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SPES IN ARDUIS

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JOHNSON'S

# LIVES OF THE POETS.

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EDITED, WITH NOTES, BY

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AND AN INTRODUCTION BY

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SMITH.

# LIVES OF THE POETS.

## SMITH.

EDMUND SMITH is one of those lucky writers who have, without much labour, attained high reputation, and who are mentioned with reverence rather for the possession than the exertion of uncommon abilities.

Of his life little is known; and that little claims no praise but what can be given to intellectual excellence, seldom employed to any virtuous purpose. His character, as given by Mr. Oldisworth,[1] with all the partiality of friendship, which is said by Dr. Burton [2] to show *what fine things one man of parts can say of another;* and which, however, comprises great part of what can be known of Mr. Smith, it is better to transcribe at once, than to take by pieces. I shall subjoin such little memorials as accident has enabled me to collect.

Mr. Edmund Smith was the only son of an eminent merchant, one Mr. Neale, by a daughter of the famous

[1] William Oldisworth (died 1734), was the editor of the *Examiner*. Swift wrote of him to Stella: "He is an ingenious fellow but the most confounded vain coxcomb in the world, so that I dare not let him see me, nor am acquainted with him."—Scott's *Swift*, vol. iii. p. 129. His *Life of Smith* was prefixed to an edition of *Phædra and Hippolitus*, 1719.

[2] *Vid. infr.* p. 22.

baron Lechmere. Some misfortunes of his father, which were soon after followed by his death, were the occasion of the son's being left very young in the hands of a near relation (one who married Mr. Neale's sister) whose name was Smith.

This gentleman and his lady treated him as their own child, and put him to Westminster-school under the care of Dr. Busby; whence after the loss of his faithful and generous guardian (whose name he assumed and retained) he was removed to Christchurch in Oxford, and there by his aunt handsomely maintained till her death; after which he continued a member of that learned and ingenious society till within five years of his own; though, some time before his leaving Christ-church, he was sent for by his mother to Worcester, and owned and acknowledged as her legitimate son; which had not been mentioned, but to wipe off the aspersions that were ignorantly cast by some on his birth. It is to be remembered for our author's honour, that, when at Westminster election he stood a candidate for one of the universities, he so signally distinguished himself by his conspicuous performances, that there arose no small contention between the representative electors of Trinity-college in Cambridge and Christ-church in Oxon, which of those two royal societies should adopt him as their own. But the electors of Trinity-college having the preference of choice that year, they resolutely elected him; who yet, being invited at the same time to Christ-church, chose to accept of a studentship there. Mr. Smith's perfections, as well natural as acquired, seem to have been formed upon Horace's plan; who says in his "Art of Poetry,"

> "—Ego nec studium sine divite venâ,
> Nec rude quid prosit video ingenium: alterius sic
> Altera poscit opem res, & conjurat amice." [1]

[1] Horace, *Ars Poet.* 409.

He was endowed by Nature with all those excellent and necessary qualifications which are previous to the accomplishment of a great man. His memory was large and tenacious, yet, by a *curious felicity chiefly* susceptible of the finest impressions, it received from the best authors he read, which it always preserved in their primitive strength and amiable order.

He had a quickness of apprehension, and vivacity of understanding, which easily took in and surmounted the most subtle and knotty parts of mathematicks and metaphysicks. His wit was prompt and flowing, yet solid and piercing; his taste delicate, his head clear, and his way of expressing his thoughts perspicuous and engaging. I shall say nothing of his person, which yet was so well *turned*, that no neglect of himself in his dress could render it disagreeable; insomuch that the fair sex, who observed and esteemed him, at once commended and reproved him by the name of the *handsome* sloven. An eager but generous and noble emulation grew up with him; which (as it were a rational sort of instinct) pushed him upon striving to excel in every art and science that could make him a credit to his college, and that college the ornament of the most learned and polite university; and it was his happiness to have several contemporaries and fellow-students who exercised and excited this virtue in themselves and others, thereby becoming so deservedly in favour with this age, and so good a proof of its nice discernment. His judgement, naturally good, soon ripened into an exquisite fineness and distinguishing sagacity, which as it was active and busy, so it was vigorous and manly, keeping even paces with a rich and strong imagination, always upon the wing, and never tired with aspiring. Hence it was, that, though he writ as young as Cowley, he had no puerilities; and his earliest productions were so far from having any thing in them mean and trifling, that, like the junior compositions of Mr.

Stepney, they may make grey authors blush. There are many of his first essays in oratory, in epigram, elegy, and epique, still handed about the university in manuscript, which shew a masterly hand; and, though maimed and injured by frequent transcribing, make their way into our most celebrated miscellanies, where they shine with uncommon lustre. Besides those verses in the Oxford books, which he could not help setting his name to, several of his compositions came abroad under other names, which his own singular modesty, and faithful silence, strove in vain to conceal. The Encœnia and public Collections of the University upon State Subjects, were never in such esteem, either for elegy or congratulation, as when he contributed most largely to them; and it was natural for those who knew his peculiar way of writing, to turn to his share in the work, as by far the most relishing part of the entertainment. As his parts were extraordinary, so he well knew how to improve them; and not only to polish the diamond, but enchase it in the most solid and durable metal. Though he was an academick the greatest part of his life, yet he contracted no sourness of temper, no spice of pedantry, no itch of disputation, or obstinate contention for the old or new philosophy, no assuming way of dictating to others; which are faults (though excusable) which some are insensibly led into, who are constrained to dwell long within the walls of a private college. His conversation was pleasant and instructive; and what Horace said of Plotius, Varius, and Virgil, might justly be applied to him:

"Nil ego contulerim jucundo sanus Amico."
*Hor. Sat.* i. 5. 44.

As correct a writer as he was in his most elaborate pieces, he read the works of others with candor, and reserved his greatest severity for his own compositions; being readier to cherish and advance, than damp or de-

press a rising genius, and as patient of being excelled himself (if any could excel him) as industrious to excel others.

'Twere to be wished he had confined himself to a particular profession, who was capable of surpassing in any; but in this, his want of application was in a great measure owing to his want of due encouragement.

He passed through the exercises of the college and university with unusual applause; and though he often suffered his friends to call him off from his retirements, and to lengthen out those jovial avocations, yet his return to his studies was so much the more passionate, and his intention upon those refined pleasures of reading and thinking so vehement (to which his facetious and unbended intervals bore no proportion) that the habit grew upon him, and the series of meditation and reflection being kept up whole weeks together, he could better sort his ideas, and take in the sundry parts of a science at one view, without interruption or confusion. Some indeed of his acquaintance, who were pleased to distinguish between the wit and the scholar, extolled him altogether on the account of the first of these titles; but others, who knew him better, could not forbear doing him justice as a prodigy in both kinds. He had signalized himself in the schools, as a philosopher and polemick of extensive knowledge and deep penetration; and went through all the courses with a wise regard to the dignity and importance of each science. I remember him in the Divinity-school responding and disputing with a perspicuous energy, a ready exactness, and commanding force of argument, when Dr. Jane worthily presided in the chair; whose condescending and disinterested commendation of him, gave him such a reputation as silenced the envious malice of his enemies, who durst not contradict the approbation of so profound a master in theology. None of those self-suffi-

cient creatures, who have either trifled with philosophy, by attempting to ridicule it, or have encumbered it with novel terms, and burdensome explanations, understood its real weight and purity half so well as Mr. Smith. He was too discerning to allow of the character of unprofitable, rugged, and abstruse, which some superficial sciolists (so very smooth and polite as to admit of no impression), either out of an unthinking indolence, or an ill-grounded prejudice, had affixed to this sort of studies. He knew the thorny terms of philosophy served well to fence-in the true doctrines of religion; and looked upon school-divinity as upon a rough but well-wrought armour, which might at once adorn and defend the Christian hero, and equip him for the combat.

Mr. Smith had a long and perfect intimacy with all the Greek and Latin Classicks; with whom he had carefully compared whatever was worth perusing in the French, Spanish, and Italian (to which languages he was no stranger), and in all the celebrated writers of his own country. But then, according to the curious observation of the late earl of Shaftesbury, he kept the poet in awe by regular criticism, and as it were, married the two arts for their mutual support and improvement. There was not a tract of credit, upon that subject, which he had not diligently examined, from Aristotle down to Hedelin and Bossû; so that, having each rule constantly before him, he could carry the art through every poem, and at once point out the graces and deformities. By this means he seemed to read with a design to correct, as well as imitate.

Being thus prepared, he could not but taste every little delicacy that was set before him; though it was impossible for him at the same time to be fed and nourished with any thing but what was substantial and lasting. He considered the ancients and moderns not as parties or rivals

for fame, but as architects upon one and the same plan, the Art of Poetry; according to which he judged, approved, and blamed, without flattery or detraction. If he did not always commend the compositions of others, it was not ill-nature (which was not in his temper) but strict justice that would not let him call a few flowers set in ranks, a glib measure, and so many couplets by the name of poetry: he was of Ben Jonson's opinion, who could not admire,

> "—Verses as smooth and soft as cream,
> In which there was neither depth nor stream."

And therefore, though his want of complaisance for some men's overbearing vanity made him enemies, yet the better part of mankind were obliged by the freedom of his reflections.

His Bodleian Speech, though taken from a remote and imperfect copy, hath shewn the world how great a master he was of the Ciceronian eloquence, mixed with the conciseness and force of Demosthenes, the elegant and moving turns of Pliny, and the acute and wise reflections of Tacitus.

Since Temple and Roscommon, no man understood Horace better, especially as to his happy diction, rolling numbers, beautiful imagery, and alternate mixture of the soft and the sublime. This endeared Dr. Hannes's odes to him, the finest genius for Latin lyrick since the Augustan Age. His friend Mr. Philips's ode to Mr. St. John (late Lord Bolingbroke) after the manner of Horace's Lusory or Amatorian Odes, is certainly a masterpiece: but Mr. Smith's "Pocockius" is of the sublimer kind, though, like Waller's writings upon Oliver Cromwell, it wants not the most delicate and surprising turns peculiar to the person praised. I do not remember to have seen any thing like it in Dr. Bathurst, who had made

some attempts this way with applause. He was an excellent judge of humanity; and so good an historian, that in familiar discourse he would talk over the most memorable facts in antiquity, the lives, actions, and characters of celebrated men, with amazing facility and accuracy. As he had thoroughly read and digested Thuanus's works, so he was able to copy after him: and his talent in this kind was so well known and allowed, that he had been singled out by some great men to write a history, which it was for their interest to have done with the utmost art and dexterity. I shall not mention for what reasons this design was dropped, though they are very much to Mr. Smith's honour. The truth is, and I speak it before living witnesses, whilst an agreeable company could fix him upon a subject of useful literature, nobody shone to greater advantage: he seemed to be that Memmius whom Lucretius speak of;

"—Quem tu, Dea, tempore in omni
Omnibus ornatum voluisti excellere rebus." [1]

His works are not many, and those scattered up and down in Miscellanies and Collections, being wrested from him by his friends with great difficulty and reluctance. All of them together make but a small part of that much greater body which lies dispersed in the possession of numerous acquaintance; and cannot perhaps be made entire, without great injustice to him, because few of them had his last hand, and the transcriber was often obliged to take the liberties of a friend. His condolance for the death of Mr. Philips is full of the noblest beauties, and hath done justice to the ashes of that second Milton, whose writings will last as long as the English language, generosity, and valour. For him Mr. Smith had contracted a perfect friendship; a passion he was most sus-

[1] *Lucretius*, i. 27.

ceptible of, and whose laws he looked upon as sacred and inviolable.

Every subject that passed under his pen had all the life, proportion, and embellishments bestowed on it, which an exquisite skill, a warm imagination, and a cool judgement, could possibly bestow on it. The epique, lyrick, elegiac, every sort of poetry he touched upon (and he had touched upon a great variety), was raised to its proper height, and the differences between each of them observed with a judicious accuracy. We saw the old rules and new beauties placed in admirable order by each other; and there was a predominant fancy and spirit of his own infused, superior to what some draw off from the ancients, or from poesies here and there culled out of the moderns, by a painful industry and servile imitation. His contrivances were adroit and magnificent; his images lively and adequate; his sentiments charming and majestick; his expressions natural and bold; his numbers various and sounding; and that enameled mixture of classical wit, which, without redundance and affectation, sparkled through his writings, and was no less pertinent and agreeable.

His "Phædra" is a consummate tragedy, and the success of it was as great as the most sanguine expectations of his friends could promise or foresee. The number of nights, and the common method of filling the house, are not always the surest marks of judging what encouragement a play meets with: but the generosity of all the persons of a refined taste about town was remarkable on this occasion; and it must not be forgotten how zealously Mr. Addison espoused his interest, with all the elegant judgement and diffusive good-nature for which that accomplished gentleman and author is so justly valued by mankind. But as to "Phædra," she has certainly made a finer figure under Mr. Smith's conduct, upon the English stage, than either Rome or Athens; and if she excels the Greek and Latin

"Phædra," I need not say she surpasses the French one, though embellished with whatever regular beauties and moving softness Racine himself could give her.

No man had a juster notion of the difficulty of composing than Mr. Smith, and he sometimes would create greater difficulties than he had reason to apprehend. Writing with ease, what (as Mr. Wycherley speaks) may be easily written, moved his indignation. When he was writing upon a subject, he would seriously consider what Demosthenes, Homer, Virgil, or Horace, if alive, would say upon that occasion, which whetted him to exceed himself as well as others. Nevertheless, he could not, or would not, finish several subjects he undertook; which may be imputed either to the briskness of his fancy, still hunting after new matter, or to an occasional indolence, which spleen and lassitude brought upon him, which, of all his foibles, the world was least inclined to forgive. That this was not owing to conceit and vanity, or a fulness of himself (a frailty which has been imputed to no less men than Shakspeare and Jonson), is clear from hence; because he left his works to the entire disposal of his friends, whose most rigorous censures he even courted and solicited; submitting to their animadversions, and the freedom they took with them, with an unreserved and prudent resignation.

I have seen sketches and rough draughts of some poems he designed, set out analytically; wherein the fable, structure, and connexion, the images, incidents, moral, episodes, and a great variety of ornaments, were so finely laid out, so well fitted to the rules of art, and squared so exactly to the precedents of the ancients, that I have often looked on these poetical elements with the same concern, with which curious men are affected at the sight of the most entertaining remains and ruins of an antique figure or building. Those fragments of the learned, which some men have been so proud of their pains in collecting, are useless

rarities, without form and without life, when compared with these embryo's, which wanted not spirit enough to preserve them; so that I cannot help thinking, that, if some of them were to come abroad, they would be as highly valued by the poets, as the sketches of Julio and Titian are by the painters; though there is nothing in them but a few outlines, as to the design and proportion.

It must be confessed, that Mr. Smith had some defects in his conduct, which those are most apt to remember who could imitate him in nothing else. His freedom with himself drew severer acknowledgements from him than all the malice he ever provoked was capable of advancing, and he did not scruple to give even his misfortunes the hard name of faults; but if the world had half his good-nature, all the shady parts would be entirely struck out of his character.

A man, who, under poverty, calamities, and disappointments, could make so many friends, and those so truly valuable, must have just and noble ideas of the passion of friendship, in the success of which consisted the greatest, if not the only, happiness of his life. He knew very well what was due to his birth, though Fortune threw him short of it in every other circumstance of life. He avoided making any, though perhaps reasonable, complaints of her dispensations, under which he had honour enough to be easy, without touching the favours she flung in his way when offered to him at the price of a more durable reputation. He took care to have no dealings with mankind, in which he could not be just; and he desired to be at no other expence in his pretensions than that of intrinsick merit, which was the only burthen and reproach he ever brought upon his friends. He could say, as Horace did of himself, what I never yet saw translated;

"—Meo sum pauper in ære."[1]

[1] Horace, *Epist. II.* 2. 12.

At his coming to town, no man was more surrounded by all those who really had or pretended to wit, or more courted by the great men, who had then a power and opportunity of encouraging arts and sciences, and gave proofs of their fondness for the name of Patron in many instances, which will ever be remembered to their glory. Mr. Smith's character grew upon his friends by intimacy, and outwent the strongest prepossessions, which had been conceived in his favour. Whatever quarrel a few sour creatures, whose obscurity is their happiness, may possibly have to the age; yet amidst a studied neglect, and total disuse of all those ceremonial attendances, fashionable equipments, and external recommendations, which are thought necessary introductions into the *grande monde*, this gentleman was so happy as still to please; and whilst the rich, the gay, the noble, and honourable, saw how much he excelled in wit and learning, they easily forgave him all other differences.[a] Hence it was that both his acquaintance and retirements were his own free choice. What Mr. Prior observes upon a very great character,[1] was true of him; *that most of his faults brought their excuse with them.*

Those who blamed him most, understood him least: it being the custom of the vulgar to charge an excess upon the most complaisant, and to form a character by the morals of a few, who have sometimes spoiled an hour or two in good company. Where only fortune is wanting to make a great name, that single exception can never pass upon the best judges and most equitable observers of mankind; and when the time comes for the world to spare their pity, we may justly enlarge our demands upon them for their admiration.

Some few years before his death, he had engaged himself in several considerable undertakings; in all which he

[1] The Earl of Dorset. See Prior's Dedication of his *Poems* to the son of the "great Earl."

had prepared the world to expect mighty things from him. I have seen about ten sheets of his "English Pindar," which exceeded any thing of that kind I could ever hope for in our own language. He had drawn out the plan of a tragedy of the "Lady Jane Grey," and had gone through several scenes of it. But he could not well have bequeathed that work to better hands than where, I hear, it is at present lodged; and the bare mention of two such names may justify the largest expectations, and is sufficient to make the town an agreeable invitation.

His greatest and noblest undertaking was "Longinus." He had finished an entire translation of the "Sublime," which he sent to the reverend Mr. Richard Parker, a friend of his, late of Merton College, an exact critick in the Greek tongue, from whom it came to my hands. The French version of Monsieur Boileau, though truly valuable, was far short of it. He proposed a large addition to this work, of notes and observations of his own, with an entire system of the Art of Poetry, in three books, under the titles of "Thought," "Diction," and "Figure." I saw the last of these perfect, and in a fair copy, in which he shewed prodigious judgement and reading; and particularly had reformed the Art of Rhetorick, by reducing that vast and confused heap of terms, with which a long succession of pedants had encumbered the world, to a very narrow compass, comprehending all that was useful and ornamental in poetry. Under each head and chapter, he intended to make remarks upon all the ancients and moderns, the Greek, Latin, English, French, Spanish, and Italian poets, and to note their several beauties and defects.

What remains of his works is left, as I am informed, in the hands of men of worth and judgement, who loved him. It cannot be supposed they would suppress any thing that was his, but out of respect to his memory, and for want of proper hands to finish what so great a genius had begun.

Such is the declamation of Oldisworth, written while his admiration was yet fresh, and his kindness warm; and therefore such as, without any criminal purpose of deceiving, shews a strong desire to make the most of all favourable truth. I cannot much commend the performance. The praise is often indistinct, and the sentences are loaded with words of more pomp than use. There is little however that can be contradicted, even when a plainer tale comes to be told.

Edmund Neal, known by the name of Smith, was born at Handley, the seat of the Lechmeres, in Worcestershire. The year of his birth is uncertain.

He was educated at Westminster. It is known to have been the practice of Dr. Busby to detain those youths long at school, of whom he had formed the highest expectations. Smith took his Master's degree on the 8th of July, 1696: he therefore was probably admitted into the university in 1689, when we may suppose him twenty years old.[1]

His reputation for literature in his college was such as has been told; but the indecency and licentiousness of his behaviour drew upon him, Dec. 24, 1694, while he was yet only Batchelor, a publick admonition, entered upon record, in order to his expulsion. Of this reproof the effect is not known. He was probably less notorious. At Oxford, as we all know, much will be forgiven to literary merit; and of that he had exhibited sufficient evidence by his excellent ode on the death of the great Orientalist, Dr. Pocock,[2] who died in 1691, and whose praise must have been written by Smith when he had been yet but two years in the university.

This ode, which closed the second volume of the "Musæ

[1] He took his B.A. June 30th, 1692.

[2] Dr. Edward Pococke (1604-1691), Canon of Christchurch, and Hebrew Professor in Oxford. See Boswell's *Johnson*, vol. iii. p. 279.

Anglicanæ," though perhaps some objections may be made to its Latinity, is by far the best Lyrick composition in that collection; nor do I know where to find it equalled among the modern writers. It expresses, with great felicity, images not classical in classical diction: its digressions and returns have been deservedly recommended by Trapp as models for imitation.

He has several imitations of Cowley:

> "Vestitur hinc tot sermo coloribus
> Quot tu, Pococki, dissimilis tui
> Orator effers, quot vicissim
> Te memores celebrare gaudent."

I will not commend the figure which makes the orator *pronounce colours*, or give to *colours memory* and *delight*. I quote it, however, as an imitation of these lines;

> "So many languages he had in store,
> That only Fame shall speak of him in more." [1]

The simile, by which an old man, retaining the fire of his youth, is compared to Ætna flaming through the snow, which Smith has used with great pomp, is stolen from Cowley, however little worth the labour of conveyance.

He proceeded to take his degree of Master of Arts, July 8, 1696. Of the exercises which he performed on that occasion, I have not heard any thing memorable.

As his years advanced, he advanced in reputation: for he continued to cultivate his mind, though he did not amend his irregularities, by which he gave so much offence, that, April 24, 1700, the Dean and Chapter declared "the place of Mr. Smith void, he having been convicted of riotous misbehaviour in the house of Mr. Cole an apothecary; but it was referred to the Dean when and upon what occasion the sentence should be put in execution."

[1] From Cowley's poem, *On the Death of Sir Henry Wotton.*

Thus tenderly was he treated: the governors of his college could hardly keep him, and yet wished that he would not force them to drive him away.

Some time afterwards he assumed an appearance of decency; in his own phrase, he *whitened* himself, having a desire to obtain the censorship, an office of honour and some profit in the college; but when the election came, the preference was given to Mr. *Foulkes*, his junior; the same, I suppose, that joined with *Freind* in an edition of part of Demosthenes;[1] the censor is a tutor, and it was not thought proper to trust the superintendance of others to a man who took so little care of himself.

From this time Smith employed his malice and his wit against the Dean, Dr. Aldrich,[2] whom he considered as the opponent of his claim. Of his lampoon upon him, I once heard a single line too gross to be repeated.

But he was still a genius and a scholar, and Oxford was unwilling to lose him: he was endured, with all his pranks and his vices, two years longer; but on Dec. 20, 1705, at the instance of all the canons, the sentence declared five years before was put in execution.

The execution was, I believe, silent and tender; for one of his friends, from whom I learned much of his life appeared not to know it.

He was now driven to London, where he associated himself with the Whigs, whether because they were in power, or because the Tories had expelled him, or because he was a Whig by principle, may perhaps be doubted. He was however caressed by men of great abilities, whatever were their party, and was supported by the liberality of those who delighted in his conversation.

There was once a design hinted at by Oldisworth, to

[1] *Oratio de Corona et Æschinis Oratio in Ctesiphontem.* Gr. et Lat. cura Foulkes et Freind. Oxon. 1695. 8vo.

[2] *Vid. supr.* vol. i. p. 326.

have made him useful. One evening, as he was sitting with a friend at a tavern, he was called down by the waiter; and, having staid some time below, came up thoughtful. After a pause, said he to his friend, "He that wanted me below was Addison, whose business was to tell me that a History of the Revolution was intended, and to propose that I should undertake it. I said, what shall I do with the character of lord Sunderland? and Addison immediately returned, When, Rag, were you drunk last? and went away."

Captain *Rag* was a name which he got at Oxford by his negligence of dress.

This story I heard from the late Mr. Clark of Lincoln's Inn, to whom it was told by the friend of Smith.

Such scruples might debar him from some profitable employments; but as they could not deprive him of any real esteem, they left him many friends; and no man was ever better introduced to the theatre than he, who, in that violent conflict of parties, had a Prologue and Epilogue from the first wits on either side.

But learning and nature will now and then take different courses. His play pleased the criticks, and the criticks only. It was, as Addison has recorded,[1] hardly heard the third night. Smith had indeed trusted entirely to his merit; had ensured no band of applauders, nor used any artifice to force success, and found that naked excellence was not sufficient for its own support.

The play, however, was bought by Lintot, who advanced the price from fifty guineas, the current rate, to sixty;[2] and Halifax, the general patron, accepted the dedication. Smith's indolence kept him from writing the dedication, till Lintot, after fruitless importunity, gave notice that he

[1] *Spectator*, No. 18.

[2] Mr. P. Cunningham states that Lintot's books show that Smith had the customary £50 for this play, March 11th, 1705.

would publish the play without it. Now therefore it was written; and Halifax expected the author with his book, and had prepared to reward him with a place of three hundred pounds a year. Smith, by pride, or caprice, or indolence, or bashfulness, neglected to attend him, though doubtless warned and pressed by his friends, and at last missed his reward by not going to solicit it.

Addison has, in the "Spectator" [1] mentioned the neglect of Smith's tragedy as disgraceful to the nation, and imputes it to the fondness for operas then prevailing. The authority of Addison is great; yet the voice of the people, when to please the people is the purpose, deserves regard. In this question, I cannot but think the people in the right. The fable is mythological, a story which which we are accustomed to reject as false, and the manners are so distant from our own, that we know them not from sympathy, but by study: the ignorant do not understand the action, the learned reject it as a school-boy's tale; *incredulus odi*. What I cannot for a moment believe, I cannot for a moment behold with interest or anxiety. The sentiments thus remote from life, are removed yet further by the diction, which is too luxuriant and splendid for dialogue, and envelopes the thoughts rather than displays them. It is a scholar's play, such as may please the reader rather than the spectator; the work of a vigorous and elegant mind, accustomed to please itself with its own conceptions, but of little acquaintance with the course of life.

Dennis tells, in one of his pieces, that he had once a design to have written the tragedy of "Phædra;" but was convinced that the action was too mythological.

In 1709, a year after the exhibition of "Phædra;" died John Philips,[2] the friend and fellow-collegian of Smith,

[1] No. 18.

[2] John Phillips did not matriculate till 1697, the year after Smith took his M.A. degree, so that they were scarcely fellow-collegians.

who, on that occasion, wrote a poem,[1] which justice must place among the best elegies which our language can shew, an elegant mixture of fondness and admiration, of dignity and softness. There are some passages too ludicrous; but every human performance has its faults.

This elegy it was the mode among his friends to purchase for a guinea; and, as his acquaintance was numerous, it was a very profitable poem.

Of his "Pindar," mentioned by Oldisworth, I have never otherwise heard. His "Longinus" he intended to accompany with some illustrations, and had selected his instances of the false "Sublime" from the works of Blackmore.

He resolved to try again the fortune of the Stage, with the story of Lady Jane Grey. It is not unlikely that his experience of the inefficacy and incredibility of a mythological tale, might determine him to choose an action from English History, at no great distance from our own times, which was to end in a real event, produced by the operation of known characters.

A subject will not easily occur that can give more opportunities of informing the understanding, for which Smith was unquestionably qualified, or for moving the passions, in which I suspect him to have had less power.

Having formed his plan, and collected materials, he declared that a few months would complete his design; and, that he might pursue his work with less frequent avocations, he was, in June 1710, invited by Mr. George Ducket[2] to his house at Gartham in Wiltshire. Here he found such opportunities of indulgence as did not much forward his studies, and particularly some strong ale, too delicious to be resisted. He eat and drank till he found himself plethorick: and then, resolving to ease himself by

[1] Printed in folio by Lintot, but without date.

[2] One of the Commissioners of Excise. Wilson's (*i.e.* Oldmixon's) *Life of Congreve* (8vo. 1730) is dedicated to him.—P. CUNNINGHAM.

evacuation, he wrote to an apothecary in the neighbourhood a prescription of a purge so forcible, that the apothecary thought it his duty to delay it till he had given notice of its danger. Smith, not pleased with the contradiction of a shopman, and boastful of his own knowledge, treated the notice with rude contempt, and swallowed his own medicine, which, in July 1710, brought him to the grave. He was buried at Gartham.

Many years afterwards, Ducket communicated to Oldmixon the historian, an account, pretended to have been received from Smith, that Clarendon's History was, in its publication, corrupted by Aldrich, Smalridge, and Atterbury; and that Smith was employed to forge and insert the alterations.[1]

This story was published triumphantly by Oldmixon, and may be supposed to have been eagerly received: but its progress was soon checked; for finding its way into the "Journal of Trevoux," it fell under the eye of Atterbury, then an exile in France, who immediately denied the charge, with this remarkable particular, that he never in his whole life had once spoken to Smith; his company being, as must be inferred, not accepted by those who attended to their characters.

The charge was afterwards very diligently refuted by Dr. Burton[2] of Eaton; a man eminent for literature, and, though not of the same party with Aldrich and Atterbury, too studious of truth to leave them burthened with a false charge. The testimonies which he has collected, have con-

[1] See *Idler*, No. 65.

[2] Burton, John, D.D. (1696-1771). This learned man and eminent tutor was rector of Warplesdon, in Surrey, but for the last twenty-three years of his life he resided principally at Eton. His attention was greatly directed to restoring the credit of the University Press, and fostering schemes for the carrying on of literary undertakings with diminished expense.

vinced mankind that either Smith or Ducket were guilty of wilful and malicious falsehood.

This controversy brought into view those parts of Smith's life, which with more honour to his name might have been concealed.

Of Smith I can yet say a little more. He was a man of such estimation among his companions, that the casual censures or praises which he dropped in conversation were considered, like those of Scaliger, as worthy of preservation.

He had great readiness and exactness of criticism, and by a cursory glance over a new composition would exactly tell all its faults and beauties.

He was remarkable for the power of reading with great rapidity, and of retaining with great fidelity what he so easily collected.

He therefore always knew what the present question required; and when his friends expressed their wonder at his acquisitions, made in a state of apparent negligence and drunkenness, he never discovered his hours of reading or method of study, but involved himself in affected silence, and fed his own vanity with their admiration and conjectures.

One practice he had, which was easily observed: if any thought or image was presented to his mind, that he could use or improve, he did not suffer it to be lost; but, amidst the jollity of a tavern, or in the warmth of conversation, very diligently committed it to paper.

Thus it was that he had gathered two quires of hints for his new tragedy; of which Rowe, when they were put into his hands, could make, as he says, very little use, but which the collector considered as a valuable stock of materials.

When he came to London, his way of life connected him with the licentious and dissolute; and he affected the airs and gaiety of a man of pleasure; but his dress was always deficient: scholastick cloudiness still hung about him; and his merriment was sure to produce the scorn of his companions.

With all his carelessness, and all his vices, he was one of the murmurers at Fortune; and wondered why he was suffered to be poor, when Addison was caressed and preferred: nor would a very little have contented him; for he estimated his wants at six hundred pounds a year.

In his course of reading it was particular, that he had diligently perused, and accurately remembered, the old romances of knight errantry.

He had a high opinion of his own merit, and something contemptuous in his treatment of those whom he considered as not qualified to oppose or contradict him. He had many frailties; yet it cannot but be supposed that he had great merit, who could obtain to the same play a prologue from Addison, and an epilogue from Prior; and who could have at once the patronage of Halifax, and the praise of Oldisworth.

For the power of communicating these minute memorials, I am indebted to my conversation with Gilbert Walmsley,[1] late register of the ecclesiastical court of Litchfield, who was acquainted both with Smith and Ducket; and declared, that, if the tale concerning Clarendon were forged, he should suspect Ducket of the falsehood; *for Rag was a man of great veracity.*

Of Gilbert Walmsley, thus presented to my mind, let me indulge myself in the remembrance. I knew him very early; he was one of the first friends that literature procured me, and I hope that at least my gratitude made me worthy of his notice.

He was of an advanced age, and I was only not a boy; yet he never received my notions with contempt. He was

[1] Gilbert Walmsley (1680-1751). Registrar of the Eccl. Court of Lichfield. He it was who, in 1735, endeavoured to get Johnson the mastership of the Grammar School at Solihull, and gave him introductions when he first went up to London. Boswell's *Johnson*, vol. i. pp. 46, 58. And for his criticism of Irene, *ibid.* p. 65.

a Whig, with all the virulence and malevolence of his party; yet difference of opinion did not keep us apart. I honoured him, and he endured me.

He had mingled with the gay world, without exemption from its vices or its follies, but had never neglected the cultivation of his mind; his belief of Revelation was unshaken; his learning preserved his principles; he grew first regular, and then pious.

His studies had been so various, that I am not able to name a man of equal knowledge. His acquaintance with books was great; and what he did not immediately know, he could at least tell where to find. Such was his amplitude of learning, and such his copiousness of communication, that it may be doubted whether a day now passes in which I have not some advantage from his friendship.

At this man's table I enjoyed many chearful and instructive hours, with companions such as are not often found; with one who has lengthened, and one who has gladdened life; with Dr. James,[1] whose skill in physick will be long remembered; and with David Garrick,[2] whom I hoped to have gratified with this character of our common friend: but what are the hopes of man! I am disappointed by that stroke of death, which has eclipsed the gaiety of nations, and impoverished the publick stock of harmless pleasure.

In the Library at Oxford is the following ludicrous Analysis of "Pocockius:"

[1] Dr. James, died 1776. Johnson's schoolfellow and early friend from whom he said he learned all he knew of physic. Boswell's *Johnson*, vol. i. p. 116, vol. iii. p. 74.

[2] The great actor died January 20th, 1779, aged 63. He was Johnson's pupil at Edial, and accompanied Johnson on his first visit to London in 1736, with fourpence in their pockets between them. Boswell's *Johnson*, vol. i. p. 66, *et seq.*

Ex Autographo.

[Sent by the Author to Mr. Urry.[1]]

Opusculum hoc, Halberdarie amplissime, in lucem proferre hactenus distuli, judicii tui acumen subveritus magis quam bipennis. Tandem aliquando Oden hanc ad te mitto sublimem, teneram, flebilem, suavem, qualem demum divinus (si Musis vacaret) scripsisset Gastrellus: adeo scilicet sublimem ut inter legendum dormire, adeo flebilem ut ridere velis. Cujus elegantiam ut melius inspicias, versuum ordinem & materiam breviter referam. 1^mus^ versus de duobus præliis decantatis. 2^dus^ & 3^us^ de Lotharingio, cuniculis subterraneis, saxis, ponto, hostibus, & Asia. 4^tus^ & 5^us^ de catenis, sudibus, uncis, draconibus, tigribus & crocodilis. 6^us^, 7^us^, 8^us^, 9^us^, de Gomorrha, de Babylone, Babele, & quodam domi suæ peregrino. 10^us^, aliquid de quodam Pocockio. 11^us^, 12^us^, de Syriâ, Solymâ. 13^us^, 14^us^, de Hoseâ, & quercu, & de juvene quodam valde sene. 15^us^, 16^us^, de Ætnâ & quomodo Ætna Pocockio sit valde similis. 17^us^, 18^us^, de tubâ, astro, umbrâ, flammis, rotis, Pocockio non neglecto. Cætera de Christianis, Ottomanis, Babyloniis, Arabibus, & gravissimâ agrorum melancholiâ; de Cæsare "Flacco,*" Nestore, & miserando juvenis cujusdam florentissimi fato, anno ætatis suæ centesimo præmaturè abrepti. Quæ omnia cum accuratè expenderis, necesse est ut Oden hanc meam admirandâ planè varietate constare fatearis. Subito ad Batavos proficiscor lauro ab illis donandus. Prius vero Pembrochienses voco ad certamen Poeticum. Vale.

Illustrissima tua deosculor crura.

E. Smith.

* Pro *Flacco*, animo paulo attentiore, scripsissem *Marone*.—Johnson.

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[1] John Urry, who edited Chaucer (1721, folio, London), and died 1714.

DUKE.

# DUKE.

OF Mr. Richard Duke I can find few memorials. He was bred at Westminster and Cambridge; and Jacob[1] relates, that he was some time tutor to the duke of Richmond.[2]

He appears from his writings to have been not ill qualified for poetical compositions; and being conscious of his powers, when he left the university he enlisted himself among the wits. He was the familiar friend of Otway; and was engaged, among other popular names, in the translations of Ovid and Juvenal. In his "Review," though unfinished, are some vigorous lines. His poems are not below mediocrity; nor have I found much in them to be praised.

With the Wit he seems to have shared the dissoluteness of the times; for some of his compositions are such as he must have reviewed with detestation in his later days, when he published those Sermons which Felton has commended.

Perhaps, like some other foolish young men, he rather talked than lived viciously, in an age when he that would be thought a Wit was afraid to say his prayers; and whatever might have been bad in the first part of his life, was surely condemned and reformed by his better judgment.

In 1683, being then master of arts, and fellow of Trinity

[1] Jacob's *Lives*, vol. ii. p. 50.

[2] Charles II.'s son, by the Duchess of Portsmouth.

College in Cambridge, he wrote a poem on the marriage of the Lady Anne with George Prince of Denmark.[1]

He took orders; and being made prebendary of Gloucester, became a proctor in convocation for that church, and chaplain to Queen Anne.

In 1710, he was presented by the bishop of Winchester to the wealthy living of Witney in Oxfordshire, which he enjoyed but a few months. On February 10, 1710-11, having returned from an entertainment, he was found dead the next morning. His death is mentioned in Swift's "Journal."[2]

[1] To Dryden's first *Miscellany* (1604), he contributed a translation of Elegy V. book i. *Ovid; Three Odes of Horace; An Idyllium of Theocritus; The Fifth Eclogue of Virgil and Floriana; A Pastoral upon the Death of the Duchess of Southampton.* He did not contribute to the other volumes.—P. CUNNINGHAM.

[2] Scott's *Swift*, vol. ii. p. 177.

KING.

# KING.

WILLIAM KING was born in London in 1663; the son of Ezekiel King, a gentleman. He was allied to the family of Clarendon.

From Westminster-school, where he was a scholar on the foundation under the care of Dr. Busby, he was at eighteen elected to Christ-church, in 1681; where he is said to have prosecuted his studies with so much intenseness and activity, that, before he was eight years standing, he had read over, and made remarks upon, twenty-two thousand odd hundred books and manuscripts. The books were certainly not very long, the manuscripts not very difficult, nor the remarks very large; for the calculator will find that he dispatched seven a-day, for every day of his eight years, with a remnant that more than satisfies most other students. He took his degree in the most expensive manner, as a *grand compounder;* whence it is inferred that he inherited a considerable fortune.

In 1688, the same year in which he was made master of arts, he published a confutation of Varillas's account of Wicliffe: and, engaging in the study of the Civil Law, became doctor in 1692, and was admitted advocate at Doctors Commons.

He had already made some translations from the French, and written some humorous and satirical pieces; when, in 1694, Molesworth[1] published his "Account of

[1] Who had been three years envoy extraordinary to Denmark, and left that country in consequence of having offended his Danish majesty.

Denmark,"[1] in which he treats the Danes and their monarch with great contempt; and takes the opportunity of insinuating those wild principles, by which he supposes liberty to be established, and by which his adversaries suspect that all subordination and government is endangered.

This book offended prince George; and the Danish minister presented a memorial against it. The principles of its author did not please Dr. King, and therefore he undertook to confute part, and laugh at the rest.[2] The controversy is now forgotten; and books of this kind seldom live long, when interest and resentment have ceased.

In 1697 he mingled in the controversy between Boyle and Bentley; and was one of those who tried what Wit could perform in opposition to Learning, on a question which Learning only could decide.

In 1699 was published by him "A Journey to London," after the method of *Dr. Martin Lister*, who had published "A Journey to Paris." And in 1700 he satirised the Royal Society, at least Sir Hans Sloane their president, in two dialogues, intituled "The Transactioneer."

Though he was a regular advocate in the courts of civil and canon law, he did not love his profession, nor indeed any kind of business which interrupted his voluptuary dreams, or forced him to rouse from that indulgence in which only he could find delight. His reputation as a civilian was yet maintained by his judgements in the courts of Delegates, and raised very high by the address and knowledge which he discovered in 1700, when he defended the earl of Anglesea against his lady, afterwards dutchess of Buckinghamshire, who sued for a divorce, and obtained it.

The expence of his pleasures, and neglect of business,

[1] *An Account of Denmark in* 1692, by Robert Lord, Viscount Molesworth. 1694, 8vo.

[2] *Animadversions on a Pretended Account of Denmark*, by Dr. Will. King, of Ch. Ch., Oxford. Lond. 1694, 8vo.

had now lessened his revenues; and he was willing to accept of a settlement in Ireland, where, about 1702, he was made judge of the admiralty, commissioner of the prizes, keeper of the records in Birmingham's tower,[1] and vicar-general to Dr. Marsh the primate.

But it is vain to put wealth within the reach of him who will not stretch out his hand to take it. King soon found a friend as idle and thoughtless as himself, in *Upton*, one of the judges, who had a pleasant house called Mountown, near Dublin, to which King frequently retired; delighting to neglect his interest, forget his cares, and desert his duty. Here he wrote "Mully of Mountown," a poem; by which, though fanciful readers in the pride of sagacity have given it a political interpretation, was meant originally no more than it expressed, as it was dictated only by the author's delight in the quiet of *Mountown*.

In 1708, when Lord Wharton was sent to govern Ireland, King returned to London, with his poverty, his idleness, and his wit; and published some essays called "Useful Transactions." His "Voyage to the Island of Cajamai" is particularly commended. He then wrote the "Art of Love," a poem remarkable, notwithstanding its title, for purity of sentiment; and in 1709 imitated Horace in an "Art of Cookery," which he published, with some letters to Dr. Lister.

In 1710 he appeared, as a lover of the Church, on the side of Sacheverell; and was supposed to have concurred at least in the projection of "The Examiner." His eyes were

[1] The original tower was for centuries used as a state prison, like the Tower of London. It derived its name from Sir William Bermingham, whose imprisonment in it was terminated in. 1331, by his execution. Being injured by an explosion in 1775, it was subsequently rebuilt in its present uninteresting form. It is situated at the rear of the Vice-Regal apartments in Dublin Castle, and has long been used as a Record Office. *Vid. infr. Life of Addison*, who was also a Keeper of the Records.

open to all the operations of Whiggism; and he bestowed some strictures upon Dr. Kennet's adulatory sermon at the funeral of the duke of Devonshire.[1]

The "History of the Heathen Gods," a book composed for schools, was written by him in 1711. The work is useful; but might have been produced without the powers of King. The same year he published "Rufinus," an historical essay, and a poem, intended to dispose the nation to think as he thought of the duke of Marlborough and his adherents.

In 1711, competence, if not plenty, was again put into his power. He was, without the trouble of attendance, or the mortification of a request, made gazetteer.[2] Swift, Freind, Prior, and other men of the same party, brought him the key of the gazetteer's office. He was now again placed in a profitable employment, and again threw the benefit away. An Act of Insolvency made his business at that time particularly troublesome; and he would not wait till hurry should be at an end, but impatiently resigned it, and returned to his wonted indigence and amusements.

One of his amusements at Lambeth, where he resided, was to mortify Dr. Tennison, the archbishop, by a publick festivity, on the surrender of Dunkirk to Hill; an event with which Tennison's political bigotry did not suffer him to be delighted. King was resolved to counteract his sullenness, and at the expence of a few barrels of ale filled the neighbourhood with honest merriment.

[1] *A Sermon at the Funeral of William, Duke of Devonshire, in the Church of All Hallows, in Derby*, Sept. 5th, 1707. Lond. 1708. 8vo. By White Kennett, D.D., Bishop of Peterborough, a learned historian and antiquary, author of *A History of England*, and *A Register and Chronicle, Eccl. and Civil, &c., &c.* His valuable MS. collections and diary were presented to the British Museum by the Marquis of Lansdowne.

[2] Steele at one time held this office, as editor or conductor of the official or governmental Gazette, the precursor, or perhaps merely the older *London Gazette* of our time.

In the Autumn of 1712 his health declined; he grew weaker by degrees, and died on Christmas-day. Though his life had not been without irregularity, his principles were pure and orthodox, and his death was pious.

After this relation, it will be naturally supposed that his poems were rather the amusements of idleness than efforts of study; that he endeavoured rather to divert than astonish; that his thoughts seldom aspired to sublimity; and that, if his verse was easy and his images familiar, he attained what he desired. His purpose is to be merry; but perhaps, to enjoy his mirth, it may be sometimes necessary to think well of his opinions.[1]

[1] Mr. Peter Cunningham observes here, "Whoever wishes to know more of Dr. King should consult his *Original Works*, 3 vols. 8vo, 1776, well edited by John Nichols."

SPRAT.

# SPRAT.

THOMAS SPRAT was born in 1636, at Tallaton in Devonshire, the son of a clergyman; and having been educated, as he tells of himself, not at Westminster or Eaton, but at a little school by the churchyard side, became a commoner of Wadham College in Oxford in 1651; and, being chosen scholar next year, proceeded through the usual academical course, and in 1657 became master of arts.[1] He obtained a fellowship, and commenced poet.

In 1659, his poem on the death of Oliver was published, with those of Dryden and Waller. In his dedication to Dr. Wilkins[2] he appears a very willing and liberal encomiast, both of the living and the dead. He implores his patron's excuse of his verses, both as falling *so infinitely below the full and sublime genius of that excellent poet who made this way of writing free of our nation*, and being *so little equal and proportioned to the renown of the prince on whom they were written; such great actions and lives deserving to be the subject of the noblest pens and most divine*

[1] He took his B.D. and D.D. July 3rd, 1669.

[2] John Wilkins, D.D. (1614-1672). He became Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, on the nomination of Richard Cromwell, Dean of Ripon, and Bishop of Chester. He married a sister of Oliver Cromwell, he was an excellent mathematician, and much addicted to natural philosophy. He was the first secretary of the Royal Society, and, according to Evelyn, "tooke great pains to preserve the universities from the ignorant sacrilegious Commanders, and souldiers who would faine have demolished all places and persons that pretended to learning."

*phansies.* He proceeds: *Having so long experienced your care and indulgence, and been formed, as it were, by your own hands, not to entitle you to any thing which my meanness produces, would be not only injustice, but sacrilege.*

He published the same year a poem on the "Plague of Athens;" a subject of which it is not easy to say what could recommend it. To these he added afterwards a poem on Mr. Cowley's death.

After the Restoration he took orders, and by Cowley's recommendation was made chaplain to the Duke of Buckingham, whom he is said to have helped in writing the "Rehearsal." He was likewise chaplain to the king.[1]

As he was the favourite of Wilkins, at whose house began those philosophical conferences and enquiries, which in time produced the Royal Society,[2] he was consequently engaged in the same studies, and became one of the fellows; and when, after their incorporation, something seemed necessary to reconcile the publick to the new institution, he undertook to write its history, which he published in 1667. This is one of the few books which selection of sentiment and elegance of diction have been able to preserve, though written upon a subject flux and transitory. The History of the Royal Society is now read, not with the wish to know what they were then doing, but how their transactions are exhibited by Sprat.

[1] He was made Chaplain to Charles II. in August, 1676.

[2] The germ of our Royal Society may be traced to the year 1645, when Wallis, Wilkins, Glisson, and others less known, agreed to meet weekly at a private house in London, to converse on subjects connected with natural, and especially experimental philosophy. Some of these soon after settled in Oxford, where they met at Wilkins's rooms in Wadham College, till he became Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1659, when most of the Oxford philosophers came to London, and held their meetings in Gresham College. Their registers are kept from 1660, and their first charter is dated 15th July, 1662. Hallam, *Lit. Eur.* vol. iii. p. 565.

In the next year he published "Observations on Sorbiere's Voyage into England, in a Letter to Mr. Wren." [1] This is a work not ill performed; but perhaps rewarded with at least its full proportion of praise.

In 1668 he published Cowley's Latin poems, and prefixed in Latin the Life of the Author; which he afterwards amplified, and placed before Cowley's English works, which were by will committed to his care.

Ecclesiastical benefices now fell fast upon him. In 1668 he became a prebendary of Westminster, and had afterwards the church of St. Margaret, adjoining to the Abbey. He was in 1680 made canon of Windsor, in 1683 dean of Westminster, and in 1684 bishop of Rochester.

The Court having thus a claim to his diligence and gratitude, he was required to write the History of the Ryehouse Plot; and in 1685 published "A true Account and Declaration of the horrid Conspiracy against the late King, his present Majesty, and the present Government;" a performance which he thought convenient, after the Revolution, to extenuate and excuse.

The same year, being clerk of the closet to the king, he was made dean of the chapel-royal; and the year afterwards received the last proof of his master's confidence, by being appointed one of the commissioners for ecclesiastical affairs. On the critical day, when the "Declaration" distinguished the true sons of the church of England, he stood neuter, and permitted it to be read at Westminster; but pressed none to violate his conscience; and when the bishop of London was brought before them,[2] gave his voice in his favour.

Thus far he suffered interest or obedience to carry him;

[1] This work was published in 1665, two years before the *Hist. of the Royal Society*.

[2] For not suspending Dr. Sharp. Compton was the Bishop.—P. CUNNINGHAM.

but further he refused to go. When he found that the powers of the ecclesiastical commission were to be exercised against those who had refused the Declaration, he wrote to the lords, and other commissioners, a formal profession of his unwillingness to exercise that authority any longer, and withdrew himself from them. After they had read his letter, they adjourned for six months, and scarcely ever met afterwards.

When king James was frighted away, and a new government was to be settled, Sprat was one of those who considered, in a conference, the great question, whether the crown was vacant; and manfully spoke in favour of his old master.

He complied, however, with the new establishment, and was left unmolested; but in 1692 a strange attack was made upon him by one *Robert Young* and *Stephen Blackhead*, both men convicted of infamous crimes, and both, when the scheme was laid, prisoners in Newgate. These men drew up an Association, in which they whose names were subscribed declared their resolution to restore king James; to seize the princess of Orange, dead or alive; and to be ready with thirty thousand men to meet king James when he should land. To this they put the names of Sancroft, Sprat, Marlborough, Salisbury, and others. The copy of Dr. Sprat's name was obtained by a fictitious request, to which an answer *in his own hand* was desired. His hand was copied so well, that he confessed it might have deceived himself. Blackhead, who had carried the letter, being sent again with a plausible message, was very curious to see the house, and particularly importunate to be let into the study; where, as is supposed, he designed to leave the Association. This however was denied him, and he dropt it in a flower-pot in the parlour.

Young now laid an information before the Privy Council; and May 7, 1692, the bishop was arrested, and kept at a

messenger's under a strict guard eleven days. His house was searched, and directions were given that the flower-pots should be inspected. The messengers however missed the room in which the paper was left. Blackhead went therefore a third time; and finding his paper where he had left it, brought it away.

The bishop, having been enlarged, was, on June the 10th and 13th, examined again before the Privy Council, and confronted with his accusers. Young persisted with the most obdurate impudence, against the strongest evidence; but the resolution of Blackhead by degrees gave way. There remained at last no doubt of the bishop's innocence, who, with great prudence and diligence, traced the progress, and detected the characters of the two informers, and published an account of his own examination, and deliverance; which made such an impression upon him, that he commemorated it through life by an yearly day of thanksgiving.

With what hope, or what interest, the villains had contrived an accusation which they must know themselves utterly unable to prove, was never discovered.

After this, he passed his days in the quiet exercise of his function. When the cause of Sacheverell put the publick in commotion, he honestly appeared among the friends of the church. He lived to his seventy-ninth year, and died May 20, 1713.[2]

Burnet is not very favourable to his memory; but he and Burnet were old rivals. On some public occasion they both preached before the house of commons. There prevailed in those days an indecent custom; when the preacher touched any favourite topick in a manner that delighted his audience, their approbation was expressed by a loud *hum*,

[1] Mr. Peter Cunningham states that there is in the Bodleian Gallery a clever portrait, by Dahl, of Sprat and his son, in one piece, of which there is a good mezzotint by Smith.

continued in proportion to their zeal or pleasure. When Burnet preached, part of his congregation *hummed* so loudly and so long, that he sat down to enjoy it, and rubbed his face with his handkerchief. When Sprat preached, he likewise was honoured with the animating *hum;* but he stretched out his hand to the congregation, and cried, "Peace, peace, I pray you, peace."

This I was told in my youth by my father, an old man, who had been no careless observer of the passages of those times.

Burnet's sermon, says Salmon,[1] was remarkable for sedition, and Sprat's for loyalty. Burnet had the thanks of the house; Sprat had no thanks, but a good living from the king; which, he said, was of as much value as the thanks of the Commons.

The works of Sprat, besides his few poems, are, "The History of the Royal Society,"[2] "The Life of Cowley,"[3] "The Answer to Sorbiere,"[4] "The History of the Ryehouse Plot,"[5] "The Relation of his own Examination," and a volume of Sermons. I have heard it observed, with great justness, that every book is of a different kind, and that each has its distinct and characteristical excellence.[6]

[1] Thomas Salmon, M.A. of Bedfordshire, author of the *Chronological Historian*, 1747, and of *An Impartial Examination of Bishop Burnet's History of his Own Time*, 1724, 2 vols. This book is from beginning to end a violent attack on Burnet, but Salmon does not make use of this expression in his account of the two sermons (vol. ii. p. 853), which is fairly enough abridged from Burnet's own statement as given in his *History*, vol. ii. p. 248.

[2] Lond. 1667, 4to.

[3] First published in Latin, 1668, translated and prefixed to an edition of Cowley's *Works*, 1669.

[4] *Observations on M. de Sorbier's Voyage into England, written to Dr. Wren.* Lond. 1665, 12mo.

[5] *A true Account of the Rye House Plot.* 1685, fol.

[6] For Macaulay's account of Sprat, see *Hist. Eng.* vol. ii. p. 95, ninth ed.

My business is only with his poems. He considered Cowley as a model; and supposed that as he was imitated, perfection was approached. Nothing therefore but Pindarick liberty was to be expected. There is in his few productions no want of such conceits as he thought excellent; and of those our judgement may be settled by the first that appears in his praise of Cromwell, where he says that Cromwell's *fame, like man, will grow white as it grows old.*

# HALIFAX.

# HALIFAX.

THE Life of the Earl of Halifax was properly that of an artful and active statesman, employed in balancing parties, contriving expedients, and combating opposition, and exposed to the vicissitudes of advancement and degradation: but in this collection, poetical merit is the claim to attention; and the account which is here to be expected may properly be proportioned not to his influence in the state, but to his rank among the writers of verse.

Charles Montague was born April 16, 1661, at Horton in Northamptonshire, the son of Mr. George Montague, a younger son of the earl of Manchester.[1] He was educated first in the country, and then removed to Westminster; where in 1677 he was chosen a king's scholar, and recommended himself to Busby by his felicity in extemporary epigrams. He contracted a very intimate friendship with Mr. Stepney; and in 1682, when Stepney was elected to Cambridge, the election of Montague being not to proceed till the year following, he was afraid lest by being placed at Oxford he might be separated from his companion, and therefore solicited to be removed to Cambridge, without waiting for the advantages of another year.[2]

[1] Henry, first Earl of Manchester.

[2] The college books show this account to be erroneous. Charles Montague matriculated fellow commoner of Trinity College, 18th Dec. 1679, took his M.A. 30th June, 1682, and, instead of being a schoolboy, was elected Fellow of Trinity, 1683, in his 22nd year.

It seems indeed time to wish for a removal; for he was already a school-boy of one and twenty.

His relation Dr. Montague was then master of the college in which he was placed a fellow commoner, and took him under his particular care. Here he commenced an acquaintance with the great Newton,[1] which continued through his life, and was at last attested by a legacy.

In 1685, his verses on the death of king Charles made such impression on the earl of Dorset, that he was invited to town, and introduced by that universal patron to the other wits. In 1687, he joined with Prior in the "City Mouse and Country Mouse," a burlesque of Dryden's "Hind and Panther."[2] He signed the invitation to the Prince of Orange, and sat in the convention. He about the same time married the countess dowager of Manchester,[3] and intended to have taken orders; but afterwards altering his purpose, he purchased for £1,500 the place of one of the clerks of the council.

After he had written his epistle on the victory of the "Boyne,"[4] his patron Dorset introduced him to king William with this expression: *Sir, I have brought a* Mouse *to wait on your Majesty.* To which the king is said to have replied, *You do well to put me in the way of making a* Man *of him;* and ordered him a pension of five hundred pounds. This story, however current, seems to have been made after

[1] Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727), succeeded Cowley as Fellow of Trinity in 1667, and Barrow as Professor of Mathematics in 1669. It was Halifax who obtained for Newton the post of Warden of the Mint, and he was afterwards Master of the Mint till his death.

[2] *Vid. supr. Life of Dryden.*

[3] Anne Yelverton, daughter of Sir Christopher Yelverton, of Easton Maudit, in Northamptonshire, and widow of the third Earl of Manchester, who died in 1682. Her son by the Earl was the first Duke of Manchester.

[4] *An Epistle to the Right Honourable Charles, Earl of Dorset and Middlesex, Lord Chamberlain of His Majesty's Household, occasioned by His Majesty's victory in Ireland*, London, 1690, fol.

the event. The king's answer implies a greater acquaintance with our proverbial and familiar diction than king William could possibly have attained.

In 1691, being member in the house of commons, he argued warmly in favour of a law to grant the assistance of counsel in trials for high treason; and in the midst of his speech, falling into some confusion, was for a while silent; but, recovering himself, observed, "how reasonable it was to allow counsel to men called as criminals before a court of justice, when it appeared how much the presence of that assembly could disconcert one of their own body."[1]

After this he rose fast into honours and employments, being made one of the commissioners of the treasury, and called to the privy council. In 1694, he became chancellor of the Exchequer; and the next year engaged in the great attempt of the recoinage, which was in two years happily compleated. In 1696, he projected the *general fund*, and raised the credit of the Exchequer; and, after enquiry concerning a grant of Irish crown-lands, it was determined by a vote of the commons, that Charles Montague, esquire, *had deserved his Majesty's favour*. In 1698, being advanced to the first commission of the treasury, he was appointed one of the regency in the king's absence: the next year he was made auditor of the Exchequer; and the year after created *baron Halifax*. He was however impeached by the commons; but the articles were dismissed by the lords.

At the accession of queen Anne he was dismissed from the council;[2] and in the first parliament of her reign was again attacked by the commons, and again escaped by the protection of the lords. In 1704, he wrote an answer to

[1] Mr. Peter Cunningham notes that this story is related by Walpole in his *Royal and Noble Authors*, of the Earl of Shaftesbury, author of the *Characteristics*.

[2] 8th March, 1702.

Bromley's speech against occasional conformity. He headed the Enquiry into the danger of the Church. In 1706, he proposed and negotiated the Union with Scotland; and when the elector of Hanover received the garter, after the act had passed for securing the Protestant Succession, he was appointed to carry the ensigns of the order to the electoral court. He sat as one of the judges of Sacheverell; but voted for a mild sentence. Being now no longer in favour, he contrived to obtain a writ for summoning the electoral prince to parliament as duke of Cambridge.

At the queen's death he was appointed one of the regents; and at the accession of George the First was made earl of Halifax, knight of the garter, and first commissioner of the treasury, with a grant to his nephew of the reversion of the auditorship of the Exchequer. More was not to be had, and this he kept but a little while; for on the 19th of May, 1715, he died of an inflammation of his lungs.[1]

Of him, who from a poet became a patron of poets, it will be readily believed that the works would not miss of celebration. Addison began to praise him early,[2] and was followed or accompanied by other poets; perhaps by almost all, except Swift and Pope; who forbore to flatter him in his life, and after his death spoke of him, Swift with slight censure,[3] and Pope in the character of Bufo with acrimonious contempt.[4]

[1] Mr. Peter Cunningham observes that he was buried in Henry VII.'s Chapel, and Addison, whose genius he had fostered, was afterwards buried by his side.

[2] In *An Account of the Greatest English Poets*, printed in Dryden's *Fourth Miscellany*, 8vo. 1694. Addison's *Works*, vol. vi. p. 27.

[3] Swift's censure of Halifax occurs in *A Libel on the Rev. Dr. Delany and his Excellency John, Lord Carteret*, 1729, where he accuses him of neglecting Congreve.

[4] "Proud as Apollo on his forked hill
Sat full blown Bufo puffed by every quill:

He was, as Pope says, *fed with dedications*;[1] for Tickell affirms that no dedicator was unrewarded. To charge all unmerited praise with the guilt of flattery, and to suppose that the encomiast always knows and feels the falsehood of his assertions, is surely to discover great ignorance of human nature and human life. In determinations depending not on rules, but on experience and comparison, judgement is always in some degree subject to affection. Very near to admiration is the wish to admire.

Every man willingly gives value to the praise which he receives, and considers the sentence passed in his favour as the sentence of discernment. We admire in a friend that understanding that selected us for confidence; we admire more, in a patron, that judgement which, instead of scattering bounty indiscriminately, directed it to us; and, if the patron be an author, those performances which gratitude forbids us to blame, affection will easily dispose us to exalt.

To these prejudices, hardly culpable, interest adds a power always operating, though not always, because not willingly, perceived. The modesty of praise wears gradually away; and perhaps the pride of patronage may be in time so increased, that modest praise will no longer please.

Many a blandishment was practised upon Halifax, which

> Fed with soft dedications all day long,
> Horace and he went hand in hand in song."
>
> Ald. *Pope*, vol. iii. p. 10.

But Mr. Roscoe and Mr. Dyce repudiate the idea that Bufo was meant for Halifax, and with other passages showing Pope's attachment to Halifax, they quote the preface to the *Iliad*, in which he thus acknowledges his obligations: "The Earl of Halifax was one of the first to favour me of whom it is hard to say, whether the advancement of the polite arts is more owing to his generosity or his example." See Dyce's *Memoir*. Ald. *Pope*, vol. i. p. xlvii.

[1] Tickell, Congreve, Smith, D'Urfey and Steele, dedicated their works to Halifax.

he would never have known, had he had no other attractions than those of his poetry, of which a short time has withered the beauties. It would now be esteemed no honour, by a contributor to the monthly bundles of verses, to be told, that, in strains either familiar or solemn, he sings like Montague.[1]

[1] See Mahon, *Hist. England*, vol. i. p. 196, ed. 1839.

PARNELL.

# PARNELL.

THE Life of Dr. Parnell [1] is a task which I should very willingly decline, since it has been lately written by Goldsmith,[2] a man of such variety of powers, and such felicity of performance, that he always seemed to do best that which he was doing; a man who had the art of being minute without tediousness, and general without confusion; whose language was copious without exuberance, exact without constraint, and easy without weakness.

What such an author has told, who would tell again? I have made an abstract from his larger narrative; and have this gratification from my attempt, that it gives me an opportunity of paying due tribute to the memory of Goldsmith.[3]

Τὸ γὰρ γέρας ἐστὶ θανόντων.[4]

Thomas Parnell was the son of a commonwealthsman of the same name, who at the Restoration left Congleton in Cheshire, where the family had been established for several centuries, and, settling in Ireland, purchased an estate, which, with his lands in Cheshire, descended to the poet, who was born at Dublin in 1679; and, after the usual education at a grammar school, was at the age of thirteen admitted into the College, where, in 1700, he became

[1] See Boswell's *Johnson*, vol. iv. p. 17.

[2] Prefixed to an edition of Parnell's *Poems*, published July, 1770, by J. Davies.

[3] The author of *The Vicar of Wakefield* and *The Deserted Village* had died in April 1774. See his epitaph by Johnson. Boswell, vol. iii. p. 120.

[4] Τὸ γὰρ γέρας ἐστὶ θανόντων. Hom. *Il.* xvi. 457.

master of arts; and was the same year ordained a deacon, though under the canonical age, by a dispensation from the bishop of Derry.

About three years afterwards he was made a priest; and in 1705 Dr. Ashe, the bishop of Clogher, conferred upon him the archdeaconry of Clogher. About the same time he married Mrs. Anne Minchin, an amiable lady, by whom he had two sons who died young, and a daughter who long survived him.

At the ejection of the Whigs, in the end of queen Anne's reign, Parnell was persuaded to change his party, not without much censure from those whom he forsook, and was received by the new ministry as a valuable reinforcement. When the earl of Oxford was told that Dr. Parnell waited among the croud in the outer room, he went, by the persuasion of Swift,[1] with his treasurer's staff in his hand, to enquire for him, and to bid him welcome; and, as may be inferred from Pope's dedication, admitted him as a favourite companion to his convivial hours, but, as it seems often to have happened in those times to the favourites of the great, without attention to his fortune, which however was in no great need of improvement.

Parnell, who did not want ambition or vanity, was desirous to make himself conspicuous, and to shew how worthy he was of high preferment. As he thought himself qualified to become a popular preacher, he displayed his elocution with great success in the pulpits of London; but the queen's death[2] putting an end to his expectations abated his diligence: and Pope represents him as falling from that time into intemperance of wine. That in his latter life he was too much a lover of the bottle, is not denied; but I have heard it imputed to a cause more likely to obtain forgiveness from mankind, the untimely

[1] *Journal to Stella*, 31*st Jan.* 1712-13. S. S. *D.* vol. iii. p. 106.

[2] Queen Anne died Aug. 1st, 1714.

death of a darling son; or, as others tell, the loss of his wife, who died (1712) in the midst of his expectations.

He was now to derive every future addition to his preferments from his personal interest with his private friends, and he was not long unregarded. He was warmly recommended by Swift to archbishop King, who gave him a prebend in 1713; and in May 1716 presented him to the vicarage of Finglas in the diocese of Dublin, worth four hundred pounds a year. Such notice from such a man, inclines me to believe that the vice of which he has been accused was not gross, or not notorious.

But his prosperity did not last long. His end, whatever was its cause, was now approaching. He enjoyed his preferment little more than a year; for in July 1717, in his thirty-eighth year, he died [1] at Chester,[2] on his way to Ireland.

He seems to have been one of those poets who take delight in writing. He contributed to the papers of that time, and probably published more than he owned. He left many compositions behind him, of which Pope selected those which he thought best,[3] and dedicated them to the earl of Oxford. Of these Goldsmith has given an opinion,

[1] Boswell gives an epitaph which Johnson composed for Parnell, dictating it to Boswell, by which means it was preserved.

"Hic requiescit Thomas Parnell.
S. T. P.

"Qui sacerdos pariter et poeta,
Utrasque partes ita implevit,
Ut neque sacerdoti suavitas poetæ,
Nec poetæ sacerdotis sanctitas deesset."

Boswell's *Johnson*, vol. iv. p. 17.

[2] Mr. Peter Cunningham notes that the register of Trinity Church, Chester, records the burial of Thomas Parnell, D.D., on the 18th October, 1718.

[3] *Poems on Several Occasions.* Written by Dr. Thomas Parnell, late Archdeacon of Clogher, and published by Mr. Pope. Lintot, 1722.

and his criticism it is seldom safe to contradict. He bestows just praise upon the "Rise of Woman,"[1] the "Fairy Tale,"[2] and the "Pervigilium Veneris;"[3] but has very properly remarked, that in the "Battle of Mice and Frogs"[4] the Greek names have not in English their original effect.

He tells us, that the "Bookworm"[5] is borrowed from "Beza;" but he should have added, with modern applications: and when he discovers that "Gay Bacchus" is translated from "Augurellus," he ought to have remarked, that the latter part is purely Parnell's. Another poem, "When Spring comes on,"[6] is, he says, taken from the French. I would add, that the description of "Barrenness," in his verses to Pope,[7] was borrowed from "Secundus;" but lately searching for the passage which I had formerly read, I could not find it. The "Night-piece on Death"[8] is indirectly preferred by Goldsmith to Gray's "Churchyard;" but, in my opinion, Gray has the advantage in dignity, variety, and originality of sentiment. He observes that the story of the "Hermit"[9] is in More's "Dialogues" and Howell's "Letters,"[10] and supposes it to have been originally Arabian.

[1] *Hesiod, or the Rise of Woman*, first published in Tonson's *Miscellany*. Ald. *Parnell*, p. 5.

[2] *A Fairy Tale.* In the ancient English style. *Ibid.* p. 25.

[3] *The Vigil of Venus, Pervigilium Veneris.* Ascribed to Catullus. *Ibid.* p. 33.

[4] Homer's *Batrachomuomachia.* *Ibid.* pp. 45-67.

[5] *The Bookworm.* *Ibid.* p. 83.

[6] *When Spring comes on.* *Ibid.* p. 19.

[7] *To Mr. Pope.* *Ibid.* p. 67.

[8] *A Night-piece on Death.* *Ibid.* p. 93.

[9] *The Hermit.* *Ibid.* p. 100.

[10] The story of the *Hermit and the Angel*, versified by Parnell, is given in Howell's *Letters*, p. 435, ed. 1705. It is there quoted from *Certain Conceptions of Sir Percy Herbert upon the strange Change of Peoples' dispositions and Actions in these latter Times. Directed to his Sonne.* Lond. 1652, 4to, p. 220.

Goldsmith has not taken any notice of the "Elegy to the old Beauty,"[1] which is perhaps the meanest; nor of the "Allegory on Man,"[2] the happiest of Parnell's performances. The hint of the "Hymn to Contentment"[3] I suspect to have been borrowed from Cleiveland.

The general character of Parnell is not great extent of comprehension, or fertility of mind. Of the little that appears still less is his own. His praise must be derived from the easy sweetness of his diction: in his verses there is *more happiness than pains;* he is spritely without effort, and always delights though he never ravishes; every thing is proper, yet every thing seems casual. If there is some appearance of elaboration in the "Hermit," the narrative, as it is less airy, is less pleasing. Of his other compositions it is impossible to say whether they are the productions of Nature, so excellent as not to want the help of Art, or of Art so refined as to resemble Nature.[4]

This criticism relates only to the pieces published by Pope. Of the large appendages which I find in the last edition, I can only say that I know not whence they came, nor have ever enquired whither they are going. They stand upon the faith of the compilers.[5]

[1] *Elegy to an Old Beauty.* Ald. *Parnell*, p. 80.

[2] *An Allegory on Man. Ibid.* p. 87.

[3] *Hymn to Contentment. Ibid.* p. 97.

[4] Mr. Peter Cunningham gives some extracts from Swift's *Journal to Stella*, 1712-1713, describing Swift's efforts to interest Lord Bolingbroke in Parnell, and a poem of his which Swift published in March, 1713, namely, *An Essay on the different Styles of Poetry*, inscribed to Lord Bolingbroke. Mr. Cunningham also gives some verses by Parnell from Steele's *Miscellany*, which are not included in the editions of his *Poems*.

[5] First published in 1758, in the *Posthumous Works of Parnell.*

# GARTH

# GARTH.

SAMUEL GARTH was of a good family in Yorkshire, and from some school in his own country became a student at Peter-house in Cambridge,[1] where he resided till he commenced doctor of physick on July the 7th, 1691. He was examined before the College at London on March the 12th, 1691-2, and admitted fellow July 26th, 1692. He was soon so much distinguished, by his conversation and accomplishments, as to obtain very extensive practice; and, if a pamphlet of those times may be credited, had the favour and confidence of one party, as Ratcliffe had of the other.

He is always mentioned as a man of benevolence; and it is just to suppose that his desire of helping the helpless, disposed him to so much zeal for the "Dispensary;" an undertaking of which some account, however short, is proper to be given.

Whether what Temple says be true, that physicians have had more learning than the other faculties, I will not stay to enquire; but, I believe, every man has found in physicians great liberality, and dignity of sentiment, very prompt effusion of beneficence, and willingness to exert a lucrative art, where there is no hope of lucre. Agreeably to this character, the College of Physicians, in July 1687, published an edict, requiring all the fellows, candidates,

[1] The college books show that Samuel Garth matriculated Pensioner of Peterhouse, 6th July, 1676, took his B.A. 1679-80, M.A. 1684, M.D. 1691.

and licentiates, to give gratuitous advice to the neighbouring poor.

This edict was sent to the Court of Aldermen; and a question being made to whom the appellation of the *poor* should be extended, the College answered, that it should be sufficient to bring a testimonial from a clergyman officiating in the parish where the patient resided.

After a year's experience, the physicians found their charity frustrated by some malignant opposition, and made to a great degree vain by the high price of physick: they therefore voted, in August 1688, that the laboratory of the College should be accommodated to the preparation of medicines, and another room prepared for their reception; and that the contributors to the expence should manage the charity.

It was now expected that the Apothecaries would have undertaken the care of providing medicines; but they took another course. Thinking the whole design pernicious to their interest, they endeavoured to raise a faction against it in the College, and found some physicians mean enough to solicit their patronage, by betraying to them the counsels of the College. The greater part, however, enforced by a new edict in 1694, the former order of 1687, and sent it to the mayor and aldermen, who appointed a committee to treat with the College, and settle the mode of administering the charity.

It was desired by the aldermen, that the testimonials of churchwardens and overseers should be admitted; and that all hired servants, and all apprentices to handicraftsmen, should be considered as *poor*. This likewise was granted by the College.

It was then considered who should distribute the medicines, and who should settle their prices. The physicians procured some apothecaries to undertake the dispensation, and offered that the warden and company of the apothe-

caries should adjust the price. This offer was rejected; and the apothecaries who had engaged to assist the charity were considered as traytors to the company, threatened with the imposition of troublesome offices, and deterred from the performance of their engagements. The apothecaries ventured upon public opposition, and presented a kind of remonstrance against the design to the committee of the city, which the physicians condescended to confute: and at last the traders seem to have prevailed among the sons of trade; for the proposal of the college having been considered, a paper of approbation was drawn up, but postponed and forgotten.

The physicians still persisted; and in 1696 a subscription was raised by themselves, according to an agreement prefixed to the "Dispensary." The poor were for a time supplied with medicines; for how long a time, I know not. The medicinal charity, like others, began with ardour, but soon remitted, and at last died gradually away.

About the time of the subscription begins the action of the "Dispensary." [1] The Poem,[2] as its subject was present and popular, co-operated with passions and prejudices then prevalent, and, with such auxiliaries to its intrinsick merit, was universally and liberally applauded. It was on the side of charity against the intrigues of interest, and of regular learning against licentious usurpation of medical authority,

[1] *The Dispensary*, a Poem. London. Printed and sold by John Nutt, near Stationer's Hall, 1699, 4to. A fifth edition was published 1703, and a seventh, "with descriptions and Episodes, never before printed," was published by Tonson, in 1714. 12mo.

[2] The versification of his once famous mock heroic poem is smooth and regular, but not forcible, the language clear and neat, the parodies and allusions happy. It may be called an imitation of the Lutrin. The subject, which is a quarrel between the physicians and apothecaries of London, may vie with that of Boileau in want of general interest, yet it seems to afford more diversity to the satirical poet. Hallam, vol. iii. p. 480.

and was therefore naturally favoured by those who read and can judge of poetry.

In 1697, Garth spoke that which is now called the "Harveian Oration;" which the authors of the "Biographia" mention with more praise than the passage quoted in their notes will fully justify. Garth, speaking of the mischiefs done by quacks, has these expressions: "Non tamen telis vulnerat ista agyrtarum colluvies, sed theriaca quadam magis perniciosa, non pyrio, sed pulvere nescio quo exotico certat, non globulis plumbeis, sed pilulis æque lethalibus interficit." This was certainly thought fine by the author, and is still admired by his biographer. In October 1702 he became one of the censors of the College.

Garth, being an active and zealous Whig, was a member of the Kit-cat club, and by consequence familiarly known to all the great men of that denomination. In 1710, when the government fell into other hands, he writ to lord Godolphin, on his dismission, a short poem,[1] which was criticised in the "Examiner," and so successfully either defended or excused by Mr. Addison, that, for the sake of the vindication, it ought to be preserved.

At the accession of the present Family his merits were acknowledged and rewarded. He was knighted with the sword of his hero, Marlborough; and was made physician in ordinary to the king, and physician-general to the army.

He then undertook an edition of Ovid's "Metamorphoses,"[2] translated by several hands; which he recommended by a Preface, written with more ostentation than

[1] The *Epistle to Lord Godolphin* was defended by Addison in the first number of the *Whig-Examiner*. See Bohn's *Hurd's Addison*, vol. i. p. 370.

[2] Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, in fifteen books. Translated by the most eminent Hands. Adorned with Sculptures. London, Printed for Jacob Tonson, at Shakespeare's Head, over against Katherine Street in the Strand, 1717, folio. Dedicated to the Princess of Wales (Queen Caroline), and her Portrait prefixed.

ability: his notions are half-formed, and his materials immethodically confused. This was his last work. He died Jan. 18, 1717-18, and was buried at Harrow-on-the-Hill.

His personal character seems to have been social and liberal.[1] He communicated himself through a very wide extent of acquaintance; and though firm in a party, at a time when firmness included virulence, yet he imparted his kindness to those who were not supposed to favour his principles. He was an early encourager of Pope, and was at once the friend of Addison and of Granville. He is accused of voluptuousness and irreligion; and Pope, who says that "if ever there was a good Christian, without knowing himself to be so, it was Dr. Garth," seems not able to deny what he is angry to hear and loth to confess.

Pope afterwards declared himself convinced that Garth died in the communion of the Church of Rome, having been privately reconciled. It is observed by Lowth, that there is less distance than is thought between scepticism and popery, and that a mind wearied with perpetual doubt, willingly seeks repose in the bosom of an infallible church.

His poetry has been praised at least equally to its merit. In the "Dispensary" there is a strain of smooth and free versification; but few lines are eminently elegant. No passages fall below mediocrity, and few rise much above it. The plan seems formed without just proportion to the subject; the means and end have no necessary connection. *Resnel*, in his Preface to *Pope's* "Essay," remarks, that Garth exhibits no discrimination of characters; and that what any one says might with equal propriety have been said by another. The general design is perhaps open to criticism; but the composition can seldom be charged with inaccuracy or negligence. The author never slumbers

[1] "No physician knew his art more nor his trade less." *Richardsoniana*, p. 333, ed. 8vo, 1776.

in self-indulgence; his full vigour is always exerted; scarce a line is left unfinished, nor is it easy to find an expression used by constraint, or a thought imperfectly expressed. It was remarked by Pope, that the "Dispensary" had been corrected in every edition, and that every change was an improvement.[1] It appears, however, to want something of poetical ardour, and something of general delectation; and therefore, since it has been no longer supported by accidental and extrinsick popularity, it has been scarcely able to support itself.

[1] For an interesting account of the copy of the *Dispensary*, presented by Garth to Pope, and containing corrections and remarks by Pope, see Carruther's *Life of Pope*, p. 342.

ROWE.

# ROWE.

NICHOLAS ROWE was born at Little Beckford[1] in Bedfordshire, in 1673. His family had long possessed a considerable estate, with a good house, at Lambertoun* in Devonshire. The ancestor from whom he descended in a direct line, received the arms borne by his descendants for his bravery in the Holy War. His father John Rowe,[2] who was the first that quitted his paternal acres to practise any art of profit, professed the law, and published Benlow's and Dallison's Reports in the reign of James the Second, when, in opposition to the notions then diligently propagated, of dispensing power, he ventured to remark how low his authors rated the prerogative. He was made a serjeant, and died April 30, 1692. He was buried in the Temple Church.

Nicholas was first sent to a private school at Highgate; and being afterwards removed to Westminster, was at twelve years[3] chosen one of the King's scholars. His

* In the Villare,[4] *Lamerton*.—JOHNSON.

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[1] Little Barford.

[2] John Rowe, of Lamerton, in county Devon, and Elizabeth, daughter of Jasper Edwards, Esq., were married Sept. 25, anno 1673.—*Register of Little Barford*. So that as Mr. Peter Cunningham observes, Rowe's birth is placed at least a year too soon.

[3] Mr. Cunningham states that he was elected in 1688.

[4] *Index Villaris, or an exact Register of all Parishes Villages Rope Ward Wapentake or other division of each County. Noblemen's Seats, &c.* 1690. Compiled and enlarged from the *Villare Anglicum*, pub. about 1650.

master was Busby, who suffered none of his scholars to le their powers lie useless; and his exercises in several lan guages are said to have been written with uncommon degrees of excellence, and yet to have cost him very little labour.

At sixteen he had in his father's opinion made advances in learning sufficient to qualify him for the study of law, and was entered a student of the Middle Temple, where for some time he read statutes and reports with proficiency proportionate to the force of his mind, which was already such that he endeavoured to comprehend law, not as a series of precedents, or collection of positive precepts, but as a system of rational government, and impartial justice.

When he was nineteen, he was by the death of his father left more to his own direction, and probably from that time suffered law gradually to give way to poetry. At twenty-five he produced "The Ambitious Stepmother," which was received with so much favour, that he devoted himself from that time wholly to elegant literature.[1]

His next tragedy (1702) was "Tamerlane," in which under the name of Tamerlane, he intended to characterise king William, and Lewis the Fourteenth under that of Bajazet. The virtues of Tamerlane seem to have been arbitrarily assigned him by his poet, for I know not that history gives any other qualities than those which make a conqueror. The fashion however of the time was, to accumulate upon Lewis all that can raise horror and detes-

[1] "We have had two new plays: a tragedy called *The Ambitious Step mother*, written by Mr. Rowe, of the Temple, and a very good one; an other, &c."—Congreve to Keally, Jan. 28, 1700 (Berkeley's *Literary Relics*, 8vo. 1789). *The Ambitious Stepmother* was produced at Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre, Betterton and Mrs. Barry having prominent parts in it. Downes, the prompter (*Rosc. Angl.* 1708, p. 45), says it was very well acted, and answered the company's expectations.—P. CUNNINGHAM

tation; and whatever good was withheld from him, that it might not be thrown away, was bestowed upon king William.

This was the tragedy which Rowe valued most, and that which probably, by the help of political auxiliaries, excited most applause; but occasional poetry must often content itself with occasional praise. Tamerlane has for a long time been acted only once a year, on the night when king William landed.[1] Our quarrel with Lewis has been long over, and it now gratifies neither zeal nor malice to see him painted with aggravated features, like a Saracen upon a sign.

The "Fair Penitent," his next production (1703), is one of the most pleasing tragedies on the stage, where it still keeps its turns of appearing, and probably will long keep them, for there is scarcely any work of any poet at once so interesting by the fable, and so delightful by the language. The story is domestick, and therefore easily received by the imagination, and assimilated to common life; the diction is exquisitely harmonious, and soft or spritely as occasion requires.

The character of *Lothario* seems to have been expanded by Richardson into *Lovelace*, but he has excelled his original in the moral effect of the fiction. Lothario, with gaiety which cannot be hated, and bravery which cannot be despised, retains too much of the spectator's kindness. It was in the power of Richardson alone to teach us at once esteem and detestation, to make virtuous resentment overpower all the benevolence which wit, elegance, and courage, naturally excite; and to lose at last the hero in the villain.

[1] Betterton played *Tamerlane*, and the tragedy, first produced at Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre, became, as Downes calls it, "a stock play." King William landed on the 5th Nov. 1688, and *Tamerlane* was played at Drury Lane on the anniversary of his landing, as late as 1815.

The fifth act is not equal to the former; the events of the drama are exhausted, and little remains but to talk of what is past. It has been observed, that the title of the play does not sufficiently correspond with the behaviour of Calista, who at last shews no evident signs of repentance, but may be reasonably suspected of feeling pain from detection rather than from guilt, and expresses more shame than sorrow, and more rage than shame.

His next (1706) was "Ulysses;" which, with the common fate of mythological stories, is now generally neglected. We have been too early acquainted with the poetical heroes, to expect any pleasure from their revival; to shew them as they have already been shewn, is to disgust by repetition; to give them new qualities or new adventures, is to offend by violating received notions.

The "Royal Convert" (1708) seems to have a better claim to longevity. The fable is drawn from an obscure and barbarous age, to which fictions are most easily and properly adapted; for when objects are imperfectly seen, they easily take forms from imagination. The scene lies among our ancestors in our own country, and therefore very easily catches attention. *Rhodogune* is a personage truly tragical, of high spirit, and violent passions, great with tempestuous dignity, and wicked with a soul that would have been heroic if it had been virtuous. The motto seems to tell that this play was not successful.

Rowe does not always remember what his characters require. In "Tamerlane" there is some ridiculous mention of the God of Love; and Rhodogune, a savage Saxon, talks of Venus, and the eagle that bears the thunder of Jupiter.

This play discovers its own date, by a prediction of the *Union*, in imitation of Cranmer's prophetick promises to *Henry the Eighth*. The anticipated blessings of union are not very naturally introduced, nor very happily expressed.

He once (1706) tried to change his hand. He ventured on a comedy, and produced the "Biter;" with which, though it was unfavourably treated by the audience, he was himself delighted; for he is said to have sat in the house, laughing with great vehemence, whenever he had in his own opinion produced a jest. But finding that he and the publick had no sympathy of mirth, he tried at lighter scenes no more.

After the "Royal Convert" (1714) appeared "Jane Shore," written, as its author professes, *in imitation of Shakspeare's style*. In what he thought himself an imitator of Shakspeare, it is not easy to conceive. The numbers, the diction, the sentiments, and the conduct, every thing in which imitation can consist, are remote in the utmost degree from the manner of Shakspeare; whose dramas it resembles only as it is an English story, and as some of the persons have their names in history. This play, consisting chiefly of domestick scenes and private distress, lays hold upon the heart. The wife is forgiven because she repents, and the husband is honoured because he forgives. This therefore is one of those pieces which we still welcome on the stage.

His last tragedy (1715) was "Lady Jane Grey." This subject had been chosen by Mr. Smith, whose papers were put into Rowe's hands such as he describes them in his Preface. This play likewise has sunk into oblivion. From this time he gave nothing more to the stage.

Being by a competent fortune exempted from any necessity of combating his inclination, he never wrote in distress, and therefore does not appear to have ever written in haste. His works were finished to his own approbation, and bear few marks of negligence or hurry. It is remarkable that his prologues and epilogues are all his own, though he sometimes supplied others; he afforded help, but did not solicit it.

As his studies necessarily made him acquainted with

Shakspeare, and acquaintance produced veneration, h undertook (1709) an edition of his works, from which h neither received much praise, nor seems to have expecte it; yet, I believe, those who compare it with former copie will find that he has done more than he promised; an that, without the pomp of notes or boasts of criticism many passages are happily restored. He prefixed a life o the author, such as tradition then almost expiring coul supply, and a preface, which cannot be said to discov much profundity or penetration. He at least contribute to the popularity of his author.

He was willing enough to improve his fortune by oth arts than poetry. He was undersecretary [1] for three yea when the duke of Queensberry was secretary of state, an afterwards applied to the earl of Oxford for some publi employment.* Oxford enjoined him to study Spanish; an when, some time afterwards, he came again, and said th he had mastered it, dismissed him with this congratulatio "Then, Sir, I envy you the pleasure of reading 'D Quixot' in the original."

This story is sufficiently attested; but why Oxford, wh desired to be thought a favourer of literature, should th insult a man of acknowledged merit; or how Rowe, wh was so keen a Whig † that he did not willingly conver with men of the opposite party, could ask preferment fro Oxford, it is not now possible to discover. Pope, who to the story, did not say on what occasion the advice w given; and though he owned Rowe's disappointmen doubted whether any injury was intended him, but thoug it rather lord Oxford's *odd way*.

* Spence.—JOHNSON.[2] † *Ibid.*[3]

[1] The office that Addison had held. (See Swift's *Journal to St* 27th October, 1710. Scott, vol. ii. p. 63.)—P. CUNNINGHAM.

[2] Ed. Singer, p. 178. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

It is likely that he lived on discontented through the rest of queen Anne's reign; but the time came at last when he found kinder friends. At the accession of king George, he was made poet laureat; I am afraid by the ejection of poor Nahum Tate,[1] who (1716) died in the Mint, where he was forced to seek shelter by extreme poverty. He was made likewise one of the land surveyors of the customs of the customs of the port of London.[2] The prince of Wales chose him clerk of his council; and the lord chancellor Parker, as soon as he received the seals, appointed him, unasked, secretary of the presentations. Such an accumulation of employments undoubtedly produced a very considerable revenue.

Having already translated some parts of Lucan's "Pharsalia," which had been published in the Miscellanies, and doubtless received many praises, he undertook a version of the whole work, which he lived to finish, but not to publish. It seems to have been printed under the care of Dr. Welwood, who prefixed the author's life, in which is contained the following character:

"As to his person it was graceful and well-made; his face regular, and of a manly beauty.[3] As his soul was well lodged, so its rational and animal faculties excelled in a

[1] Tate died 22nd July, 1715, and on the 1st August following, Rowe was "sworn and admitted into the place and quality of Poet Laureate to his Majesty in the room of Nahum Tate, Esq. deceased." Tate was the last Poet Laureate created by patent. Malone's *Life of Dryden*, p. 206.

[2] Mr. Cunningham gives an amusing extract from a letter from Dennis to Rowe, dated Oct. 5th, 1715. "On his bein g made Surveyor at the Custom House, and his Marriage." "You are become a husband," he says, "since I saw you last, as well as a land Surveyor. Jesu! what alteration must not these two offices have made in the life of a gentleman who loved to lie in bed all day for his ease, and to sit up all night for his pleasure!"

[3] Mr. Cunningham states that there is a portrait of Rowe at Nuneham by Kneller, which belonged to Jacob Tonson.

high degree. He had a quick and fruitful invention, a deep penetration, and a large compass of thought, with singular dexterity and easiness in making his thoughts to be understood. He was master of most parts of polite learning, especially the classical authors, both Greek and Latin; understood the French, Italian, and Spanish Languages, and spoke the first fluently, and the other two tolerably well.

"He had likewise read most of the Greek and Roman histories in their original languages, and most that are wrote in English, French, Italian, and Spanish. He had a good taste in philosophy; and, having a firm impression of religion upon his mind, he took great delight in divinity and ecclesiastical history, in both which he made great advances in the times he retired into the country, which were frequent. He expressed, on all occasions, his full persuasion of the truth of Revealed Religion; and being a sincere member of the established church himself, he pitied, but condemned not, those that dissented from it. He abhorred the principles of persecuting men upon the account of their opinions in religion; and being strict in his own, he took it not upon him to censure those of another persuasion. His conversation was pleasant, witty, and learned, without the least tincture of affectation or pedantry; and his inimitable manner of diverting and enlivening the company, made it impossible for any one to be out of humour when he was in it. Envy and detraction seemed to be entirely foreign to his constitution; and whatever provocations he met with at any time, he passed them over without the least thought of resentment or revenge. As Homer had a Zoilus, so Mr. Rowe had sometimes his; for there were not wanting malevolent people and pretenders to poetry too, that would now-and-then bark at his best performances; but he was so much conscious of his own genius, and had so much good-nature as

to forgive them; nor could he ever be tempted to return them an answer.

"The love of learning and poetry made him not the less fit for business, and nobody applied himself closer to it, when it required his attendance. The late duke of Queensberry, when he was secretary of state, made him his secretary for publick affairs; and when that truly great man came to know him well, he was never so pleased as when Mr. Rowe was in his company. After the duke's death, all avenues were stopped to his preferment; and during the rest of that reign, he passed his time with the Muses and his books, and sometimes the conversation of his friends.

"When he had just got to be easy in his fortune, and was in a fair way to make it better, death swept him away, and in him deprived the world of one of the best men as well as one of the best geniuses of the age. He died like a Christian and a Philosopher, in charity with all mankind, and with an absolute resignation to the will of God. He kept up his good-humour to the last; and took leave of his wife and friends, immediately before his last agony, with the same tranquillity of mind, and the same indifference for life, as though he had been upon taking but a short journey. He was twice married, first to a daughter of Mr. Parsons, one of the auditors of the revenue; and afterwards to a daughter of Mr. Devenish, of a good family in Dorsetshire. By the first he had a son; and by the second a daughter, married afterwards to Mr. Fane. He died the sixth of December, 1718, in the forty-fifth year of his age; and was buried the nineteenth of the same month in Westminster-abbey, in the isle where many of our English poets are interred, over-against Chaucer, his body being attended by a select number of his friends, and the dean and choir officiating at the funeral." [1]

[1] His grave is distinguished by a handsome monument (erected by his

To this character, which is apparently given with the fondness of a friend, may be added the testimony of Pope; who says, in a letter to Blount, "Mr. Rowe accompanied me, and passed a week in the Forest. I need not tell you how much a man of his turn entertained me; but I must acquaint you, there is a vivacity and gaiety of disposition, almost peculiar to him, which make it impossible to part from him without that uneasiness which generally succeeds all our pleasure."

Pope has left behind him another mention of his companion, less advantageous, which is thus reported by Dr. Warburton:

"Rowe, in Mr. Pope's opinion, maintained a decent character, but had no heart. Mr. Addison was justly offended with some behaviour which arose from that want, and estranged himself from him; which Rowe felt very severely. Mr. Pope, their common friend, knowing this, took an opportunity, at some juncture of Mr. Addison's advancement, to tell him how poor Rowe was grieved at his displeasure, and what satisfaction he expressed at Mr. Addison's good fortune; which he expressed so naturally, that he (Mr. Pope) could not but think him sincere. Mr. Addison replied, 'I do not suspect that he feigned; but the levity of his heart is such, that he is struck with any new adventure; and it would affect him in just the same manner, if he heard I was going to be hanged.'—Mr. Pope said, he could not deny but Mr. Addison understood Rowe well."

This censure time has not left us the power of confirming or refuting; but observation daily shews, that much stress is not to be laid on hyperbolical accusations, and pointed sentences, which even he that utters them desires to be applauded rather than credited. Addison can hardly be

widow) containing his bust from the chisel of Rysbrack, and his epitaph in verse, by Pope.—P. Cunningham.

supposed to have meant all that he said. Few characters can bear the microscopick scrutiny of wit quickened by anger; and perhaps the best advice to authors would be, that they should keep out of the way of one another.

Rowe is chiefly to be considered as a tragick writer and a translator. In his attempt at comedy he failed so ignominiously, that his "Biter" is not inserted in his works; and his occasional poems and short compositions are rarely worthy of either praise or censure; for they seem the casual sports of a mind seeking rather to amuse its leisure than to exercise its powers.

In the construction of his dramas, there is not much art; he is not a nice observer of the Unities. He extends time and varies place as his convenience requires. To vary the place is not, in my opinion, any violation of Nature, if the change be made between the acts; for it is no less easy for the spectator to suppose himself at Athens in the second act, than at Thebes in the first; but to change the scene, as is done by Rowe, in the middle of an act, is to add more acts to the play, since an act is so much of the business as is transacted without interruption. Rowe, by this licence, easily extricates himself from difficulties; as in "Jane Grey," when we have been terrified with all the dreadful pomp of publick execution, and are wondering how the heroine or the poet will proceed, no sooner has "Jane" pronounced some prophetick rhymes, than—pass and be gone—the scene closes, and *Pembroke* and *Gardiner* are turned out upon the stage.[1]

I know not that there can be found in his plays any deep search into nature, any accurate discriminations of kindred qualities, or nice display of passion in its progress; all is general and undefined. Nor does he much interest or affect

[1] Mrs. Oldfield used to say, "The best school she had ever known was only hearing Rowe read her part in his tragedies."—*Richardsoniana*, p. 77.

the auditor, except in "Jane Shore," who is always seen and heard with pity. "Alicia" is a character of empty noise, with no resemblance to real sorrow or to natural madness.

Whence, then, has Rowe his reputation? From the reasonableness and propriety of some of his scenes, from the elegance of his diction, and the suavity of his verse. He seldom moves either pity or terror, but he often elevates the sentiments; he seldom pierces the breast, but he always delights the ear, and often improves the understanding.

His translation of the "Golden Verses," and of the first book of *Quillet's* "Poem," have nothing in them remarkable. The "Golden Verses" are tedious.

The version of "Lucan" is one of the greatest productions of English poetry; for there is perhaps none that so completely exhibits the genius and spirit of the original. "Lucan" is distinguished by a kind of dictatorial or philosophic dignity, rather, as Quintilian observes, declamatory than poetical; full of ambitious morality and pointed sentences, comprised in vigorous and animated lines. This character Rowe has very diligently and successfully preserved. His versification, which is such as his contemporaries practised, without any attempt at innovation or improvement, seldom wants either melody or force. His author's sense is sometimes a little diluted by additional infusions, and sometimes weakened by too much expansion. But such faults are to be expected in all translations, from the constraint of measures and dissimilitude of languages. The "Pharsalia" of Rowe[1] deserves more notice than it obtains, and as it is more read will be more esteemed.

[1] George I. granted Rowe's widow a pension of £40 a year "*in consideration of the translation of Lucan's 'Pharsalia,' made by her late husband.*"—*Audit Office Enrolments*, vol. i. p. 630.

# ADDISON.

## PREFATORY NOTE.

The most complete and convenient edition of Addison's Works is that in Bohn's *Standard Library*. 6 vols. It is referred to in our notes under the contraction B. *Ad.*

For *Life* and Criticism, see Courthope's *Life of Addison* in *Eng. Men of Letters.*

# ADDISON.

JOSEPH ADDISON[1] was born on the first of May, 1672, at Milston, of which his father, Lancelot Addison, was then rector, near Ambrosbury in Wiltshire, and appearing weak and unlikely to live, he was christened the same day. After the usual domestick education,[2] which, from the character of his father, may be reasonably supposed to have given him strong impressions of piety, he was committed to the care of Mr. Naish at Ambrosbury, and afterwards of Mr. Taylor at Salisbury.

Not to name the school or the masters of men illustrious for literature, is a kind of historical fraud, by which honest fame is injuriously diminished: I would therefore trace him through the whole process of his education. In 1683, in the beginning of his twelfth year, his father being made dean of Lichfield,[3] naturally carried his family to his new residence, and, I believe, placed him for some time, probably not long, under Mr. Shaw, then master of the school at Lichfield, father of the late Dr. Peter Shaw. Of this interval his biographers have given no account, and I

[1] See Boswell on this *Life*, and *Various Readings*. Boswell's *Johnson*, vol. iv. p. 16.

[2] For a charming description of the family, by Steele, see *Tatler*, No. 235.

[3] See Courthope's *Addison*, pp. 22-25, for an account of Lancelot Addison, his residence in Barbary, and his writings on Mahommedanism and Judaism. He died in 1703.

know it only from a story of a *barring-out*, told me, when I was a boy, by Andrew Corbet[1] of Shropshire, who had heard it from Mr. Pigot his uncle.

The practice of *barring-out*, was a savage license, practised in many schools to the end of the last century, by which the boys, when the periodical vacation drew near, growing petulant at the approach of liberty, some days before the time of regular recess, took possession of the school, of which they barred the doors, and bade their master defiance from the windows. It is not easy to suppose that on such occasions the master would do more than laugh; yet, if tradition may be credited, he often struggled hard to force or surprise the garrison. The master, when Pigot was a school-boy, was *barred-out* at Lichfield, and the whole operation, as he said, was planned and conducted by Addison.

To judge better of the probability of this story, I have enquired when he was sent to the Chartreux;[2] but, as he was not one of those who enjoyed the Founder's benefaction, there is no account preserved of his admission. At the school of the Chartreux, to which he was removed either from that of Salisbury or Lichfield, he pursued his juvenile studies under the care of Dr. Ellis,[3] and contracted

[1] Johnson's schoolfellow. See Boswell's *Johnson*, vol. i. p. 30.

[2] The Chartreuse or Charter House—for three centuries a Carthusian monastery—was in the year 1609 bought by Thomas Sutton, one of the first and noblest of the long line of England's merchant princes. Here he founded the hospital, for the maintenance of aged men past work and the education of the children of poor parents, immortalized by Thackeray (under the name of Grey Friars), in *The Newcomes*. A list of the illustrious names that adorn the Charterhouse register is given in Thornbury's *Old and New London*, vol. ii. p. 402. In 1872 the school was removed to Godalming.

[3] The name of Dr. Ellis does not appear in the complete lists of the masters, schoolmasters and ushers of the Charterhouse, given in Dr. Brown's *Charterhouse Past and Present*.

that intimacy with Sir Richard Steele, which their joint labours have so effectually recorded.[1]

Of this memorable friendship the greater praise must be given to Steele. It is not hard to love those from whom nothing can be feared, and Addison never considered Steele as a rival; but Steele lived, as he confesses, under an habitual subjection to the predominating genius of Addison, whom he always mentioned with reverence, and treated with obsequiousness.

Addison,* who knew his own dignity, could not always forbear to shew it, by playing a little upon his admirer; but he was in no danger of retort: his jests were endured without resistance or resentment.

But the sneer of jocularity was not the worst. Steele, whose imprudence of generosity, or vanity of profusion, kept him always incurably necessitous, upon some pressing exigence, in an evil hour, borrowed an hundred pounds of his friend, probably without much purpose of repayment; but Addison, who seems to have had other notions of a hundred pounds, grew impatient of delay, and reclaimed his loan by an execution. Steele felt with great sensibility the obduracy of his creditor; but with emotions of sorrow rather than of anger.[2]

In 1687 he was entered into Queen's College in Oxford, where, in 1689, the accidental perusal of some Latin verses[3] gained him the patronage of Dr. Lancaster, afterwards provost of Queen's College; by whose recommenda-

* Spence.—Johnson.[4]

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[1] The "joint labours" of Steele and Addison produced *The Tatler*, and *The Spectator*. Addison assisted Steele in his play *The Tender Husband*, and Steele frequently acted as Addison's amanuensis.

[2] See Malone's note. Boswell's *Johnson*, vol. iv. pp. 16, 48.

[3] "*Inauguratio Regis Gulielmi.*" B. *Ad.* vol. vi. p. 546.

[4] Ed. Singer, p. 197.

tion he was elected into Magdalen College as a Demy, a term by which that society denominates those which are elsewhere called Scholars; young men, who partake of the founder's benefaction, and succeed in their order to vacant fellowships.*

Here[1] he continued to cultivate poetry and criticism, and grew first eminent by his Latin compositions, which are indeed entitled to particular praise. He has not confined himself to the imitation of any ancient author, but has formed his style from the general language, such as a diligent perusal of the productions of different ages happened to supply.

His Latin compositions seem to have had much of his fondness; for he collected a second volume of the "Musæ Anglicanæ," perhaps for a convenient receptacle, in which all his Latin pieces are inserted, and where his Poem on the Peace[2] has the first place. He afterwards presented the collection to Boileau, whom from that time *conceived*, says Tickell,[3] *an opinion of the English genius for poetry*. Nothing is better known of Boileau,[4] than that he had an injudicious and peevish contempt of modern Latin, and therefore his profession of regard was probably the effect of his civility rather than approbation.

* He took the degree of M.A. Feb. 14, 1693.—JOHNSON.[5]

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[1] A portion of the Water-walks, formerly called Dover-Pier, and supposed to have been his favourite resort, is still called by his name.

[2] *Pax Gulielmi Auspiciis Europæ Reddita*, 1697. B. *Ad.* vol. i. p. 23. A translation of this poem, by the Rev. Thomas Newcombe, is given B. *Ad.* vol. vi. p. 549.

[3] See *Preface* by Tickell. B. *Ad.* vol. i. p. iv.

[4] For a very interesting letter from Addison to Bishop Hough giving an account of his introduction to Boileau and their conversation, see Aikin's *Addison*, vol. i. pp. 90-92.

[5] The college elected him probationary Fellow in 1697, and actual Fellow the year after. He resigned his Fellowship 14th July, 1711.

Three of his Latin poems are upon subjects on which perhaps he would not have ventured to have written in his own language. "The Battle of the Pigmies and Cranes;"[1] "The Barometer;"[2] and "A Bowling-green."[3] When the matter is low or scanty, a dead language, in which nothing is mean because nothing is familiar, affords great conveniences; and by the sonorous magnificence of Roman syllables, the writer conceals penury of thought, and want of novelty, often from the reader, and often from himself.

In his twenty-second year he first shewed his power of English poetry, by some verses addressed to Dryden;[4] and soon afterwards published a translation of the greater part of the Fourth Georgick upon Bees;[5] after which, says Dryden,[6] *my latter swarm is hardly worth the hiving.*

About the same time he composed the arguments prefixed to the several books of Dryden's "Virgil;" and produced an Essay on the Georgicks, juvenile, superficial, and uninstructive, without much either of the scholar's learning or the critick's penetration.

His next paper of verses contained a character of the principal English poets, inscribed to Henry Sacheverell,[7]

[1] *Praelium inter Pygmæos et Grues Commissum*, B. *Ad.* vol. i. p. 239. Translation by W. Warburton, D.D., *ibid.* vol. vi. p. 563.

[2] *Barometri Descriptio*, B. *Ad.* vol. i. p. 237. Translation by Mr. Geo. Sewell, *ibid.* vol. vi. p. 555.

[3] *Sphæristerium*, B. *Ad.* vol. i. p. 246. Translation by Mr. Nicholas Amhurst, *ibid.* vol. vi. p. 576.

[4] *To Mr. Dryden*, B. *Ad.* vol. i. p. 1.

[5] *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 10.

[6] In his Postscript to *Virgil.*

[7] *An Account of the Greatest English Poets*, April 3, 1694. To Mr. Henry Sacheverell, first published in Dryden's *Fourth Miscellany.* This was the afterwards notorious Dr. Sacheverell, who was impeached by the Whig ministers for two sermons, one preached at Derby, the other at St. Paul's, maintaining the doctrine of nonresistance. He was found guilty, but the light sentence of suspension for three years from preaching and the burning of his two sermons was regarded as a triumph by the Tories and celebrated by bonfires and illuminations over the

who was then, if not a poet, a writer of verses; as is shewn by his version of a small part of Virgil's Georgicks,[1] published in the Miscellanies, and a Latin encomium on queen Mary, in the "Musæ Anglicanæ." These verses exhibit all the fondness of friendship; but on one side or the other friendship was afterwards too weak for the malignity of faction.

In this poem is a very confident and discriminative character of Spenser, whose work he had then never read.* So little sometimes is criticism the effect of judgement. It is necessary to inform the reader, that about this time he was introduced by Congreve to Montague, then Chancellor of the Exchequer: Addison was then learning the trade of a courtier, and subjoined Montague [2] as a poetical name to those of Cowley and of Dryden.

By the influence of Mr. Montague, concurring, according to Tickell,[3] with his natural modesty, he was diverted from his original design of entering into holy orders. Montague alleged the corruption of men who engaged in civil employments without liberal education; and declared that, though he was represented as an enemy to the Church, he would never do it any injury but by withholding Addison from it.

Soon after (in 1695) he wrote a poem [4] to king William.

* Spence.—JOHNSON.[5]

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whole country. During his suspension he made a triumphal progress through various parts of the kingdom, and at its conclusion he was presented by the Queen to the valuable living of St. Andrew's, Holborn. He was a man of little or no learning, and his speech at his trial, which was really good, is said to have been written for him by Dr. Francis Atterbury, the deprived Bishop of Rochester.

[1] Pub. in Dryden's *Third Miscellany*, in 1698, p. 413.

[2] See *ante*, p. 54, *Life of Halifax*. [3] B. *Ad. Preface*, p. v.

[4] *A Poem to His Majesty*. London, Tonson, 1695, folio.

[5] Ed. Singer, p. 50.

with a rhyming introduction addressed to lord Somers.[1] King William had no regard to elegance or literature; his study was only war; yet by a choice of ministers, whose disposition was very different from his own, he procured, without intention, a very liberal patronage to poetry. Addison was caressed both by Somers and Montague.

In 1697 appeared his Latin verses on the peace of Ryswick,[2] which he dedicated to Montague, and which was afterwards called by Smith[3] *the best Latin poem since the "Æneid."* Praise must not be too rigorously examined; but the performance cannot be denied to be vigorous and elegant.

Having yet no publick employment, he obtained (in 1699) a pension of three hundred pounds a year, that he might be enabled to travel. He staid a year at Blois,* probably to learn the French language; and then proceeded in his journey to Italy, which he surveyed with the eyes of a poet.

While he was travelling at leisure, he was far from being idle; for he not only collected his observations on the country, but found time to write his "Dialogues on Medals,"[4] and four Acts of "Cato." Such at least is the relation of Tickell.[5] Perhaps he only collected his materials, and formed his plan.

Whatever were his other employments in Italy, he

* Spence.—JOHNSON.[6]

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[1] "The great Lord Chancellor Somers, one of that kind of patriots, who think it no waste of the public treasure to purchase politeness to their country."—Tickell, *Preface*, B. *Ad.* p. v.

[2] B. *Ad.* vol. i. p. 232.

[3] In his dedication of *Phædra* to Lord Halifax.

[4] *Dialogues on Medals*, B. *Ad.* vol. i. p. 253.

[5] *Preface*, B. *Ad.* vol. i. pp. vi., ix.

[6] Ed. Singer, p. 184. Mr. Cunningham remarks that it was at Blois that French was then considered to be spoken in its greatest purity.

there wrote the letter to lord Halifax,[1] which is justly considered as the most elegant, if not the most sublime, of his poetical productions. But in about two years he found it necessary to hasten home; being, as Swift informs us, distressed by indigence, and compelled to become the tutor of a travelling Squire, because his pension was not remitted.

At his return he published his Travels,[2] with a dedication to lord Somers. As his stay in foreign countries was short, his observations are such as might be supplied by a hasty view, and consist chiefly in comparisons of the present face of the country with the descriptions left us by the Roman poets, from whom he made preparatory collections, though he might have spared the trouble, had he known that such collections had been made twice before by Italian authors.[3]

The most amusing passage of his book, is his account of the minute republick of San Marino; of many parts it is not a very severe censure to say that they might have been written at home. His elegance of language, and variegation of prose and verse, however, gains upon the reader; and the book, though a while neglected, became in time so much the favourite of the publick, that before it was reprinted it rose to five times its price.

When he returned to England (in 1702),[4] with a mean-

[1] B. *Ad.* vol. i. p. 29. Mr. Courthope (p. 48, *Life of Addison in Eng. Men of Letters*) observes that in this poem is used for the first time, the expression, now proverbial, "*classic ground*" afterwards repeated by Pope with evident reference to this poem in his Satire on the travels of "the young Æneas."

Addison presented a copy of this work to Swift, inscribing it "to the most agreeable companion, the truest friend, and the greatest genius of his age."

[2] *Remarks on Several Parts of Italy*, &c. in 1701-2-3. London, Tonson. 1705. 8vo. B. *Ad.* vol. i. p. 356.

[3] See Boswell's *Johnson*, vol. ii. p. 316.

[4] We have letters from Addison dated August and September, 1703.

ness of appearance which gave testimony of the difficulties to which he had been reduced, he found his old patrons out of power, and was therefore for a time at full leisure for the cultivation of his mind, and a mind so cultivated gives reason to believe that little time was lost.

But he remained not long neglected or useless. The victory at Blenheim (1704) spread triumph and confidence over the nation; and lord Godolphin [1] lamenting to lord Halifax, that it had not been celebrated in a manner equal to the subject, desired him to propose it to some better poet. Halifax told him that there was no encouragement for genius; that worthless men were unprofitably enriched with publick money, without any care to find or employ those whose appearance might do honour to their country. To this Godolphin replied, that such abuses should in time be rectified; and that if a man could be found capable of the task then proposed, he should not want an ample recompense. Halifax then named Addison; but required that the Treasurer should apply to him in his own person. Godolphin sent the message by Mr. Boyle, afterwards lord Carleton; and Addison having undertaken the work, communicated it to the Treasurer, while it was yet advanced no further than the simile of the Angel,[2] and was immediately rewarded by succeeding Mr. Locke [3] in the place of *Commissioner of Appeals.*

Amsterdam, he could not, therefore, have returned to England in 1702. It was also in June, 1703, that the Duke of Somerset offered to Addison, at Amsterdam, the post of travelling companion to his son Lord Hertford, on terms so inadequate that Addison declined to accept them.

[1] Lord Godolphin was Prime Minister from the accession of Queen Anne till August, 1710.

[2] In *The Campaign, A Poem to his Grace the Duke of Marlborough*, Lond. Tonson, 1705, folio. *Works*, vol. i. p. 42. See Aikin's *Addison*, vol. i. p. 169.

[3] Tickell observes that this place was (in 1704) "vacant by the removal of the famous Mr. Locke to the Council of Trade." *Works*, vol. i. p. vii.

In the following year he was at Hanover with lord Halifax;[1] and the year after was made under-secretary of state, first to Sir Charles Hedges, and in a few months more to the earl of Sunderland.

About this time the prevalent taste for Italian opera inclined him to try what would be the effect of a musical Drama in our own language. He therefore wrote the opera of "Rosamond," which, when exhibited on the stage, was either hissed or neglected; but trusting that the readers would do him more justice, he published it, with an inscription to the dutchess of Marlborough;[2] a woman without skill, or pretensions to skill, in poetry or literature. His dedication was therefore an instance of servile absurdity, to be exceeded only by Joshua Barnes's dedication of a Greek Anacreon to the Duke.

His reputation had been somewhat advanced by "The Tender Husband," a comedy which Steele dedicated to him, with a confession that he owed to him several of the most successful scenes. To this play Addison supplied a prologue.

When the marquis of Wharton was appointed lord lieutenant of Ireland, Addison attended him as his secretary; and was made keeper of the records in Birmingham's Tower, with a salary of three hundred pounds a year. The office was little more than nominal, and the salary was augmented for his accommodation.

[1] When, in 1705, Lord Halifax was sent to carry to the Court of Hanover the Act for the Naturalization of the Electress Sophia, and to form an alliance with the United Provinces for securing the succession of the House of Brunswick to the English throne.

[2] Miss Aikin observes that as the scene of this opera is laid in the very Manor of Woodstock recently granted by the Crown to the Duke of Marlborough, and that it moreover included a fable or prophetic vision of the exploits of the great Captain, illustrated with a plan of the rising towers of Blenheim Castle, there was a peculiar fitness in the dedication of it to the Duchess. Aikin's *Addison*, vol. i. p. 211.

Interest and faction allow little to the operation of particular dispositions, or private opinions. Two men of personal characters more opposite than those of Wharton and Addison, could not easily be brought together. Wharton [1] was impious, profligate, and shameless, without regard, or appearance of regard, to right and wrong: whatever is contrary to this, may be said of Addison; but as agents of a party they were connected, and how they adjusted their other sentiments we cannot know.

Addison must however not be too hastily condemned. It is not necessary to refuse benefits from a bad man, when the acceptance implies no approbation of his crimes; nor has the subordinate officer any obligation to examine the opinions or conduct of those under whom he acts, except that he may not be made the instrument of wickedness. It is reasonable to suppose that Addison counteracted, as far as he was able, the malignant and blasting influence of the Lieutenant, and that at least by his intervention some good was done, and some mischief prevented.[2]

When he was in office, he made a law to himself, as Swift has recorded, never to remit his regular fees in civility to his friends: "For," said he, "I may have a hundred friends; and, if my fee be two guineas, I shall, by relinquishing my right, lose two hundred guineas, and no friend gain more than two; there is therefore no proportion between the good imparted and the evil suffered." [3]

[1] Mr. Cunningham thinks that there is here a confusion between the Marquis of Wharton, who died in 1715, and his son, the notorious Duke of Wharton, satirized in Pope's *First Moral Essay*.

[2] "The Parliamentary career of Addison in Ireland has, we think, wholly escaped the notice of his biographers. He was elected Member for Cavan in the summer of 1709; and in the journals of two sessions his name frequently occurs. Some of the entries appear to indicate that he so far overcame his timidity as to make speeches." Macaulay, *Essays*, p. 70.

[3] This is related by Swift to Dr. Sheridan. Scott's *Swift*, vol. xvi. p. 465, 2nd ed.

He was in Ireland when Steele, without any communication of his design, began the publication of the "Tatler;" but he was not long concealed: by inserting a remark on Virgil,[1] which Addison had given him, he discovered himself. It is indeed not easy for any man to write upon literature, or common life, so as not to make himself known to those with whom he familiarly converses, and who are acquainted with his track of study, his favourite topicks, his peculiar notions, and his habitual phrases.

If Steele desired to write in secret, he was not lucky; a single month detected him. His first "Tatler" was published April 22 (1709), and Addison's contribution appeared May 26. Tickell observes,[2] that the "Tatler" began and was concluded without his concurrence. This is doubtless literally true; but the work did not suffer much by his unconsciousness of its commencement, or his absence at its cessation; for he continued his assistance to December 23, and the paper stopped on January 2. He did not distinguish his pieces by any signature; and I know not whether his name was not kept secret, till the papers were collected into volumes.

To the "Tatler," in about two months, succeeded the "Spectator;" a series of essays of the same kind, but written with less levity, upon a more regular plan, and published daily.[3] Such an undertaking shewed the writers not to distrust their own copiousness of materials or facility of composition, and their performance justified their confidence. They found, however, in their progress, many auxiliaries. To attempt a single paper was no terrifying labour: many pieces were offered, and many were received.

Addison had enough of the zeal of party, but Steele had

[1] *Tatler*, No. VI.

[2] *Preface*, p. viii.

[3] *The Spectator*, No. I., Thursday, March 1, 1710-11. Addison's contributions to *The Tatler* will be found B. *Ad.* vol. ii. pp. 1-224, to *The Spectator*, vol. i. p. 228, vol. ii., and vol. iv. pp. 1-153.

at that time almost nothing else. The "Spectator," in one of the first papers, shewed the political tenets of its authors; but a resolution was soon taken, of courting general approbation by general topicks, and subjects on which faction had produced no diversity of sentiments; such as literature, morality, and familiar life. To this practice they adhered with very few deviations. The ardour of Steele once broke out in praise of Marlborough; and when Dr. Fleetwood prefixed to some sermons a preface, overflowing with whiggish opinions, that it might be read by the Queen, it was reprinted in the "Spectator." [1]

To teach the minuter decencies and inferior duties, to regulate the practice of daily conversation, to correct those depravities which are rather ridiculous than criminal, and remove those grievances which, if they produce no lasting calamities, impress hourly vexation, was first attempted by *Casa* in his book of "Manners," [2] and *Castiglione* in his "Courtier;" [3] two books yet celebrated in Italy for purity and elegance, and which, if they are now less read, are neglected only because they have effected that reformation which their authors intended, and their precepts now are no longer wanted. Their usefulness to the age in which they were written, is sufficiently attested by the translations which almost all the nations of Europe were in haste to obtain.

This species of instruction was continued, and perhaps advanced, by the French; among whom *La Bruyere's* "Manners of the Age," [4] though, as Boileau remarked, it

[1] No. 384, May 21st, 1712.

[2] Giovanni della Casa. *Galateo, first written in the Italian tongue, and now done into English by Robert Peterson*, London, 1576. 4to. It was again translated in 1703, 8vo, and in 1774, 12mo.

[3] Baldessar Castiglione, *Il Cortigiano*, London, 1727. *In Italian and English.* But it had been "done into English" by Thomas Hoby, in 1561, 4to. This was called by the Italians the "golden book."

[4] Jean de la Bruyère (1645-1696). *The Characters* "consists of 16

is written without connection, certainly deserves great praise, for liveliness of description and justness of observation.

Before the "Tatler" and "Spectator," if the writers for the theatre are excepted, England had no masters of common life. No writers had yet undertaken to reform either the savageness of neglect, or the impertinence of civility; to shew when to speak, or to be silent; how to refuse, or how to comply. We had many books to teach us our more important duties, and to settle opinions in philosophy or politicks; but an *Arbiter elegantiarum*,[1] a judge of propriety, was yet wanting, who should survey the track of daily conversation, and free it from thorns and prickles, which teaze the passer, though they do not wound him.

For this purpose nothing is so proper as the frequent publication of short papers, which we read not as study but amusement. If the subject be slight, the treatise likewise is short. The busy may find time, and the idle may find patience.

This mode of conveying cheap and easy knowledge began among us in the Civil War, when it was much the interest of either party to raise and fix the prejudices of the people. A

chapters, 15 of which are employed in detecting the fallacy and ridicule of the objects of human passions and inclinations, and 1—the last—wherein Atheism is attacked and perhaps routed, and the providence of God defended against insults and complaints of free thinkers." *Preface*, in which the author also says, "The subject matter of this work being borrowed from the public, I now give back what it had lent to me." This interesting and amusing work was translated by Eustace Budgell, in 1699, and newly rendered into English by Henri van Laun, London, Nimmo, 1885.

[1] Mrs. Piozzi, in her marginal notes to the *Lives of the Poets* (Murphy's ed. vol. x. p. 81), says "*Arbiter Elegantiarum*. This phrase has been admired, adopted and quoted ever since these Lines came out. . . . It existed twenty years before in Dr. Harrington's *Epitaph on Beau Nash* in the Abbey Church at Bath."

that time appeared "Mercurius Aulicus," "Mercurius Rusticus," and "Mercurius Civicus." It is said, that when any title grew popular, it was stolen by the antagonist, who by this stratagem conveyed his notions to those who would not have received him had he not worn the appearance of a friend. The tumult of those unhappy days left scarcely any man leisure to treasure up occasional compositions; and so much were they neglected, that a complete collection is no where to be found.

These "Mercuries" were succeeded by L'Estrange's "Observator," and that by Lesley's "Rehearsal," and perhaps by others; but hitherto nothing had been conveyed to the people, in this commodious manner, but controversy relating to the Church or State; of which they taught many to talk, whom they could not teach to judge.

It has been suggested that the Royal Society[1] was instituted soon after the Restoration, to divert the attention of the people from publick discontent. The "Tatler" and "Spectator" had the same tendency: they were published at a time when two parties, loud, restless, and violent, each with plausible declarations, and each perhaps without any distinct termination of its views, were agitating the nation; to minds heated with political contest, they supplied cooler and more inoffensive reflections; and it is said by Addison, in a subsequent work, that they had a perceptible influence upon the conversation of that time, and taught the frolick and the gay to unite merriment with decency; an effect which they can never wholly lose, while they continue to be among the first books by which both sexes are initiated in the elegances of knowledge.

The "Tatler" and "Spectator"[2] adjusted, like Casa, the unsettled practice of daily intercourse by propriety and politeness; and, like La Bruyere, exhibited the *Characters*

[1] *Vid. supr.* vol. i. p. 206, vol. ii. p. 42.

[2] See Boswell's *Johnson*, vol. ii. p. 201, and vol. iii. p. 81.

*and Manners of the Age.* The personages introduced in these papers were not merely ideal; they were then known and conspicuous in various stations. Of the "Tatler" this is told by Steele in his last paper, and of the "Spectator" by Budgell[1] in the Preface to "Theophrastus;"[2] a book which Addison has recommended, and which he was suspected to have revised, if he did not write it. Of those portraits, which may be supposed to be sometimes embellished, and sometimes aggravated, the originals are now partly known, and partly forgotten.

But to say that they united the plans of two or three eminent writers, is to give them but a small part of their due praise; they superadded literature and criticism, and sometimes towered far above their predecessors; and taught, with great justness of argument and dignity of language, the most important duties and sublime truths.

All these topicks were happily varied with elegant fictions and refined allegories, and illuminated with different changes of style and felicities of invention.

It is recorded by Budgell, that of the characters feigned or exhibited in the "Spectator," the favourite of Addison was Sir Roger de Coverley, of whom he had formed a very delicate and discriminated idea, which he would not suffer to be violated; and therefore when Steele had shewn him innocently picking up a girl in the Temple, and taking her to a tavern, he drew upon himself so much of his friend's indignation, that he was forced to appease him by a promise of forbearing Sir Roger for the time to come.

The reason which induced Cervantes to bring his hero to the grave, *para mi sola nacio Don Quixote, y yo para el,*

[1] Addison's kinsman and secretary. He wrote in *The Spectator* the papers signed X, and was a man of considerable literary ability, but violent temper. He was accused of falsifying Dr. Tyndall's will, and in 1737 committed suicide to escape the consequence.

[2] *The Characters of Theophrastus*, translated from the Greek, by Eustace Budgell. Lond. 8vo. 1713.

made Addison declare, with an undue vehemence of expression, that he would kill Sir Roger; being of opinion that they were born for one another, and that any other hand would do him wrong.

It may be doubted whether Addison ever filled up his original delineation. He describes his Knight as having his imagination somewhat warped; but of this perversion he has made very little use. The irregularities in Sir Roger's conduct, seem not so much the effects of a mind deviating from the beaten track of life, by the perpetual pressure of some overwhelming idea, as of habitual rusticity, and that negligence which solitary grandeur naturally generates.

The variable weather of the mind, the flying vapours of incipient madness, which from time to time cloud reason, without eclipsing it, it requires so much nicety to exhibit, that Addison seems to have been deterred from prosecuting his own design.

To Sir Roger, who, as a country gentleman, appears to be a Tory, or, as it is gently expressed, an adherent to the landed interest, is opposed Sir Andrew Freeport, a new man, a wealthy merchant, zealous for the moneyed interest, and a Whig. Of this contrariety of opinions, it is probable more consequences were at first intended, than could be produced when the resolution was taken to exclude party from the paper. Sir Andrew does but little, and that little seems not to have pleased Addison, who, when he dismissed him from the club, changed his opinions. Steele had made him, in the true spirit of unfeeling commerce, declare that he *would not build an hospital for idle people*;[1] but at last he buys land, settles in the country, and builds not a manufactory, but an hospital for twelve old husbandmen,[2] for men with whom a merchant has little acquain-

[1] *Spectator*, No. 282, vol. iii. p. 247.

[2] *Ibid.* No. 549, vol. vii. p. 308. B. *Ad.* vol. iv. p. 76.

tance, and whom he commonly considers with little kindness.

Of essays thus elegant,[1] thus instructive, and thus commodiously distributed, it is natural to suppose the approbation general and the sale numerous. I once heard it observed, that the sale may be calculated by the product of the tax, related in the last number to produce more than twenty pounds a week, and therefore stated at one and twenty pounds, or three pounds ten shillings a day: this, at a half-penny a paper, will give sixteen hundred and eighty for the daily number.[2]

This sale is not great; yet this, if Swift[3] be credited, was likely to grow less; for he declares that the "Spectator," whom he ridicules for his endless mention of the *fair sex*, had before his recess wearied his readers.

The next year (1713), in which "Cato"[4] came upon the stage, was the grand climaterick of Addison's reputation. Upon the death of Cato, he had, as is said, planned a tragedy in the time of his travels, and had for several years the four first acts finished, which were shewn to such as were likely to spread their admiration. They were seen by Pope, and by Cibber; who relates[5] that Steele, when he took back the copy, told him, in the despicable cant of literary modesty, that, whatever spirit his friend had shewn in the composition, he doubted whether he

[1] In 1864, Mr. Dykes Campbell printed (privately at Glasgow), *Some Portions of Essays contributed to the Spectator by Mr. Joseph Addison. Now first printed from his MS. notebook.* Internal evidence and the handwriting prove that it contains three Essays, *Of the Imagination*, *Of Jealousy*, and *Of Fame*. Carefully written out in his own hand, and subsequently worked up into *Spectators* on the same topics. . . . The whole is a very interesting illustration of Addison's mode of composition. Leslie Stephen in *Dict. Nat. Biog.*

[2] See Macaulay's *Essays*, p. 710, and *Tatler*, ed. 1786, vol. vi. p. 452.

[3] *Journal to Stella*, Nov. 2, 1711. [4] B. *Ad.* vol. i. p. 162.

[5] Cibber's *Apology*, 2nd ed. 1740, p. 377.

would have courage sufficient to expose it to the censure of a British audience.

The time however was now come, when those who affected to think liberty in danger, affected likewise to think that a stage-play might preserve it: and Addison was importuned, in the name of the tutelary deities of Britain, to shew his courage and his zeal by finishing his design.

To resume his work he seemed perversely and unaccountably unwilling; and by a request, which perhaps he wished to be denied, desired Mr. Hughes [1] to add a fifth act. Hughes supposed him serious; and, undertaking the supplement, brought in a few days some scenes for his examination; but he had in the mean time gone to work himself, and produced half an act, which he afterwards completed, but with brevity irregularly disproportionate to the foregoing parts; like a task performed with reluctance, and hurried to its conclusion.

It may yet be doubted whether "Cato" was made publick by any change of the author's purpose; for Dennis [2] charged him with raising prejudices in his own favour by false positions of preparatory criticism, and with *poisoning the town* by contradicting in the "Spectator" the established rule of poetical justice, because his own hero, with all his virtues, was to fall before a tyrant. The fact is certain; the motives we must guess.

Addison was, I believe, sufficiently disposed to bar all avenues against all danger. When Pope brought him the prologue, which is properly accommodated to the play, there were these words, *Britons, arise, be worth like this approved*; meaning nothing more than, Britons, erect and

[1] John Hughes, whose complimentary verses were among those prefixed to *Cato*.

[2] John Dennis (1657-1734), a play writer and critic, whose criticism made much noise in its day.—MATT. ARNOLD.

exalt yourselves to the approbation of public virtue. Addi son was frighted lest he should be thought a promoter of in surrection, and the line was liquidated to *Britons, attend*.

Now, *heavily in clouds came on the day, the great, th important day*, when Addison was to stand the hazard o the theatre. That there might, however, be left as litt to hazard as was possible, on the first night [2] Steele, a himself relates, undertook to pack an audience. This says Pope,* had been tried for the first time in favour o the "Distrest Mother;" [3] and was now, with more efficac practised for "Cato."

The danger was soon over. The whole nation was a that time on fire with faction. The Whigs applaud every line in which Liberty was mentioned, as a satire o the Tories; and the Tories echoed every clap, to shew tha the satire was unfelt. The story of Bolingbroke is wel known. He called Booth to his box, and gave him fif guineas for defending the cause of Liberty so well again a perpetual dictator.[4] The Whigs, says Pope,[5] design second present, when they can accompany it with as goo a sentence.

The play, supported thus by the emulation of factio praise, was acted night after night for a longer time tha I believe, the publick had allowed to any drama before

* Spence.—Johnson.[7]

[1] Warburton's *Pope*, ed. 1752, vol. iv. p. 177.

[2] April 14th, 1713.

[3] An adaptation by Ambrose Phillips, from a tragedy by Racin *Vid. infr.* vol. iii.

[4] This was a pungent allusion to the attempt which Marlborough h made not long before his fall, to obtain a patent creating him Captai General for life. Macaulay's *Essays*, p. 712.

[5] Pope to Trumbull, April 30th, 1713.

[6] It ran for twenty nights. On the unusual gains of the manage see Cibber's *Apology*, pp. 377, 387.

[7] Ed. Singer, p.

and the author, as Mrs. Porter [1] long afterwards related, wandered through the whole exhibition behind the scenes with restless and unappeasable solicitude.

When it was printed, notice was given that the Queen would be pleased if it was dedicated to her; *but as he had designed that compliment elsewhere, he found himself obliged,* says Tickell,[2] *by his duty on the one hand, and his honour on the other, to send it into the world without any dedication.*

Human happiness has always its abatements; the brightest sun-shine of success is not without a cloud. No sooner was "Cato" offered to the reader,[3] than it was attacked by the acute malignity of Dennis, with all the violence of angry criticism. Dennis, though equally zealous, and probably by his temper more furious than Addison, for what they called liberty, and though a flatterer of the Whig ministry, could not sit quiet at a successful play; but was eager to tell friends and enemies, that they had misplaced their admirations. The world was too stubborn for instruction; with the fate of the censurer of Corneille's "Cid," [4] his animadversions shewed his anger without effect, and "Cato" continued to be praised.

Pope had now an opportunity of courting the friendship

[1] Mrs. Porter was the original Lucia in *Cato*.—P. CUNNINGHAM.

[2] B. *Ad.* vol. i. *Preface*, p. ix.

[3] A fourth edition appeared on May 4th, and eight editions were published in the year.

[4] Corneille's *Cid* obtained, on its first appearance, such an enthusiastic reception as to excite the jealousy of Richelieu, who had employed Corneille to put his own Comedies into verse. But, notwithstanding the violent persecution of this powerful minister, the *Cid* maintained its fame with the public, and the French Academy gained eternal honour by its generous defence of the author against the minister to whom, as a body, they owed their existence, and the *Sentiments de l'Académie Française sur la Tragi-Comédie du Cid* was received with universal approbation after months of debates and negotiations with Richelieu, who wished to proscribe the play.

of Addison, by vilifying his old enemy, and could gi
resentment its full play without appearing to revenge hi
self. He therefore published "A Narrative of the madn
of John Dennis;" a performance which left the objectio
to the play in their full force, and therefore discover
more desire of vexing the critick than of defending the po

Addison, who was no stranger to the world, probabl
saw the selfishness of Pope's friendship; and, resolvi
that he should have the consequences of his officiousn
to himself, informed Dennis by Steele, that he was sor
for the insult; and that whenever he should think fit
answer his remarks, he would do it in a manner to whi
nothing could be objected.

The greatest weakness of the play is in the scenes
love, which are said by Pope * to have been added to t
original plan upon a subsequent review, in compliance wi
the popular practice of the stage. Such an authority it
hard to reject; yet the love is so intimately mingled wi
the whole action, that it cannot easily be thought extrins
and adventitious; for if it were taken away, what would
left? or how were the four acts filled in the first draug

At the publication the Wits seemed proud to pay th
attendance with encomiastick verses. The best are fr
an unknown hand, which will perhaps lose somewhat
their praise when the author is known to be Jeffreys.[1]

"Cato" had yet other honours. It was censured a
party-play by a *Scholar of Oxford*[2] and defended in
favourable examination by Dr. Sewel. It was transla
by Salvini into Italian, and acted at Florence; and by t
Jesuits of St. Omer's into Latin, and played by their pu

* Spence.—JOHNSON.[3]

[1] George Jeffreys, 1678-1755. He published, by subscription, s
Poems, two Tragedies, and an Oratorio.

[2] In *Mr. Addison turned Tory*, 1713, 4to. [3] Ed. Singer, p.

Of this version a copy was sent to Mr. Addison: it is to be wished that it could be found, for the sake of comparing their version of the soliloquy with that of Bland.

A tragedy was written on the same subject by Des Champs, a French poet, which was translated, with a criticism on the English play. But the translator and the critick are now forgotten.

Dennis lived on unanswered, and therefore little read: Addison knew the policy of literature too well to make his enemy important, by drawing the attention of the publick upon a criticism, which, though sometimes intemperate, was often irrefragable.

While "Cato" was upon the stage, another daily paper, called "The Guardian," was published by Steele.[1] To this, Addison gave great assistance, whether occasionally or by previous engagement is not known.

The character of "Guardian" was too narrow and too serious: it might properly enough admit both the duties and the decencies of life, but seemed not to include literary speculations, and was in some degree violated by merriment and burlesque. What had the "Guardian" of the Lizards to do with clubs of tall or of little men, with nests of ants, or with Strada's prolusions?

Of this paper nothing is necessary to be said, but that it found many contributors, and that it was a continuation of the "Spectator," with the same elegance, and the same variety, till some unlucky sparkle from a Tory paper set Steele's politicks on fire, and wit at once blazed into faction. He was soon too hot for neutral topicks, and quitted the "Guardian" to write the "Englishman."

The papers of Addison are marked in the "Spectator" by one of the Letters in the name of "Clio," and in the "Guardian" by a *hand*; whether it was, as Tickell pre-

[1] The first number of *The Guardian* appeared March 12th, 1712-13. For Addison's papers in *The Guardian*, see B. *Ad.* vol. iv. pp. 159-325.

tends to think, that he was unwilling to usurp the praise of others, or as Steele, with far greater likelihood, insinuates, that he could not without discontent impart to others any of his own. I have heard that his avidity did not satisfy itself with the air of renown, but that with great eagerness he laid hold on his proportion of the profits.

Many of these papers were written with powers truly comick, with nice discrimination of characters, and accurate observation of natural or accidental deviations from propriety; but it was not supposed that he had tried a comedy on the stage, till Steele, after his death, declared him the author of the "Drummer;"[1] this however Steele did not know to be true by any direct testimony; for when Addison put the play into his hands, he only told him, it was the work of a *Gentleman in the Company*; and when it was received, as is confessed, with cold disapprobation, he was probably less willing to claim it. Tickell omitted it in his collection; but the testimony of Steele, and the total silence of any other claimant, has determined the publick to assign it to Addison, and it is now printed with his other poetry. Steele carried the "Drummer"[2] to the playhouse, and afterwards to the press, and sold the copy for fifty guineas.

To the opinion of Steele may be added the proof supplied by the play itself, of which the characters are such as Addison would have delineated, and the tendency such as Addison would have promoted. That it should have been ill received would raise wonder, did we not daily see the capricious distribution of theatrical praise.

He was not all this time an indifferent spectator of publick affairs.[3] He wrote, as different exigences required

[1] B. *Ad.* vol. v. p. 154.

[2] *The Drummer* was acted for the first time at Drury Lane, March 15, 1715-16, and ran three nights.

[3] Addison came into Parliament in November, 1708, for Lostwithiel, and that election being set aside he was elected in 1710 for Malmesbury, and held that seat during his life.

(in 1707), "The present State of the War, and the Necessity of an Augmentation;" which, however judicious, being written on temporary topicks, and exhibiting no peculiar powers, laid hold on no attention, and has naturally sunk by its own weight into neglect. This cannot be said of the few papers entitled "The Whig Examiner," in which is employed all the force of gay malevolence and humorous satire. Of this paper, which just appeared and expired, Swift remarks, with exultation, that *it is now down among the dead men.*[1] He might well rejoice at the death of that which he could not have killed. Every reader of every party, since personal malice is past, and the papers which once inflamed the nation are read only as effusions of wit, must wish for more of the "Whig Examiners;"[2] for on no occasion was the genius of Addison more vigorously exerted, and on none did the superiority of his powers more evidently appear. His "Trial of Count Tariff,"[3] written to expose the Treaty of Commerce with France, lived no longer than the question that produced it.

Not long afterwards an attempt was made to revive the "Spectator," at a time indeed by no means favourable to literature, when the succession of a new family to the throne filled the nation with anxiety, discord, and confusion; and either the turbulence of the times, or the satiety of the readers, put a stop to the publication, after an experiment of eighty numbers, which were afterwards collected into an eighth volume, perhaps more valuable than any one of those that went before it. Addison produced more than a fourth part, and the other contributors

[1] This was the burthen of a Tory song then in vogue.—P. Cunningham.

[2] The last *Whig Examiner* is dated Oct. 12, 1710, and on that day Swift and Addison dined together at the Devil Tavern. See *Journal to Stella*.

[3] B. *Ad.* vol. iv. p. 364.

are by no means unworthy of appearing as his associates. The time that had passed during the suspension of the "Spectator," though it had not lessened his power of humour, seems to have increased his disposition to seriousness: the proportion of his religious to his comick papers is greater than in the former series.

The "Spectator," from its recommencement, was published only three times a week; and no discriminative marks were added to the papers. To Addison Tickell has ascribed twenty-three.*

The "Spectator" had many contributors; and Steele, whose negligence kept him always in a hurry, when it was his turn to furnish a paper, called loudly for the Letters, of which Addison, whose materials were more, made little use; having recourse to sketches and hints, the product of his former studies, which he now reviewed and completed: among these are named by Tickell the "Essays on Wit," those on the "Pleasures of the Imagination," and the "Criticism on Milton."

When the House of Hanover took possession of the throne, it was reasonable to expect that the zeal of Addison would be suitably rewarded. Before the arrival of king George, he was made secretary to the regency, and was required by his office to send notice to Hanover that the Queen was dead, and that the throne was vacant. To do this would not have been difficult to any man but Addison, who was so overwhelmed with the greatness of the event, and so distracted by choice of expression, that the lords, who could not wait for the niceties of criticism, called Mr. Southwell, a clerk in the house, and ordered him to dispatch the message. Southwell readily told what was

* Numb. 556, 557, 558, 559, 561, 562, 565, 567, 568, 569, 57[illegible] 574, 575, 579, 580, 582, 583, 584, 585, 590, 592, 598, 60[illegible] JOHNSON.

necessary, in the common style of business, and valued himself upon having done what was too hard for Addison.

He was better qualified for the "Freeholder,"[1] a paper which he published twice a week, from Dec. 23, 1715, to the middle of the next year. This was undertaken in defence of the established government, sometimes with argument, sometimes with mirth. In argument he had many equals; but his humour was singular and matchless. Bigotry itself must be delighted with the Tory-Fox-hunter.

There are however some strokes less elegant, and less decent; such as the "Pretender's Journal," in which one topick of ridicule is his poverty. This mode of abuse had been employed by Milton against king Charles II.

"— — — — *Jacobæi*
Centum exulantis viscera Marsupii regis."

And Oldmixon delights to tell of some alderman of London, that he had more money than the exiled princes; but that which might be expected from Milton's savageness, or Oldmixon's meanness, was not suitable to the delicacy of Addison.

Steele thought the humour of the "Freeholder" too nice and gentle for such noisy times; and is reported to have said that the ministry made use of a lute, when they should have called for a trumpet.

This year (1716 *) he married the countess dowager of Warwick,[2] whom he had solicited by a very long and anxious courtship, perhaps with behaviour not very unlike that of Sir Roger to his disdainful widow; and who, I am afraid, diverted herself often by playing with his passion.

* August 2.—JOHNSON.

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[1] B. *Ad.* vol. iv. p. 396.

[2] Charlotte Middleton, daughter of Sir Thomas Middleton, of Chirk Castle, county Denbigh, Bart., M.P.—P. CUNNINGHAM.

He is said to have first known her by becoming tutor to her son.* "He formed," said Tonson, "the design of getting that lady, from the time when he was first recommended into the family." In what part of his life he obtained the recommendation, or how long, and in what manner he lived in the family, I know not. His advances at first were certainly timorous, but grew bolder as his reputation and influence increased; till at last the lady was persuaded to marry him, on terms much like those on which a Turkish princess is espoused, to whom the Sultan is reported to pronounce, "Daughter, I give thee this man for thy slave." The marriage, if uncontradicted report can be credited, made no addition to his happiness; it neither found them nor made them equal. She always remembered her own rank, and thought herself entitled to treat with very little ceremony the tutor of her son. Rowe's ballad of the "Despairing Shepherd" is said to have been written, either before or after marriage, upon this memorable pair; and it is certain that Addison has left behind him no encouragement for ambitious love.

The year after (1717) he rose to his highest elevation, being made secretary of state. For this employment he might be justly supposed qualified by long practice of business, and by his regular ascent through other offices; but expectation is often disappointed; it is universally confessed that he was unequal to the duties of his place. In the house of commons he could not speak, and therefore was useless to the defence of the government. In this office, says Pope,† he could not issue an order without losing his time in quest of fine expressions. What he gained in rank, he lost in credit; and, finding by experience his own inability, was forced to solicit his dismission, with a pension of fifteen hundred pounds a year. His friends

* Spence.—Johnson. † *Ibid.*

palliated this relinquishment, of which both friends and enemies knew the true reason, with an account of declining health, and the necessity of recess and quiet.

He now returned to his vocation, and began to plan literary occupations for his future life. He purposed a tragedy on the death of Socrates; a story of which, as Tickell remarks, the basis is narrow, and to which I know not how love could have been appended. There would however have been no want either of virtue in the sentiments, or elegance in the language.

He engaged in a nobler work, a defence of the *Christian Religion*, of which part was published after his death; and he designed to have made a new poetical version of the Psalms.

These pious compositions Pope imputed * to a selfish motive, upon the credit, as he owns, of Tonson; who having quarrelled with Addison, and not loving him, said, that, when he laid down the secretary's office, he intended to take orders, and obtain a bishoprick; *for*, said he, *I always thought him a priest in his heart.*[1]

That Pope should have thought this conjecture of Tonson worth remembrance is a proof, but indeed so far as I have found, the only proof, that he retained some malignity from their ancient rivalry. Tonson pretended but to guess it; no other mortal ever suspected it; and Pope might have reflected, that a man who had been secretary of state, in the ministry of Sunderland, knew a nearer way to a bishoprick than by defending Religion, or translating the Psalms.

It is related that he had once a design to make an English Dictionary, and that he considered Dr. Tillotson as the writer of highest authority. There was formerly sent

* Spence.—JOHNSON.[2]

[1] Spence, ed. Singer, p. 200.

[2] Ed. Singer, p. 192.

to me by Mr. Locker, clerk of the Leathersellers Company, who was eminent for curiosity and literature, a collection of examples selected from Tillotson's works, as Locker said, by Addison. It came too late to be of use, so I inspected it but slightly, and remember it indistinctly. I thought the passages too short.

Addison however did not conclude his life in peaceful studies; but relapsed, when he was near his end, to a political dispute.

It so happened that (1718-19) a controversy was agitated with great vehemence, between those friends of long continuance, Addison and Steele. It may be asked, in the language of Homer, what power or what cause could set them at variance. The subject of their dispute was of great importance. The earl of Sunderland proposed an act called the "Peerage Bill,"[1] by which the number of peers should be fixed, and the king restrained from any new creation of nobility, unless when an old family should be extinct. To this the lords would naturally agree; and the king,[2] who was yet little acquainted with his own prerogative, and, as is now well known, almost indifferent to the possessions of the Crown, had been persuaded to consent. The only difficulty was found among the commons, who were not likely to approve the perpetual exclusion of themselves and their posterity. The bill therefore was eagerly opposed, and among others by Sir Robert Walpole, whose speech was published.

The lords might think their dignity diminished by improper advancements, and particularly by the introduction of twelve new peers at once, to produce a majority of Tories in the last reign; an act of authority violent enough, yet certainly legal, and by no means to be compared with

[1] That, if this Bill had passed, representative government would have been impossible, is shown in Green's *Hist. Eng. People*, p. 707.
[2] George I.

that contempt of national right, with which some time afterwards, by the instigation of Whiggism, the commons, chosen by the people for three years, chose themselves for seven. But, whatever might be the disposition of the lords, the people had no wish to increase their power. The tendency of the bill, as Steele observed in a letter to the earl of Oxford, was to introduce an Aristocracy; for a majority in the house of lords, so limited, would have been despotick and irresistible.

To prevent this subversion of the ancient establishment, Steele, whose pen readily seconded his political passions, endeavoured to alarm the nation by a pamphlet called "The Plebeian;" to this an answer was published by Addison, under the title of "The Old Whig,"[1] in which it is not discovered that Steele was then known to be the advocate for the commons. Steele replied by a second "Plebeian;" and, whether by ignorance or by courtesy, confined himself to his question, without any personal notice of his opponent. Nothing hitherto was committed against the laws of friendship, or proprieties of decency; but controvertists cannot long retain their kindness for each other. The "Old Whig" answered the "Plebeian," and could not forbear some contempt of "little *Dicky*, whose trade it was to write pamphlets."[2] Dicky however did not lose his

[1] B. *Ad.* vol. v. p. 236.

[2] This is a singular example of Johnson's looseness of quotation. There is no such sentence as this in *The Old Whig*. The only mention of "Little Dickey" is in the following sentences (B. *Ad.* vol. v. p. 287), "Who forbears laughing, when the Spanish friar represents 'LITTLE DICKEY' under the person of Gomez, insulting the Colonel that was able to fright him out of his wits with a single frown?" Macaulay was the first to identify the actor alluded to. He writes to Professor Napier, then Editor of *The Edinburgh Review*, under date, July 22, 1843:—"I am much pleased with one thing. You may remember how confidently I asserted that 'Little Dickey,' in *The Old Whig*, was the nickname of some comic actor. Several people thought that I risked too much in assuming this so strongly on mere internal evidence. I have now, by an odd accident,

settled veneration for his friend; but contented himself with quoting some lines of "Cato," which were at once detection and reproof. The bill was laid aside during that session, and Addison died before the next, in which its commitment was rejected by two hundred sixty-five to one hundred seventy-seven.

Every reader surely must regret that these two illustrious friends, after so many years past in confidence and endearment, in unity of interest, conformity of opinion, and fellowship of study, should finally part in acrimonious opposition. Such a controversy was *Bellum plusquam civile*, as Lucan expresses it.[1] Why could not faction find other advocates? But, among the uncertainties of the human state, we are doomed to number the instability of friendship.

Of this dispute I have little knowledge but from the "Biographia Britannica." The "Old Whig"[2] is not in-

found out who the actor was. An old prompter of Drury Lane Theatre, named Chetwood, published, in 1749, a small volume containing an account of all the famous performers he remembered, arranged in alphabetical order. This little volume I picked up yesterday, for sixpence, at a bookstall in Holborn; and the first name on which I opened was that of Henry Norris, a favourite comedian, who was nicknamed 'Dicky' because he first obtained celebrity by acting the part of Dicky in the *Trip to the Jubilee*. It is added that his figure was very diminutive. He was, it seems, in the height of his popularity at the very time when *The Old Whig* was written. You will, I think, agree with me that this is decisive. I am a little vain of my sagacity, which I really think would have dubbed me a *vir clarissimus*, if it had been shown on a point of Greek or Latin learning; but I am still more pleased that the vindication of Addison from an unjust charge, which has been universally believed since the publication of the *Lives of the Poets*, should thus be complete."—*Prof. Napier's Correspondence*, p. 419.

[1] In the first line of his *Pharsalia*:

"*Bella per Emathios plusquam civilia Campos*," I. i.

[2] *The Old Whig* and *The Plebeian* are both given in Bohn's *Ad* vol. v.

serted in Addison's works, nor is it mentioned by Tickell in his "Life;" why it was omitted the biographers doubtless give the true reason; the fact was too recent, and those who had been heated in the contention were not yet cool.

The necessity of complying with times, and of sparing persons, is the great impediment of biography. History may be formed from permanent monuments and records; but Lives can only be written from personal knowledge, which is growing every day less, and in a short time is lost for ever. What is known can seldom be immediately told; and when it might be told, it is no longer known. The delicate features of the mind, the nice discriminations of character, and the minute peculiarities of conduct, are soon obliterated; and it is surely better that caprice, obstinacy, frolick, and folly, however they might delight in the description, should be silently forgotten, than that, by wanton merriment and unseasonable detection, a pang should be given to a widow, a daughter, a brother, or a friend. As the process of these narrative is now bringing me among my contemporaries, I begin to feel myself *walking upon ashes under which the fire is not extinguished*, and coming to the time of which it will be proper rather to say *nothing that is false, than all that is true.*

The end of this useful life was now approaching.—Addison had for some time been oppressed by shortness of breath, which was now aggravated by a dropsy; and, finding his danger pressing, he prepared to die conformably to his own precepts and professions.

During this lingering decay, he sent, as Pope relates,* a message by the earl of Warwick to Mr. Gay, desiring to

* Spence.—JOHNSON.[1]

[1] Ed. Singer, p. 150.

see him: Gay, who had not visited him for some time before, obeyed the summons, and found himself received with great kindness. The purpose for which the interview had been solicited was then discovered: Addison told him that he had injured him; but that, if he recovered, he would recompense him. What the injury was he did not explain, nor did Gay ever know; but supposed that some preferment designed for him, had, by Addison's intervention, been withheld.

Lord Warwick was a young man of very irregular life, and perhaps of loose opinions. Addison, for whom he did not want respect, had very diligently endeavoured to reclaim him; but his arguments and expostulations had no effect. One experiment, however, remained to be tried: when he found his life near its end, he directed the young lord to be called; and when he desired, with great tenderness, to hear his last injunctions, told him, *I have sent for you that you may see how a Christian can die.* What effect this awful scene had on the earl I know not; he likewise died himself in a short time.[1]

In Tickell's excellent Elegy on his friend are these lines:

> "He taught us how to live; and, oh! too high
> The price of knowledge, taught us how to die."

In which he alludes, as he told Dr. Young, to this moving interview.

Having given directions to Mr. Tickell for the publication of his works, and dedicated them on his death-bed to his friend Mr. Craggs,[2] he died June 17

[1] The Earl of Warwick died Aug. 16, 1721, aged 24. Addison's widow died July 7th, 1731. His only child, Charlotte Addison, died unmarried at Bilton, in Warwickshire, March 10, 1797, aged 80.

[2] James Craggs, the younger (1686-1721), succeeded Addison as Secretary of State. He was also the intimate friend of Pope, and Gay speaks of him as "Bold, generous Craggs, whose heart was ne'er disguised." He died of small-pox just before the publication of Addison's

1719,[1] at Holland-house, leaving no child but a daughter.[2]

Of his virtue it is a sufficient testimony, that the resentment of party has transmitted no charge of any crime. He was not one of those who are praised only after death; for his merit was so generally acknowledged, that Swift, having observed[3] that his election passed without a contest, adds, that if he had proposed himself for king, he would hardly have been refused.

His zeal for his party did not extinguish his kindness for the merit of his opponents: when he was secretary in Ireland, he refused to intermit his acquaintance with Swift.

Of his habits, or external manners, nothing is so often mentioned as that timorous or sullen taciturnity, which his friends called modesty by too mild a name. Steele mentions[4] with great tenderness "that remarkable bashfulness, which is a cloak that hides and muffles merit;" and tells us, that "his abilities were covered only by modesty, which doubles the beauties which are seen, and gives credit and esteem to all that are concealed." Chesterfield affirms, that "Addison was the most timorous and awkward man that he ever saw." And Addison, speaking

*Works*, in 1721, and Lord Warwick, to whom Tickell inscribed his verses, died also before their publication.

[1] Addison died in the well-known dining-room where so many statesmen, artists, and poets have met together at the hospitable table of Lord Holland. A print of this room will be found in the Princess Liechtenberg's *Holland House*, vol. ii. p. 75. Addison is said to have killed himself by drinking the Widow Trueby's Water, spoken of in the *Spectator*, B. *Ad.* vol. iii. p. 329, and vol. v. p. 427.

[2] In 1809, a monument by Sir Richard Westmacott, was erected in Poets' Corner. Addison's daughter and sister leaving money for that purpose.

[3] *Journal to Stella*, Oct. 12, 1710.

[4] In his dedication of the Drummer to Congreve. B. *Ad.* vol. v. p. 152.

of his own deficience in conversation, used to say of himself,[1] that, with respect to intellectual wealth, "he could draw bills for a thousand pounds, though he had not a guinea in his pocket."

That he wanted current coin for ready payment, and by that want was often obstructed and distressed; that he was oppressed by an improper and ungraceful timidity, every testimony concurs to prove; but Chesterfield's representation is doubtless hyperbolical. That man cannot be supposed very unexpert in the arts of conversation and practice of life, who, without fortune or alliance, by his usefulness and dexterity, became secretary of state; and who died at forty-seven, after having not only stood long in the highest rank of wit and literature, but filled one of the most important offices of state.

The time in which he lived, had reason to lament his obstinacy of silence; for "he was," says Steele, "above all men in that talent called humour, and enjoyed it in such perfection, that I have often reflected, after a night spent with him apart from all the world, that I had had the pleasure of conversing with an intimate acquaintance of Terence and Catullus, who had all their wit and nature heightened with humour more exquisite and delightful than any other man ever possessed." This is the fondness of a friend; let us hear what is told us by a rival. "Addison's conversation," * says Pope, "had something in it more charming than I have found in any other man. But this was only when familiar: before strangers, or perhaps a single stranger, he preserved his dignity by a stiff silence."

* Spence.—JOHNSON.[2]

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[1] This was reported to Johnson by Langton, who gave it in a slightly different form, "*I have only ninepence in my pocket; but I can draw for a thousand pounds.*" Boswell's *Johnson*, vol. iii. p. 339.

[2] Ed. Singer, p. 50.

This modesty was by no means inconsistent with a very high opinion of his own merit. He demanded to be the first name in modern wit; and, with Steele to echo him, used to depreciate Dryden, whom Pope and Congreve defended against them.* There is no reason to doubt that he suffered too much pain from the prevalence of Pope's poetical reputation; nor is it without strong reason suspected, that by some disingenuous acts he endeavoured to obstruct it; Pope was not the only man whom he insidiously injured, though the only man of whom he could be afraid.

His own powers were such as might have satisfied him with conscious excellence. Of very extensive learning he has indeed given no proofs. He seems to have had small acquaintance with the sciences, and to have read little except Latin and French; but of the Latin poets his "Dialogues on Medals" [1] shew that he had perused the works with great diligence and skill. The abundance of his own mind left him little need of adventitious sentiments; his wit always could suggest what the occasion demanded. He had read with critical eyes the important volume of human life, and knew the heart of man from the depths of stratagem to the surface of affectation.

What he knew he could easily communicate. "This," says Steele, "was particular in this writer, that, when he had taken his resolution, or made his plan for what he designed to write, he would walk about a room, and dictate it into language with as much freedom and ease as any one could write it down, and attend to the coherence and grammar of what he dictated." [2]

* Tonson and Spence.—JOHNSON.[3]

[1] B. *Ad.* vol. i. pp. 253-338.
[2] Dedication of *The Drummer*. B. *Ad.* vol. v. p. 153.
[3] Ed. Singer, p. 47.

Pope,* who can be less suspected of favouring his memory, declares that he wrote very fluently, but was slow and scrupulous in correcting; that many of his "Spectators" were written very fast, and sent immediately to the press; and that it seemed to be for his advantage not to have time for much revisal.

"He would alter," says Pope, "any thing to please his friends, before publication; but would not retouch his pieces afterwards: and I believe not one word in "Cato," to which I made an objection, was suffered to stand."[1]

The last line of "Cato" is Pope's, having been originally written

"And, oh! 'twas this that ended Cato's life."

Pope might have made more objections to the six concluding lines. In the first couplet the words *from hence* are improper; and the second line is taken from Dryden's "Virgil." Of the next couplet, the first verse being included in the second, is therefore useless; and in the third *Discord* is made to produce *Strife*.

Of the course of Addison's familiar day,† before his marriage, Pope has given a detail. He had in the house with him Budgell, and perhaps Philips. His chief companions were Steele, Budgell, Philips, Carey, Davenant, and colonel Brett. With one or other of these he always breakfasted. He studied all morning; then dined at a tavern, and went afterwards to Button's.[2]

Button had been a servant in the countess of Warwick's family, who, under the patronage of Addison, kept a coffee-house on the south side of Russel-street, about two doors from Covent-garden. Here it was that the wits of that

* Spence.—JOHNSON.[3]

† *Ibid.*[4]

[1] Spence, ed. Singer, p. 151.
[2] *Vid. supr.* vol. i. p. 424.
[3] Ed. Singer, p. 49.
[4] Ed. Singer, p. 286.

time used to assemble. It is said, that when Addison had suffered any vexation from the countess, he withdrew the company from Button's house.[1]

[1] The following list of the portraits of Addison is abridged from Mr. Scharf's Catalogue given in Bloxam's *Register of Magdalen College*, vol. vi. p. 92.

1. At Knole, lately the seat of the Duke of Dorset. A half-length, standing to the left. Painted and signed by Jarvis.

2. At Bilton Hall, a duplicate of No. 1. The head alone, copied by Thurston, is engraved in Charles Knight's *Gallery of Portraits*, and by R. Rhodes for the *Effigies Poeticæ*.

3. The Kit-Cat Club picture painted by Sir Godfrey Kneller for Jacob Tonson, now in possession (1879) of his representative, Mr. Baker, of Bayfordbury, Herts.

4. A repetition of No. 3, in the Bodleian Gallery, given by Addison's daughter in 1749.

5. A picture in the President's lodgings at Magdalen College, purchased in 1809 from a picture dealer in Oxford.

6. A coarse old copy from the Kit-Cat, No. 3, is in the National Portrait Gallery.

7. An important picture, life size, in the Hall of Queen's College. The artist's name is difficult to read, well painted, the attitude easy and natural.

8. The Northwick Park picture by Sir Godfrey Kneller, engraved by J. Brown for Miss Aikin's *Life of Addison*. Vertue's drawing from this picture was in the possession of the Rev. H. Wellesley, at Oxford.

9. At Nuneham is a remarkable oval by Vanderqucht, a well-known copyist.

10. Michael Dahl painted Addison in 1719. The picture is only known (in 1879) by the brilliant mezzotint engraving of J. Simon.

11, 12. By Kneller, as engraved by Vertue, 1721, and by Miller in 1761, as frontispieces to editions of Addison's *Works*.

13. Arland is said to have painted a miniature.

14. The Holland House picture, purchased by Henry Fox, 3rd Lord Holland, which is a repetition of one at Narford, belonging to Mr. Andrew Fountaine.

15. Portrait of very questionable authenticity, presented to Magdalen College, by Walter Birch, in 1817.

16. A very interesting little portrait in crayons, belonging to Mr. H. C. Dent, 20, Thurloe Square, London, well finished in the style of Latterell.

From the coffee-house he went again to a tavern, where he often sat late, and drank too much wine. In the bottle, discontent seeks for comfort, cowardice for courage, and bashfulness for confidence. It is not unlikely that Addison was first seduced to excess by the manumission which he obtained from the servile timidity of his sober hours. He that feels oppression from the presence of those to whom he knows himself superior, will desire to set loose his powers of conversation; and who, that ever asked succour from Bacchus, was able to preserve himself from being enslaved by his auxiliary?

Among those friends it was that Addison displayed the elegance of his colloquial accomplishments, which may easily be supposed such as Pope represents them. The remark of Mandeville,[1] who, when he had passed an evening in his company, declared that he was a parson in a tye-wig, can detract little from his character; he was always reserved to strangers, and was not incited to uncommon freedom by a character like that of Mandeville.[2]

From any minute knowledge of his familiar manners, the intervention of sixty years has now debarred us. Steele once promised[3] Congreve and the publick a complete description of his character; but the promises of authors are like the vows of lovers. Steele thought no more on his design, or thought on it with anxiety that at last disgusted him, and left his friend in the hands of Tickell.

One slight lineament of his character Swift has preserved. It was his practice when he found any man invincibly wrong, to flatter his opinions by acquiescence, and sink

[1] Hawkins, *History of Music*, vol. v. pp. 315-316.

[2] Bernard Mandeville, M.D. (died 1733), Author of *The Fable of the Bees; or, Private Vices Public Benefits*, 1714. *Free Thoughts on Religion*, 1720, &c., &c.. replied to by Hutcheson, Berkeley, and Law.

[3] In the Epistle Dedicatory of *The Drummer*, to Congreve, occasioned by Mr. Tickell's Preface to Addison's *Works*. B. *Ad.* vol. v. p. 142.

him yet deeper in absurdity. This artifice of mischief was admired by Stella; and Swift seems to approve her admiration.

His works will supply some information. It appears from his various pictures of the world, that, with all his bashfulness, he had conversed with many distinct classes of men, had surveyed their ways with very diligent observation, and marked with great acuteness the effects of different modes of life. He was a man in whose presence nothing reprehensible was out of danger; quick in discerning whatever was wrong or ridiculous, and not unwilling to expose it. *There are*, says Steele, *in his writings many oblique strokes upon some of the wittiest men of the age.*[1] His delight was more to excite merriment than detestation, and he detects follies rather than crimes.

If any judgement be made, from his books, of his moral character, nothing will be found but purity and excellence. Knowledge of mankind indeed, less extensive than that of Addison, will shew, that to write, and to live, are very different. Many who praise virtue, do no more than praise it. Yet it is reasonable to believe that Addison's professions and practice were at no great variance, since, amidst that storm of faction in which most of his life was passed, though his station made him conspicuous, and his activity made him formidable, the character given him by his friends was never contradicted by his enemies: of those with whom interest or opinion united him, he had not only the esteem, but the kindness; and of others, whom the violence of opposition drove against him, though he might lose the love, he retained the reverence.

It is justly observed by Tickell, that he employed wit on the side of virtue and religion. He not only made the proper use of wit himself, but taught it to others; and from his time it has been generally subservient to the

[1] Dedication of *The Drummer*. B. *Ad.* vol. v. p. 148.

cause of reason and of truth. He has dissipated the prejudice that had long connected gaiety with vice, and easiness of manners with laxity of principles. He has restored virtue to its dignity, and taught innocence not to be ashamed. This is an elevation of literary character, *above all Greek, above all Roman fame.* No greater felicity can genius attain than that of having purified intellectual pleasure, separated mirth from indecency, and wit from licentiousness; of having taught a succession of writers to bring elegance and gaiety to the aid of goodness; and, if I may use expressions yet more awful, of having *turned many to righteousness.*[1]

Addison, in his life, and for some time afterwards, was considered by the greater part of readers as supremely excelling both in poetry and criticism. Part of his reputation may be probably ascribed to the advancement of his fortune: when, as Swift observes, he became a statesman, and saw poets waiting at his levee, it is no wonder that praise was accumulated upon him. Much likewise may be more honourably ascribed to his personal character: he who, if he had claimed it, might have obtained the diadem, was not likely to be denied the laurel.

But time quickly puts an end to artificial and accidental fame; and Addison is to pass through futurity protected only by his genius. Every name which kindness or interest once raised too high, is in danger, lest the next age should, by the vengeance of criticism, sink it in the same proportion. A great writer has lately styled him an *indifferent poet, and a worse critick.*[2]

[1] For a brief but admirable sketch of the distracted state of society in politics and art; its court party flushed with the recent restoration, and its austere Republicans representing the rising power of the Democracy and the influence of Addison, see Courthope's *Addison*, pp. 1-21, and pp. 161-192.

[2] Warburton. Pope's *Works*, vol. iv. p. 178, ed. 1752.

His poetry is first to be considered; of which it must be confessed that it has not often those felicities of diction which give lustre to sentiments, or that vigour of sentiment that animates diction: there is little of ardour, vehemence, or transport; there is very rarely the awfulness of grandeur, and not very often the splendour of elegance. He thinks justly; but he thinks faintly. This is his general character; to which, doubtless, many single passages will furnish exceptions.

Yet, if he seldom reaches supreme excellence, he rarely sinks into dulness, and is still more rarely entangled in absurdity. He did not trust his powers enough to be negligent. There is in most of his compositions a calmness and equability, deliberate and cautious, sometimes with little that delights, but seldom with any thing that offends.

Of this kind seem to be his Poems to Dryden,[1] to Somers,[2] and to the King.[3] His "Ode on St. Cecilia" has been imitated by Pope, and has something in it of Dryden's vigour. Of his "Account of the English Poets,"[4] he used to speak as a *poor thing;** but it is not worse than his usual strain. He has said, not very judiciously, in his character of Waller:

> "Thy verse could shew ev'n Cromwell's innocence,
> And compliment the storms that bore him hence.
> O! had thy Muse not come an age too soon,
> But seen great Nassau on the British throne,
> How had his triumph glitter'd in thy page!—"[5]

What is this but to say that he who could compliment

* Spence.—JOHNSON.

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[1] *B. Ad.* vol. i. p. 1.
[2] *To the Right Honble Sir John Somers, Lord Keeper of the Great Seal, ibid.* p. 3.
[3] *Ibid.* p. 4.
[4] *Ibid.* p. 22.
[5] *Ibid.* p. 25.

Cromwell had been the proper poet for king William: Addison however never printed the piece.[1]

The "Letter from Italy"[2] has been always praised, but has never been praised beyond its merit. It is more correct, with less appearance of labour, and more elegant, with less ambition of ornament, than any other of his poems. There is however one broken metaphor, of which notice may properly be taken:

> "Fir'd with that name—
> I bridle in my struggling Muse with pain,
> That longs to launch into a nobler strain."[3]

To *bridle* a *goddess* is no very delicate idea; but why must she be *bridled?* because she *longs to launch;* an act which was never hindered by a *bridle;* and whither will she *launch?* into a *nobler strain.* She is in the first line a *horse,* in the second a *boat;* and the care of the poet is to keep his *horse* or his *boat* from *singing.*

The next composition is the far-famed "Campaign," which Dr. Warton has termed a *Gazette in Rhyme,* with harshness not often used by the good-nature of his criticism. Before a censure so severe is admitted, let us consider that War is a frequent subject of Poetry, and then enquire who has described it with more justness and force. Many of our own writers tried their powers upon this year of victory, yet Addison's is confessedly the best performance; his poem is the work of a man not blinded by the dust of learning: his images are not borrowed merely from books. The superiority which he confers upon his hero is not personal prowess, and *mighty bone,* but deliberate in-

[1] Mr. P. Cunningham points out that this is a mistake, as this poem appeared, with Addison's name, in Dryden's *Fourth Miscellany,* 1694.

[2] B. *Ad.* vol. i. p. 29. Pope preferred the *Letter from Italy* to all Addison's poems, "even more than his *Campaign.*" Spence ed. Singer, p. 316.

[3] *Ibid.* p. 37. [4] *Ibid.* p. 42.

trepidity, a calm command of his passions, and the power of consulting his own mind in the midst of danger. The rejection and contempt of fiction is rational and manly.

It may be observed that the last line is imitated by Pope;

> "Marlb'rough's exploits appear divinely bright—
> Rais'd of themselves, their genuine charms they boast,
> And those that paint them truest, praise them most." [1]

This Pope had in his thoughts; but, not knowing how to use what was not his own, he spoiled the thought when he had borrowed it:

> "The well-sung woes shall soothe my ghost;
> He best can paint them who shall feel them most." [2]

Martial exploits may be *painted;* perhaps *woes* may be *painted;* but they are surely not *painted* by being *well-sung:* it is not easy to paint in song, or to sing in colours.

No passage in the "Campaign" has been more often mentioned than the simile of the Angel,[3] which is said in "The Tatler" to be *one of the noblest thoughts that ever entered into the heart of man,* and is therefore worthy of attentive consideration. Let it be first enquired whether it be a simile. A poetical simile is the discovery of likeness between two actions, in their general nature dissimilar, or of causes terminating by different operations in some resemblance of effect. But the mention of another like consequence from a like cause, or of a like performance by a like agency, is not a simile, but an exemplification. It is not a simile to say that the Thames waters fields, as the Po waters fields; or that as Hecla vomits flames in Iceland, so Ætna vomits flames in Sicily. When Horace says of Pindar,[4] that he pours his violence and rapidity of verse,

[1] B. *Ad.* vol. i. p. 54.
[2] *Eloisa to Abelard, ibid.* p. 115.
[3] *Ibid.* p. 49.
[4] *Horace,* Book IV. Ode 2.

as a river swoln with rain rushes from the mountain; or of himself, that his genius wanders in quest of poetical decorations, as the bee wanders to collect honey; he, in either case, produces a simile; the mind is impressed with the resemblance of things generally unlike, as unlike as intellect and body. But if Pindar had been described as writing with the copiousness and grandeur of Homer, or Horace had told that he reviewed and finished his own poetry with the same care as Isocrates polished his orations, instead of similitude he would have exhibited almost identity; he would have given the same portraits with different names. In the poem now examined, when the English are represented as gaining a fortified pass, by repetition of attack and perseverance of resolution; their obstinacy of courage, and vigour of onset, is well illustrated by the sea that breaks, with incessant battery, the dikes of Holland. This is a simile: but when Addison, having celebrated the beauty of Marlborough's person, tells us that *Achilles thus was formed with every grace*, here is no simile, but a mere exemplification. A simile may be compared to lines converging at a point, and is more excellent as the lines approach from greater distance: an exemplification may be considered as two parallel lines which run on together without approximaton, never far separated, and never joined.

Marlborough is so like the angel in the poem, that the action of both is almost the same, and performed by both in the same manner. Marlborough *teaches the battle to rage*; the angel *directs the storm:* Marlborough is *unmoved in peaceful thought*; the angel is *calm and serene:* Marlborough stands *unmoved amidst the shock of hosts*; the angel rides *calm in the whirlwind.* The lines on Marlborough are just and noble; but the simile gives almost the same images a second time.

But perhaps this thought, though hardly a simile, was

remote from vulgar conceptions, and required great labour of research, or dexterity of application. Of this, Dr. Madden,[1] a name which Ireland ought to honour, once gave me his opinion. *If I had set*, said he, *ten school-boys to write on the battle of* Blenheim, *and eight had brought me the Angel, I should not have been surprised.*

The opera of "Rosamond,"[2] though it is seldom mentioned, is one of the first of Addison's compositions. The subject is well-chosen, the fiction is pleasing, and the praise of Marlborough, for which the scene gives an opportunity, is, what perhaps every human excellence must be, the product of good-luck improved by genius. The thoughts are sometimes great, and sometimes tender; the versification is easy and gay. There is doubtless some advantage in the shortness of the lines, which there is little temptation to load with expletive epithets. The dialogue seems commonly better than the songs. The two comick characters of Sir Trusty and Grideline, though of no great value, are yet such as the poet intended. Sir Trusty's account of the death of Rosamond is, I think, too grossly absurd. The whole drama is airy and elegant; engaging in its process, and pleasing in its conclusion. If Addison had cultivated the lighter parts of poetry, he would probably have excelled.

The tragedy of "Cato,"[3] which, contrary to the rule observed in selecting the works of other poets, has by the weight of its character forced its way into the late collection, is unquestionably the noblest production of Addison's genius. Of a work so much read, it is difficult to say any thing new. About things on which the public thinks long, it commonly attains to think right; and of "Cato" it has been not unjustly determined, that it is rather a poem in

[1] For an account of *Premium Madden*, see Boswell's *Johnson*, vol. i. p. 249 n.

[2] B. *Ad.* vol. i. p. 55.

[3] *Ibid.* p. 162.

dialogue than a drama, rather a succession of just sentiments in elegant language, than a representation of natural affections, or of any state probable or possible in human life. Nothing here *excites or asswages emotion*; here is no *magical power of raising phantastick terror or wild anxiety*. The events are expected without solicitude, and are remembered without joy or sorrow. Of the agents we have no care: we consider not what they are doing, or what they are suffering; we wish only to know what they have to say. Cato is a being above our solicitude; a man of whom the gods take care, and whom we leave to their care with heedless confidence. To the rest, neither gods nor men can have much attention; for there is not one amongst them that strongly attracts either affection or esteem. But they are made the vehicles of such sentiments and such expression, that there is scarcely a scene in the play which the reader does not wish to impress upon his memory.

When "Cato" was shewn to Pope,* he advised the author to print it, without any theatrical exhibition; supposing that it would be read more favourably than heard. Addison declared himself of the same opinion; but urged the importunity of his friends for its appearance on the stage. The emulation of parties made it successful beyond expectation, and its success has introduced or confirmed among us the use of dialogue too declamatory, of unaffecting elegance, and chill philosophy.

The universality of applause, however it might quell the censure of common mortals, had no other effect than to harden Dennis in fixed dislike;[1] but his dislike was not merely capricious. He found and shewed many faults: he

* Spence.—JOHNSON.[2]

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[1] *Remarks upon Cato; a Tragedy*, 1713. 4to.

[2] Ed. Singer, p. 196.

shewed them indeed with anger, but he found them with acuteness, such as ought to rescue his criticism from oblivion; though, at last, it will have no other life than it derives from the work which it endeavours to oppress.

Why he pays no regard to the opinion of the audience, he gives his reason, by remarking, that

"A deference is to be paid to a general applause, when it appears that that applause is natural and spontaneous; but that little regard is to be had to it, when it is affected and artificial. Of all the tragedies which in his memory have had vast and violent runs, not one has been excellent, few have been tolerable, most have been scandalous. When a poet writes a tragedy, who knows he has judgement, and who feels he has genius, that poet presumes upon his own merit, and scorns to make a cabal. That people come coolly to the representation of such a tragedy, without any violent expectation, or delusive imagination, or invincible prepossession; that such an audience is liable to receive the impressions which the poem shall naturally make in them, and to judge by their own reason, and their own judgements, and that reason and judgement are calm and serene, not formed by nature to make proselytes, and to controul and lord it over the imaginations of others. But that when an author writes a tragedy, who knows he has neither genius nor judgement, he has recourse to the making a party, and he endeavours to make up in industry what is wanting in talent, and to supply by poetical craft the absence of poetical art: that such an author is humbly contented to raise men's passions by a plot without doors, since he despairs of doing it by that which he brings upon the stage. That party and passion, and prepossession, are clamorous and tumultuous things, and so much the more clamorous and tumultuous by how much the more erroneous: that they domineer and tyrannize over the imaginations of persons who want judgement, and sometimes

too of those who have it; and, like a fierce and outrageous torrent, bear down all opposition before them."

He then condemns the neglect of poetical justice; which is always one of his favourite principles.

"'Tis certainly the duty of every tragick poet, by the exact distribution of poetical justice, to imitate the Divine Dispensation, and to inculcate a particular Providence. 'Tis true, indeed, upon the stage of the world, the wicked sometimes prosper, and the guiltless suffer. But that is permitted by the Governor of the world, to shew, from the attribute of his infinite justice, that there is a compensation in futurity, to prove the immortality of the human soul, and the certainty of future rewards and punishments. But the poetical persons in tragedy exist no longer than the reading, or the representation; the whole extent of their entity is circumscribed by those; and therefore, during that reading or representation, according to their merits or demerits, they must be punished or rewarded. If this is not done, there is no impartial distribution of poetical justice, no instructive lecture of a particular Providence, and no imitation of the Divine Dispensation. And yet the author of this tragedy does not only run counter to this, in the fate of his principal character; but every where, throughout it, makes virtue suffer, and vice triumph: for not only Cato is vanquished by Cæsar, but the treachery and perfidiousness of Syphax prevails over the honest simplicity and the credulity of Juba; and the sly subtlety and dissimulation of Portius over the generous frankness and open-heartedness of Marcus."

Whatever pleasure there may be in seeing crimes punished and virtue rewarded, yet, since wickedness often prospers in real life, the poet is certainly at liberty to give it prosperity on the stage. For if poetry has an imitation of reality, how are its laws broken by exhibiting the world in its true form? The stage may sometimes gratify our

wishes; but, if it be truly the *mirror of life*, it ought to shew us sometimes what we are to expect.

Dennis objects to the characters that they are not natural, or reasonable; but as heroes and heroines are not beings that are seen every day, it is hard to find upon what principles their conduct shall be tried. It is, however, not useless to consider what he says of the manner in which Cato receives the account of his son's death.

"Nor is the grief of Cato, in the fourth act, one jot more in nature than that of his son and Lucia in the third. Cato receives the news of his son's death not only with dry eyes but with a sort of satisfaction; and in the same page sheds tears for the calamity of his country, and does the same thing in the next page upon the bare apprehension of the danger of his friends. Now, since the love of one's country is the love of one's countrymen, as I have shewn upon another occasion, I desire to ask these questions: Of all our countrymen, which do we love most, those whom we know, or those whom we know not? And of those whom we know, which do we cherish most, our friends or our enemies? And of our friends, which are the dearest to us? those who are related to us, or those who are not? And of all our relations, for which have we most tenderness, for those who are near to us, or for those who are remote? And of our near relations, which are the nearest, and consequently the dearest to us, our offspring or others? Our offspring, most certainly; as nature, or in other words Providence, has wisely contrived for the preservation of mankind. Now, does it not follow, from what has been said, that for a man to receive the news of his son's death with dry eyes, and to weep at the same time for the calamities of his country, is a wretched affectation, and a miserable inconsistency? Is not that, in plain English, to receive with dry eyes the news of the deaths of those for whose sake our country is a name so dear to us, and at the same time to

shed tears for those for whose sakes our country is not a name so dear to us?"

But this formidable assailant is least resistible when he attacks the probability of the action, and the reasonableness of the plan. Every critical reader must remark, that Addison has, with a scrupulosity almost unexampled on the English stage,[1] confined himself in time to a single day, and in place to rigorous unity. The scene never changes, and the whole action of the play passes in the great hall of Cato's house at Utica. Much therefore is done in the hall, for which any other place had been more fit; and this impropriety affords Dennis many hints of merriment, and opportunities of triumph. The passage is long; but as such disquisitions are not common, and the objections are skilfully formed and vigorously urged, those who delight in critical controversy will not think it tedious.

"Upon the departure of Portius, Sempronius makes but one soliloquy, and immediately in comes Syphax, and then the two politicians are at it immediately. They lay their heads together, with their snuff-boxes in their hands, as Mr. Bayes has it, and league it away. But, in the midst of that wise scene, Syphax seems to give a seasonable caution to Sempronius:

> "'*Syph.* But is it true, Sempronius, that your senate
> Is call'd together? Gods! thou must be cautious,
> Cato has piercing eyes.'

There is a great deal of caution shewn indeed, in meeting in a governor's own hall to carry on their plot against him. Whatever opinion they have of his eyes, I suppose they had none of his ears, or they would never have talked at this foolish rate so near:

> "'Gods! thou must be cautious.'

[1] See Johnson's Preface to *Shakespeare*.

Oh! yes, very cautious: for if Cato should overhear you, and turn you off for politicians, Cæsar would never take you; no, Cæsar would never take you.

"When Cato, Act II. turns the senators out of the hall, upon pretence of acquainting Juba with the result of their debates, he appears to me to do a thing which is neither reasonable nor civil. Juba might certainly have better been made acquainted with the result of that debate in some private apartment of the palace. But the poet was driven upon this absurdity to make way for another; and that is, to give Juba an opportunity to demand Marcia of her father. But the quarrel and rage of Juba and Syphax, in the same Act, the invective of Syphax against the Romans and Cato; the advice that he gives Juba, in her father's hall, to bear away Marcia by force; and his brutal and clamorous rage upon his refusal, and at a time when Cato was scarce out of sight, and perhaps not out of hearing; at least, some of his guards or domesticks must necessarily be supposed to be within hearing; is a thing that is so far from being probable, that it is hardly possible.

"Sempronius, in the second Act, comes back once more in the same morning to the governor's hall, to carry on the conspiracy with Syphax against the governor, his country, and his family; which is so stupid, that it is below the wisdom of the O—'s, the Mac's, and the Teague's; even Eustace Commins himself would never have gone to Justice-hall, to have conspired again the government. If officers at Portsmouth should lay their heads together, in order to the carrying off J— G—'s niece or daughter, would they meet in J— G—'s hall, to carry on that conspiracy? There would be no necessity for their meeting there, at least till they came to the execution of their plot, because there would be other places to meet in. There would be no probability that they should meet there,

because there would be places more private and more commodious. Now there ought to be nothing in a tragical action but what is necessary or probable.

"But treason is not the only thing that is carried on in this hall: that and love, and philosophy, take their turns in it, without any manner of necessity or probability occasioned by the action, as duly and as regularly, without interrupting one another, as if there were a triple league between them, and a mutual agreement that each should give place to and make way for the other, in a due and orderly succession.

"We now come to the third Act. Sempronius, in this Act, comes into the governor's hall, with the leaders of the mutiny: but as soon as Cato is gone, Sempronius, who but just before had acted like an unparalleled knave, discovers himself, like an egregrious fool, to be an accomplice in the conspiracy.

"'*Semp.* Know, villains, when such paltry slaves presume
To mix in treason, if the plot succeeds,
They're thrown neglected by: but if it fails,
They're sure to die like dogs, as you shall do.
Here, take these factious monsters, drag them forth
To sudden death.—'

"'Tis true, indeed, the second leader says, there are none there but friends: but is that possible at such a juncture? Can a parcel of rogues attempt to assassinate the governor of a town of war, in his own house, in mid-day, and after they are discovered and defeated, can there be none near them but friends? Is it not plain from these words of Sempronius,

"'Here, take these factious monsters, drag them forth
To sudden death—'

and from the entrance of the guards upon the word of command, that those guards were within ear-shot? Be-

hold Sempronius then palpably discovered. How comes it to pass, then, that, instead of being hanged up with the rest, he remains secure in the governor's hall, and there carries on his conspiracy against the government, the third time in the same day, with his old comrade Syphax? who enters at the same time that the guards are carrying away the leaders, big with the news of the defeat of Sempronius; though where he had his intelligence so soon is difficult to imagine. And now the reader may expect a very extraordinary scene: there is not abundance of spirit indeed, nor a great deal of passion, but there is wisdom more than enough to supply all defects.

"'*Syph.* Our first design, my friend, has prov'd abortive;
Still there remains an after-game to play:
My troops are mounted, their Numidian steeds
Snuff up the winds, and long to scour the desart:
Let but Sempronius lead us in our flight,
We'll force the gate, where Marcus keeps his guard,
And hew down all that would oppose our passage;
A day will bring us into Cæsar's camp.
*Semp.* Confusion! I have fail'd of half my purpose;
Marcia, the charming Marcia's left behind.'

"Well! but though he tells us the half-purpose that he has fail'd of, he does not tell us the half that he has carried. But what does he mean by

"'Marcia, the charming Marcia's left behind?'

He is now in her own house; and we have neither seen her nor heard of her any where else since the play began. But now let us hear Syphax:

"'What hinders then, but that thou find her out,
And hurry her away by manly force?'

But what does old Syphax mean by finding her out? They talk as if she were as hard to be found as a hare in a frosty morning.

"'*Semp.* But how to gain admission?

"Oh! she is found out then, it seems.

"'But how to gain admission? for access
Is giv'n to none, but Juba and her brothers.'

But, raillery apart, why access to Juba? For he was owned and received as a lover neither by the father nor by the daughter. Well! but let that pass. Syphax puts Sempronius out of pain immediately; and, being a Numidian, abounding in wiles, supplies him with a stratagem for admission, that, I believe, is a non-pareille:

"'*Syph.* Thou shalt have Juba's dress, and Juba's guards;
The doors will open, when Numidia's prince
Seems to appear before them.'

"Sempronius is, it seems, to pass for Juba in full day at Cato's house, where they were both so very well known, by having Juba's dress and his guards: as if one of the marshals of France could pass for the duke of Bavaria, at noon-day, at Versailles, by having his dress and liveries. But how does Syphax pretend to help Sempronius to young Juba's dress? Does he serve him in a double capacity, as general and master of his wardrobe? But why Juba's guards? For the devil of any guards has Juba appeared with yet. Well! though this is a mighty politick invention, yet, methinks, they might have done without it: for, since the advice that Syphax gave to Sempronius was,

"'To hurry her away by manly force,'

in my opinion, the shortest and likeliest way of coming at the lady was by demolishing, instead of putting on an impertinent disguise to circumvent two or three slaves. But Sempronius, it seems, is of another opinion. He extols to the skies the invention of old Syphax:

"'*Sempr.* Heavens! what a thought was there!'

"Now I appeal to the reader, if I have not been as good as my word. Did I not tell him, that I would lay before him a very wise scene?

"But now let us lay before the reader that part of the scenery of the Fourth Act, which may shew the absurdities which the author has run into, through the indiscreet observance of the Unity of Place. I do not remember that Aristotle has said any thing expressly concerning the Unity of Place. 'Tis true, implicitly he has said enough in the rules which he has laid down for the Chorus. For, by making the Chorus an essential part of Tragedy, and by bringing it on the stage immediately after the opening of the scene, and retaining it there till the very catastrophe, he has so determined and fixed the place of action, that it was impossible for an author on the Grecian stage to break through that unity. I am of opinion, that if a modern tragic poet can preserve the unity of place, without destroying the probability of the incidents, 'tis always best for him to do it; because, by the preservation of that unity, as we have taken notice above, he adds grace, and cleanness, and comeliness, to the representation. But since there are no express rules about it, and we are under no compulsion to keep it, since we have no Chorus as the Grecian poet had; if it cannot be preserved, without rendering the greater part of the incidents unreasonable and absurd, and perhaps sometimes monstrous, 'tis certainly better to break it.

"Now comes bully Sempronius, comically accoutred and equipped with his Numidian dress and his Numidian guards. Let the reader attend to him with all his ears; for the words of the wise are precious:

"'*Sempr.* The deer is lodg'd, I've track'd her to her covert.'

"Now I would fain know why this deer is said to be

lodged, since we have not heard one word, since the play began, of her being at all out of harbour: and if we consider the discourse with which she and Lucia begin the Act, we have reason to believe that they had hardly been talking of such matters in the street. However, to please Sempronius, let us suppose, for once, that the deer is lodged:

"'The deer is lodg'd, I've track'd her to her covert.'

"If he had seen her in the open field, what occasion had he to track her, when he had so many Numidian dogs at his heels, which, with one halloo, he might have set upon her haunches? If he did not see her in the open field, how could he possibly track her? If he had seen her in the street, why did he not set upon her in the street, since through the street she must be carried at last? Now here, instead of having his thoughts upon his business, and upon the present danger; instead of meditating and contriving how he shall pass with his mistress through the southern gate, where her brother Marcus is upon the guard, and where she would certainly prove an impediment to him, which is the Roman word for the *baggage*; instead of doing this, Sempronius is entertaining himself with whimsies:

"'*Sempr.* How will the young Numidian rave to see
His mistress lost! If aught could glad my soul,
Beyond th' enjoyment of so bright a prize,
'Twould be to torture that young gay Barbarian.
But hark! what noise? Death to my hopes, 'tis he,
'Tis Juba's self! There is but one way left!
He must be murder'd, and a passage cut
Through those his guards.'

"Pray, what are *those his guards?* I thought at present that Juba's guards had been Sempronius's tools, and had been dangling after his heels.

"But now let us sum up all these absurdities together

Sempronius goes at noon-day, in Juba's clothes, and with Juba's guards, to Cato's palace, in order to pass for Juba, in a place where they were both so very well known: he meets Juba there, and resolves to murder him with his own guards. Upon the guards appearing a little bashful, he threatens them:

> "'Hah! Dastards, do you tremble!
> Or act like men, or by yon azure heav'n!'

"But the guards still remaining restive, Sempronius himself attacks Juba, while each of the guards is representing Mr. Spectator's sign of the Gaper, awed, it seems, and terrified by Sempronius's threats. Juba kills Sempronius, and takes his own army prisoners, and carries them in triumph away to Cato. Now I would fain know, if any part of Mr. Bayes's tragedy is so full of absurdity as this?

"Upon hearing the clash of swords, Lucia and Marcia come in. The question is, why no men come in upon hearing the noise of swords in the governor's hall? Where was the governor himself? Where were his guards? Where were his servants? Such an attempt as this, so near the person of a governor of a place of war, was enough to alarm the whole garrison: and yet, for almost half an hour after Sempronius was killed, we find none of those appear, who were the likeliest in the world to be alarmed; and the noise of swords is made to draw only two poor women thither, who were most certain to run away from it. Upon Lucia and Marcia's coming in, Lucia appears in all the symptoms of an hysterical gentlewoman:

> "'*Luc.* Sure 'twas the clash of swords! my troubled heart
> Is so cast down, and sunk amidst its sorrows,
> It throbs with fear, and akes at every sound!'

"And immediately her old whimsy returns upon her:

"'O Marcia, should thy brothers, for my sake—
I die away with horror at the thought.'

"She fancies that there can be no cutting-of-throats, but it must be for her. If this is tragical, I would fain know what is comical. Well! upon this they spy the body of Sempronius; and Marcia, deluded by the habit, it seems, takes him for Juba; for, says she,

"'The face is muffled up within the garment.'

"Now how a man could fight, and fall with his face muffled up in his garment, is, I think, a little hard to conceive! Besides, Juba, before he killed him, knew him to be Sempronius. It was not by his garment that he knew this; it was by his face then: his face therefore was not muffled. Upon seeing this man with the muffled face, Marcia falls a-raving; and, owning her passion for the supposed defunct, begins to make his funeral oration. Upon which Juba enters listening, I suppose on tip-toe: for I cannot imagine how any one can enter listening, in any other posture. I would fain know how it came to pass, that during all this time he had sent nobody, no not so much as a candle-snuffer, to take away the dead body of Sempronius. Well! but let us regard him listening. Having left his apprehension behind him, he, at first, applies what Marcia says to Sempronius. But finding at last, with much ado, that he himself is the happy man, he quits his eve-dropping, and discovers himself just time enough to prevent his being cuckoled by a dead man, of whom the moment before he had appeared so jealous; and greedily intercepts the bliss, which was fondly designed for one who could not be the better for it. But here I must ask a question: how comes Juba to listen here, who had not listened before throughout the play? Or, how comes he to be the only person of this tragedy who listens, where love and treason were so often talked in so publick a place

as a hall? I am afraid the author was driven upon all these absurdities only to introduce this miserable mistake of Marcia; which, after all, is much below the dignity of tragedy, as any thing is which is the effect or result of trick.

"But let us come to the scenery of the Fifth Act. Cato appears first upon the scene, sitting in a thoughtful posture; in his hand Plato's treatise on the 'Immortality of the Soul,' a drawn sword on the table by him. Now let us consider the place in which this sight is presented to us. The place, forsooth, is a long hall. Let us suppose, that any one should place himself in this posture, in the midst of one of our halls in London; that he should appear *solus*, in a sullen posture, a drawn sword on the table by him; in his hand Plato's treatise on the 'Immortality of the Soul,' translated lately by Bernard Lintot: I desire the reader to consider, whether such a person as this would pass with them who beheld him, for a great patriot, a great philosopher, or a general, or for some whimsical person who fancied himself all these; and whether the people, who belonged to the family, would think that such a person had a design upon their midrifs or his own?

"In short, that Cato should sit long enough, in the aforesaid posture, in the midst of this large hall, to read over Plato's treatise on the 'Immortality of the Soul,' which is a lecture of two long hours; that he should propose to himself to be private there upon that occasion; that he should be angry with his son for intruding there; then, that he should leave this hall upon the pretence of sleep, give himself the mortal wound in his bedchamber, and then be brought back into that hall to expire, purely to shew his good-breeding, and save his friends the trouble of coming up to his bedchamber; all this appears to me to be improbable, incredible, impossible."

Such is the censure of Dennis. There is, as Dryden ex-

presses it, perhaps *too much horseplay in his raillery*; but if his jests are coarse, his arguments are strong. Yet as we love better to be pleased than to be taught, "Cato" is read, and the critick is neglected.

Flushed with consciousness of these detections of absurdity in the conduct, he afterwards attacked the sentiments of "Cato;" but he then amused himself with petty cavils, and minute objections.

Of Addison's smaller poems, no particular mention is necessary; they have little that can employ or require a critick. The parallel of the Princes and Gods, in his verses to Kneller, is often happy, but is too well known to be quoted.

His translations, so far as I have compared them, want the exactness of a scholar. That he understood his authors cannot be doubted; but his versions will not teach others to understand them, being too licentiously paraphrastical. They are however, for the most part, smooth and easy; and, what is the first excellence of a translator, such as may be read with pleasure by those who do not know the originals.

His poetry is polished and pure; the product of a mind too judicious to commit faults, but not sufficiently vigorous to attain excellence. He has sometimes a striking line, or a shining paragraph; but in the whole he is warm rather than fervid, and shews more dexterity than strength. He was however one of our earliest examples of correctness.

The versification which he had learned from Dryden, he debased rather than refined. His rhymes are often dissonant; in his Georgick he admits broken lines. He uses both triplets and alexandrines, but triplets more frequently in his translations than his other works. The mere structure of verses seems never to have engaged much of his care. But his lines are very smooth in "Rosamond," and too smooth in "Cato."

Addison is now to be considered as a critick; a name which the present generation is scarcely willing to allow him. His criticism is condemned as tentative or experimental, rather than scientifick, and he is considered as deciding by taste rather than by principles.

It is not uncommon for those who have grown wise by the labour of others, to add a little of their own, and overlook their masters.[1] Addison is now despised by some who perhaps would never have seen his defects, but by the lights which he afforded them. That he always wrote as he would think it necessary to write now, cannot be affirmed; his instructions were such as the character of his readers made proper. That general knowledge which now circulates in common talk, was in his time rarely to be found. Men not professing learning were not ashamed of ignorance; and in the female world, any acquaintance with books was distinguished only to be censured. His purpose was to infuse literary curiosity, by gentle and unsuspected conveyance, into the gay, the idle, and the wealthy; he therefore presented knowledge in the most alluring form, not lofty and austere, but accessible and familiar. When he shewed them their defects, he shewed them likewise that they might be easily supplied. His attempt succeeded; enquiry was awakened, and comprehension expanded. An emulation of intellectual elegance was excited, and from his time to our own, life has been gradually exalted, and conversation purified and enlarged.

Dryden had, not many years before, scattered criticism over his Prefaces with very little parcimony; but, though he sometimes condescended to be somewhat familiar, his manner was in general too scholastick for those who had yet their rudiments to learn, and found it not easy to understand

[1] See Tennyson's *The Flower*.

> "Most can raise the flowers now,
> For all have got the seed."

their master. His observations were framed rather for those that were learning to write, than for those that read only to talk.

An instructor like Addison was now wanting, whose remarks being superficial, might be easily understood, and being just, might prepare the mind for more attainments. Had he presented "Paradise Lost" to the publick with all the pomp of system and severity of science, the criticism would perhaps have been admired, and the poem still have been neglected; but by the blandishments of gentleness and facility, he has made Milton an universal favourite, with whom readers of every class think it necessary to be pleased.

He descended now and then to lower disquisitions; and by a serious display of the beauties of "Chevy Chase," exposed himself to the ridicule of Wagstaff, who bestowed a like pompous character on "Tom Thumb;" and to the contempt of Dennis, who, considering the fundamental position of his criticism, that "Chevy Chase" pleases, and ought to please, because it is natural, observes, "that there is a way of deviating from nature, by bombast or tumour, which soars above nature, and enlarges images beyond their real bulk; by affectation, which forsakes nature in quest of something unsuitable; and by imbecillity, which degrades nature by faintness and diminution, by obscuring its appearances, and weakening its effects." In "Chevy Chase" there is not much of either bombast or affectation; but there is chill and lifeless imbecillity. The story cannot possibly be told in a manner that shall make less impression on the mind.

Before the profound observers of the present race repose too securely on the consciousness of their superiority to Addison, let them consider his "Remarks on Ovid,"[2] in

[1] B. *Ad.* vol. ii. p. 374.

[2] See *Notes on Ovid's Metamorphoses.* B. *Ad.* vol. i. pp. 139-153.

which may be found specimens of criticism sufficiently subtle and refined; let them peruse likewise his Essays on "Wit," and on the "Pleasures of Imagination," in which he founds art on the base of nature, and draws the principles of invention from dispositions inherent in the mind of man, with skill and elegance, such as his contemners will not easily attain.

As a describer of life and manners, he must be allowed to stand perhaps the first of the first rank. His humour, which, as Steele observes, is peculiar to himself, is so happily diffused as to give the grace of novelty to domestick scenes and daily occurrences. He never *outsteps the modesty of nature*, nor raises merriment or wonder by the violation of truth. His figures neither divert by distortion, nor amaze by aggravation. He copies life with so much fidelity, that he can be hardly said to invent; yet his exhibitions have an air so much original, that it is difficult to suppose them not merely the product of imagination.

As a teacher of wisdom, he may be confidently followed. His religion has nothing in it enthusiastick or superstitious: he appears neither weakly credulous nor wantonly sceptical; his morality is neither dangerously lax, nor impracticably rigid. All the enchantment of fancy, and all the cogency of argument, are employed to recommend to the reader his real interest, the care of pleasing the Author of his being. Truth is shewn sometimes as the phantom of a vision, sometimes appears half-veiled in an allegory; sometimes attracts regard in the robes of fancy, and sometimes steps forth in the confidence of reason. She wears a thousand dresses, and in all is pleasing.

"Mille habet ornatus, mille decenter habet."

His prose is the model of the middle style; on grave subjects not formal, on light occasions not groveling; pure without scrupulosity, and exact without apparent elabora-

tion; always equable, and always easy, without glowing words or pointed sentences. Addison never deviates from his track to snatch a grace; he seeks no ambitious ornaments, and tries no hazardous innovations. His page is always luminous, but never blazes in unexpected splendour.

It was apparently his principal endeavour to avoid all harshness and severity of diction; he is therefore sometimes verbose in his transitions and connections, and sometimes descends too much to the language of conversation; yet if his language had been less idiomatical, it might have lost somewhat of its genuine Anglicism. What he attempted, he performed; he is never feeble, and he did not wish to be energetick; he is never rapid, and he never stagnates. His sentences have neither studied amplitude, nor affected brevity: his periods, though not diligently rounded, are voluble and easy. Whoever wishes to attain an English style, familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious, must give his days and nights to the volumes of Addison.

HUGHES.

# HUGHES.

JOHN HUGHES, the son of a citizen of London, and of Anne Burgess, of an ancient family in Wiltshire, was born at Marlborough, July 29, 1677. He was educated at a private school; and though his advances in literature are in the "Biographia" very ostentatiously displayed, the name of his master is somewhat ungratefully concealed.

At nineteen he drew the plan of a tragedy; and paraphrased, rather too diffusely, the ode of Horace which begins *Integer Vitæ*.[1] To poetry he added the science of musick, in which he seems to have attained considerable skill, together with the practice of design, or rudiments of painting.

His studies did not withdraw him wholly from business, nor did business hinder him from study. He had a place in the office of ordnance, and was secretary to several commissions for purchasing lands necessary to secure the royal docks at Chatham and Portsmouth; yet found time to acquaint himself with modern languages.

In 1697 he published a poem on the "Peace of Ryswick;" and in 1699 another piece, called "The Court of Neptune," on the return of king William, which he addressed to Mr. Montague, the general patron of the followers of the Muses. The same year he produced a song on the duke of Gloucester's birth-day.

He did not confine himself to poetry, but cultivated other kinds of writing with great success; and about this

[1] Horace, *Odes*, i. 22.

time shewed his knowledge of human nature by an "Essay on the Pleasure of being deceived." In 1702 he published on the death of king William, a Pindarick ode called "The House of Nassau;" and wrote another paraphrase on the "Otium Divos" of Horace.

In 1703 his ode on Musick was performed at Stationers Hall; and he wrote afterwards six cantatas, which were set to musick by the greatest master of that time, and seem intended to oppose or exclude the Italian opera, an exotick and irrational entertainment, which has been always combated, and always has prevailed.

His reputation was now so far advanced, that the publick began to pay reverence to his name; and he was solicited to prefix a preface to the translation of Boccalini, a writer whose satirical vein cost him his life in Italy; but who never, I believe, found many readers in this country, even though introduced by such powerful recommendation.

He translated Fontenelle's "Dialogues of the Dead;" and his version was perhaps read at that time, but is now neglected; for by a book not necessary, and owing its reputation wholly to its turn of diction, little notice can be gained but from those who can enjoy the graces of the original. To the dialogues of Fontenelle he added two composed by himself; and, though not only an honest but a pious man, dedicated his work to the earl of Wharton. He judged skilfully enough of his own interest; for Wharton, when he went lord lieutenant to Ireland, offered to take Hughes with him, and establish him; but Hughes having hopes or promises from another man in power, of some provision more suitable to his inclination, declined Wharton's offer, and obtained nothing from the other.

He translated the "Miser" of Moliere; which he never offered to the Stage; and occasionally amused himself with making versions of favourite scenes in other plays.

Being now received as a wit among the wits, he paid his contributions to literary undertakings, and assisted both the "Tatler," "Spectator," and "Guardian." In 1712 he translated Vertot's "History of the Revolution of Portugal;" produced an "Ode to the Creator of the World, from the Fragments of Orpheus;" and brought upon the Stage an opera called "Calypso and Telemachus," intended to shew that the English language might be very happily adapted to musick. This was impudently opposed by those who were employed in the Italian opera; and, what cannot be told without indignation, the intruders had such interest with the duke of Shrewsbury, then lord chamberlain, who had married an Italian, as to obtain an obstruction of the profits, though not an inhibition of the performance.

There was at this time a project formed by Tonson for a translation of the "Pharsalia," by several hands; and Hughes englished the tenth book. But this design, as must often happen where the concurrence of many is necessary, fell to the ground; and the whole work was afterwards performed by Rowe.[1]

His acquaintance with the great writers of his time appears to have been very general; but of his intimacy with Addison there is a remarkable proof. It is told, on good authority, that "Cato" was finished and played by the persuasion. It had long wanted the last act, which he was desired by Addison to supply. If the request was sincere, it proceeded from an opinion, whatever it was, that did not last long; for when Hughes came in a week to shew him his first attempt, he found half an act written by Addison himself.

He afterwards published the works of Spenser, with a Life, a Glossary, and a "Discourse on Allegorical

[1] See *ante*, p. 311. The translation was not published till after Rowe's death.

Poetry;" a work for which he was well qualified, as a judge of the beauties of writing, but perhaps wanted an antiquary's knowledge of the obsolete words. He did not much revive the curiosity of the publick; for near thirty years elapsed before his edition was reprinted. The same year produced his "Apollo and Daphne," of which the success was very earnestly promoted by Steele, who, when the rage of party did not misguide him, seems to have been a man of boundless benevolence.

Hughes had hitherto suffered the mortifications of a narrow fortune; but in 1717 the lord chancellor Cowper set him at ease, by making him secretary to the Commissions of the Peace; in which he afterwards, by a particular request, desired his successor lord Parker to continue him. He had now affluence; but such is human life, that he had it when his declining health could neither allow him long possession nor quick enjoyment.

His last work was his tragedy, "The Siege of Damascus;" after which "a Siege" became a popular title. This play, which still continues on the Stage, and of which it is unnecessary to add a private voice to such continuance of approbation, is not acted or printed according to the author's original draught, or his settled intention. He had made Phocyas apostatize from his religion; after which the abhorrence of Eudocia would have been reasonable, his misery would have been just, and the horrors of his repentance exemplary. The players, however, required that the guilt of Phocyas should terminate in desertion to the enemy; and Hughes, unwilling that his relations should lose the benefit of his work, complied with the alteration.

He was now weak with a lingering consumption, and not able to attend the rehearsal; yet was so vigorous in his faculties, that only ten days before his death he wrote the dedication to his patron lord Cowper. On February

17, 1719-20, the play was represented, and the author died. He lived to hear that it was well received; but paid no regard to the intelligence, being then wholly employed in the meditations of a departing Christian.

A man of his character was undoubtedly regretted; and Steele devoted an essay, in the paper called "The Theatre," to the memory of his virtues. His life is written in the "Biographia" with some degree of favourable partiality; and an account of him is prefixed to his works, by his relation the late Mr. Duncombe, a man whose blameless elegance deserved the same respect.

The character of his genius I shall transcribe from the correspondence of Swift and Pope.

"A month ago," says Swift, "was sent me over, by a friend of mine, the works of John Hughes, Esquire. They are in prose and verse. I never heard of the man in my life, yet I find your name as a subscriber. He is too grave a poet for me; and I think among the *mediocrists*, in prose as well as verse." [1]

To this Pope returns: "To answer your question as to Mr. Hughes; what he wanted in genius, he made up as an honest man; but he was of the class you think him."

In Spence's collections Pope is made to speak of him with still less respect, as having no claim to poetical reputation but from his tragedy.

[1] Swift to Pope, Sept. 3, 1735. Scott's *Swift*, 2nd ed. vol. xviii. pp. 366-7.

SHEFFIELD,

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE.

# SHEFFIELD,

## BUCKINGHAMSHIRE.

JOHN SHEFFIELD, descended from a long series of illustrious ancestors,[1] was born in 1649, the son of Edmund, earl of Mulgrave, who died 1658. The young lord was put into the hands of a tutor, with whom he was so little satisfied, that he got rid of him in a short time, and, at an age not exceeding twelve years, resolved to educate himself. Such a purpose, formed at such an age, and successfully prosecuted, delights as it is strange, and instructs as it is real.

His literary acquisitions are more wonderful, as those years in which they are commonly made were spent by him in the tumult of a military life, or the gaiety of a court. When war was declared against the Dutch, he went at seventeen on board the ship in which prince Rupert and the duke of Albemarle sailed, with the command of the fleet; but by contrariety of winds they were restrained from action. His zeal for the king's service was recompensed by the command of one of the independent troops of horse, then raised to protect the coast.

Next year he received a summons to parliament, which, as he was then but eighteen years old, the earl of North-

[1] Mr. Peter Cunningham states that the poet was the great-grandson of the first Earl of Mulgrave, K.G., who distinguished himself at sea against the Spanish Armada, and whose monument is still to be seen at Hammersmith. The mother of the poet was Elizabeth Craufield, daughter of the Earl of Middlesex.

umberland censured as at least indecent, and his objection was allowed. He had a quarrel with the earl of Rochester, which he has perhaps too ostentatiously related, as Rochester's surviving sister, the lady Sandwich, is said to have told him with very sharp reproaches.

When another Dutch war (1672) broke out, he went again a volunteer in the ship which the celebrated lord Ossory commanded; and there made, as he relates, two curious remarks.

"I have observed two things, which I dare affirm, though not generally believed. One was, that the wind of a cannon-bullet, though flying never so near, is incapable of doing the least harm; and, indeed, were it otherwise, no man above deck would escape. The other was, that a great shot may be sometimes avoided, even as it flies, by changing one's ground a little; for, when the wind sometimes blew away the smoak, it was so clear a sun-shiny day that we could easily perceive the bullets (that were half-spent) fall into the water, and from thence bound up again among us, which gives sufficient time for making a step or two on any side; though, in so swift a motion, 'tis hard to judge well in what line the bullet comes, which, if mistaken, may by removing cost a man his life, instead of saving it."

His behaviour was so favourably represented by lord Ossory, that he was advanced to the command of the "Katherine," the best second-rate ship in the navy.

He afterwards raised a regiment of foot, and commanded it as colonel. The land-forces were sent ashore by prince Rupert; and he lived in the camp very familiarly with Schomberg. He was then appointed colonel of the old Holland regiment, together with his own; and had the promise of a garter, which he obtained in his twenty-fifth year. He was likewise made gentleman of the bed-chamber.

He afterwards went into the French service, to learn the art of war under Turenne, but staid only a short time. Being by the duke of Monmouth opposed in his pretensions to the first troop of horse-guards, he, in return, made Monmouth suspected by the duke of York. He was not long after, when the unlucky Monmouth fell into disgrace, recompensed with the lieutenancy of Yorkshire and the government of Hull.

Thus rapidly did he make his way both to military and civil honours and employments; yet, busy as he was, he did not neglect his studies, but at least cultivated poetry; in which he must have been early considered as uncommonly skilful, if it be true which is reported, that, when he was yet not twenty years old, his recommendation advanced Dryden to the laurel.

The Moors having besieged Tangier, he was sent (1680) with two thousand men to its relief. A strange story is told of danger to which he was intentionally exposed in a leaky ship, to gratify some resentful jealousy of the king, whose health he therefore would never permit at his table, till he saw himself in a safer place. His voyage was prosperously performed in three weeks, and the Moors without a contest retired before him.

In this voyage he composed the "Vision;" a licentious poem, such as was fashionable in those times, with little power of invention or propriety of sentiment.

At his return he found the King kind, who perhaps had never been angry; and he continued a wit and a courtier as before.

At the succession of king James, to whom he was intimately known, and by whom he thought himself beloved, he naturally expected still brighter sun-shine; but all know how soon that reign began to gather clouds. His expectations were not disappointed; he was immediately admitted into the privy council, and made lord chamber-

lain. He accepted a place in the high commission, without knowledge, as he declared after the Revolution, of its illegality. Having few religious scruples, he attended the king to mass, and kneeled with the rest; but had no disposition to receive the Romish Faith, or to force it upon others; for when the priests, encouraged by his appearances of compliance, attempted to convert him, he told them, as Burnet has recorded,[1] that he was willing to receive instruction, and that he had taken much pains to believe in God who made the world and all men in it; but that he should not be easily persuaded *that man was quite, and made God again.*

A pointed sentence is bestowed by successive transmission on the last whom it will fit: this censure of transubstantiation, whatever be its value, was uttered long ago by Anne Askew, one of the first sufferers for the Protestant Religion, who in the time of Henry VIII. was tortured in the Tower; concerning which there is reason to wonder that it was not known to the Historian of the Reformation.

In the Revolution he acquiesced, though he did not promote it. There was once a design of associating him in the invitation of the prince of Orange; but the earl of Shrewsbury discouraged the attempt, by declaring that Mulgrave would never concur. This king William afterwards told him, and asked what he would have done if the proposal had been made. *Sir*, said he, *I would have discovered it to the king whom I then served.* To which King William replied, *I cannot blame you.*

Finding king James irremediably excluded, he voted for the conjunctive sovereignty, upon this principle, that he thought the titles of the prince and his consort equal, and it would please the prince their protector to have a share

[1] Burnet's *Own Time*, vol. iii. p. 115, ed. 1823.

in the sovereignty. This vote gratified king William; yet, either by the king's distrust or his own discontent, he lived some years without employment. He looked on the king with malevolence, and, if his verses or his prose may be credited, with contempt. He was, notwithstanding this aversion or indifference, made marquis of Normanby (1694); but still opposed the court on some important questions; yet at last he was received into the cabinet council, with a pension of three thousand pounds.

At the accession of queen Anne, whom he is said to have courted when they were both young, he was highly favoured. Before her coronation (1702) she made him lord privy seal, and soon after lord lieutenant of the North-riding of Yorkshire. He was then named commissioner for treating with the Scots about the Union; and was made next year first duke of Normanby, and then of Buckinghamshire, there being suspected to be somewhere a latent claim to the title of Buckingham.

Soon after, becoming jealous of the duke of Marlborough, he resigned the privy seal, and joined the discontented Tories in a motion extremely offensive to the Queen, for inviting the princess Sophia to England. The Queen courted him back with an offer no less than that of the chancellorship, which he refused. He now retired from business, and built that house in the Park, which is now the Queen's,[1] upon ground granted by the Crown.

When the ministry was changed (1710), he was made lord chamberlain of the household, and concurred in all transactions of that time, except that he endeavoured to protect the Catalans. After the Queen's death, he became

[1] In 1761. Buckingham House was purchased for the Crown and settled on Queen Charlotte for life, being called the Queen's House. Here George I. frequently resided, and here took place the famous interview with Johnson. It was taken down in 1825, and the present palace erected on its site.

a constant opponent of the Court; and, having no public business, is supposed to have amused himself by writing his two tragedies. He died February 24, 1720-21.

He was thrice married; by his two first wives he had no children: by his third, who was the daughter of king James by the countess of Dorchester, and the widow of the earl of Anglesey, he had, besides other children that died early, a son born in 1716, who died in 1735, and put an end to the line of Sheffield. It is observable that the Duke's three wives were all widows. The Dutchess died in 1742.

His character is not to be proposed as worthy of imitation. His religion he may be supposed to have learned from Hobbes, and his morality was such as naturally proceeds from loose opinions. His sentiments with respect to women he picked up in the court of Charles, and his principles concerning property were such as a gaming-table supplies. He was censured as covetous, and has been defended by an instance of inattention to his affairs as if a man might not at once be corrupted by avarice and idleness. He is said, however, to have had much tenderness, and to have been very ready to apologise for his violences of passion.

He is introduced into the late collection only as a poet, and, if we credit the testimony of his contemporaries, he was a poet of no vulgar rank. But favour and flattery are now at an end; criticism is no longer softened by his bounties or awed by his splendor, and, being able to take a more steady view, discovers him to be a writer that sometimes glimmers, but rarely shines, feebly laborious and at best but pretty. His songs are upon common topicks; he hopes, and grieves, and repents, and despairs and rejoices, like any other maker of little stanzas. To be great, he hardly tries; to be gay, is hardly in his power.

In the "Essay on Satire"[1] he was always supposed to have had the help of Dryden. His "Essay on Poetry" is the great work, for which he was praised by Roscommon, Dryden, and Pope, and doubtless by many more whose eulogies have perished.

Upon this piece he appears to have set a high value; for he was all his life improving it by successive revisals, so that there is scarcely any poem to be found of which the last edition differs more from the first. Amongst other changes, mention is made of some compositions of Dryden, which were written after the first appearance of the "Essay."

At the time when this work first appeared, Milton's fame was not yet fully established, and therefore Tasso and Spenser were set before him. The last two lines were these. The Epick Poet, says he,

"Must above Milton's lofty flights prevail,
Succeed where great Torquato, and where greater Spenser fail."

The last line in succeeding editions was shortened, and the order of names continued; but now Milton is at last advanced to the highest place, and the passage thus adjusted,

"Must above Tasso's lofty flights prevail,
Succeed where Spenser, and ev'n Milton fail."

Amendments are seldom made without some token of a rent: *lofty* does not suit Tasso so well as Milton.

One celebrated line seems to be borrowed. The "Essay" calls a perfect character

"A faultless monster which the world ne'er saw."

[1] This is the Essay for the supposed authorship of which Dryden was waylaid and beaten. *Vid. supr. Life of Dryden*, p. 389.

Scaliger in his poems terms Virgil *sine labe monstrum*.[1] Sheffield can scarcely be supposed to have read Scaliger's poetry; perhaps he found the words in a quotation.

Of this "Essay," which Dryden has exalted so highly, it may be justly said that the precepts are judicious, sometimes new, and often happily expressed; but there are, after all the emendations, many weak lines, and some strange appearances of negligence; as, when he gives the laws of elegy, he insists upon connection and coherence, without which, says he,

> "'Tis epigram, 'tis point, 'tis what you will;
> But not an elegy, nor writ with skill,
> No "Panegyrick," nor a "Cooper's Hill."

Who would not suppose that Waller's "Panegyrick" and Denham's "Cooper's Hill" were Elegies?

His verses are often insipid; but his memoirs are lively and agreeable; he had the perspicuity and elegance of an historian, but not the fire and fancy of a poet.

[1] Johnson apparently refers to *Manes Catul. De Virgil. innocen. divin.*, p. 639 (edit. 1674) where Scaliger describes Virgil as, "O monstrum vitio carens."

# PRIOR.

# PRIOR.

MATTHEW PRIOR is one of those that have burst out from an obscure original to great eminence. He was born July 21, 1664, according to some, at Winburne in Dorsetshire,[1] of I know not what parents; others say that he was the son of a Joiner of London: he was perhaps willing enough to leave his birth unsettled,* in hope, like Don Quixote, that the historian of his actions might find him some illustrious alliance.

He is supposed to have fallen, by his father's death, into the hands of his uncle,[2] a vintner near Charing-cross, who sent him for some time to Dr. Busby at Westminster; but, not intending to give him any education beyond that of the school, took him, when he was well advanced in

* The difficulty of settling Prior's birth-place is great. In the register of his College he is called, at his admission by the President, *Matthew Prior* of *Winburn* in *Middlesex;* by himself next day, *Matthew Prior* of *Dorsetshire*, in which county, not in Middlesex, *Winborn*, or *Wimborne*, as it stands in the *Villare*, is found. When he stood candidate for his fellowship, five years afterwards, he was registered again by himself as of *Middlesex*. The last record ought to be preferred, because it was made upon oath. It is observable, that, as a native of *Winborne*, he is stiled *Filius Georgii Prior generosi;* not consistently with the common account of the meanness of his birth.—JOHNSON.

[1] Prior was born in Abbot Street, one mile from Wimborne Minster, in Dorsetshire. See Wilson's *De Foe*, vol. iii. p. 646.—P. CUNNINGHAM.

[2] His uncle, Samuel Prior, kept the Rummer Tavern at Charing Cross. See Cunningham's *Handbook of London*, ed. 1850, p. 433.

literature, to his own house; where the earl of Dorset, celebrated for patronage of genius, found him by chance, as Burnet relates,[1] reading Horace, and was so well pleased with his proficiency, that he undertook the care and cost of his academical education.

He entered his name in St. John's College at Cambridge in 1682, in his eighteenth year; and it may be reasonably supposed that he was distinguished among his contemporaries. He became a Bachelor,[2] as is usual, in four years; and two years afterwards wrote the poem on the *Deity*, which stands first in his volume.[3]

It is the established practice of that College to send every year to the earl of Exeter some poems upon sacred subjects, in acknowledgment of a benefaction enjoyed by them from the bounty of his ancestor. On this occasion were those verses written, which, though nothing is said of their success, seem to have recommended him to some notice; for his praise of the countess's music, and his lines on the famous picture of Seneca, afford reason for imagining that he was more or less conversant with that family.

The same year[4] he published the "City Mouse and Country Mouse," to ridicule Dryden's "Hind and Panther," in conjunction with Mr. Montague. There is a story * of

* Spence.—JOHNSON.[5]

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[1] Burnet's *Own Time*, ed. 1823, vol. vi. p. 65.

[2] Prior matriculated pensioner of St. John's College, July 5th, 1683, took his B.A. as eleventh Wrangler, 1686-7, M.A. in 1700. The M.A. degree was an ordinary one, but was granted in his absence. He was elected Fellow of St. John's, April 2nd, 1688.

[3] That is, in the splendid subscription folio of his works.

[4] *The Hind and Panther transversed to the story of the Country Mouse and the City Mouse.* 4to, 1687.

[5] Ed. Singer, p. 61.

great pain suffered, and of tears shed, on this occasion, by Dryden, who thought it hard that *an old man should be so treated by those to whom he had always been civil.* By tales like these is the envy raised by superior abilities every day gratified: when they are attacked, every one hopes to see them humbled; what is hoped is readily believed, and what is believed is confidently told. Dryden had been more accustomed to hostilities, than that such enemies should break his quiet; and if we can suppose him vexed, it would be hard to deny him sense enough to conceal his uneasiness.

The "City Mouse and Country Mouse" procured its authors more solid advantages than the pleasure of fretting Dryden; for they were both speedily preferred. Montague, indeed, obtained the first notice, with some degree of discontent, as it seems, in Prior, who probably knew that his own part of the performance was the best. He had not, however, much reason to complain; for he came to London, and obtained such notice, that (in 1691) he was sent to the Congress at The Hague as secretary to the embassy. In this assembly of princes and nobles, to which Europe has perhaps scarcely seen any thing equal, was formed the grand alliance against Lewis; which at last did not produce effects proportionate to the magnificence of the transaction.

The conduct of Prior, in this splendid initiation into public business, was so pleasing to king William, that he made him one of the gentlemen of his bedchamber; and he is supposed to have passed some of the next years in the quiet cultivation of literature and poetry.[1]

The death of Queen Mary (in 1695) produced a subject

[1] Prior's first epistle to Fleetwood Shepherd opens a volume of Miscellany Poems, published in 1692 by Gildon. Six of his poems appeared in Dryden's *Third Miscellany*, 1693, and two in Dryden's *Fourth Miscellany*, 1694. Ald. *Pr.* vol. i. p. 32.

for all the writers: perhaps no funeral was ever so poetically attended. Dryden, indeed, as a man discountenanced and deprived, was silent; but scarcely any other maker of verses omitted to bring his tribute of tuneful sorrow. An emulation of elegy was universal. Maria's praise was not confined to the English language, but fills a great part of the "Musæ Anglicanæ."

Prior, who was both a poet and a courtier, was too diligent to miss this opportunity of respect. He wrote a long ode,[1] which was presented to the king, by whom it was not likely to be ever read.[2]

In two years he was secretary to another embassy[3] at the treaty of Ryswick (in 1697); and next year had the same office at the court of France, where he is said to have been considered with great distinction.

As he was one day surveying the apartments at Versailles, being shewn the Victories of Lewis, painted, by Le Brun, and asked whether the king of England's palace had any such decorations; *The monuments of my Master's actions*, said he, *are to be seen everywhere but in his own house.* The pictures of Le Brun[4] are not only in themselves sufficiently ostentatious, but were explained by inscriptions so arrogant that Boileau and Racine thought it necessary to make them more simple.

[1] Ald. *Pr.* vol. i. p. 86.

[2] Mr. Cunningham here observes that in this year, 1695, appeared one of Prior's best performances, his *English Ballad* (Ald. *Pr.* vol. i. p. 77), in answer to Boileau's *Ode on the Taking of Namur*. Mr. Cunningham gives in full a letter of Prior's to Tonson, with instructions regarding this publication, discovered since Johnson wrote.

[3] He received, December 9th, 1697, the sum of 200 guineas, "as a reward for bringing over the Articles of Peace to their Excellencies the Lords Justices."—P. CUNNINGHAM.

[4] Charles Le Brun (1619-1690), was as successful a courtier as artist. The pictures alluded to were allegorical representations of the great events of the reign of Louis XIV.

He was in the following year at Loo with the king; from whom, after a long audience, he carried orders to England, and upon his arrival became under-secretary of state in the earl of Jersey's office; a post which he did not retain long, because Jersey was removed; but he was soon made commissioner of Trade.

This year (1700) produced one of his longest and most splendid compositions, the "Carmen Seculare," [1] in which he exhausts all his powers of celebration. I mean not to accuse him of flattery; he probably thought all that he writ, and retained as much veracity as can be properly exacted from a poet professedly encomiastic. King William supplied copious materials for either verse or prose. His whole life had been action, and none ever denied him the resplendent qualities of steady resolution and personal courage. He was really in Prior's mind what he represents him in his verses; he considered him as a hero, and was accustomed to say, that he praised others in compliance with the fashion, but that in celebrating king William he followed his inclination. To Prior gratitude would dictate praise, which reason would not refuse.

Among the advantages to arise from the future years of William's reign, he mentions *Societies for useful Arts*, and among them

> "Some that with care true eloquence shall teach,
> And to just idioms fix our doubtful speech;
> That from our writers distant realms may know
> The thanks we to our monarch owe,
> And schools profess our tongue through every land,
> That has invok'd his aid, or bless'd his hand." [2]

Tickell, in his "Prospect of Peace," [3] has the same hope of a new academy:

[1] *Carmen sæculare for the year* 1700. Fol. 1700. Ald. *Pr.* vol. i. p. 146.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 161.

[3] Published 1713. *Vid. infr. Life of Tickell.*

"In happy chains our daring language bound,
Shall sport no more in arbitrary sound."

Whether the similitude of those passages which exhibit the same thought on the same occasion proceeded from accident or imitation, is not easy to determine. Tickell might have been impressed with his expectation by Swift's "Proposal for ascertaining the English Language," then lately published.[1]

In the parliament that met in 1701, he was chosen representative of East Grinstead. Perhaps it was about this time that he changed his party; for he voted for the impeachment of those lords who had persuaded the king to the Partition-treaty, a treaty in which he had himself been ministerially employed.

A great part of queen Anne's reign was a time of war, in which there was little employment for negotiators, and Prior had therefore leisure to make or to polish verses. When the battle of Blenheim called forth all the verse-men, Prior, among the rest, took care to shew his delight in the increasing honour of his country by an Epistle to Boileau.[2]

He published, soon afterwards, a volume of poems, with the encomiastic character of his deceased patron the duke of Dorset: it began with the College Exercise,[3] and ended with the "Nut-brown Maid."[4]

The battle of Ramillies soon afterwards (in 1706) excited him to another effort of poetry. On this occasion he had fewer or less formidable rivals; and it would be not easy to name any other composition produced by that event which is now remembered.

[1] Published 1712. *Vid. infr.* vol. iii. *Life of Swift.*

[2] Published by Tonson, 1704, folio. Anonymous. Prior altered the text materially in subsequent editions. Ald. *Pr.* vol. i. p. 171.

[3] *Ode on Exodus iii.* 14. *Ibid.* p. 23.

[4] Published in 8vo. 1707. *Ibid.* p. 187.

Every thing has its day. Through the reigns of William and Anne no prosperous event passed undignified by poetry. In the last war, when France was disgraced and overpowered in every quarter of the globe, when Spain, coming to her assistance, only shared her calamities, and the name of an Englishman was reverenced through Europe, no poet was heard amidst the general acclamation; the fame of our counsellors and heroes was intrusted to the Gazetteer.

The nation in time grew weary of the war, and the queen grew weary of her ministers. The war was burdensome, and the ministers were insolent. Harley and his friends began to hope that they might, by driving the Whigs from court and from power, gratify at once the queen and the people. There was now a call for writers,[1] who might convey intelligence of past abuses, and shew the waste of public money, the unreasonable *Conduct of the Allies*, the avarice of generals, the tyranny of minions, and the general danger of approaching ruin.

For this purpose a paper called the "Examiner"[2] was periodically published, written, as it happened, by any wit of the party, and sometimes as is said by Mrs. Manley.[3] Some are owned by Swift; and one, in ridicule of Garth's verses to Godolphin upon the loss of his place, was written by Prior, and answered by Addison, who appears to have known the author either by conjecture or intelligence.

The Tories, who were now in power, were in haste to end the war; and Prior, being recalled (1710) to his former employment of making treaties, was sent (July 1711) pri-

[1] Among these Swift may be mentioned, who wrote for this purpose *A New Journey to Paris*.

[2] The ostensible editor was William Oldisworth. *Vid. infr.* Johnson on this subject in the lives of Garth and Addison.

[3] This lady, of greater vivacity than virtue, attained celebrity by a piece of political scandal called *The Atalantis*. She also wrote several plays and poems, and succeeded Swift in editing *The Examiner*. She died in 1724.

vately to Paris with propositions of peace.[1] He was remembered at the French court; and, returning in about a month, brought with him the Abbé Gaultier,[2] and M. Mesnager,[3] a minister from France, invested with full powers.

This transaction not being avowed, Mackay, the master of the Dover packet-boat, either zealously or officiously, seized Prior and his associates at Canterbury.[4] It is easily supposed that they were soon released.

The negotiation was begun at Prior's house, where the Queen's ministers met Mesnager (September 20, 1711), and entered privately upon the great business. The importance of Prior appears from the mention made of him by St. John in his Letter to the Queen.

"My Lord Treasurer moved, and all my Lords were of the same opinion, that Mr. Prior should be added to those who are empowered to sign; the reason for which is, because he, having personally treated with Monsieur de Torcy, is the best witness we can produce of the sense in which the general preliminary engagements are entered into: besides which, as he is the best versed in matters of trade of all your Majesty's servants who have been trusted in this secret, if you shall think fit to employ him in the future treaty of commerce, it will be of consequence that he has been a party concerned in concluding that convention which must be the rule of this treaty."

[1] See Boyer, *Hist. Queen Anne*, p. 517.

[2] François Gauthier, died 1720. This French ecclesiastic and diplomatist came to London as chaplain to the ambassador, and was employed three times in the negotiations previous to the Peace of Utrecht in 1711. In consequence of this success he received two abbeys in France, the archbishopric of Toulouse, a pension from the King of Spain, and another from Queen Anne.

[3] Mesnager (Nicolas le Baillif) (1658-1714), the French diplomatist sent secretly to England with negotiations for peace.

[4] See for an account of Prior as a plenipotentiary, Boyer's *Annals of Queen Anne's reign*, vol. x. p. 231, *et seq.*; vol. xi. pp. 258, 397.

The assembly of this important night was in some degree clandestine, the design of treating not being yet opened declared, and, when the Whigs returned to power, was aggravated to a charge of high treason; though, as Prior remarks in his imperfect answer to the Report of the *Committee of Secrecy*, no treaty ever was made without private interviews and preliminary discussions.

My business is not the history of the peace, but the life of Prior. The conferences began at Utrecht on the first of January (1711-12), and the English plenipotentiaries arrived on the fifteenth. The ministers of the different potentates conferred and conferred; but the peace advanced so slowly, that speedier methods were found necessary, and Bolingbroke was sent to Paris to adjust differences with less formality; Prior either accompanied him or followed him;[1] and after his departure had the appointments and authority of an ambassador, though no public character.

By some mistake of the Queen's orders, the court of France had been disgusted; and Bolingbroke says in his Letter, "Dear Mat, hide the nakedness of thy country, and give the best turn thy fertile brain will furnish thee with to the blunders of thy countrymen, who are not much better politicians than the French are poets."

Soon after the duke of Shrewsbury went on a formal embassy to Paris. It is related by Boyer,[2] that the intention was to have joined Prior in the same commission, but that Shrewsbury refused to be associated with a man so meanly born. Prior therefore continued to act without a title till the duke returned next year to England, and then he assumed the style and dignity of embassador.

[1] "With these instructions the Lord Bolingbroke set out for Dover on the 2nd of August, accompanied by Mr. Prior and the Abbot Gualtier." They arrived in Paris August 17th (1712). Boyer, *Hist. Reign of Queen Anne*, 1735, fol. p. 596.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 556.

But, while he continued in appearance a private man, he was treated with confidence by Lewis, who sent him with a letter to the Queen, written in favour of the elector of Bavaria. "I shall expect," says he, "with impatience the return of Mr. Prior, whose conduct is very agreeable to me." And while the Duke of Shrewsbury was still at Paris, Bolingbroke wrote to Prior thus: "Monsieur de Torcy has a confidence in you; make use of it, once for all, upon this occasion, and convince him thoroughly, that we must give a different turn to our parliament and our people, according to their resolution at this crisis."

Prior's public dignity and splendour commenced in August, 1713, and continued till the August following; but I am afraid that, according to the usual fate of greatness, it was attended with some perplexities and mortifications. He had not all that is customarily given to ambassadors: he hints to the Queen, in an imperfect poem, that he had no service of plate; and it appeared, by the debts which he contracted, that his remittances were not punctually made.

On the first of August, 1714,[2] ensued the downfall of the Tories and the degradation of Prior. He was recalled; but was not able to return, being detained by the debts which he had found it necessary to contract, and which were not discharged before March, though his old friend Montague was now at the head of the treasury.

He returned then as soon as he could, and was welcomed on the 25th of March by a warrant, but was, however, suffered to live in his own house, under the custody of the

[1] The reader who would pursue Prior's ambassadorial labours further than Johnson has here pursued them, should turn to Lord Hardwicke's *State Papers*, vol. ii. p. 489, where he will find three of Prior's despatches to Lord Bolingbroke at this period.—P. CUNNINGHAM. See also Boyer's *Hist. Queen Anne*, pp. 517-602.

[2] The day of Queen Anne's death.

messenger, till he was examined before a committee of the Privy Council, of which Mr. Walpole was chairman, and lord Coningsby, Mr. Stanhope, and Mr. Lechmere, were the principal interrogators; who, in this examination, of which there is printed an account not unentertaining, behaved with the boisterousness of men elated by recent authority. They are represented as asking questions sometimes vague, sometimes insidious, and writing answers different from those which they received. Prior, however, seems to have been overpowered by their turbulence; for he confesses that he signed what, if he had ever come before a legal judicature, he should have contradicted or explained away. The oath was administered by Boscawen, a Middlesex justice, who at last was going to write his attestation on the wrong side of the paper.

They were very industrious to find some charge against Oxford, and asked Prior, with great earnestness, who was present when the preliminary articles were talked of or signed at his house? He told them, that either the earl of Oxford or the duke of Shrewsbury was absent, but he could not remember which; an answer which perplexed them, because it supplied no accusation against either. "Could any thing be more absurd," says he, "or more inhuman, than to propose to me a question, by the answering of which I might, according to them, prove myself a traitor? And notwithstanding their solemn promise, that nothing which I could say should hurt myself, I had no reason to trust them: for they violated that promise about five hours after. However, I owned I was there present. Whether this was wisely done or no, I leave to my friends to determine."

When he had signed the paper, he was told by Walpole, that the committee were not satisfied with his behaviour, nor could give such an account of it to the Commons as might merit favour; and that they now thought a stricter

confinement necessary than to his own house. "Here," says he, "Boscawen played the moralist, and Coningsby the christian, but both very aukwardly." The messenger, in whose custody he was to be placed, was then called, and very decently asked by Coningsby, *if his house was secured by bars and bolts?* The messenger answered, *No*, with astonishment; at which Coningsby very angrily said, *Sir, you must secure this prisoner; it is for the safety of the nation: if he escape, you shall answer for it.*

They had already printed their report; and in this examination were endeavouring to find proofs.

He continued thus confined for some time; and Mr. Walpole (June 10, 1715) moved for an impeachment against him. What made him so acrimonious does not appear; he was by nature no thirster for blood. Prior was a week after committed to close custody, with orders that *no person should be admitted to see him without leave from the Speaker.*

When, two years after, an Act of Grace was passed, he was excepted, and continued still in custody, which he had made less tedious by writing his "Alma."[2] He was, however, soon after discharged.

He had now his liberty, but he had nothing else. Whatever the profit of his employments might have been, he had always spent it; and at the age of fifty-three was, with all his abilities, in danger of penury, having yet no solid revenue but from the fellowship of his college, which, when in his exaltation he was censured for retaining it, he said, he could live upon at last.

Being however generally known and esteemed, he was

[1] Thomas Earl Coningsby (1656-1729), an ardent supporter of the Revolution of 1688. He was twice vice-treasurer and paymaster of the forces in Ireland, and was one of the Select Committee appointed to examine the negotiations for the treaty of Utrecht.

[2] *Alma, or the Progress of the Mind*, Ald. *Pr.* vol. ii. p. 27.

encouraged to add other poems to those which he had printed, and to publish them by subscription. The expedient succeeded by the industry of many friends, who circulated the proposals,* and the care of some, who, it is said, withheld the money from him, lest he should squander it. The price of the volume was two guineas;[1] the whole collection was four thousand; to which lord Harley, the son of the earl of Oxford, to whom he had invariably adhered, added an equal sum for the purchase of Down-hall, which Prior was to enjoy during life, and Harley after his decease.

He had now, what wits and philosophers have often wished, the power of passing the day in contemplative tranquillity. But it seems that busy men seldom live long in a state of quiet. It is not unlikely that his health declined. He complains of deafness; *for*, says he, *I took little care of my ears while I was not sure if my head was my own.*

Of any occurrences in his remaining life I have found no account.[2] In a letter to Swift, "I have," says he, "treated lady Harriot at Cambridge. A Fellow of a College treat! and spoke verses to her in a gown and cap! What, the plenipotentiary, so far concerned in the damned peace at Utrecht! the man that makes up half the volume of terse prose, that makes up the report of the committee, speaking verses! *Sic est, homo sum.*"[3]

* Swift obtained *many* subscriptions for him in Ireland.—JOHNSON.

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[1] Mr. Cunningham remarks that "this is a noble folio, and, I believe, the largest sized volume in the whole range of English poetry."

[2] His last publication was *The Conversation, a Tale* (anonymous), printed by Tonson in 1720, folio. Ald. *Pr.* vol. ii. p. 233.

[3] Letter to Swift, Dec. 8th, 1719. Scott's *Swift*, vol. xvi. p. 329, 2nd ed.

He died at *Wimpole*, a seat of the earl of Oxford, on the eighteenth of September, 1721, and was buried in Westminster; where on a monument, for which, as the *last piece of human vanity*, he left five hundred pounds, is engraven this epitaph:

"Sui Temporis Historiam meditanti,
Paulatim obrepens Febris
Operi simul & Vitæ filum abrupit,
Sept. 18. An. Dom. 1721. Ætat. 57.
H. S. E.
Vir Eximius
Serenissimis
Regi Gulielmo Reginæque Mariæ
In Congressione Fœderatorum
Hagæ anno 1690 celebrata,
Deinde Magnæ Britanniæ Legatis
Tum iis,
Qui anno 1697 Pacem Ryswicki confecerunt,
Tum iis,
Qui apud Gallos annis proximis Legationem obierunt;
Eodem etiam anno 1697 in Hibernia
Secretarius;
Nec non in utroque Honorabili confessu
Eorum,
Qui anno 1700 ordinandis Commercii negotiis,
Quique anno 1711 dirigendis Portorii rebus,
Præsidebant,
Commissionarius;
Postremo
Ab Anna
Felicissimæ memoriæ Reginâ
Ad Ludovicum XIV. Galliæ Regem
Missus anno 1711
De Pace stabilienda,
(Pace etiamnum durante
Diuque ut boni jam omnes sperant duratura)
Cum summa potestate Legatus.
MATTHÆUS PRIOR Armiger;
Qui

Hos omnes, quibus cumulatus est, Titulos
Humanitatis, Ingenii, Eruditionis laude
Superavit;
Cui enim nascenti faciles arriserant Musæ.
Hunc Puerum Schola hic Regia perpolivit;
Juvenem in Collegio Sti. Johannis
Cantabrigia optimis Scientiis instruxit;
Virum denique auxit; & perfecit
Multa cum viris Principibus consuetudo;
Ita natus, ita institutus,
A Vatum Choro avelli nunquam potuit,
Sed solebat sæpe rerum Civilium gravitatem
Amœniorum Literarum Studiis condire:
Et cum omne adeo Poetices genus
Haud infeliciter tentaret,
Tum in Fabellis concinne lepideque texendis
Mirus Artifex
Neminem habuit parem.
Hæc liberalis animi oblectamenta;
Quam nullo Illi labore constiterint,
Facile ii perspexere, quibus usus est Amici;
Apud quos Urbanitatum & Leporum plenus
Cum ad rem, quæcunque forte inciderat,
Aptè variè copiosèque alluderet,
Interea nihil quæsitum, nihil vi expressum
Videbatur,
Sed omnia ultro effluere,
Et quasi jugi è fonte affatim exuberare,
Ita Suos tandem dubios reliquit,
Essetne in Scriptis, Poeta Elegantior,
An in Convictu, Comes Jucundior.

Of Prior, eminent as he was, both by his abilities and station, very few memorials have been left by his contemporaries; the account therefore must now be destitute of his private character and familiar practices. He lived at a time when the rage of party detected all which it was any man's interest to hide; and as little ill is heard of Prior, it is certain that not much was known. He was not afraid

of provoking censure; for when he forsook the Whigs,* under whose patronage he first entered the world, he became a Tory so ardent and determinate, that he did not willingly consort with men of different opinions. He was one of the sixteen Tories[1] who met weekly, and agreed to address each other by the title of *Brother;* and seems to have adhered, not only by concurrence of political designs, but by peculiar affection, to the earl of Oxford and his family. With how much confidence he was trusted, has been already told.

He was however, in Pope's† opinion, fit only to make verses, and less qualified for business than Addison himself. This was surely said without consideration. Addison, exalted to a high place, was forced into degradation by the sense of his own incapacity; Prior, who was employed by men very capable of estimating his value, having been secretary to one embassy, had, when great abilities were again wanted, the same office another time; and was, after so much experience of his knowledge and dexterity, at last sent to transact a negotiation in the highest degree arduous and important; for which he was qualified, among other requisites, in the opinion of Bolingbroke, by his influence upon the French minister, and by skill in questions of commerce above other men.[2]

* Spence.—JOHNSON.[3] † *Ibid.*[4]

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[1] The sixteen consisted of Oxford, Bolingbroke, Hamilton, Ormond, Shrewsbury, Peterborough, Harcourt, Arran, Rivers, Masham, George Granville, Sir William Wyndham, Prior, Swift, Lewis and Arbuthnot. —P. CUNNINGHAM.

[2] He was tall, thin, and latterly deaf. Portraits of him are preserved at St. John's College, Cambridge, by La Belle; at Stationers' Hall, London, and at Welbeck (a half-length in black). He sat to Richardson for Lord Harley, and the engraving made by Vertue from Richardson's "excellent

[3] Ed. Singer, p. 2. [4] *Ibid.* p. 175.

Of his behaviour in the lighter parts of life, it is too late to get much intelligence. One of his answers to a boastful Frenchman has been related, and to an impertinent he made another equally proper. During his embassy, he sat at the opera by a man, who, in his rapture, accompanied with his own voice the principal singer. Prior fell to railing at the performer with all the terms of reproach that he could collect, till the Frenchman, ceasing from his song, began to expostulate with him for his harsh censure of a man who was confessedly the ornament of the stage. "I know all that," says the ambassador, "*mais il chante si haut, que je ne sçaurois vous entendre.*"

In a gay French company, where every one sung a little song or stanza, of which the burden was, "Bannissons la Melancholie;" when it came to his turn to sing, after the performance of a young lady that sat next him, he produced these extemporary lines:

"Mais celle voix, et ces beaux yeux,
Font Cupidon trop dangereux,
Et je suis triste quand je crie
Bannissons la Melancholie."

Tradition represents him as willing to descend from the dignity of the poet and the statesman to the low delights of mean company. His Chloe probably was sometimes ideal; but the woman with whom he cohabited was a despicable drab* of the lowest species. One of his wenches,

* Spence.—JOHNSON.[1]

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picture" for so Prior himself calls it, is particularly alluded to in a letter from Prior to Swift of May 4th, 1720, printed in Scott, vol. xvi. p. 339. His bust in marble, said to be by Roubillac, but certainly not by him, was bought for 130 guineas by the minister Sir Robert Peel, at the sale at Stowe. The best bust of him is on his monument in Westminster Abbey. Lord Oxford had a portrait of him by Rigaud. His London house was in Duke Street, Westminster, facing Charles Street.—P. CUNNINGHAM.

[1] Ed. Singer, pp. 2, 49.

perhaps Chloe, while he was absent from his house, stole his plate, and ran away; as was related by a woman who had been his servant. Of this propensity to sordid converse I have seen an account so seriously ridiculous, that it seems to deserve insertion.*

"I have been assured that Prior, after having spent the evening with Oxford, Bolingbroke, Pope, and Swift, would go and smoke a pipe, and drink a bottle of ale, with a common soldier and his wife, in Long-Acre, before he went to bed; not from any remains of the lowness of his original, as one said, but, I suppose, that his faculties

"—Strain'd to the height,
In that celestial colloquy sublime,
Dazzled and spent, sunk down, and sought repair."

Poor Prior! why was he so *strained*, and in such need of *repair*, after a conversation with men not, in the opinion of the world, much wiser than himself? But such are the conceits of speculatists, who *strain* their *faculties* to find in a mine what lies upon the surface.

His opinions, so far as the means of judging are left us, seem to have been right; but his life was, it seems, irregular, negligent, and sensual.

Prior has written with great variety, and his variety has made him popular. He has tried all styles, from the grotesque to the solemn, and has not so failed in any as to incur derision or disgrace.

His works may be distinctly considered as comprising Tales, Love-verses, Occasional Poems, "Alma," and "Solomon."

His Tales have obtained general approbation, being written with great familiarity and great spriteliness: the language is easy, but seldom gross, and the numbers

* Richardsoniana.—JOHNSON.[1]

[1] 1776, p. 275.

smooth, without appearance of care. Of these Tales there are only four. The "Ladle;"[1] which is introduced by a Preface, neither necessary nor pleasing, neither grave nor merry. "Paulo Purganti;"[2] which has likewise a Preface, but of more value than the Tale. "Hans Carvel,"[3] not over-decent; and "Protogenes and Apelles,"[4] an old story, mingled, by an affectation not disagreeable, with modern images. The "Young Gentleman in Love"[5] has hardly a just claim to the title of *a Tale*. I know not whether he be the original author of any Tale which he has given us. The Adventure of "Hans Carvel" has passed through many successions of merry wits; for it is to be found in Ariosto's "Satires," and is perhaps yet older. But the merit of such stories is the art of telling them.

In his Amorous Effusions he is less happy; for they are not dictated by nature or by passion, and have neither gallantry nor tenderness. They have the coldness of Cowley, without his wit, the dull exercises of a skilful versifyer, resolved at all adventures to write something about Chloe, and trying to be amorous by dint of study. His fictions therefore are mythological. Venus, after the example of the Greek Epigram,[6] asks when she was seen *naked and bathing*. Then *Cupid* is *mistaken*; then *Cupid* is *disarmed*; then he loses his darts to *Ganymede*; then *Jupiter* sends him a summons by *Mercury*. Then *Chloe* goes a-hunting, with an *ivory quiver graceful at her side*; Diana mistakes her for one of her nymphs, and Cupid laughs at the blunder. All this is surely despicable;[7]

[1] Ald. *Pr.* vol. i. p. 133.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 128.
[3] *Ibid.* p. 122.
[4] *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 5.
[5] *Ibid.* p. 117.
[6] This Epigram is ascribed to Plato in *Anth. Plan.* iv. 160, and was called forth by the beauty of Praxiteles' Cnidian Aphrodite.
[7] "When Prior wrote, Venus and Cupid were not so obsolete as now. . . There is a fashion in these things which the Doctor seems to have forgotten. But what shall we say of his old fusty, rusty remarks on it.

and even when he tries to act the lover, without the help of gods or goddesses, his thoughts are unaffecting or remote. He talks not *like a man of this world*.

The greatest of all his amorous essays is "Henry and Emma;"[1] a dull and tedious dialogue, which excites neither esteem for the man nor tenderness for the woman. The example of Emma, who resolves to follow an outlawed murderer wherever fear and guilt shall drive him, deserves no imitation; and the experiment by which Henry tries the lady's constancy, is such as must end either in infamy to her, or in disappointment to himself.

His occasional Poems necessarily lost part of their value, as their occasions, being less remembered, raised less emotion. Some of them, however, are preserved by their inherent excellence. The burlesque of Boileau's "Ode on Namur"[2] has, in some parts, such airiness and levity as will always procure it readers, even among those who cannot compare it with the original. The Epistle to Boileau[3] is not so happy. The Poems to the King[4] are now perused only by young students, who read merely that they may learn to write; and of the "Carmen Seculare,"[5] I cannot but suspect that I might praise or censure it by caprice, without danger of detection; for who can be supposed to have laboured through it? Yet the time has been when this neglected work was so popular, that it was translated into Latin by no common master.[6]

upon *Henry and Emma?* I agree with him, that morally considered both the knight and his lady are bad characters . . . but when the critic calls it a dull dialogue who will believe him? There are few readers of poetry, of either sex, in this country, who cannot remember how that enchanting piece has bewitched them."—COWPER, Letter to Unwin, Jan. 5, 1782.

[1] Ald. *Pr.* vol. i. p. 200.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 73.
[3] *Ibid.* p. 171.
[4] *Ibid.* pp. 63, 86.
[5] *Ibid.* p. 146.
[6] Mr. Cunningham says this was Thomas Dibben, whom Prior calls

His Poem on the battle of Ramillies[1] is necessarily tedious by the form of the stanza: an uniform mass of ten lines, thirty-five times repeated, inconsequential and slightly connected, must weary both the ear and the understanding. His imitation of Spenser, which consists principally in *I ween* and *I weet*, without exclusion of later modes of speech, makes his poem neither ancient nor modern. His mention of *Mars* and *Bellona*, and his comparison of Marlborough to the Eagle that bears the thunder of *Jupiter*, are all puerile and unaffecting; and yet more despicable is the long tale told by *Lewis* in his despair, of *Brute* and *Troynovante*, and the teeth of *Cadmus*, with his similies of the raven and eagle, and wolf and lion. By the help of such easy fictions, and vulgar topicks, without acquaintance with life, and without knowledge of art or nature, a poem of any length, cold and lifeless like this, may be easily written on any subject.

In his Epilogues to "Phædra"[2] and to "Lucius,"[3] he is very happily facetious; but in the Prologue before the Queen,[4] the pedant has found his way, with Minerva, Perseus, and Andromeda.

His Epigrams and lighter pieces are, like those of others, sometimes elegant, sometimes trifling, and sometimes dull; among the best are the "Camelion,"[5] and the epitaph on "John and Joan."[6]

Scarcely any one of our poets has written so much, and translated so little: the version of Callimachus[7] is sufficiently licentious; the paraphrase on St. Paul's Exhortation to Charity is eminently beautiful.[8]

in the preface to his poems, "his good friend and schoolfellow." Dibden died in 1741.

[1] Ald. *Pr.* vol. i. p. 226.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 250.
[3] *Ibid.* p. 252.
[4] *Ibid.* p. 169.
[5] *Ibid.* p. 178.
[6] *Ibid.* p. 257.
[7] *Ibid.* p. 12.
[8] *Ibid.* p. 21.

"Alma"[1] is written in professed imitation of "Hudibras," and has at least one accidental resemblance: "Hudibras" wants a plan, because it is left imperfect; "Alma" is imperfect, because it seems never to have had a plan. Prior appears not to have proposed to himself any drift or design, but to have written the casual dictates of the present moment.

What Horace said when he imitated Lucilius, might be said of Butler by Prior, his numbers were not smooth or neat: Prior excelled him in versification, but he was, like Horace, *inventore minor*;[2] he had not Butler's exuberance of matter and variety of illustration. The spangles of wit which he could afford, he knew how to polish; but he wanted the bullion of his master. Butler pours out a negligent profusion, certain of the weight, but careless of the stamp. Prior has comparatively little, but with that little he makes a fine shew. "Alma" has many admirers, and was the only piece among Prior's works of which Pope said that he should wish to be the author.[3]

"Solomon"[4] is the work to which he entrusted the protection of his name, and which he expected succeeding ages to regard with veneration. His affection was natural; it had undoubtedly been written with great labour, and who is willing to think that he has been labouring in vain? He had infused into it much knowledge and much thought, had often polished it to elegance, often dignified it with splendour, and sometimes heightened it to sublimity: he perceived in it many excellences, and did not discover that it wanted that without which all others are of small avail, the power of engaging attention and alluring curiosity.

Tediousness is the most fatal of all faults; negligences or errors are single and local, but tediousness pervades the whole; other faults are censured and forgotten, but the

[1] Ald. *Pr.* vol. i. p. 27.
[2] Hor. *Sat.* i. 10, 48.
[3] Ruffhead's *Life of Pope*, p. 482.
[4] Ald. *Pr.* vol. ii. p. 80.

power of tediousness propagates itself. He that is weary the first hour, is more weary the second; as bodies forced into motion, contrary to their tendency, pass more and more slowly through every successive interval of space.

Unhappily this pernicious failure is that which an author is least able to discover. We are seldom tiresome to ourselves; and the act of composition fills and delights the mind with change of language and succession of images; every couplet when produced is new, and novelty is the great source of pleasure. Perhaps no man ever thought a line superfluous when he first wrote it, or contracted his work till his ebullitions of invention had subsided. And even if he should controul his desire of immediate renown, and keep his work *nine years* unpublished, he will be still the author, and still in danger of deceiving himself; and if he consults his friends, he will probably find men who have more kindness than judgement, or more fear to offend than desire to instruct.

The tediousness of this poem proceeds not from the uniformity of the subject, for it is sufficiently diversified, but from the continued tenour of the narration; in which Solomon relates the successive vicissitudes of his own mind, without the intervention of any other speaker, or the mention of any other agent, unless it be Abra; the reader is only to learn what he thought, and to be told that he thought wrong. The event of every experiment is foreseen, and therefore the process is not much regarded.

Yet the work is far from deserving to be neglected. He that shall peruse it will be able to mark many passages, to which he may recur for instruction or delight; many from which the poet may learn to write, and the philosopher to reason.

If Prior's poetry be generally considered, his praise will be that of correctness and industry, rather than of compass of comprehension, or activity of fancy. He never made

any effort of invention: his greater pieces are only tissues of common thoughts; and his smaller, which consist of light images or single conceits, are not always his own. I have traced him among the French Epigrammatists, and have been informed that he poached for prey among obscure authors. The "Thief and the Cordelier" is, I suppose, generally considered as an original production; with how much justice this Epigram may tell, which was written by Georgius Sabinus,[1] a poet now little known or read, though once the friend of Luther and Melancthon:

"De Sacerdote Furem consolante.

Quidam sacrificus furem comitatus euntem
Huc ubi dat sontes carnificina neci.
Ne sis mœstus, ait; summi conviva Tonantis
Jam cum cœlitibus (si modo credis) eris.
Ille gemens, si vera mihi solatia præbes,
Hospes apud superos sis meus oro, refert.
Sacrificus contra; mihi non convivia fas est
Ducere, jejunans hac edo luce nihil."

What he has valuable he owes to his diligence and his judgement. His diligence has justly placed him amongst the most correct of the English poets; and he was one of the first that resolutely endeavoured at correctness. He never sacrifices accuracy to haste, nor indulges himself in contemptuous negligence, or impatient idleness; he has no careless lines, or entangled sentiments; his words are nicely selected, and his thoughts fully expanded. If this part of his character suffers any abatement, it must be from the disproportion of his rhymes, which have not always sufficient consonance, and from the admission of broken lines into his "Solomon;" but perhaps he thought

[1] G. Sabinus (1508-1560), one of Melancthon's scholars, who in 1536 married his daughter. He made his reputation in Germany by his first poem, *Res Gestæ Cæsarum Germanorum*.

like Cowley, that hemistichs ought to be admitted into heroic poetry.

He had apparently such rectitude of judgement as secured him from every thing that approached to the ridiculous or absurd; but as laws operate in civil agency not to the excitement of virtue, but the repression of wickedness, so judgement in the operations of intellect can hinder faults, but not produce excellence. Prior is never low, nor very often sublime. It is said by Longinus[1] of Euripides, that he forces himself sometimes into grandeur by violence of effort, as the lion[2] kindles his fury by the lashes of his own tail. Whatever Prior obtains above mediocrity seems the effort of struggle and of toil. He has many vigorous but few happy lines; he has every thing by purchase, and nothing by gift; he had no *nightly visitations* of the Muse, no infusions of sentiment or felicities of fancy.

His diction, however, is more his own than that of any among the successors of Dryden; he borrows no lucky turns, or commodious modes of language, from his predecessors. His phrases are original, but they are sometimes harsh; as he inherited no elegances, none has he bequeathed. His expression has every mark of laborious study; the line seldom seems to have been formed at once; the words did not come till they were called, and were then put by constraint into their places, where they do their duty, but do it sullenly. In his greater compositions there may be found more rigid stateliness than graceful dignity.

Of versification he was not negligent: what he received from Dryden he did not lose; neither did he increase the difficulty of writing, by unnecessary severity, but uses Triplets and Alexandrines without scruple. In his Preface to "Solomon"[3] he proposes some improvements, by

[1] *De Sublim.* § 15.

[2] From Hom. *Il.* xx. 170, 171, quoted by Longinus.

[3] *Preface to Solomon*, Ald. *Pr.* vol. ii. p. 80.

extending the sense from one couplet to another, with variety of pauses. This he has attempted, but without success; his interrupted lines are unpleasing, and his sense as less distinct is less striking.

He has altered the Stanza of Spenser, as a house is altered by building another in its place of a different form. With how little resemblance he has formed his new Stanza to that of his master, these specimens will shew.

SPENSER.

"She flying fast from heaven's hated face,
And from the world that her discover'd wide,
Fled to the wasteful wilderness apace,
From living eyes her open shame to hide,
And lurk'd in rocks and caves long unespy'd.
But that fair crew of knights, and Una fair,
Did in that castle afterwards abide,
To rest themselves, and weary powers repair,
Where store they found of all, that dainty was and rare."

PRIOR.

"To the close rock the frighted raven flies,
Soon as the rising eagle cuts the air:
The shaggy wolf unseen and trembling lies,
When the hoarse roar proclaims the lion near.
Ill-starr'd did we our forts and lines forsake,
To dare our British foes to open fight:
Our conquests we by stratagem should make:
Our triumph had been founded in our flight.
'Tis ours, by craft and by surprise to gain:
'Tis theirs, to meet in arms, and battle in the plain."[1]

By this new structure of his lines he has avoided difficulties; nor am I sure that he has lost any of the power of pleasing; but he no longer imitates Spenser.

[1] *An Ode* inscribed to the queen, on the glorious success of her Majesty's Arms, 1706. Ald. *Pr.* vol. i. p. 236.

Some of his poems are written without regularity of measures; for, when he commenced poet, we had not recovered from our Pindarick infatuation; but he probably lived to be convinced that the essence of verse is order and consonance.

His numbers are such as mere diligence may attain; they seldom offend the ear, and seldom sooth it; they commonly want airiness, lightness, and facility; what is smooth, is not soft. His verses always roll, but they seldom flow.

A survey of the life and writings of Prior may exemplify a sentence which he doubtless understood well, when he read Horace at his uncle's; *the vessel long retains the scent which it first receives.*[1] In his private relaxation he revived the tavern, and in his amorous pedantry he exhibited the college. But on higher occasions, and nobler subjects, when habit was overpowered by the necessity of reflection, he wanted not wisdom as a statesman, nor elegance as a poet.

[1] Hor. *Epist.* i. 2. 69.

# CONGREVE.

# CONGREVE.

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

Neither the time nor place of his birth are certainly known:[2] if the inscription upon his monument be true, he was born in 1672. For the place; it was said by himself that he owed his nativity to England, and by every body else that he was born in Ireland. Southern mentioned him with sharp censure, as a man that meanly disowned his native country. The biographers assign his nativity to Bardsa, near Leeds in Yorkshire, from the account given by himself, as they suppose, to Jacob.[3]

To doubt whether a man of eminence has told the truth about his own birth, is, in appearance, to be very deficient

[1] For *Various Readings* in this Life, see Boswell's *Johnson*, vol. iv. p. 19.

[2] He was baptized at Bardsey, near Leeds, Feb. 10th, 1669-70. Malone's *Dryden*, vol. i. p. 225.

[3] Giles Jacob. See his *Poetical Register, or Lives, &c., of the English Dramatic Poets*, 1719, p. 41.

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

Wherever Congreve was born, he was educated first at Kilkenny,[1] and afterwards at Dublin, his father having some military employment that stationed him in Ireland: but after having passed through the usual preparatory studies, as may be reasonably supposed with great celerity and success, his father thought it proper to assign him a profession, by which something might be gotten; and about the time of the Revolution sent him, at the age of sixteen,[2] to study law in the Middle Temple, where he lived for several years, but with very little attention to Statutes or Reports.

His disposition to become an author appeared very early, as he very early felt that force of imagination, and possessed that copiousness of sentiment, by which intellectual pleasure can be given. His first performance was a novel, called "Incognita, or Love and Duty reconciled:"[3] It is

[1] Mr. Gosse (p. 15) describes Kilkenny as the "Eton of Ireland." One of Congreve's schoolfellows was Jonathan Swift, who was three years his senior, and left Kilkenny in 1682 for Trinity College, Dublin, where he was in 1685 joined by Congreve.

[2] As we have the register of Congreve's baptism in 1669-70, he must have been twenty-one when he was admitted to the Middle Temple, March 17th, 1690-91.

[3] *Incognita; or Love and Duty Reconciled.* A Novel. Printed for Peter Buck, at the sign of the Temple, near Temple Bar in Fleet Street, 1692.

praised by the biographers, who quote some part of the preface, that is indeed, for such a time of life, uncommonly judicious. I would rather praise it than read it.

His first dramatick labour was the "Old Batchelor;" of which he says, in his defence against Collier, "that comedy was written, as several know, some years before it was acted. When I wrote it, I had little thoughts of the stage; but did it, to amuse myself, in a slow recovery from a fit of sickness. Afterwards, through my indiscretion, it was seen, and in some little time more it was acted; and I, through the remainder of my indiscretion, suffered myself to be drawn in, to the prosecution of a difficult and thankless study, and to be involved in a perpetual war with knaves and fools."[1]

There seems to be a strange affectation in authors of appearing to have done every thing by chance. The "Old Batchelor" was written for amusement, in the languor of convalescence. Yet it is apparently composed with great elaborateness of dialogue, and incessant ambition of wit. The age of the writer considered. it is indeed a very wonderful performance; for, whenever written, it was acted (1693) when he was not more than twenty-one[2] years old; and was then recommended by Mr. Dryden, Mr. Southern, and Mr. Maynwaring. Dryden said that he never had seen such a first play; but they found it deficient in some things requisite to the success of its exhibition, and by their greater experience fitted it for the stage. Southern used to relate of one comedy, probably of this, that when Congreve read it to the players, he pronounced it so wretchedly that they had almost rejected it; but they

[1] Two beautiful manorial gardens dispute the honour of being the birthplace of the *Old Bachelor*, that of Stratton Hall and that of Aldermaston in Berkshire. Gosse, p. 23.

[2] Twenty-three. For an account of the singular success of this play, see Cibber's *Lives of the Poets*, vol. iv. p. 87.

were afterwards so well persuaded of its excellence, that, for half a year before it was acted, the manager allowed its author the privilege of the house.

Few plays have ever been so beneficial to the writer; for it procured him the patronage of Halifax,[1] who immediately made him one of the commissioners for licensing coaches, and soon after gave him a place in the pipe-office, and another in the customs of six hundred pounds a year.[2] Congreve's conversation must surely have been at least equally pleasing with his writings.

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

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

[1] Charles Montague, who was made Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1694, and became Lord Halifax in 1700.

[2] Mr. Gosse (p. 48) shows the improbability of Congreve's possession of these sinecures.

Yet this gay comedy, when all these deductions are made, will still remain the work of very powerful and fertile faculties: the dialogue is quick and sparkling, the incidents such as seize the attention, and the wit so exuberant that it *o'er-informs its tenement.*

Next year he gave another specimen of his abilities in "The Double Dealer," [1] which was not received with equal kindness. He writes to his patron the lord Halifax a dedication, in which he endeavours to reconcile the reader to that which found few friends among the audience. These apologies are always useless; *de gustibus non est disputandum;* men may be convinced, but they cannot be pleased, against their will. But though taste is obstinate, it is very variable, and time often prevails when arguments have failed.

Queen Mary conferred upon both those plays the honour of her presence; and when she died, soon after, Congreve testified his gratitude by a despicable effusion of elegiac pastoral; [2] a composition in which all is unnatural, and yet nothing is new.

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

[1] Acted at the Theatre Royal, in November, 1693, and published December 4th, 1693, with the date 1694 on the title-page. With *The Double Dealer* was published Dryden's epistle, *To my dear Friend Mr. Congreve*, predicting Congreve's literary success, and concluding with the celebrated lines:—

"Be kind to my remains: and oh! defend,
Against your judgment, your departed friend!
Let not the insulting foe my fame pursue,
But shade those laurels which descend to you."

[2] Cibber's *Lives of the Poets*, vol. iv. p. 88.

had their lucky days; and Shaftesbury himself, though he had no religion, was said to regard predictions. The *Sailor* is not accounted very natural, but he is very pleasant.[1]

With this play was opened the New Theatre, under the direction of Betterton the tragedian; where he exhibited two years afterwards (1697) "The Mourning Bride,"[2] a tragedy, so written as to shew him sufficiently qualified for either kind of dramatick poetry.

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

But whatever objections may be made either to his comic or tragick excellence, they are lost at once in the blaze of admiration, when it is remembered that he had produced these four plays before he had passed his twenty-fifth year;[3] before other men, even such as are some time to shine in eminence, have passed their probation of literature, or presume to hope for any other notice than such as is bestowed on diligence and inquiry. Among all the efforts of early genius which literary history records, I

[1] Mr. Gosse (p. 70) observes that *Love for Love* has been commonly accounted Congreve's masterpiece. It survived on the stage for more than a century. Hazlitt saw it played, and says of it, "It still acts, and is still acted well."

[2] *The Mourning Bride* was probably brought out in February, 1697, since the first edition of the play appeared on March 11th of that year. See Johnson on a favourite passage in this play. Boswell's *Johnson*, vol. ii. p. 90.

[3] Twenty-seventh.

doubt whether any one can be produced that more surpasses the common limits of nature than the plays of Congreve.

About this time began the long-continued controversy between Collier [1] and the poets. In the reign of Charles the First the Puritans had raised a violent clamour against the drama, which they considered as an entertainment not lawful to Christians, an opinion held by them in common with the church of Rome; and Prynne published "Histriomastix," [2] a huge volume, in which stage-plays were censured. The outrages and crimes of the Puritans brought afterwards their whole system of doctrine into disrepute, and from the Restoration the poets and the players were left at quiet; for to have molested them would have had the appearance of tendency to puritanical malignity.

This danger, however, was worn away by time; and Collier, a fierce and implacable Nonjuror, knew that an attack upon the theatre would never make him suspected for a Puritan; he therefore (1698) published "A short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage," [3] I believe with no other motive than religious zeal and honest indignation. He was formed for a controvertist; with sufficient learning; with diction vehement and pointed, though often vulgar and incorrect; with unconquerable pertinacity; with wit in the highest degree keen and sarcastick; and with all those powers exalted and invigorated by just confidence in his cause.

Thus qualified, and thus incited, he walked out to battle, and assailed at once most of the living writers, from Dryden

[1] See Macaulay's character of Collier, *Essay on the Comic Dramatists of the Restoration*, Essays (ed. 1868), vol. i. pp. 167-70.

[2] *Histrio mastix. The Player's Scourge, or Actor's Tragedie.* 2 parts. Lond. 1633. For the publication of this work Prynne was sentenced by the Star Chamber to pay a fine of £5,000, and to lose his ears in the pillory.

[3] *Vid. supr.* vol. i. p. 416.

to Durfey.[1] His onset was violent: those passages, which while they stood single had passed with little notice, when they were accumulated and exposed together, excited horror; the wise and the pious caught the alarm, and the nation wondered why it had so long suffered irreligion and licentiousness to be openly taught at the publick charge.

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

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

The stage found other advocates,[2] and the dispute was protracted through ten years; but at last Comedy grew

[1] Tom D'Urfey, author of *Wit and Mirth; or Pills to purge Melancholy*, 6 vols. 12mo, 1712, and numerous plays, operas, &c.

[2] *A Vindication of the Stage*, said to be by Wycherley, a very interesting tract. *A Defence of Dramatic Poetry*, by E. Filmer. *The Usefulness of the Stage*, by John Dennis.

more modest,[1] and Collier lived to see the reward of his labour in the reformation of the theatre.

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

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

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

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

Congreve's last play was "The Way of the World;"[2] which, though as he hints in his dedication, it was written with great labour and much thought, was received with so little favour, that, being in a high degree offended and disgusted, he resolved to commit his quiet and his fame no more to the caprices of an audience.[3]

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

He seems not to have taken much pleasure in writing, as he contributed nothing to the "Spectator," and only one paper to the "Tatler," though published by men with

[1] When Congreve's *Double Dealer* was revived on March 4th, 1699, these words were printed on the bills: "Written by Mr. Congreve: with several expressions omitted." This was noted by Dryden as the first time an author's name had been printed in a play-bill, at least in England.

[2] Probably produced in the first week of March, 1700, as the book of the play was published March 28th, 1700.

[3] On this occasion Dennis remarked, "Mr. Congreve quitted the stage early, and that Comedy left it with him."—E. Gosse, p. 138.

whom he might be supposed willing to associate; and though he lived many years after the publication of his "Miscellaneous Poems," yet he added nothing to them, but lived on in literary indolence; engaged in no controversy, contending with no rival, neither soliciting flattery by publick commendations, nor provoking enmity by malignant criticism, but passing his time among the great and splendid, in the placid enjoyment of his fame and fortune.

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

> "Non obtusa adeo gestamus pectora Pœni,
> Nec tam aversus equos Tyriâ sol jungit ab urbe."[1]

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

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

But he treated the Muses with ingratitude; for, having long conversed familiarly with the great, he wished to be considered rather as a man of fashion than of wit; and, when he received a visit from Voltaire, disgusted him by the despicable foppery of desiring to be considered not as

[1] *Virg. Æn.* i. 567, 568.

an author but a gentleman; to which the Frenchman replied, "that if he had been only a gentleman, he should not have come to visit him." [1]

In his retirement [2] he may be supposed to have applied himself to books; for he discovers more literature than the poets have commonly attained. But his studies were in his latter days obstructed by cataracts in his eyes, which at last terminated in blindness. This melancholy state was aggravated by the gout, for which he sought relief by a journey to Bath; but being overturned in his chariot, complained from that time of a pain in his side, and died, at his house in Surrey-street in the Strand, Jan. 29, 1728-9. Having lain in state in the Jerusalem-chamber, he was buried in Westminster-abbey, where a monument is erected to his memory by Henrietta dutchess of Marlborough, to whom, for reasons either not known or not mentioned, he bequeathed a legacy of about ten thousand pounds; the accumulation of attentive parsimony, which, though to her superfluous and useless, might have given great assistance to the ancient family from which he descended, at that time by the imprudence of his relation reduced to difficulties and distress.

Congreve has merit of the highest kind; he is an original writer, who borrowed neither the models of his plot, nor the manner of his dialogue. Of his plays I cannot speak distinctly; for since I inspected them many years have passed; but what remains upon my memory is, that his characters are commonly fictitious and artificial, with very little of nature, and not much of life. He formed a peculiar idea of comick excellence, which he supposed to consist in gay

[1] For a different and more pleasing view of this circumstance see Gosse's *Congreve*, pp. 177-8.

[2] Who does not lament the absence of a Boswell on July 7th, 1726, when Pope entertained at dinner at Twickenham, Congreve, Bolingbroke, Gay and Swift. *E. and C.* vol. vii. p. 69.

remarks and unexpected answers; but that which he endeavoured, he seldom failed of performing. His scenes exhibit not much of humour, imagery, or passion: his personages are a kind of intellectual gladiators; every sentence is to ward or strike; the contest of smartness is never intermitted; his wit is a meteor playing to and fro with alternate coruscations. His comedies have therefore, in some degree, the operation of tragedies; they surprise rather than divert, and raise admiration oftener than merriment. But they are the works of a mind replete with images, and quick in combination.

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

"ALMERIA.

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

LEONORA.

It bore the accent of a human voice.

ALMERIA.

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

LEONORA.

Hark!

ALMERIA.

No, all is hush'd, and still as death.—'Tis dreadful!
How reverend is the face of this tall pile;
Whose ancient pillars rear their marble heads,
To bear aloft its arch'd and ponderous roof,
By its own weight made stedfast and immoveable,
Looking tranquillity! It strikes an awe
And terror on my aching sight; the tombs
And monumental caves of death look cold,
And shoot a chilness to my trembling heart.
Give me thy hand, and let me hear thy voice;
Nay, quickly speak to me, and let me hear
Thy voice—my own affrights me with its echoes."

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

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

"The rocks are cleft, and new-descending rills
Furrow the brows of all th' impending hills.
The water-gods to floods their rivulets turn,
And each, with streaming eyes, supplies his wanting urn.
The Fauns forsake the woods, the Nymphs the grove,
And round the plain in sad distractions rove:
In prickly brakes their tender limbs they tear,
And leave on thorns their locks of golden hair.
With their sharp nails, themselves the Satyrs wound,
And tug their shaggy beards, and bite with grief the ground.
Lo Pan himself, beneath a blasted oak,
Dejected lies, his pipe in pieces broke.
See Pales weeping too, in wild despair,
And to the piercing winds her bosom bare.
And see yon fading myrtle, where appears

The Queen of Love, all bath'd in flowing tears;
See how she wrings her hands, and beats her breast,
And tears her useless girdle from her waist:
Hear the sad murmurs of her sighing doves!
For grief they sigh, forgetful of their loves."

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

"And now the winds, which had so long been still,
Began the swelling air with sighs to fill:
The water-nymphs, who motionless remain'd
Like images of ice, while she complain'd,
Now loos'd their streams: as when descending rains
Roll the steep torrents headlong o'er the plains.
The prone creation, who so long had gaz'd,
Charm'd with her cries, and at her griefs amaz'd,
Began to roar and howl with horrid yell,
Dismal to hear, and terrible to tell;
Nothing but groans and sighs were heard around,
And Echo multiplied each mournful sound."

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

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

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

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

"'Twas now, when flowery lawns the prospect made,
And flowing brooks beneath a forest shade,
A lowing heifer, loveliest of the herd,
Stood feeding by; while two fierce bulls prepar'd

Their armed heads for fight; by fate of war to prove
The victor worthy of the fair-one's love.
Unthought presage of what met next my view;
For soon the shady scene withdrew.
And now, for woods, and fields, and springing flowers,
Behold a town arise, bulwark'd with walls and lofty towers;
Two rival armies all the plain o'erspread,
Each in battalia rang'd, and shining arms array'd;
With eager eyes beholding both from far,
Namur, the prize and mistress of the war."

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

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

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

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

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

His petty poems are seldom worth the cost of criticism:

sometimes the thoughts are false, and sometimes common. In his verses on lady Gethin, the latter part is an imitation of Dryden's ode on Mrs. Killigrew; and Doris, that has been so lavishly flattered by Steele, has indeed some lively stanzas, but the expression might be mended; and the most striking part of the character had been already shewn in "Love for Love." His "Art of Pleasing" is founded on a vulgar but perhaps impracticable principle, and the staleness of the sense is not concealed by any novelty of illustration or elegance of diction.

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

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

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

BLACKMORE.

# BLACKMORE.

SIR RICHARD BLACKMORE is one of those men whose writings have attracted much notice, but of whose life and manners very little has been communicated, and whose lot it has been to be much oftener mentioned by enemies than by friends.[1]

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

In some part of his life, it is not known when, his indigence compelled him to teach a school; an humiliation with which, though it certainly lasted but a little while, his enemies did not forget to reproach him, when he became conspicuous enough to excite malevolence; and let it be

[1] See Boswell on Johnson's generous treatment of Blackmore and *Various Readings* in this Life. Boswell's *Johnson*, vol. iv. p. 18.

remembered for his honour, that to have been once a school-master is the only reproach which all the perspicacity of malice, animated by wit, has ever fixed upon his private life.

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

Whether he rested satisfied with this direction, or sought for better, he commenced physician, and obtained high eminence and extensive practice. He became Fellow of the College of Physicians, April 12, 1687, being one of the thirty which, by the new charter of king James, were added to the former Fellows.[1] His residence was in Cheapside, and his friends were chiefly in the city. In the early part of Blackmore's time, a citizen was a term of reproach; and his place of abode was another topick to which his adversaries had recourse, in the penury of scandal.

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

I believe it is peculiar to him, that his first publick work was an heroick poem. He was not known as a maker of verses, till he published (in 1695) "Prince Arthur,"[2] in

[1] He became Censor of the College in 1716, and was named an Elect on August 22nd, 1716, which office he resigned on October 22nd, 1720. A. H. Bullen, *Dict. Nat. Biog.*

[2] *Prince Arthur.* An Heroick Poem in Ten Books, fol. It reached a second edition in 1696 and third in 1714: an enlarged edition in twelve books appeared in 1697.

ten books, written, as he relates, *by such catches and starts, and in such occasional uncertain hours as his profession afforded, and for the greatest part in coffee-houses, or in passing up and down the streets.* For the latter part of this apology he was accused of writing *to the rumbling of his chariot-wheels.* He had read, he says, *but little poetry throughout his whole life; and for fifteen years before had not written an hundred verses, except one copy of Latin verses in praise of a friend's book.*

He thinks, and with some reason, that from such a performance perfection cannot be expected; but he finds another reason for the severity of his censurers, which he expresses in language such as Cheapside easily furnished. *I am not free of the Poets Company, having never kissed the governor's hands: mine is therefore not so much as a permission-poem, but a downright interloper. Those gentlemen who carry on their poetical trade in a joint stock, would certainly do what they could to sink and ruin an unlicensed adventurer, notwithstanding I disturbed none of their factories, nor imported any goods they had ever dealt in.* He had lived in the city till he had learned its note.

That "Prince Arthur" found many readers, is certain; for in two years it had three editions; a very uncommon instance of favourable reception, at a time when literary curiosity was yet confined to particular classes of the nation. Such success naturally raised animosity; and Dennis attacked it by a formal criticism, more tedious and disgusting than the work which he condemns. To this censure may be opposed the approbation of Locke and the admiration of Molineux,[1] which are found in their printed Letters. Molineux[2] is particularly delighted with the song of *Mopas*, which is therefore subjoined to this narrative.

[1] Locke's *Works*, ed. 1727, vol. iii. pp. 568-573.

[2] William Molyneux (1656-1698), mathematician and astronomer. There was also a Thomas Molyneux, a correspondent of Locke.

It is remarked by Pope,[1] that what *raises the hero often sinks the man.* Of Blackmore it may be said, that as the poet sinks, the man rises; the animadversions of Dennis, insolent and contemptuous as they were, raised in him no implacable resentment: he and his critick were afterwards friends; and in one of his latter works he praises Dennis as *equal to Boileau in poetry, and superior to him in critical abilities.*

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

The malignity of the wits attributed his knighthood to his new poem; but king William was not very studious of poetry, and Blackmore perhaps had other merit: for he says, in his Dedication to "Alfred,"[2] that *he had a greater part in the succession of the house of Hanover than ever he had boasted.*

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

[1] *Ess. on Man*, Pt. iv. Ald. *P.* vol. ii. p. 81.

[2] *Alfred*, an Epic Poem in twelve books, 1723, fol.

deceive themselves. Whether he promoted the Succession or not, he at least approved it, and adhered invariably to his principles and party through his whole life.

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

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

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

The same year[1] he published a "Satire on Wit;" a proclamation of defiance which united the poets almost all against him, and which brought upon him lampoons and ridicule from every side. This he doubtless foresaw, and evidently despised; nor should his dignity of mind be without its praise, had he not paid the homage to greatness which he denied to genius, and degraded himself by conferring that authority over the national taste, which he takes from the poets, upon men of high rank and wide influence, but of less wit, and not greater virtue.

Here is again discovered the inhabitant of Cheapside, whose head cannot keep his poetry unmingled with trade.

[1] 1700.

To hinder that intellectual bankruptcy which he affects to fear, he will erect a "Bank for Wit."

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

His head still teemed with heroick poetry, and (1705) he published "Eliza"[1] in ten books. I am afraid that the world was now weary of contending about Blackmore's heroes; for I do not remember that by any author, serious or comical, I have found "Eliza" either praised or blamed. She *dropped*, as it seems, *dead-born from the press*. It is never mentioned, and was never seen by me till I borrowed it for the present occasion. Jacob[2] says, *it is corrected, and revised for another impression;* but the labour of revision was thrown away.

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

Not long after (1712) he published "Creation, a philosophical Poem," which has been, by my recommendation, inserted in the late collection. Whoever judges of this by any other of Blackmore's performances, will do it injury.

[1] *Eliza*, an Epic Poem in ten books, folio, 1705.

[2] *Poetical Register*, 1723, vol. ii. p. 10.

The praise given by Addison ("Spec." 339) is too well known to be transcribed; but some notice is due to the testimony of Dennis, who calls it a "philosophical Poem, which has equalled that of Lucretius in the beauty of its versification, and infinitely surpassed it in the solidity and strength of its reasoning."

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

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

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

He deviated, however, sometimes into other tracks of

literature, and condescended to entertain his readers with plain prose. When the "Spectator" stopped, he considered the polite world as destitute of entertainment; and in concert with Mr. Hughes, who wrote every third paper, published three times a week the "Lay Monastery,"[1] founded on the supposition that some literary men, whose characters are described, had retired to a house in the country to enjoy philosophical leisure, and resolved to instruct the public, by communicating their disquisitions and amusements. Whether any real persons were concealed under fictitious names, is not known. The hero of the club is one Mr. Johnson; such a constellation of excellence, that his character shall not be suppressed, though there is no great genius in the design, nor skill in the delineation.

"The first I shall name is Mr. Johnson, a gentleman that owes to Nature excellent faculties and an elevated genius, and to industry and application many acquired accomplishments. His taste is distinguishing, just and delicate; his judgement clear, and his reason strong, accompanied with an imagination full of spirit, of great compass, and stored with refined ideas. He is a critick of the first rank; and, what is his peculiar ornament, he is delivered from the ostentation, malevolence, and supercilious temper, that so often blemish men of that character. His remarks result from the nature and reason of things, and are formed by a judgement free, and unbiassed by the authority of those who have lazily followed each other in the same beaten track of thinking, and are arrived only at the reputation of acute grammarians and commentators; men, who have been copying one another many hundred years, without any improvement; or, if they have ventured farther, have only applied in a mechanical manner the

[1] *The Lay Monastery* consisted of Essays, Discourses, &c., published singly, under the title of *The Lay Monk*, 2nd ed., 1714.

rules of antient criticks to modern writings, and with great labour discovered nothing but their own want of judgement and capacity. As Mr. Johnson penetrates to the bottom of his subject, by which means his observations are solid and natural, as well as delicate, so his design is always to bring to light something useful and ornamental; whence his character is the reverse to theirs, who have eminent abilities in insignificant knowledge, and a great felicity in finding out trifles. He is no less industrious to search out the merit of an author, than sagacious in discerning his errors and defects; and takes more pleasure in commending the beauties than exposing the blemishes of a laudable writing: like Horace, in a long work, he can bear some deformities, and justly lay them on the imperfection of human nature, which is incapable of faultless productions. When an excellent Drama appears in publick, and by its intrinsick worth attracts a general applause, he is not stung with envy and spleen; nor does he express a savage nature, in fastening upon the celebrated author, dwelling upon his imaginary defects, and passing over his conspicuous excellences. He treats all writers upon the same impartial foot; and is not, like the little criticks, taken up entirely in finding out only the beauties of the ancient, and nothing but the errors of the modern writers. Never did any one express more kindness and good nature to young and unfinished authors; he promotes their interests, protects their reputation, extenuates their faults, and sets off their virtues, and by his candour guards them from the severity of his judgement. He is not like those dry criticks, who are morose because they cannot write themselves, but is himself master of a good vein in poetry; and though he does not often employ it, yet he has sometimes entertained his friends with his unpublished performances."

The rest of the Lay Monks seem to be but feeble

mortals, in comparison with the gigantic Johnson; who yet, with all his abilities, and the help of the fraternity, could drive the publication but to forty papers, which were afterwards collected into a volume, and called in the title "A Sequel to the 'Spectators.'"

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

"As to its efficient cause, *Wit* owes its production to an extraordinary and peculiar temperament in the constitution of the possessor of it, in which is found a concurrence of regular and exalted ferments, and an affluence of animal spirits, refined and rectified to a great degree of purity; whence, being endowed with vivacity, brightness, and celerity, as well in their reflexions as direct motions, they become proper instruments for the spritely operations of the mind; by which means the imagination can with great facility range the wide field of Nature, contemplate an infinite variety of objects, and, by observing the similitude and disagreement of their several qualities, single out and abstract, and then suit and unite those ideas which will best serve its purpose. Hence beautiful allusions, surprising metaphors, and admirable sentiments, are always ready at hand: and while the fancy is full of images collected from innumerable objects and their different qualities, relations, and habitudes, it can at pleasure dress a common notion in a strange but becoming garb; by which, as before observed, the same thought will

appear a new one, to the great delight and wonder of the hearer. What we call *genius* results from this particular happy complexion in the first formation of the person that enjoys it, and is Nature's gift, but diversified by various specifick characters and limitations, as its active fire is blended and allayed by different proportions of phlegm, or reduced and regulated by the contrast of opposite ferments. Therefore, as there happens in the composition of a facetious genius a greater or less, though still an inferior, degree of judgement and prudence, one man of wit will be varied and distinguished from another."

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

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

ever offered for the discovery of the author, or that the infamous book was ever condemned to be burnt in publick: whether this proceeds from the excessive esteem and love that men in power, during the late reign, had for wit, or their defect of zeal and concern for the Christian Religion, will be determined best by those who are best acquainted with their character."

In another place he speaks with becoming abhorrence of a *godless author* who has burlesqued a Psalm. This author was supposed to be Pope, who published a reward for any one that would produce the coiner of the accusation, but never denied it; and was afterwards the perpetual and incessant enemy of Blackmore.[1]

One of his Essays is upon the Spleen, which is treated by him so much to his own satisfaction, that he has published the same thoughts in the same words; first in the "Lay Monastery;" then in the Essay; and then in the Preface to a Medical Treatise on the Spleen. One passage, which I have found already twice, I will here exhibit, because I think it better imagined, and better expressed, than could be expected from the common tenour of his prose:

"—As the several combinations of splenetic madness and folly produce an infinite variety of irregular understanding, so the amicable accommodation and alliance between several virtues and vices produce an equal diversity in the dispositions and manners of mankind; whence it comes to pass, that as many monstrous and absurd productions are found in the moral as in the intellectual world. How surprising is it to observe among the least culpable men, some whose minds are attracted by heaven and earth, with a seeming equal force; some who are proud of humility; others who are censorious and un-

[1] *Dunciad*, ii. 259-68.

charitable, yet self-denying and devout; some who join contempt of the world with sordid avarice; and others, who preserve a great degree of piety, with ill-nature and ungoverned passions: nor are instances of this inconsistent mixture less frequent among bad men, where we often, with admiration, see persons at once generous and unjust, impious lovers of their country, and flagitious heroes, good-natured sharpers, immoral men of honour, and libertines who will sooner die than change their religion; and though it is true that repugnant coalitions of so high a degree are found but in a part of mankind, yet none of the whole mass, either good or bad, are intirely exempted from some absurd mixture."

He about this time (Aug. 22, 1716) became one of the *Elects* of the College of Physcians; and was soon after (Oct. 1) chosen *Censor*. He seems to have arrived late, whatever was the reason, at his medical honours.

Having succeeded so well in his book on "Creation," by which he established the great principle of all Religion, he thought his undertaking imperfect, unless he likewise enforced the truth of Revelation; and for that purpose added another poem on "Redemption."[1] He had likewise written, before his "Creation," three books on the "Nature of Man."[2]

The lovers of musical devotion have always wished for a more happy metrical version than they have yet obtained of the book of Psalms; this wish the piety of Blackmore led him to gratify, and he produced (1721) "a new Version of the Psalms of David, fitted to the Tunes used in Churches;" which, being recommended by the archbishops and many bishops, obained a licence for its admission into publick worship; but no admission has it yet obtained, nor has it any right to come where Brady and Tate have got

[1] *Redemption*, a Divine Poem in six books, 1722.

[2] *The Nature of Man*, appeared in 1711, in three books.

possession. Blackmore's name must be added to those of many others, who, by the same attempt, have obtained only the praise of meaning well.

He was not yet deterred from heroick poetry; there was another monarch of this island, for he did not fetch his heroes from foreign countries, whom he considered as worthy of the Epic muse, and he dignified Alfred (1723) with twelve books. But the opinion of the nation was now settled; a hero introduced by Blackmore was not likely to find either respect or kindness; "Alfred" took his place by "Eliza" in silence and darkness: benevolence was ashamed to favour, and malice was weary of insulting. Of his four Epic Poems, the first had such reputation and popularity as enraged the criticks; the second was at least known enough to be ridiculed; the two last had neither friends nor enemies.

Contempt is a kind of gangrene, which if it seizes one part of a character corrupts all the rest by degrees. Blackmore, being despised as a poet, was in time neglected as a physician; his practice, which was once invidiously great, forsook him in the latter part of his life; but being by nature, or by principle, averse from idleness, he employed his unwelcome leisure in writing books on physick, and teaching others to cure those whom he could himself cure no longer. I know not whether I can enumerate all the treatises by which he has endeavoured to diffuse the art of healing; for there is scarcely any distemper, of dreadful name, which he has not taught his reader how to oppose. He has written on the small-pox, with a vehement invective against inoculation; on consumptions, the spleen, the gout, the rheumatism, the king's-evil, the dropsy, the jaundice, the stone, the diabetes, and the plague.[1]

[1] Swift gives a ludicrous rhyming list of Blackmore's writings in a copy of verses "to be placed under the picture of England's Arch-Poet," &c. Scott's *Swift*, 2nd ed., 1824, vol. xiii. p. 374.

Of those books, if I had read them, it could not be expected that I should be able to give a critical account. I have been told that there is something in them of vexation and discontent, discovered by a perpetual attempt to degrade physick from its sublimity, and to represent it as attainable without much previous or concomitant learning. By the transient glances which I have thrown upon them, I have observed an affected contempt of the Ancients, and a supercilious derision of transmitted knowledge. Of this indecent arrogance the following quotation from his Preface to the "Treatise on the Small-pox" will afford a specimen; in which, when the reader finds, what I fear is true, that when he was censuring Hippocrates he did not know the difference between *aphorism* and *apophthegm*, he will not pay much regard to his determinations concerning ancient learning.

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

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

"Some gentlemen have been disingenuous and unjust to me, by wresting and forcing my meaning in the Preface to another book, as if I condemned and exposed all learning, though they knew I declared that I greatly honoured and esteemed all men of superior literature and erudition; and that I only undervalued false or superficial learning, that signifies nothing for the service of mankind; and that, as