

Lives of the Poets

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by Samuel Johnson

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LIVES OF THE POETS (ADDISON, SAVAGE, SWIFT)

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INTRODUCTION.

Johnson’s “Lives of the Poets” were written to serve as Introductions to a trade
edition of the works of poets whom the booksellers selected for republication.
Sometimes, therefore, they dealt briefly with men in whom the public at large
has long ceased to be interested. Richard Savage would be of this number if
Johnson’s account of his life had not secured for him lasting remembrance.
Johnson’s Life of Savage in this volume has not less interest than the Lives of

Addison and Swift, between which it is set, although Savage himself has no right at all to be remembered in such company. Johnson published this piece of biography when his age was thirty-five; his other lives of poets appeared when that age was about doubled. He was very poor when the Life of Savage was written for Cave. Soon after its publication, we are told, Mr.

Harte dined with Cave, and incidentally praised it. Meeting him again soon afterwards Cave said to Mr. Harte, "You made a man very happy t'other day." "How could that be?" asked Harte. "Nobody was there but ourselves." Cave answered by reminding him that a plate of victuals was sent behind a screen, which was to Johnson, dressed so shabbily that he did not choose to appear.

Johnson, struggling, found Savage struggling, and was drawn to him by faith in the tale he told. We have seen in our own time how even an Arthur Orton could find sensible and good people to believe the tale with which he sought to enforce claim upon the Tichborne baronetcy. Savage had literary skill, and he could personate the manners of a gentleman in days when there were still gentlemen of fashion who drank, lied, and swaggered into midnight brawls. I have no doubt whatever that he was the son of the nurse with whom the Countess of Macclesfield had placed a child that died, and that after his mother's death he found the papers upon which he built his plot to personate the child, extort money from the Countess and her family, and bring himself into a profitable notoriety.

Johnson's simple truthfulness and ready sympathy made it hard for him to doubt the story told as Savage told it to him. But when he told it again himself, though he denounced one whom he believed to be an unnatural mother, and dealt gently with his friend, he did not translate evil into good. Through all the generous and kindly narrative we may see clearly that Savage was an impostor. There is the heart of Johnson in the noble appeal against judgment of the self-righteous who have never known the harder trials of the world, when he says of Savage, "Those are no proper judges of his conduct, who have slumbered away their time on the down of plenty; nor will any wise man easily presume to say, 'Had I been in Savage's condition, I should have lived or written better than Savage.'" But Johnson, who made large allowance for temptations pressing on the poor, himself suffered and overcame the hardest trials, firm always to his duty, true servant of God and friend of man.

Richard Savage's whole public life was built upon a lie. His base nature foiled

any attempt made to befriend him; and the friends he lost, he slandered; Richard Steele among them. Samuel Johnson was a friend easy to make, and difficult to lose. There was no money to be got from him, for he was altogether poor in everything but the large spirit of human kindness. Savage drew largely on him for sympathy, and had it; although Johnson was too clear-sighted to be much deceived except in judgment upon the fraudulent claims which then gave rise to division of opinion. The Life of Savage is a noble piece of truth, although it rests on faith put in a fraud.

H. M.

ADDISON.

Joseph Addison was born on the 1st of May, 1672, at Milston, of which his father, Lancelot Addison, was then rector, near Ambrosebury, in Wiltshire, and, appearing weak and unlikely to live, he was christened the same day. After the usual domestic education, 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 Ambrosebury, 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, 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 know it only from a story of a BARRING-OUT, told me, when I was a boy, by Andrew Corbet, of Shropshire, who had heard it from Mr. Pigot, his uncle.

The practice of BARRING-OUT was a savage licence, 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 schoolboy, 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 inquired when he was sent to the Chartreux; 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, and contracted that intimacy with Sir Richard Steele which their joint labours have so effectually recorded.

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 show 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 jocularitv 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 a 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.

In 1687 he was entered into Queen's College in Oxford, where, in 1689, the accidental perusal of some Latin verses gained him the patronage of Dr. Lancaster, afterwards Provost of Queen's College; by whose recommendation he was elected into Magdalen College as a demy, a term by which that society denominates those who are elsewhere called scholars: young men who partake of the founder's benefaction, and succeed in their order to vacant fellowships. Here 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 “Musae Anglicanae” perhaps for a convenient receptacle, in which all his Latin pieces are inserted, and where his poem on the Peace has the first place. He afterwards presented the collection to Boileau, who from that time “conceived,” says Tickell, “an opinion of the English genius for poetry.” Nothing is better known of Boileau 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.

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,” “The Barometer,” and “A Bowling-green.”

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 showed his power of English poetry by some verses addressed to Dryden; and soon after published a translation of the greater part of the Fourth Georgic upon Bees; after which, says Dryden, “my latter swarm is scarcely 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 Georgics, juvenile, superficial, and uninformative, without much either of the scholar’s learning or the critic’s penetration. His next paper of verses contained a character of the principal English poets, inscribed to Henry Sacheverell, who was then, if not a poet, a writer of verses; as is shown by his version of a small part of Virgil’s Georgics, published in the Miscellanies; and a Latin encomium on Queen Mary, in the “Musae Anglicanae.” 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 discriminate character of Spenser, whose work he had then never read; so little sometimes is criticism the effect of judgment. 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 as a poetical name to those of Cowley and of Dryden. By the influence of Mr. Montague, concurring,

according to Tickell, 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 to King William, with a rhyming introduction addressed to Lord Somers. 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, which he dedicated to Montague, and which was afterwards called, by Smith, “the best Latin poem since the ‘Aeneid.’” Praise must not be too rigorously examined; but the performance cannot be denied to be vigorous and elegant. Having yet no public employment, he obtained (in 1699) a pension of three hundred pounds a year, that he might be enabled to travel. He stayed 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,” and four acts of Cato. Such, at least, is the relation of Tickell. Perhaps he only collected his materials and formed his plan. Whatever were his other employments in Italy, he there wrote the letter to Lord Halifax 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, 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.

The most amusing passage of his book is his account of the minute republic 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, gain upon the reader; and the book, though awhile neglected, became in time so much the favourite of the public that before it was reprinted it rose to five times its price.

When he returned to England (in 1702), with a meanness 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, 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 public 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 Carlton; and Addison, having undertaken the work, communicated it to the Treasury while it was yet advanced no further than the simile of the angel, and was immediately rewarded by succeeding Mr. Locke in the place of Commissioner of Appeals.

In the following year he was at Hanover with Lord Halifax: and the year after he 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 operas 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 Duchess of Marlborough—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. 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 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. 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." 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 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 topic, 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 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. Such an undertaking showed 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 at that time almost nothing else. The Spectator, in one of the first papers, showed the political tenets of its authors; but a resolution was soon taken of courting general approbation by general topics, and subjects on which faction had produced no diversity of sentiments—

such as literature, morality, and familiar life. To this practice they adhered with 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.

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,” and Castiglione in his “Courtier:” 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" (though, as Boileau remarked, it is written without connection) certainly deserves 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 show 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 politics; but an arbiter elegantiarum, (a judge of propriety) was yet wanting who should survey the track of daily conversation, and free it from thorns and prickles, which tease 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 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. At 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 nowhere 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 was instituted soon after the Restoration to divert the attention of the people from public 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 frolic 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 adjusted, like Casa, the unsettled practice of daily intercourse by propriety and politeness; and, like La Bruyere, exhibited the "Characters 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 in the preface to "Theophrastus," 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 topics 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 discriminate idea, which he would not suffer to be violated; and therefore when Steele had shown 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*, made Addison declare, with 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;” but at last he buys land, settles in the country, and builds, not a manufactory, but an hospital for twelve old husbandmen—for men with whom a merchant has little acquaintance, and whom he commonly considers with little kindness.

Of essays thus elegant, 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 halfpenny a paper, will give sixteen hundred and eighty for the daily number. This sale is not great; yet this, if Swift 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 came upon the stage, was the grand climacteric 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 shown to such as were likely to spread their admiration. They were seen by Pope and by Cibber, who relates that Steele, when he took back the copy, told him, in the despicable cant of literary modesty, that, whatever spirit his friend had shown in the composition, he doubted whether he 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 show 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 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 meantime 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 public by any change of the author's purpose; for Dennis 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, "Britains, arise! be worth like this approved;" meaning nothing more than—Britons, erect and exalt yourselves to the approbation of public virtue. Addison was frightened, lest he should be thought a promoter of insurrection, and the line was liquidated to "Britains, attend."

Now "heavily in clouds came on the day, the great, the important day," when Addison was to stand the hazard of the theatre. That there might, however, be left as little hazard as was possible, on the first night Steele, as himself relates, undertook to pack an audience. "This," says Pope, "had been tried for the first time in favour of the Distressed Mother; and was now, with more efficacy, practised for Cato." The danger was soon over. The whole nation was at that time on fire with faction. The Whigs applauded every line in which liberty was mentioned, as a satire on the Tories; and the Tories echoed every clap, to show that the satire was unfelt.

The story of Bolingbroke is well known; he called Booth to his box, and gave him fifty guineas for defending the cause of liberty so well against a perpetual dictator. "The Whigs," says Pope, "design a second present, when they can accompany it with as good a sentence."

The play, supported thus by the emulation of factious praise, was acted night after night for a longer time than, I believe, the public had allowed to any drama before; and the author, as Mrs.

Porter 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, "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 sunshine of success is not without a cloud. No sooner was Cato offered to the reader 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, his animadversions showed his anger without effect, and Cato continued to be praised.

Pope had now an opportunity of courting the friendship of Addison by vilifying his old enemy, and could give resentment its full play without appearing to revenge himself. He therefore published "A Narrative of the Madness of John Dennis:" a performance which left the objections to the play in their full force, and therefore discovered more desire of vexing the critic than of defending the poet.

Addison, who was no stranger to the world, probably saw the selfishness of Pope's friendship; and, resolving that he should have the consequences of his officiousness to himself, informed Dennis by Steele that he was sorry for the insult; and that, whenever he should think fit to answer his remarks, he would do

it in a manner to which nothing could be objected.

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

At the publication the wits seemed proud to pay their attendance with encomiastic verses. The best are from an unknown hand, which will perhaps lose somewhat of their praise when the author is known to be Jeffreys.

Cato had yet other honours. It was censured as a party-play by a scholar of Oxford; and defended in a favourable examination by Dr.

Sewel. It was translated by Salvini into Italian, and acted at Florence; and by the Jesuits of St. Omer's into Latin, and played by their pupils. 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 critic 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 public 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. 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 politics on fire, and wit at once blazed into faction. He was soon too hot for neutral topics, 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 pretends 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 comic, 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*. 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 public to assign it to Addison, and it is now printed with other poetry. Steele carried *The Drummer* to the play-house, 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 public affairs.

He wrote, as different exigences required (in 1707), "*The Present State of the War, and the Necessity of an Augmentation;*" which, however judicious, being written on temporary topics, 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.” 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; 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,”

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 actually collected into an eighth volume, perhaps more valuable than any of those that went before it. Addison produced more than a fourth part; and the other contributors 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 comic papers is greater than in the former series.

The Spectator, from its re-commencement, 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 despatch the message. Southwell readily told what was 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*, a paper which he published twice a week, from December 23, 1715, to the middle of the next year. This was undertaken in defence of the established Government, sometimes with argument, and 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 topic of ridicule is his poverty. This mode of abuse had been employed by Milton against King Charles II.

"Jacoboei.

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, 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. 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 taken 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 the 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 dismissal, with a pension of fifteen hundred pounds a year. His friends 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 bishopric; “for,”

said he, “I always thought him a priest in his heart.”

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 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 bishopric 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 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 should set them at variance. The subject of their dispute was of great importance. The Earl of Sunderland proposed an Act, called the "Peerage Bill;" 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, 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 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 despotic 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,”

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.” Dicky, however, did not lose his 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 and sixty-five to one hundred and seventy-seven.

Every reader surely must regret that these two illustrious friends, after so many years passed 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. 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” is not inserted 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, frolic, 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 narratives 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 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.

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, he died June 17, 1719, at Holland House, leaving no child but a daughter.

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 that his election passed without a contest, adds that if he 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 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 of his own deficiency in conversation, used to say of himself 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; and that he was often oppressed by an improper and ungraceful timidity, every testimony concurs to prove; but Chesterfield’s representation is doubtless hyperbolic. 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.” 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" show that he had perused the works with great diligence and skill. The abundance of his own mind left him little indeed 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."

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, "anything to please his friends before publication, but would not retouch his pieces afterwards; and I believe not one word of Cato to which I made an objection was suffered to stand."

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 [Ambrose], 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. 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 Russell Street, about two doors from Covent Garden. Here it was that the wits of that time used to assemble. It is said when Addison had suffered any vexation from the countess, he withdrew the company from Button's house. 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 succours 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, who, when he had passed an evening in his company, declared that he was a parson in a tie-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.

From any minute knowledge of his familiar manners the intervention of sixty years has now debarred us. Steele once promised Congreve and the public 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 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 the 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." His delight was more to excite merriment than detestation; and he detects follies rather than crimes. If any judgment 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 show 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 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."

Addison, in his life and for some time afterwards, was considered by a 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

was 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 critic.” 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 exception. 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 anything that offends. Of this kind seem to be his poems to Dryden, to Somers, and to the King. 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 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 show even Cromwell’s innocence, And compliment the storms that bore him hence.

Oh! had thy Muse not come an age too soon, But seen great Nassau on the British throne, How had his triumph glittered in thy page!”

What is this but to say that he who could compliment Cromwell had been the proper poet for King William? Addison, however, printed the piece.

The Letter from Italy 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:—

“Fired with that name—

I bridle in my struggling Muse with pain, That longs to launch into a nobler strain.”

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 inquire who has described it with more justice 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 intrepidity, 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—

Raised of themselves their genuine charms they boast, And those that paint them truest, praise them most.”

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 pensive ghost; He best can paint them who shall feel them most.”

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, 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 inquired 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 AEtna vomits flames in Sicily. When Horace says of Pindar that he pours his violence and rapidity of verse, as a river swollen 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 are well illustrated by the sea that breaks, with incessant battery, the dykes of Holland. This is a simile. But when Addison, having celebrated the beauty of Marlborough's person, tells us that "Achilles thus was formed of 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 approximation, 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 and research, or dexterity of application. Of this Dr.

Madden, a name which Ireland ought to honour, once gave me his opinion. "If I had set," said he, "ten schoolboys to write on the battle of Blenheim, and eight had brought me the angel, I should not have been surprised."

The opera of Rosamond, 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 comic 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, 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 anything 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 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 assuages emotion:" here is "no magical power of raising phantastic 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 shown 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 impertinence 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 unassuming 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; but his dislike was not merely capricious. He found and showed many faults; he showed them indeed with anger, but he found them indeed 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 the applause is natural and spontaneous; but that little regard is to be had to it when it is affected or 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 judgment, 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 on them, and to judge by their own reason, and their own judgments; and that reason and judgment are calm and serene, not formed by nature to make proselytes, and to control and lord it over the imagination of others. But that when an author writes a tragedy who knows he has neither genius nor judgment, 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 tyrannise over the imaginations of persons who want judgment, 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 one of his favourite principles:—

“‘Tis certainly the duty of every tragic 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 show, 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 enmity 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 everywhere, throughout it, makes virtue suffer, and vice triumph: for not only Cato is vanquished by Caesar, but the treachery and perfidiousness of Syphax prevail 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 show 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 shown 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 less 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, 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 feague 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 called together? Gods! thou must be cautious; Cato has piercing eyes.’

“There is a great deal of caution shown, 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 have none of his ears, or they would never have talked at this foolish rate so near:—

““Gods! thou must be cautious.’

Oh! yes, very cautious: for if Cato should overhear you, and turn you off for politicians, Caesar 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 invectives 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 scarcely out of sight, and perhaps not out of hearing, at least some of his guards or domestics 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 Macs, and the Teagues; even Eustace Commins himself would never

have gone to Justice-hall to have conspired against 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 egregious 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 midday, 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? Behold 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 proved 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 desert.

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 Caesar's camp.

SEMP. Confusion! I have failed of half my purpose; Marcia, the charming Marcia's left behind.'

Well, but though he tells us the half-purpose he has failed 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 anywhere else since the play began. But now let us hear Syphax:—

“‘What hinders, then, but that you 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 nonpareil.

““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 noonday, 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 politic 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:—

““SEMP. 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 show 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 anything 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 amity 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 clearness 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:—

“SEMP. The deer is lodged; I've tracked 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 pleasure Sempronius, let us suppose, for once, that the deer is lodged:—

“The deer is lodged; I've tracked 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 he 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:—

“Semp. 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 murdered, and a passage cut Through those his guards.'

"Pray, what are 'those 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 noonday, 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 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 aches 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 his 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 eaves-dropping, and discovers himself just time enough to prevent his being cuckolded 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, when love and treason were so often talked in so public 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 anything 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 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 midriffs 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 show 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 expresses it, perhaps “too much horse-play in his railleries;” 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 critic 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 critic. 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 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 paraphrastic. 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 shows 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 Georgic he admits broken lines. He uses both triplets and Alexandrines, but triplets more frequently in his translation 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 critic: a name which the present generation is scarcely willing to allow him. His criticism is condemned as tentative or experimental rather than scientific; 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.

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 characters 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 showed them their defects, he showed them likewise that they might be easily supplied.

His attempt succeeded; inquiry was awakened, and comprehension expanded. An emulation of intellectual elegance was excited, and from this 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 parsimony; but though he sometimes condescended to be somewhat familiar, his manner was in general too scholastic for those who had yet their rudiments to learn, and found it not easy to understand 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 public 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 imbecility, 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 imbecility. 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, in 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 domestic scenes and daily occurrences. He never "o'ersteps 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 enthusiastic 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 shown 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 grovelling; pure without scrupulosity, and exact without apparent elaboration; 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 energetic; 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.

SAVAGE.

It has been observed in all ages that the advantages of nature or of fortune have contributed very little to the promotion of happiness: and that those whom the splendour of their rank, or the extent of their capacity, has placed upon the summit of human life, have not often given any just occasion to envy in those

who look up to them from a lower station; whether it be that apparent superiority incites great designs, and great designs are naturally liable to fatal miscarriages; or that the general lot of mankind is misery, and the misfortunes of those whose eminence drew upon them universal attention have been more carefully recorded, because they were more generally observed, and have in reality been only more conspicuous than those of others, not more frequent, or more severe.

That affluence and power, advantages extrinsic and adventitious, and therefore easily separable from those by whom they are possessed, should very often flatter the mind with expectations of felicity which they cannot give, raises no astonishment: but it seems rational to hope that intellectual greatness should produce better effects; that minds qualified for great attainments should first endeavour their own benefit, and that they who are most able to teach others the way to happiness, should with most certainty follow it themselves. But this expectation, however plausible, has been very frequently disappointed. The heroes of literary as well as civil history have been very often no less remarkable for what they have suffered than for what they have achieved; and volumes have been written only to enumerate the miseries of the learned, and relate their unhappy lives and untimely deaths.

To these mournful narratives I am about to add the Life of RICHARD

SAVAGE, a man whose writings entitle him to an eminent rank in the classes of learning, and whose misfortunes claim a degree of compassion not always due to the unhappy, as they were often the consequences of the crimes of others rather than his own.

In the year 1697, Anne, Countess of Macclesfield, having lived some time upon very uneasy terms with her husband, thought a public confession of adultery the most obvious and expeditious method of obtaining her liberty; and therefore declared that the child with which she was then great, was begotten by the Earl Rivers. This, as may be imagined, made her husband no less desirous of a separation than herself, and he prosecuted his design in the most effectual manner: for he applied, not to the ecclesiastical courts for a divorce, but to the Parliament for an Act by which his marriage might be dissolved, the nuptial contract annulled, and the children of his wife illegitimated. This Act, after the usual deliberation, he obtained, though without the approbation of some, who considered marriage as an affair only cognisable by ecclesiastical judges; and on March 3rd was separated from his wife, whose fortune, which was very great,

was repaid her, and who having, as well as her husband, the liberty of making another choice, she in a short time married Colonel Brett.

While the Earl of Macclesfield was prosecuting this affair, his wife was, on the 10th of January, 1607-8,[sic] delivered of a son: and the Earl Rivers, by appearing to consider him as his own, left none any reason to doubt of the sincerity of her declaration; for he was his godfather and gave him his own name, which was by his direction inserted in the register of St. Andrew's parish in Holborn, but unfortunately left him to the care of his mother, whom, as she was now set free from her husband, he probably imagined likely to treat with great tenderness the child that had contributed to so pleasing an event. It is not indeed easy to discover what motives could be found to overbalance that natural affection of a parent, or what interest could be promoted by neglect or cruelty. The dread of shame or of poverty, by which some wretches have been incited to abandon or murder their children, cannot be supposed to have affected a woman who had proclaimed her crimes and solicited reproach, and on whom the clemency of the Legislature had undeservedly bestowed a fortune, which would have been very little diminished by the expenses which the care of her child could have brought upon her. It was therefore not likely that she would be wicked without temptation; that she would look upon her son from his birth with a kind of resentment and abhorrence; and, instead of supporting, assisting, and defending him, delight to see him struggling with misery, or that she would take every opportunity of aggravating his misfortunes, and obstructing his resources, and with an implacable and restless cruelty continue her persecution from the first hour of his life to the last. But whatever were her motives, no sooner was her son born than she discovered a resolution of disowning him; and in a very short time removed him from her sight, by committing him to the care of a poor woman, whom she directed to educate him as her own, and enjoined never to inform him of his true parents.

Such was the beginning of the life of Richard Savage. Born with a legal claim to honour and to affluence, he was in two months illegitimated by the Parliament, and disowned by his mother, doomed to poverty and obscurity, and launched upon the ocean of life only that he might be swallowed by its quicksands, or dashed upon its rocks. His mother could not indeed infect others with the same cruelty. As it was impossible to avoid the inquiries which the curiosity or tenderness of her relations made after her child, she was obliged to give some account of the measures she had taken; and her mother, the Lady Mason, whether in approbation of her design, or to prevent more criminal contrivances,

engaged to transact with the nurse, to pay her for her care, and to superintend the education of the child.

In this charitable office she was assisted by his godmother, Mrs.

Lloyd, who, while she lived, always looked upon him with that tenderness which the barbarity of his mother made peculiarly necessary; but her death, which happened in his tenth year, was another of the misfortunes of his childhood, for though she kindly endeavoured to alleviate his loss by a legacy of three hundred pounds, yet as he had none to prosecute his claim, to shelter him from oppression, or call in law to the assistance of justice, her will was eluded by the executors, and no part of the money was ever paid. He was, however, not yet wholly abandoned. The Lady Mason still continued her care, and directed him to be placed at a small grammar school near St. Albans, where he was called by the name of his nurse, without the least intimation that he had a claim to any other. Here he was initiated in literature, and passed through several of the classes, with what rapidity or with what applause cannot now be known. As he always spoke with respect of his master, it is probable that the mean rank in which he then appeared did not hinder his genius from being distinguished, or his industry from being rewarded; and if in so low a state he obtained distinctions and rewards, it is not likely that they were gained but by genius and industry.

It is very reasonable to conjecture that his application was equal to his abilities, because his improvement was more than proportioned to the opportunities which he enjoyed; nor can it be doubted that if his earliest productions had been preserved, like those of happier students, we might in some have found vigorous sallies of that sprightly humour which distinguishes "The Author to be Let," and in others strong touches of that imagination which painted the solemn scenes of "The Wanderer."

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

instance of a lie invented by a mother to deprive her son of a provision which was designed him by another, and which she could not expect herself, though he should lose it. This was therefore an act of wickedness which could not be defeated, because it could not be suspected; the earl did not imagine that there could exist in a human form a mother that would ruin her son without enriching herself, and therefore bestowed upon some other person six thousand pounds which he had in his will bequeathed to Savage.

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

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

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

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

About this time his nurse, who had always treated him as her own son, died; and it was natural for him to take care of those effects which by her death were, as he imagined, become his own: he therefore went to her house, opened her boxes,

and examined her papers, among which he found some letters written to her by the Lady Mason, which informed him of his birth, and the reasons for which it was concealed. He was no longer satisfied with the employment which had been allotted him, but thought he had a right to share the affluence of his mother; and therefore without scruple applied to her as her son, and made use of every art to awaken her tenderness and attract her regard. But neither his letters, nor the interposition of those friends which his merit or his distress procured him, made any impression on her mind. She still resolved to neglect, though she could no longer disown him. It was to no purpose that he frequently solicited her to admit him to see her; she avoided him with the most vigilant precaution, and ordered him to be excluded from her house, by whomsoever he might be introduced, and what reason soever he might give for entering it.

Savage was at the same time so touched with the discovery of his real mother, that it was his frequent practice to walk in the dark evenings for several hours before her door, in hopes of seeing her as she might come by accident to the window, or cross her apartment with a candle in her hand. But all his assiduity and tenderness were without effect, for he could neither soften her heart nor open her hand, and was reduced to the utmost miseries of want, while he was endeavouring to awaken the affection of a mother. He was therefore obliged to seek some other means of support; and, having no profession, became by necessity an author.

At this time the attention of the literary world was engrossed by the Bangorian controversy, which filled the press with pamphlets, and the coffee-houses with disputants. Of this subject, as most popular, he made choice for his first attempt, and, without any other knowledge of the question than he had casually collected from conversation, published a poem against the bishop. What was the success or merit of this performance I know not; it was probably lost among the innumerable pamphlets to which that dispute gave occasion. Mr. Savage was himself in a little time ashamed of it, and endeavoured to suppress it, by destroying all the copies that he could collect. He then attempted a more gainful kind of writing, and in his eighteenth year offered to the stage a comedy borrowed from a Spanish plot, which was refused by the players, and was therefore given by him to Mr. Bullock, who, having more interest, made some slight alterations, and brought it upon the stage, under the title of *Woman's a Riddle*, but allowed the unhappy author no part of the profit.

Not discouraged, however, at his repulse, he wrote two years afterwards *Love in*

a Veil, another comedy, borrowed likewise from the Spanish, but with little better success than before; for though it was received and acted, yet it appeared so late in the year, that the author obtained no other advantage from it than the acquaintance of Sir Richard Steele and Mr. Wilks, by whom he was pitied, caressed, and relieved.

Sir Richard Steele, having declared in his favour with all the ardour of benevolence which constituted his character, promoted his interest with the utmost zeal, related his misfortunes, applauded his merit, took all the opportunities of recommending him, and asserted that “the inhumanity of his mother had given him a right to find every good man his father.” Nor was Mr. Savage admitted to his acquaintance only, but to his confidence, of which he sometimes related an instance too extraordinary to be omitted, as it affords a very just idea of his patron’s character. He was once desired by Sir Richard, with an air of the utmost importance, to come very early to his house the next morning. Mr. Savage came as he had promised, found the chariot at the door, and Sir Richard waiting for him, and ready to go out. What was intended, and whither they were to go, Savage could not conjecture, and was not willing to inquire; but immediately seated himself with Sir Richard. The coachman was ordered to drive, and they hurried with the utmost expedition to Hyde Park Corner, where they stopped at a petty tavern, and retired to a private room. Sir Richard then informed him that he intended to publish a pamphlet, and that he had desired him to come thither that he might write for him. He soon sat down to the work. Sir Richard dictated, and Savage wrote, till the dinner that had been ordered was put upon the table. Savage was surprised at the meanness of the entertainment, and after some hesitation ventured to ask for wine, which Sir Richard, not without reluctance, ordered to be brought. They then finished their dinner, and proceeded in their pamphlet, which they concluded in the afternoon.

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

Mr. Savage related another fact equally uncommon, which, though it has no

relation to his life, ought to be preserved. Sir Richard Steele having one day invited to his house a great number of persons of the first quality, they were surprised at the number of liveries which surrounded the table; and after dinner, when wine and mirth had set them free from the observation of a rigid ceremony, one of them inquired of Sir Richard how such an expensive train of domestics could be consistent with his fortune. Sir Richard very frankly confessed that they were fellows of whom he would very willingly be rid. And being then asked why he did not discharge them, declared that they were bailiffs, who had introduced themselves with an execution, and whom, since he could not send them away, he had thought it convenient to embellish with liveries, that they might do him credit while they stayed. His friends were diverted with the expedient, and by paying the debt, discharged their attendance, having obliged Sir Richard to promise that they should never again find him graced with a retinue of the same kind.

Under such a tutor, Mr. Savage was not likely to learn prudence or frugality; and perhaps many of the misfortunes which the want of those virtues brought upon him in the following parts of his life, might be justly imputed to so unimproving an example. Nor did the kindness of Sir Richard end in common favours. He proposed to have established him in some settled scheme of life, and to have contracted a kind of alliance with him, by marrying him to a natural daughter, on whom he intended to bestow a thousand pounds. But though he was always lavish of future bounties, he conducted his affairs in such a manner that he was very seldom able to keep his promises, or execute his own intentions; and, as he was never able to raise the sum which he had offered, the marriage was delayed. In the meantime he was officiously informed that Mr. Savage had ridiculed him; by which he was so much exasperated that he withdrew the allowance which he had paid him, and never afterwards admitted him to his house.

It is not, indeed, unlikely that Savage might by his imprudence expose himself to the malice of a talebearer; for his patron had many follies, which, as his discernment easily discovered, his imagination might sometimes incite him to mention too ludicrously.

A little knowledge of the world is sufficient to discover that such weakness is very common, and that there are few who do not sometimes, in the wantonness of thoughtless mirth, or the heat of transient resentment, speak of their friends and benefactors with levity and contempt, though in their cooler moments they want neither sense of their kindness nor reverence for their virtue; the fault,

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

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

As Mr. Wilks was one of those to whom calamity seldom complained without relief, he naturally took an unfortunate wit into his protection, and not only assisted him in any casual distresses, but continued an equal and steady kindness to the time of his death. By this interposition Mr. Savage once obtained from his mother fifty pounds, and a promise of one hundred and fifty more; but it was the fate of this unhappy man that few promises of any advantage to him were performed. His mother was infected, among others, with the general madness of the South Sea traffic; and having been disappointed in her expectations, refused to pay what perhaps nothing but the prospect of sudden affluence prompted her to promise.

Being thus obliged to depend upon the friendship of Mr. Wilks, he was consequently an assiduous frequenter of the theatres: and in a short time the amusements of the stage took such possession of his mind that he never was absent from a play in several years. This constant attendance naturally procured him the acquaintance of the players, and, among others, of Mrs. Oldfield, who was so much pleased with his conversation, and touched with his misfortunes, that she allowed him a settled pension of fifty pounds a year, which was during her life regularly paid. That this act of generosity may receive its due praise, and that the good actions of Mrs. Oldfield may not be sullied by her general character, it is proper to mention that Mr. Savage often declared, in the strongest terms, that he never saw her alone, or in any other place than behind the scenes.

At her death he endeavoured to show his gratitude in the most decent manner, by wearing mourning as for a mother; but did not celebrate her in elegies, because

he knew that too great a profusion of praise would only have revived those faults which his natural equity did not allow him to think less because they were committed by one who favoured him; but of which, though his virtue would not endeavour to palliate them, his gratitude would not suffer him to prolong the memory or diffuse the censure.

In his “Wanderer” he has indeed taken an opportunity of mentioning her; but celebrates her not for her virtue, but her beauty, an excellence which none ever denied her: this is the only encomium with which he has rewarded her liberality, and perhaps he has even in this been too lavish of his praise. He seems to have thought that never to mention his benefactress would have an appearance of ingratitude, though to have dedicated any particular performance to her memory would have only betrayed an officious partiality, and that without exalting her character would have depressed his own.

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

The punishment which our laws inflict upon those parents who murder their infants is well known, nor has its justice ever been contested; but, if they deserve death who destroy a child in its birth, what pain can be severe enough for her who forbears to destroy him only to inflict sharper miseries upon him; who prolongs his life only to make him miserable; and who exposes him, without care and without pity, to the malice of oppression, the caprices of chance, and the

temptations of poverty; who rejoices to see him overwhelmed with calamities; and, when his own industry, or the charity of others, has enabled him to rise for a short time above his miseries, plunges him again into his former distress?

The kindness of his friends not affording him any constant supply, and the prospect of improving his fortune by enlarging his acquaintance necessarily leading him to places of expense, he found it necessary to endeavour once more at dramatic poetry; for which he was now better qualified by a more extensive knowledge and longer observation. But having been unsuccessful in comedy, though rather for want of opportunities than genius, he resolved to try whether he should not be more fortunate in exhibiting a tragedy. The story which he chose for the subject was that of Sir Thomas Overbury, a story well adapted to the stage, though perhaps not far enough removed from the present age to admit properly the fictions necessary to complete the plan; for the mind, which naturally loves truth, is always most offended with the violation of those truths of which we are most certain; and we of course conceive those facts most certain which approach nearer to our own time. Out of this story he formed a tragedy, which, if the circumstances in which he wrote it be considered, will afford at once an uncommon proof of strength of genius and evenness of mind, of a serenity not to be ruffled and an imagination not to be suppressed.

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

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

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

received great assistance on many occasions, and whom he never mentioned but with the utmost tenderness and regard.

He had been for some time distinguished by him with very particular kindness, and on this occasion it was natural to apply to him as an author of an established character. He therefore sent this tragedy to him, with a short copy of verses, in which he desired his correction. Mr. Hill, whose humanity and politeness are generally known, readily complied with his request; but as he is remarkable for singularity of sentiment, and bold experiments in language, Mr.

Savage did not think this play much improved by his innovation, and had even at that time the courage to reject several passages which he could not approve; and, what is still more laudable, Mr. Hill had the generosity not to resent the neglect of his alterations, but wrote the prologue and epilogue, in which he touches on the circumstances of the author with great tenderness.

After all these obstructions and compliances, he was only able to bring his play upon the stage in the summer, when the chief actors had retired, and the rest were in possession of the house for their own advantage. Among these, Mr. Savage was admitted to play the part of Sir Thomas Overbury, by which he gained no great reputation, the theatre being a province for which nature seems not to have designed him; for neither his voice, look, nor gesture were such as were expected on the stage, and he was so much ashamed of having been reduced to appear as a player, that he always blotted out his name from the list when a copy of his tragedy was to be shown to his friends.

In the publication of his performance he was more successful, for the rays of genius that glimmered in it, that glimmered through all the mists which poverty and Cibber had been able to spread over it, procured him the notice and esteem of many persons eminent for their rank, their virtue, and their wit. Of this play, acted, printed, and dedicated, the accumulated profits arose to a hundred pounds, which he thought at that time a very large sum, having been never master of so much before.

In the dedication, for which he received ten guineas, there is nothing remarkable. The preface contains a very liberal encomium on the blooming excellence of Mr. Theophilus Cibber, which Mr. Savage could not in the latter part of his life see his friends about to read without snatching the play out of their hands. The generosity of Mr. Hill did not end on this occasion; for afterwards, when Mr.

Savage's necessities returned, he encouraged a subscription to a Miscellany of Poems in a very extraordinary manner, by publishing his story in the Plain Dealer, with some affecting lines, which he asserts to have been written by Mr. Savage upon the treatment received by him from his mother, but of which he was himself the author, as Mr. Savage afterwards declared. These lines, and the paper in which they were inserted, had a very powerful effect upon all but his mother, whom, by making her cruelty more public, they only hardened in her aversion.

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

The subscriptions of those whom these papers should influence to patronise merit in distress, without any other solicitation, were directed to be left at Button's Coffee-house; and Mr. Savage going thither a few days afterwards, without expectation of any effect from his proposal, found, to his surprise, seventy guineas, which had been sent him in consequence of the compassion excited by Mr.

Hill's pathetic representation.

To this Miscellany he wrote a preface, in which he gives an account of his mother's cruelty in a very uncommon strain of humour, and with a gaiety of imagination which the success of his subscription probably produced. The dedication is addressed to the Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, whom he flatters without reserve, and, to confess the truth, with very little art. The same observation may be extended to all his dedications: his compliments are constrained and violent, heaped together without the grace of order, or the decency of introduction. He seems to have written his panegyrics for the perusal only of his patrons, and to imagine that he had no other task than to pamper them with praises, however gross, and that flattery would make its way to the heart, without the assistance of elegance or invention.

Soon afterwards the death of the king furnished a general subject for a poetical contest, in which Mr. Savage engaged, and is allowed to have carried the prize of honour from his competitors: but I know not whether he gained by his performance any other advantage than the increase of his reputation, though it must certainly have been with farther views that he prevailed upon himself to

attempt a species of writing, of which all the topics had been long before exhausted, and which was made at once difficult by the multitudes that had failed in it, and those that had succeeded.

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

On the 20th of November, 1727, Mr. Savage came from Richmond, where he then lodged that he might pursue his studies with less interruption, with an intent to discharge another lodging which he had in Westminster; and accidentally meeting two gentlemen, his acquaintances, whose names were Merchant and Gregory, he went in with them to a neighbouring coffee-house, and sat drinking till it was late, it being in no time of Mr. Savage's life any part of his character to be the first of the company that desired to separate.

He would willingly have gone to bed in the same house, but there was not room for the whole company, and therefore they agreed to ramble about the streets, and divert themselves with such amusements as should offer themselves till morning. In this walk they happened unluckily to discover a light in Robinson's Coffee-house, near Charing Cross, and therefore went in. Merchant with some rudeness demanded a room, and was told that there was a good fire in the next parlour, which the company were about to leave, being then paying their reckoning. Merchant, not satisfied with this answer, rushed into the room, and was followed by his companions. He then petulantly placed himself between the company and the fire, and soon after kicked down the table. This produced a quarrel, swords were drawn on both sides, and one Mr. James Sinclair was killed. Savage, having likewise wounded a maid that held him, forced his way, with Merchant, out of the house; but being intimidated and confused, without resolution either to fly or stay, they were taken in a back court by one of the company, and some soldiers, whom he had called to his assistance. Being secured and guarded that night, they were in the morning carried before three justices, who committed them to the Gatehouse, from whence, upon the death of Mr. Sinclair, which happened the same day, they were removed in the night to Newgate, where they were, however, treated with some distinction, exempted from the ignominy of chains, and confined, not among the common criminals, but in the Press yard.

When the day of trial came, the court was crowded in a very unusual manner, and the public appeared to interest itself as in a cause of general concern. The witnesses against Mr. Savage and his friends were, the woman who kept the house, which was a house of ill-fame, and her maid, the men who were in the room with Mr. Sinclair, and a woman of the town, who had been drinking with them, and with whom one of them had been seen. They swore in general, that Merchant gave the provocation, which Savage and Gregory drew their swords to justify; that Savage drew first, and that he stabbed Sinclair when he was not in a posture of defence, or while Gregory commanded his sword; that after he had given the thrust he turned pale, and would have retired, but the maid clung round him, and one of the company endeavoured to detain him, from whom he broke by cutting the maid on the head, but was afterwards taken in a court. There was some difference in their depositions; one did not see Savage give the wound, another saw it given when Sinclair held his point towards the ground; and the woman of the town asserted that she did not see Sinclair's sword at all. This difference, however, was very far from amounting to inconsistency; but it was sufficient to show, that the hurry of the dispute was such that it was not easy to discover the truth with relation to particular circumstances, and that therefore some deductions were to be made from the credibility of the testimonies.

Sinclair had declared several times before his death that he received his wound from Savage: nor did Savage at his trial deny the fact, but endeavoured partly to extenuate it, by urging the suddenness of the whole action, and the impossibility of any ill design or premeditated malice; and partly to justify it by the necessity of self-defence, and the hazard of his own life, if he had lost that opportunity of giving the thrust: he observed, that neither reason nor law obliged a man to wait for the blow which was threatened, and which, if he should suffer it, he might never be able to return; that it was allowable to prevent an assault, and to preserve life by taking away that of the adversary by whom it was endangered. With regard to the violence with which he endeavoured to escape, he declared that it was not his design to fly from justice, or decline a trial, but to avoid the expenses and severities of a prison; and that he intended to appear at the bar without compulsion.

This defence, which took up more than an hour, was heard by the multitude that thronged the court with the most attentive and respectful silence. Those who thought he ought not to be acquitted owned that applause could not be refused him; and those who before pitied his misfortunes now revered his abilities. The witnesses which appeared against him were proved to be persons of characters which did not entitle them to much credit; a common strumpet, a woman by whom strumpets were entertained, a man by whom they were supported: and the character of Savage was by several persons of distinction asserted to be that of a modest, inoffensive man, not inclined to broils or to insolence, and who had, to that time, been only known for his misfortunes and his wit. Had his audience been his judges, he had undoubtedly been acquitted, but Mr. Page, who was then upon the bench, treated him with his usual insolence and severity, and when he had summed up the evidence, endeavoured to exasperate the jury, as Mr. Savage used to relate it, with this eloquent harangue:

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

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

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

Merchant, who had no sword, only of manslaughter.

Thus ended this memorable trial, which lasted eight hours. Mr.

Savage and Mr. Gregory were conducted back to prison, where they were more closely confined, and loaded with irons of fifty pounds'

weight. Four days afterwards they were sent back to the court to receive sentence, on which occasion Mr. Savage made, as far as it could be retained in memory, the following speech:—

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

Mr. Savage had now no hopes of life but from the mercy of the Crown, which was very earnestly solicited by his friends, and which, with whatever difficulty the story may obtain belief, was obstructed only by his mother.

To prejudice the queen against him, she made use of an incident which was omitted in the order of time, that it might be mentioned together with the purpose which it was made to serve. Mr. Savage, when he had discovered his birth, had an incessant desire to speak to his mother, who always avoided him in public, and refused him admission into her house. One evening, walking, as was his custom, in the street that she inhabited, he saw the door of her house by

accident open; he entered it, and finding no person in the passage to hinder him, went upstairs to salute her. She discovered him before he entered the chamber, alarmed the family with the most distressful outcries, and when she had by her screams gathered them about her, ordered them to drive out of the house that villain, who had forced himself in upon her and endeavoured to murder her.

Savage, who had attempted with the most submissive tenderness to soften her rage, hearing her utter so detestable an accusation, thought it prudent to retire, and, I believe, never attempted afterwards to speak to her.

But shocked as he was with her falsehood and her cruelty, he imagined that she intended no other use of her lie than to set herself free from his embraces and solicitations, and was very far from suspecting that she would treasure it in her memory as an instrument of future wickedness, or that she would endeavour for this fictitious assault to deprive him of his life. But when the queen was solicited for his pardon, and informed of the severe treatment which he had suffered from his judge, she answered that, however unjustifiable might be the manner of his trial, or whatever extenuation the action for which he was condemned might admit, she could not think that man a proper object of the king's mercy who had been capable of entering his mother's house in the night with an intent to murder her.

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

Thus had Savage perished by the evidence of a bawd, a strumpet, and his mother, had not justice and compassion procured him an advocate of rank too great to be rejected unheard, and of virtue too eminent to be heard without being believed. His merit and his calamities happened to reach the ear of the Countess of Hertford, who engaged in his support with all the tenderness that is excited by pity, and all the zeal which is kindled by generosity, and, demanding an audience of the queen, laid before her the whole series of his mother's cruelty, exposed the improbability of an accusation by which he was charged with an intent to commit a murder that could produce no advantage, and soon convinced her how little his former conduct could deserve to be mentioned as a reason for

extraordinary severity.

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

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

This mother is still (1744) alive, and may perhaps even yet, though her malice was so often defeated, enjoy the pleasure of reflecting that the life which she often endeavoured to destroy was at last shortened by her maternal offices; that though she could not transport her son to the plantations, bury him in the shop of a mechanic, or hasten the hand of the public executioner, she has yet had the satisfaction of embittering all his hours, and forcing him into exigencies that hurried on his death. It is by no means necessary to aggravate the enormity of this woman's conduct by placing it in opposition to that of the Countess of Hertford. No one can fail to observe how much more amiable it is to relieve than to oppress, and to rescue innocence from destruction than to destroy without an injury.

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

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

The nature of the act for which he had been tried was in itself doubtful; of the evidences which appeared against him, the character of the man was not unexceptionable, that of the woman notoriously infamous; she whose testimony chiefly influenced the jury to condemn him afterwards retracted her assertions. He always himself denied that he was drunk, as had been generally reported. Mr. Gregory, who is now (1744) collector of Antigua, is said to declare him far less criminal than he was imagined, even by some who favoured him; and Page himself afterwards confessed that he had treated him with uncommon rigour. When all these particulars are rated together, perhaps the memory of Savage may not be much sullied by his trial.

Some time after he obtained his liberty, he met in the street the woman who had sworn with so much malignity against him. She informed him that she was in distress, and, with a degree of confidence not easily attainable, desired him to relieve her. He, instead of insulting her misery, and taking pleasure in the calamities of one who had brought his life into danger, reproved her gently for her perjury, and, changing the only guinea that he had, divided it equally between her and himself. This is an action which in some ages would have made a saint, and perhaps in others a hero, and which, without any hyperbolical encomiums, must be allowed to be an instance of uncommon generosity, an act of complicated virtue, by which he at once relieved the poor, corrected the vicious, and forgave an enemy; by which he at once remitted the strongest provocations, and exercised the most ardent charity. Compassion was indeed the distinguishing quality of Savage: he never appeared inclined to take advantage of weakness, to attack the defenceless, or to press upon the falling. Whoever was distressed was certain at least of his good wishes; and when he could give no assistance to extricate them from misfortunes, he endeavoured to soothe them by sympathy and tenderness. But when his heart was not softened by the sight of misery, he was sometimes obstinate in his resentment, and did not quickly lose the remembrance of an injury. He always continued to speak with anger of the insolence and partiality of Page, and a short time before his death revenged it by a satire.

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

occasion of a copy of verses, in which the failings of good men are recounted, and in which the author had endeavoured to illustrate his position, that “the best may sometimes deviate from virtue,” by an instance of murder committed by Savage in the heat of wine, Savage remarked that it was no very just representation of a good man, to suppose him liable to drunkenness, and disposed in his riots to cut throats.

He was now indeed at liberty, but was, as before, without any other support than accidental favours and uncertain patronage afforded him; sources by which he was sometimes very liberally supplied, and which at other times were suddenly stopped; so that he spent his life between want and plenty, or, what was yet worse, between beggary and extravagance, for, as whatever he received was the gift of chance, which might as well favour him at one time as another, he was tempted to squander what he had because he always hoped to be immediately supplied. Another cause of his profusion was the absurd kindness of his friends, who at once rewarded and enjoyed his abilities by treating him at taverns, and habituating him to pleasures which he could not afford to enjoy, and which he was not able to deny himself, though he purchased the luxury of a single night by the anguish of cold and hunger for a week.

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

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

hundred pounds a year. This was the golden part of Mr. Savage's life; and for some time he had no reason to complain of fortune.

His appearance was splendid, his expenses large, and his acquaintance extensive. He was courted by all who endeavoured to be thought men of genius, and caressed by all who valued themselves upon a refined taste. To admire Mr. Savage was a proof of discernment; and to be acquainted with him was a title to poetical reputation. His presence was sufficient to make any place of public entertainment popular, and his approbation and example constituted the fashion. So powerful is genius, when it is invested with the glitter of affluence! Men willingly pay to fortune that regard which they owe to merit, and are pleased when they have an opportunity at once of gratifying their vanity and practising their duty.

This interval of prosperity furnished him with opportunities of enlarging his knowledge of human nature, by contemplating life from its highest gradations to its lowest; and, had he afterwards applied to dramatic poetry, he would perhaps not have had many superiors, for, as he never suffered any scene to pass before his eyes without notice, he had treasured in his mind all the different combinations of passions, and the innumerable mixtures of vice and virtue, which distinguished one character from another; and, as his conception was strong, his expressions were clear, he easily received impressions from objects, and very forcibly transmitted them to others. Of his exact observations on human life he has left a proof, which would do honour to the greatest names, in a small pamphlet, called "The Author to be Let," where he introduces Iscariot Hackney, a prostitute scribbler, giving an account of his birth, his education, his disposition and morals, habits of life, and maxims of conduct.

In the introduction are related many secret histories of the petty writers of that time, but sometimes mixed with ungenerous reflections on their birth, their circumstances, or those of their relations; nor can it be denied that some passages are such as Iscariot Hackney might himself have produced. He was accused likewise of living in an appearance of friendship with some whom he satirised, and of making use of the confidence which he gained by a seeming kindness, to discover failings and expose them. It must be confessed that Mr. Savage's esteem was no very certain possession, and that he would lampoon at one time those whom he had praised at another.

It may be alleged that the same man may change his principles, and that he who

was once deservedly commended may be afterwards satirised with equal justice, or that the poet was dazzled with the appearance of virtue, and found the man whom he had celebrated, when he had an opportunity of examining him more narrowly, unworthy of the panegyric which he had too hastily bestowed; and that, as a false satire ought to be recanted, for the sake of him whose reputation may be injured, false praise ought likewise to be obviated, lest the distinction between vice and virtue should be lost, lest a bad man should be trusted upon the credit of his encomiast, or lest others should endeavour to obtain like praises by the same means. But though these excuses may be often plausible, and sometimes just, they are very seldom satisfactory to mankind; and the writer who is not constant to his subject, quickly sinks into contempt, his satire loses its force, and his panegyric its value; and he is only considered at one time as a flatterer, and a calumniator at another. To avoid these imputations, it is only necessary to follow the rules of virtue, and to preserve an unvaried regard to truth. For though it is undoubtedly possible that a man, however cautious, may be sometimes deceived by an artful appearance of virtue, or by false evidences of guilt, such errors will not be frequent; and it will be allowed that the name of an author would never have been made contemptible had no man ever said what he did not think, or misled others but when he was himself deceived.

“The Author to be Let” was first published in a single pamphlet, and afterwards inserted in a collection of pieces relating to the “Dunciad,” which were addressed by Mr. Savage to the Earl of Middlesex, in a dedication which he was prevailed upon to sign, though he did not write it, and in which there are some positions that the true author would perhaps not have published under his own name, and on which Mr. Savage afterwards reflected with no great satisfaction. The enumeration of the bad effects of the uncontrolled freedom of the press, and the assertion that the “liberties taken by the writers of journals with their superiors were exorbitant and unjustifiable,” very ill became men who have themselves not always shown the exactest regard to the laws of subordination in their writings, and who have often satirised those that at least thought themselves their superiors, as they were eminent for their hereditary rank, and employed in the highest offices of the kingdom. But this is only an instance of that partiality which almost every man indulges with regard to himself: the liberty of the press is a blessing when we are inclined to write against others, and a calamity when we find ourselves overborne by the multitude of our assailants; as the power of the Crown is always thought too great by those who suffer by its influence, and too little by those in whose favour it is exerted; and a standing army is generally accounted necessary by those who command, and dangerous and oppressive by

those who support it.

Mr. Savage was likewise very far from believing that the letters annexed to each species of bad poets in the Bathos were, as he was directed to assert, “set down at random;” for when he was charged by one of his friends with putting his name to such an improbability, he had no other answer to make than that “he did not think of it;”

and his friend had too much tenderness to reply, that next to the crime of writing contrary to what he thought was that of writing without thinking.

After having remarked what is false in this dedication, it is proper that I observe the impartiality which I recommend, by declaring what Savage asserted—that the account of the circumstances which attended the publication of the “Dunciad,” however strange and improbable, was exactly true.

The publication of this piece at this time raised Mr. Savage a great number of enemies among those that were attacked by Mr. Pope, with whom he was considered as a kind of confederate, and whom he was suspected of supplying with private intelligence and secret incidents; so that the ignominy of an informer was added to the terror of a satirist. That he was not altogether free from literary hypocrisy, and that he sometimes spoke one thing and wrote another, cannot be denied, because he himself confessed that, when he lived with great familiarity with Dennis, he wrote an epigram against him.

Mr. Savage, however, set all the malice of all the pigmy writers at defiance, and thought the friendship of Mr. Pope cheaply purchased by being exposed to their censure and their hatred; nor had he any reason to repent of the preference, for he found Mr. Pope a steady and unalienable friend almost to the end of his life.

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

As he was very far from approving the conduct of Sir Robert Walpole, and in conversation mentioned him sometimes with acrimony, and generally with contempt, as he was one of those who were always zealous in their assertions of

the justice of the late opposition, jealous of the rights of the people, and alarmed by the long-continued triumph of the Court, it was natural to ask him what could induce him to employ his poetry in praise of that man who was, in his opinion, an enemy to liberty, and an oppressor of his country?

He alleged that he was then dependent upon the Lord Tyrconnel, who was an implicit follower of the ministry: and that, being enjoined by him, not without menaces, to write in praise of the leader, he had not resolution sufficient to sacrifice the pleasure of affluence to that of integrity.

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

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

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

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

And more distinctly in the following passage:—

"By woe, the soul to daring action swells; By woe, in plaintless patience it excels: From patience prudent, clear experience springs, And traces knowledge through the course of things.

Thence hope is formed, thence fortitude, success, Renown—whate'er men covet and caress."

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

It has been generally objected to "The Wanderer," that the disposition of the parts is irregular; that the design is obscure, and the plan perplexed; that the images, however beautiful, succeed each other without order; and that the whole performance is not so much a regular fabric, as a heap of shining materials thrown together by accident, which strikes rather with the solemn magnificence of a stupendous ruin than the elegant grandeur of a finished pile. This criticism is universal, and therefore it is reasonable to believe it at least in a degree just; but Mr. Savage was always of a contrary opinion, and thought his drift could only be missed by negligence or stupidity, and that the whole plan was regular, and the parts distinct. It was never denied to abound with strong representations of nature, and just observations upon life; and it may easily be observed that most of his pictures have an evident tendency to illustrate his first great position, "that good is the consequence of evil." The sun that burns up the mountains fructifies the vales; the deluge that rushes down the broken rocks with dreadful impetuosity is separated into purling brooks; and the rage of the hurricane purifies the air.

Even in this poem he has not been able to forbear one touch upon the cruelty of his mother, which, though remarkably delicate and tender, is a proof how deep an impression it had upon his mind. This must be at least acknowledged, which ought to be thought equivalent to many other excellences, that this poem can promote no other purposes than those of virtue, and that it is written with a very strong sense of the efficacy of religion. But my province is rather to give the history of Mr. Savage's performances than to display their beauties, or to obviate the criticisms which they have occasioned, and therefore I shall not dwell upon the particular passages which deserve applause. I shall neither show the excellence of his descriptions, nor expatiate on the terrific portrait of suicide, nor point out the artful touches by which he has distinguished the intellectual features of the rebels, who suffer death in his last canto. It is, however, proper to observe, that Mr. Savage always declared the characters wholly fictitious, and without the least allusion to any real persons or actions.

From a poem so diligently laboured, and so successfully finished, it might be reasonably expected that he should have gained considerable advantage; nor can

it, without some degree of indignation and concern, be told, that he sold the copy for ten guineas, of which he afterwards returned two, that the two last sheets of the work might be reprinted, of which he had in his absence entrusted the correction to a friend, who was too indolent to perform it with accuracy.

A superstitious regard to the correction of his sheets was one of Mr. Savage's peculiarities: he often altered, revised, recurred to his first reading or punctuation, and again adopted the alteration; he was dubious and irresolute without end, as on a question of the last importance, and at last was seldom satisfied. The intrusion or omission of a comma was sufficient to discompose him, and he would lament an error of a single letter as a heavy calamity. In one of his letters relating to an impression of some verses he remarks that he had, with regard to the correction of the proof, "a spell upon him;" and indeed the anxiety with which he dwelt upon the minutest and most trifling niceties, deserved no other name than that of fascination. That he sold so valuable a performance for so small a price was not to be imputed either to necessity, by which the learned and ingenious are often obliged to submit to very hard conditions, or to avarice, by which the booksellers are frequently incited to oppress that genius by which they are supported, but to that intemperate desire of pleasure, and habitual slavery to his passions, which involved him in many perplexities. He happened at that time to be engaged in the pursuit of some trifling gratification, and, being without money for the present occasion, sold his poem to the first bidder, and perhaps for the first price that was proposed, and would probably have been content with less if less had been offered him.

This poem was addressed to the Lord Tyrconnel, not only in the first lines, but in a formal dedication filled with the highest strains of panegyric, and the warmest professions of gratitude, but by no means remarkable for delicacy of connection or elegance of style. These praises in a short time he found himself inclined to retract, being discarded by the man on whom he had bestowed them, and whom he then immediately discovered not to have deserved them. Of this quarrel, which every day made more bitter, Lord Tyrconnel and Mr. Savage assigned very different reasons, which might perhaps all in reality concur, though they were not all convenient to be alleged by either party. Lord Tyrconnel affirmed that it was the constant practice of Mr. Savage to enter a tavern with any company that proposed it, drink the most expensive wines with great profusion, and when the reckoning was demanded to be without money. If, as it often happened, his company were willing to defray his part, the affair ended without any ill consequences; but if they were refractory, and expected that the wine

should be paid for by him that drank it, his method of composition was, to take them with him to his own apartment, assume the government of the house, and order the butler in an imperious manner to set the best wine in the cellar before his company, who often drank till they forgot the respect due to the house in which they were entertained, indulged themselves in the utmost extravagance of merriment, practised the most licentious frolics, and committed all the outrages of drunkenness. Nor was this the only charge which Lord Tyrconnel brought against him.

Having given him a collection of valuable books, stamped with his own arms, he had the mortification to see them in a short time exposed to sale upon the stalls, it being usual with Mr. Savage, when he wanted a small sum, to take his books to the pawnbroker.

Whoever was acquainted with Mr. Savage easily credited both these accusations; for having been obliged, from his first entrance into the world, to subsist upon expedients, affluence was not able to exalt him above them; and so much was he delighted with wine and conversation, and so long had he been accustomed to live by chance, that he would at any time go to the tavern without scruple, and trust for the reckoning to the liberality of his company, and frequently of company to whom he was very little known. This conduct, indeed, very seldom drew upon him those inconveniences that might be feared by any other person, for his conversation was so entertaining, and his address so pleasing, that few thought the pleasure which they received from him dearly purchased by paying for his wine. It was his peculiar happiness that he scarcely ever found a stranger whom he did not leave a friend; but it must likewise be added, that he had not often a friend long without obliging him to become a stranger.

Mr. Savage, on the other hand, declared that Lord Tyrconnel quarrelled with him because he would not subtract from his own luxury and extravagance what he had promised to allow him, and that his resentment was only a plea for the violation of his promise. He asserted that he had done nothing that ought to exclude him from that subsistence which he thought not so much a favour as a debt, since it was offered him upon conditions which he had never broken: and that his only fault was, that he could not be supported with nothing. He acknowledged that Lord Tyrconnel often exhorted him to regulate his method of life, and not to spend all his nights in taverns, and that he appeared desirous that he would pass those hours with him which he so freely bestowed upon others. This demand Mr. Savage considered as a censure of his conduct which he could

never patiently bear, and which, in the latter and cooler parts of his life, was so offensive to him, that he declared it as his resolution “to spurn that friend who should pretend to dictate to him;” and it is not likely that in his earlier years he received admonitions with more calmness. He was likewise inclined to resent such expectations, as tending to infringe his liberty, of which he was very jealous, when it was necessary to the gratification of his passions; and declared that the request was still more unreasonable as the company to which he was to have been confined was insupportably disagreeable. This assertion affords another instance of that inconsistency of his writings with his conversation which was so often to be observed. He forgot how lavishly he had, in his dedication to “The Wanderer,” extolled the delicacy and penetration, the humanity and generosity, the candour and politeness of the man whom, when he no longer loved him, he declared to be a wretch without understanding, without good nature, and without justice; of whose name he thought himself obliged to leave no trace in any future edition of his writings, and accordingly blotted it out of that copy of “The Wanderer” which was in his hands.

During his continuance with the Lord Tyrconnel, he wrote “The Triumph of Health and Mirth,” on the recovery of Lady Tyrconnel from a languishing illness. This performance is remarkable, not only for the gaiety of the ideas and the melody of the numbers, but for the agreeable fiction upon which it is formed. Mirth, overwhelmed with sorrow for the sickness of her favourite, takes a flight in quest of her sister Health, whom she finds reclined upon the brow of a lofty mountain, amidst the fragrance of perpetual spring, with the breezes of the morning sporting about her. Being solicited by her sister Mirth, she readily promises her assistance, flies away in a cloud, and impregnates the waters of Bath with new virtues, by which the sickness of Belinda is relieved. As the reputation of his abilities, the particular circumstances of his birth and life, the splendour of his appearance, and the distinction which was for some time paid him by Lord Tyrconnel, entitled him to familiarity with persons of higher rank than those to whose conversation he had been before admitted, he did not fail to gratify that curiosity which induced him to take a nearer view of those whom their birth, their employments, or their fortunes necessarily placed at a distance from the greatest part of mankind, and to examine whether their merit was magnified or diminished by the medium through which it was contemplated; whether the splendour with which they dazzled their admirers was inherent in themselves, or only reflected on them by the objects that surrounded them; and whether great men were selected for high stations, or high stations made great men.

For this purpose he took all opportunities of conversing familiarly with those who were most conspicuous at that time for their power or their influence; he watched their looser moments, and examined their domestic behaviour, with that acuteness which nature had given him, and which the uncommon variety of his life had contributed to increase, and that inquisitiveness which must always be produced in a vigorous mind by an absolute freedom from all pressing or domestic engagements. His discernment was quick, and therefore he soon found in every person, and in every affair, something that deserved attention; he was supported by others, without any care for himself, and was therefore at leisure to pursue his observations. More circumstances to constitute a critic on human life could not easily concur; nor, indeed, could any man, who assumed from accidental advantages more praise than he could justly claim from his real merit, admit any acquaintance more dangerous than that of Savage; of whom likewise it must be confessed, that abilities really exalted above the common level, or virtue refined from passion, or proof against corruption, could not easily find an abler judge or a warmer advocate.

What was the result of Mr. Savage's inquiry, though he was not much accustomed to conceal his discoveries, it may not be entirely safe to relate, because the persons whose characters he criticised are powerful, and power and resentment are seldom strangers; nor would it perhaps be wholly just, because what he asserted in conversation might, though true in general, be heightened by some momentary ardour of imagination, and as it can be delivered only from memory, may be imperfectly represented, so that the picture, at first aggravated, and then unskilfully copied, may be justly suspected to retain no great resemblance of the original.

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

But the opportunity of indulging his speculations on great characters was now at an end. He was banished from the table of Lord Tyrconnel, and turned again

adrift upon the world, without prospect of finding quickly any other harbour. As prudence was not one of the virtues by which he was distinguished, he made no provision against a misfortune like this. And though it is not to be imagined but that the separation must for some time have been preceded by coldness, peevishness, or neglect, though it was undoubtedly the consequence of accumulated provocations on both sides, yet every one that knew Savage will readily believe that to him it was sudden as a stroke of thunder; that, though he might have transiently suspected it, he had never suffered any thought so unpleasing to sink into his mind, but that he had driven it away by amusements or dreams of future felicity and affluence, and had never taken any measures by which he might prevent a precipitation from plenty to indigence. This quarrel and separation, and the difficulties to which Mr. Savage was exposed by them, were soon known both to his friends and enemies; nor was it long before he perceived, from the behaviour of both, how much is added to the lustre of genius by the ornaments of wealth. His condition did not appear to excite much compassion, for he had not been always careful to use the advantages he enjoyed with that moderation which ought to have been with more than usual caution preserved by him, who knew, if he had reflected, that he was only a dependent on the bounty of another, whom he could expect to support him no longer than he endeavoured to preserve his favour by complying with his inclinations, and whom he nevertheless set at defiance, and was continually irritating by negligence or encroachments.

Examples need not be sought at any great distance to prove that superiority of fortune has a natural tendency to kindle pride, and that pride seldom fails to exert itself in contempt and insult; and if this is often the effect of hereditary wealth, and of honours enjoyed only by the merits of others, it is some extenuation of any indecent triumphs to which this unhappy man may have been betrayed, that his prosperity was heightened by the force of novelty, and made more intoxicating by a sense of the misery in which he had so long languished, and perhaps of the insults which he had formerly borne, and which he might now think himself entitled to revenge. It is too common for those who have unjustly suffered pain to inflict it likewise in their turn with the same injustice, and to imagine that they have a right to treat others as they have themselves been treated.

That Mr. Savage was too much elevated by any good fortune is generally known; and some passages of his Introduction to "The Author to be Let" sufficiently show that he did not wholly refrain from such satire, as he afterwards thought

very unjust when he was exposed to it himself; for, when he was afterwards ridiculed in the character of a distressed poet, he very easily discovered that distress was not a proper subject for merriment or topic of invective. He was then able to discern, that if misery be the effect of virtue, it ought to be revered; if of ill fortune, to be pitied; and if of vice, not to be insulted, because it is perhaps itself a punishment adequate to the crime by which it was produced.

And the humanity of that man can deserve no panegyric who is capable of reproaching a criminal in the hands of the executioner. But these reflections, though they readily occurred to him in the first and last parts of his life, were, I am afraid, for a long time forgotten; at least they were, like many other maxims, treasured up in his mind rather for show than use, and operated very little upon his conduct, however elegantly he might sometimes explain, or however forcibly he might inculcate them. His degradation, therefore, from the condition which he had enjoyed with such wanton thoughtlessness, was considered by many as an occasion of triumph.

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

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

It does not appear that after this return of his wants he found mankind equally favourable to him, as at his first appearance in the world. His story, though in reality not less melancholy, was less affecting, because it was no longer new. It

therefore procured him no new friends, and those that had formerly relieved him thought they might now consign him to others. He was now likewise considered by many rather as criminal than as unhappy, for the friends of Lord Tyrconnel, and of his mother, were sufficiently industrious to publish his weaknesses, which were indeed very numerous, and nothing was forgotten that might make him either hateful or ridiculous. It cannot but be imagined that such representations of his faults must make great numbers less sensible of his distress; many who had only an opportunity to hear one part made no scruple to propagate the account which they received; many assisted their circulation from malice or revenge; and perhaps many pretended to credit them, that they might with a better grace withdraw their regard, or withhold their assistance.

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

Savage went next day to repay his visit at his own house, but was prevailed on by his domestics to retire without insisting on seeing him.

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

These mutual accusations were retorted on both sides, for many years, with the utmost degree of virulence and rage; and time seemed rather to augment than diminish their resentment. That the anger of Mr. Savage should be kept alive is not strange, because he felt every day the consequences of the quarrel; but it might reasonably have been hoped that Lord Tyrconnel might have relented, and at length have forgot those provocations, which, however they might have once inflamed him, had not in reality much hurt him. The spirit of Mr. Savage, indeed, never suffered him to solicit a reconciliation; he returned reproach for reproach, and insult for insult; his superiority of wit supplied the disadvantages of his fortune, and enabled him to form a party, and prejudice great numbers in his

favour. But though this might be some gratification of his vanity, it afforded very little relief to his necessities, and he was frequently reduced to uncommon hardships, of which, however, he never made any mean or importunate complaints, being formed rather to bear misery with fortitude than enjoy prosperity with moderation.

He now thought himself again at liberty to expose the cruelty of his mother; and therefore, I believe, about this time, published “The Bastard,” a poem remarkable for the vivacious sallies of thought in the beginning, where he makes a pompous enumeration of the imaginary advantages of base birth, and the pathetic sentiments at the end, where he recounts the real calamities which he suffered by the crime of his parents. The vigour and spirit of the verses, the peculiar circumstances of the author, the novelty of the subject, and the notoriety of the story to which the allusions are made, procured this performance a very favourable reception; great numbers were immediately dispersed, and editions were multiplied with unusual rapidity.

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

This was perhaps the first time that she ever discovered a sense of shame, and on this occasion the power of wit was very conspicuous; the wretch who had, without scruple, proclaimed herself an adulteress, and who had first endeavoured to starve her son, then to transport him, and afterwards to hang him, was not able to bear the representation of her own conduct, but fled from reproach, though she felt no pain from guilt, and left Bath in the utmost haste to shelter herself among the crowds of London. Thus Savage had the satisfaction of finding that, though he could not reform his mother, he could punish her, and that he did not always suffer alone.

The pleasure which he received from this increase of his poetical reputation was sufficient for some time to overbalance the miseries of want, which this performance did not much alleviate; for it was sold for a very trivial sum to a bookseller, who, though the success was so uncommon that five impressions

were sold, of which many were undoubtedly very numerous, had not generosity sufficient to admit the unhappy writer to any part of the profit. The sale of this poem was always mentioned by Mr. Savage with the utmost elevation of heart, and referred to by him as an incontestable proof of a general acknowledgment of his abilities. It was, indeed, the only production of which he could justly boast a general reception. But, though he did not lose the opportunity which success gave him of setting a high rate on his abilities, but paid due deference to the suffrages of mankind when they were given in his favour, he did not suffer his esteem of himself to depend upon others, nor found anything sacred in the voice of the people when they were inclined to censure him; he then readily showed the folly of expecting that the public should judge right, observed how slowly poetical merit had often forced its way into the world; he contented himself with the applause of men of judgment, and was somewhat disposed to exclude all those from the character of men of judgment who did not applaud him. But he was at other times more favourable to mankind than to think them blind to the beauties of his works, and imputed the slowness of their sale to other causes; either they were published at a time when the town was empty, or when the attention of the public was engrossed by some struggle in the Parliament or some other object of general concern; or they were, by the neglect of the publisher, not diligently dispersed, or, by his avarice, not advertised with sufficient frequency. Address, or industry, or liberality was always wanting, and the blame was laid rather on any person than the author.

By arts like these, arts which every man practises in some degree, and to which too much of the little tranquillity of life is to be ascribed, Savage was always able to live at peace with himself. Had he, indeed, only made use of these expedients to alleviate the loss or want of fortune or reputation, or any other advantages which it is not in a man's power to bestow upon himself, they might have been justly mentioned as instances of a philosophical mind, and very properly proposed to the imitation of multitudes who, for want of diverting their imaginations with the same dexterity, languish under afflictions which might be easily removed.

It were doubtless to be wished that truth and reason were universally prevalent; that everything were esteemed according to its real value; and that men would secure themselves from being disappointed, in their endeavours after happiness, by placing it only in virtue, which is always to be obtained; but, if adventitious and foreign pleasures must be pursued, it would be perhaps of some benefit, since that pursuit must frequently be fruitless, if the practice of Savage could be

taught, that folly might be an antidote to folly, and one fallacy be obviated by another. But the danger of this pleasing intoxication must not be concealed; nor, indeed, can any one, after having observed the life of Savage, need to be cautioned against it. By imputing none of his miseries to himself, he continued to act upon the same principles, and to follow the same path; was never made wiser by his sufferings, nor preserved by one misfortune from falling into another. He proceeded throughout his life to tread the same steps on the same circle; always applauding his past conduct, or at least forgetting it, to amuse himself with phantoms of happiness, which were dancing before him; and willingly turned his eyes from the light of reason, when it would have discovered the illusion, and shown him, what he never wished to see, his real state. He is even accused, after having lulled his imagination with those ideal opiates, of having tried the same experiment upon his conscience; and, having accustomed himself to impute all deviations from the right to foreign causes, it is certain that he was upon every occasion too easily reconciled to himself, and that he appeared very little to regret those practices which had impaired his reputation. The reigning error of his life was that he mistook the love for the practice of virtue, and was indeed not so much a good man as the friend of goodness.

This, at least, must be allowed him, that he always preserved a strong sense of the dignity, the beauty, and the necessity of virtue; and that he never contributed deliberately to spread corruption amongst mankind. His actions, which were generally precipitate, were often blameable; but his writings, being the production of study, uniformly tended to the exaltation of the mind and the propagation of morality and piety. These writings may improve mankind when his failings shall be forgotten; and therefore he must be considered, upon the whole, as a benefactor to the world.

Nor can his personal example do any hurt, since whoever hears of his faults will hear of the miseries which they brought upon him, and which would deserve less pity had not his condition been such as made his faults pardonable. He may be considered as a child exposed to all the temptations of indigence, at an age when resolution was not yet strengthened by conviction, nor virtue confirmed by habit; a circumstance which, in his “Bastard,” he laments in a very affecting manner:—

“No mother’s care

Shielded my infant innocence with prayer; No father’s guardian hand my youth maintained, Called forth my virtues, or from vice restrained.”

“The Bastard,” however it might provoke or mortify his mother, could not be expected to melt her to compassion, so that he was still under the same want of the necessaries of life; and he therefore exerted all the interest which his wit, or his birth, or his misfortunes could procure to obtain, upon the death of Eusden, the place of Poet Laureate, and prosecuted his application with so much diligence that the king publicly declared it his intention to bestow it upon him; but such was the fate of Savage that even the king, when he intended his advantage, was disappointed in his schemes; for the Lord Chamberlain, who has the disposal of the laurel as one of the appendages of his office, either did not know the king’s design, or did not approve it, or thought the nomination of the Laureate an encroachment upon his rights, and therefore bestowed the laurel upon Colley Cibber.

Mr. Savage, thus disappointed, took a resolution of applying to the queen, that, having once given him life, she would enable him to support it, and therefore published a short poem on her birthday, to which he gave the odd title of “Volunteer Laureate.” The event of this essay he has himself related in the following letter, which he prefixed to the poem when he afterwards reprinted it in *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, whence I have copied it entire, as this was one of the few attempts in which Mr. Savage succeeded.

“MR. URBAN,—In your Magazine for February you published the last ‘Volunteer Laureate,’ written on a very melancholy occasion, the death of the royal patroness of arts and literature in general, and of the author of that poem in particular; I now send you the first that Mr. Savage wrote under that title. This gentleman, notwithstanding a very considerable interest, being, on the death of Mr. Eusden, disappointed of the Laureate’s place, wrote the following verses; which were no sooner published, but the late queen sent to a bookseller for them. The author had not at that time a friend either to get him introduced, or his poem presented at Court; yet, such was the unspeakable goodness of that princess, that, notwithstanding this act of ceremony was wanting, in a few days after publication Mr. Savage received a bank-bill of fifty pounds, and a gracious message from her Majesty, by the Lord North and Guilford, to this effect: ‘That her Majesty was highly pleased with the verses; that she took particularly kind his lines there relating to the king; that he had permission to write annually on the same subject; and that he should yearly receive the like present, till something better (which was her Majesty’s intention) could be done for him.’ After this he was permitted to present one of his annual poems to her Majesty, had the honour of kissing her hand, and met with the most gracious reception.

“Yours, etc.”

Such was the performance, and such its reception; a reception which, though by no means unkind, was yet not in the highest degree generous. To chain down the genius of a writer to an annual panegyric showed in the queen too much desire of hearing her own praises, and a greater regard to herself than to him on whom her bounty was conferred. It was a kind of avaricious generosity, by which flattery was rather purchased than genius rewarded.

Mrs. Oldfield had formerly given him the same allowance with much more heroic intention: she had no other view than to enable him to prosecute his studies, and to set himself above the want of assistance, and was contented with doing good without stipulating for encomiums.

Mr. Savage, however, was not at liberty to make exceptions, but was ravished with the favours which he had received, and probably yet more with those which he was promised: he considered himself now as a favourite of the queen, and did not doubt but a few annual poems would establish him in some profitable employment. He therefore assumed the title of “Volunteer Laureate,” not without some reprehensions from Cibber, who informed him that the title of “Laureate” was a mark of honour conferred by the king, from whom all honour is derived, and which, therefore, no man has a right to bestow upon himself; and added that he might with equal propriety style himself a Volunteer Lord or Volunteer Baronet. It cannot be denied that the remark was just; but Savage did not think any title which was conferred upon Mr. Cibber so honourable as that the usurpation of it could be imputed to him as an instance of very exorbitant vanity, and therefore continued to write under the same title, and received every year the same reward. He did not appear to consider these encomiums as tests of his abilities, or as anything more than annual hints to the queen of her promise, or acts of ceremony, by the performance of which he was entitled to his pension, and therefore did not labour them with great diligence, or print more than fifty each year, except that for some of the last years he regularly inserted them in *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, by which they were dispersed over the kingdom.

Of some of them he had himself so low an opinion that he intended to omit them in the collection of poems for which he printed proposals, and solicited subscriptions; nor can it seem strange that, being confined to the same subject, he should be at some times indolent and at others unsuccessful; that he should sometimes delay a disagreeable task till it was too late to perform it well; or that

he should sometimes repeat the same sentiment on the same occasion, or at others be misled by an attempt after novelty to forced conceptions and far-fetched images. He wrote indeed with a double intention, which supplied him with some variety; for his business was to praise the queen for the favours which he had received, and to complain to her of the delay of those which she had promised: in some of his pieces, therefore, gratitude is predominant, and in some discontent; in some, he represents himself as happy in her patronage; and, in others, as disconsolate to find himself neglected. Her promise, like other promises made to this unfortunate man, was never performed, though he took sufficient care that it should not be forgotten. The publication of his "Volunteer Laureate" procured him no other reward than a regular remittance of fifty pounds. He was not so depressed by his disappointments as to neglect any opportunity that was offered of advancing his interest.

When the Princess Anne was married, he wrote a poem upon her departure, only, as he declared, "because it was expected from him,"

and he was not willing to bar his own prospects by any appearance of neglect. He never mentioned any advantage gained by this poem, or any regard that was paid to it; and therefore it is likely that it was considered at Court as an act of duty, to which he was obliged by his dependence, and which it was therefore not necessary to reward by any new favour: or perhaps the queen really intended his advancement, and therefore thought it superfluous to lavish presents upon a man whom she intended to establish for life.

About this time not only his hopes were in danger of being frustrated, but his pension likewise of being obstructed, by an accidental calumny. The writer of The Daily Courant, a paper then published under the direction of the Ministry, charged him with a crime, which, though very great in itself, would have been remarkably invidious in him, and might very justly have incensed the queen against him. He was accused by name of influencing elections against the Court by appearing at the head of a Tory mob; nor did the accuser fail to aggravate his crime by representing it as the effect of the most atrocious ingratitude, and a kind of rebellion against the queen, who had first preserved him from an infamous death, and afterwards distinguished him by her favour, and supported him by her charity. The charge, as it was open and confident, was likewise by good fortune very particular. The place of the transaction was mentioned, and the whole series of the rioter's conduct related. This exactness made Mr. Savage's vindication easy; for he never had in his life seen the place which was declared to be the

scene of his wickedness, nor ever had been present in any town when its representatives were chosen. This answer he therefore made haste to publish, with all the circumstances necessary to make it credible; and very reasonably demanded that the accusation should be retracted in the same paper, that he might no longer suffer the imputation of sedition and ingratitude. This demand was likewise pressed by him in a private letter to the author of the paper, who, either trusting to the protection of those whose defence he had undertaken, or having entertained some personal malice against Mr.

Savage, or fearing lest, by retracting so confident an assertion, he should impair the credit of his paper, refused to give him that satisfaction. Mr. Savage therefore thought it necessary, to his own vindication, to prosecute him in the King's Bench; but as he did not find any ill effects from the accusation, having sufficiently cleared his innocence, he thought any further procedure would have the appearance of revenge; and therefore willingly dropped it. He saw soon afterwards a process commenced in the same court against himself, on an information in which he was accused of writing and publishing an obscene pamphlet.

It was always Mr Savage's desire to be distinguished; and, when any controversy became popular, he never wanted some reason for engaging in it with great ardour, and appearing at the head of the party which he had chosen. As he was never celebrated for his prudence, he had no sooner taken his side, and informed himself of the chief topics of the dispute, than he took all opportunities of asserting and propagating his principles, without much regard to his own interest, or any other visible design than that of drawing upon himself the attention of mankind.

The dispute between the Bishop of London and the chancellor is well known to have been for some time the chief topic of political conversation; and therefore Mr. Savage, in pursuance of his character, endeavoured to become conspicuous among the controvertists with which every coffee-house was filled on that occasion. He was an indefatigable opposer of all the claims of ecclesiastical power, though he did not know on what they were founded; and was therefore no friend to the Bishop of London. But he had another reason for appearing as a warm advocate for Dr.

Rundle; for he was the friend of Mr. Foster and Mr. Thomson, who were the friends of Mr. Savage.

Thus remote was his interest in the question, which, however, as he imagined, concerned him so nearly, that it was not sufficient to harangue and dispute, but necessary likewise to write upon it. He therefore engaged with great ardour in a new poem, called by him, "The Progress of a Divine;" in which he conducts a profligate priest, by all the gradations of wickedness, from a poor curacy in the country to the highest preferments of the Church; and describes, with that humour which was natural to him, and that knowledge which was extended to all the diversities of human life, his behaviour in every station; and insinuates that this priest, thus accomplished, found at last a patron in the Bishop of London. When he was asked, by one of his friends, on what pretence he could charge the bishop with such an action, he had no more to say than that he had only inverted the accusation; and that he thought it reasonable to believe that he who obstructed the rise of a good man without reason would for bad reasons promote the exaltation of a villain. The clergy were universally provoked by this satire; and Savage, who, as was his constant practice, had set his name to his performance, was censured in *The Weekly Miscellany* with severity, which he did not seem inclined to forget.

But return of invective was not thought a sufficient punishment.

The Court of King's Bench was therefore moved against him; and he was obliged to return an answer to a charge of obscenity. It was urged, in his defence, that obscenity was criminal when it was intended to promote the practice of vice; but that Mr. Savage had only introduced obscene ideas with the view of exposing them to detestation, and of amending the age by showing the deformity of wickedness. This plea was admitted; and Sir Philip Yorke, who then presided in that court, dismissed the information, with encomiums upon the purity and excellence of Mr. Savage's writings. The prosecution, however, answered in some measure the purpose of those by whom it was set on foot; for Mr. Savage was so far intimidated by it that, when the edition of his poem was sold, he did not venture to reprint it; so that it was in a short time forgotten, or forgotten by all but those whom it offended. It is said that some endeavours were used to incense the queen against him: but he found advocates to obviate at least part of their effect; for though he was never advanced, he still continued to receive his pension.

This poem drew more infamy upon him than any incident of his life; and, as his conduct cannot be vindicated, it is proper to secure his memory from reproach by informing those whom he made his enemies that he never intended to repeat

the provocation; and that, though whenever he thought he had any reason to complain of the clergy, he used to threaten them with a new edition of "The Progress of a Divine," it was his calm and settled resolution to suppress it for ever.

He once intended to have made a better reparation for the folly or injustice with which he might be charged, by writing another poem, called "The Progress of a Free-thinker," whom he intended to lead through all the stages of vice and folly, to convert him from virtue to wickedness, and from religion to infidelity, by all the modish sophistry used for that purpose; and at last to dismiss him by his own hand into the other world. That he did not execute this design is a real loss to mankind; for he was too well acquainted with all the scenes of debauchery to have failed in his representations of them, and too zealous for virtue not to have represented them in such a manner as should expose them either to ridicule or detestation. But this plan was, like others, formed and laid aside, till the vigour of his imagination was spent, and the effervescence of invention had subsided; but soon gave way to some other design, which pleased by its novelty for awhile, and then was neglected like the former.

He was still in his usual exigencies, having no certain support but the pension allowed him by the queen, which, though it might have kept an exact economist from want, was very far from being sufficient for Mr. Savage, who had never been accustomed to dismiss any of his appetites without the gratification which they solicited, and whom nothing but want of money withheld from partaking of every pleasure that fell within his view. His conduct with regard to his pension was very particular. No sooner had he changed the bill than he vanished from the sight of all his acquaintance, and lay for some time out of the reach of all the inquiries that friendship or curiosity could make after him. At length he appeared again, penniless as before, but never informed even those whom he seemed to regard most where he had been; nor was his retreat ever discovered.

This was his constant practice during the whole time that he received the pension from the queen: he regularly disappeared and returned. He, indeed, affirmed that he retired to study, and that the money supported him in solitude for many months; but his friends declared that the short time in which it was spent sufficiently confuted his own account of his conduct.

His politeness and his wit still raised him friends who were desirous of setting him at length free from that indigence by which he had been hitherto oppressed;

and therefore solicited Sir Robert Walpole in his favour with so much earnestness that they obtained a promise of the next place that should become vacant, not exceeding two hundred pounds a year. This promise was made with an uncommon declaration, “that it was not the promise of a minister to a petitioner, but of a friend to his friend.”

Mr. Savage now concluded himself set at ease for ever, and, as he observes in a poem written on that incident of his life, trusted, and was trusted; but soon found that his confidence was ill-grounded, and this friendly promise was not inviolable. He spent a long time in solicitations, and at last despaired and desisted. He did not indeed deny that he had given the minister some reason to believe that he should not strengthen his own interest by advancing him, for he had taken care to distinguish himself in coffee-houses, as an advocate for the ministry of the last years of Queen Anne, and was always ready to justify the conduct, and exalt the character, of Lord Bolingbroke, whom he mentions with great regard in an Epistle upon Authors, which he wrote about that time, but was too wise to publish, and of which only some fragments have appeared, inserted by him in the Magazine after his retirement.

To despair was not, however, the character of Savage; when one patronage failed, he had recourse to another. The Prince was now extremely popular, and had very liberally rewarded the merit of some writers whom Mr. Savage did not think superior to himself, and therefore he resolved to address a poem to him. For this purpose he made choice of a subject which could regard only persons of the highest rank and greatest affluence, and which was therefore proper for a poem intended to procure the patronage of a prince; and having retired for some time to Richmond, that he might prosecute his design in full tranquillity, without the temptations of pleasure, or the solicitations of creditors, by which his meditations were in equal danger of being disconcerted, he produced a poem “On Public Spirit, with regard to Public Works.”

The plan of this poem is very extensive, and comprises a multitude of topics, each of which might furnish matter sufficient for a long performance, and of which some have already employed more eminent writers; but as he was perhaps not fully acquainted with the whole extent of his own design, and was writing to obtain a supply of wants too pressing to admit of long or accurate inquiries, he passes negligently over many public works which, even in his own opinion, deserved to be more elaborately treated.

But though he may sometimes disappoint his reader by transient touches upon these subjects, which have often been considered, and therefore naturally raise expectations, he must be allowed amply to compensate his omissions by expatiating, in the conclusion of his work, upon a kind of beneficence not yet celebrated by any eminent poet, though it now appears more susceptible of embellishments, more adapted to exalt the ideas and affect the passions, than many of those which have hitherto been thought most worthy of the ornament of verse. The settlement of colonies in uninhabited countries, the establishment of those in security whose misfortunes have made their own country no longer pleasing or safe, the acquisition of property without injury to any, the appropriation of the waste and luxuriant bounties of nature, and the enjoyment of those gifts which Heaven has scattered upon regions uncultivated and unoccupied, cannot be considered without giving rise to a great number of pleasing ideas, and bewildering the imagination in delightful prospects; and therefore, whatever speculations they may produce in those who have confined themselves to political studies, naturally fixed the attention, and excited the applause, of a poet. The politician, when he considers men driven into other countries for shelter, and obliged to retire to forests and deserts, and pass their lives and fix their posterity in the remotest corners of the world to avoid those hardships which they suffer or fear in their native place, may very properly inquire why the legislature does not provide a remedy for these miseries rather than encourage an escape from them. He may conclude that the flight of every honest man is a loss to the community; that those who are unhappy without guilt ought to be relieved; and the life which is overburdened by accidental calamities set at ease by the care of the public; and that those who have by misconduct forfeited their claim to favour ought rather to be made useful to the society which they have injured than be driven from it. But the poet is employed in a more pleasing undertaking than that of proposing laws which, however just or expedient, will never be made; or endeavouring to reduce to rational schemes of government societies which were formed by chance, and are conducted by the private passions of those who preside in them. He guides the unhappy fugitive, from want and persecution, to plenty, quiet, and security, and seats him in scenes of peaceful solitude and undisturbed repose.

Savage has not forgotten, amidst the pleasing sentiments which this prospect of retirement suggested to him, to censure those crimes which have been generally committed by the discoverers of new regions, and to expose the enormous wickedness of making war upon barbarous nations because they cannot resist, and of invading countries because they are fruitful; of extending navigation only

to propagate vice; and of visiting distant lands only to lay them waste. He has asserted the natural equality of mankind, and endeavoured to suppress that pride which inclines men to imagine that right is the consequence of power. His description of the various miseries which force men to seek for refuge in distant countries affords another instance of his proficiency in the important and extensive study of human life; and the tenderness with which he recounts them, another proof of his humanity and benevolence.

It is observable that the close of this poem discovers a change which experience had made in Mr. Savage's opinions. In a poem written by him in his youth, and published in his Miscellanies, he declares his contempt of the contracted views and narrow prospects of the middle state of life, and declares his resolution either to tower like the cedar, or be trampled like the shrub; but in this poem, though addressed to a prince, he mentions this state of life as comprising those who ought most to attract reward, those who merit most the confidence of power and the familiarity of greatness; and, accidentally mentioning this passage to one of his friends, declared that in his opinion all the virtue of mankind was comprehended in that state.

In describing villas and gardens he did not omit to condemn that absurd custom which prevails among the English of permitting servants to receive money from strangers for the entertainment that they receive, and therefore inserted in his poem these lines: "But what the flowering pride of gardens rare, However royal, or however fair,

If gates which to excess should still give way, Ope but, like Peter's paradise, for pay; If perquisited varlets frequent stand, And each new walk must a new tax demand; What foreign eye but with contempt surveys?

What Muse shall from oblivion snatch their praise?"

But before the publication of his performance he recollected that the queen allowed her garden and cave at Richmond to be shown for money; and that she so openly countenanced the practice that she had bestowed the privilege of showing them as a place of profit on a man whose merit she valued herself upon rewarding, though she gave him only the liberty of disgracing his country. He therefore thought, with more prudence than was often exerted by him, that the publication of these lines might be officiously represented as an insult upon the queen, to whom he owed his life and his subsistence; and that the propriety of

his observation would be no security against the censures which the unseasonableness of it might draw upon him; he therefore suppressed the passage in the first edition, but after the queen's death thought the same caution no longer necessary, and restored it to the proper place. The poem was, therefore, published without any political faults, and inscribed to the prince; but Mr. Savage, having no friend upon whom he could prevail to present it to him, had no other method of attracting his observation than the publication of frequent advertisements, and therefore received no reward from his patron, however generous on other occasions. This disappointment he never mentioned without indignation, being by some means or other confident that the prince was not ignorant of his address to him; and insinuated that if any advances in popularity could have been made by distinguishing him, he had not written without notice or without reward. He was once inclined to have presented his poem in person and sent to the printer for a copy with that design; but either his opinion changed or his resolution deserted him, and he continued to resent neglect without attempting to force himself into regard. Nor was the public much more favourable than his patron; for only seventy-two were sold, though the performance was much commended by some whose judgment in that kind of writing is generally allowed. But Savage easily reconciled himself to mankind without imputing any defect to his work, by observing that his poem was unluckily published two days after the prorogation of the parliament, and by consequence at a time when all those who could be expected to regard it were in the hurry of preparing for their departure, or engaged in taking leave of others upon their dismissal from public affairs. It must be however allowed, in justification of the public, that this performance is not the most excellent of Mr. Savage's works; and that, though it cannot be denied to contain many striking sentiments, majestic lines, and just observations, it is in general not sufficiently polished in the language, or enlivened in the imagery, or digested in the plan. Thus his poem contributed nothing to the alleviation of his poverty, which was such as very few could have supported with equal patience; but to which it must likewise be confessed that few would have been exposed who received punctually fifty pounds a year; a salary which, though by no means equal to the demands of vanity and luxury, is yet found sufficient to support families above want, and was undoubtedly more than the necessities of life require.

But no sooner had he received his pension than he withdrew to his darling privacy, from which he returned in a short time to his former distress, and for some part of the year generally lived by chance, eating only when he was invited to the tables of his acquaintances, from which the meanness of his dress often

excluded him, when the politeness and variety of his conversation would have been thought a sufficient recompense for his entertainment. He lodged as much by accident as he dined, and passed the night sometimes in mean houses which are set open at night to any casual wanderers; sometimes in cellars, among the riot and filth of the meanest and most profligate of the rabble; and sometimes, when he had not money to support even the expenses of these receptacles, walked about the streets till he was weary, and lay down in the summer upon the bulk, or in the winter, with his associate, in poverty, among the ashes of a glass-house.

In this manner were passed those days and those nights which nature had enabled him to have employed in elevated speculations, useful studies, or pleasing conversation. On a bulk, in a cellar, or in a glass-house, among thieves and beggars, was to be found the author of "The Wanderer," the man of exalted sentiments, extensive views, and curious observations; the man whose remarks on life might have assisted the statesman, whose ideas of virtue might have enlightened the moralist, whose eloquence might have influenced senates, and whose delicacy might have polished courts. It cannot but be imagined that such necessities might sometimes force him upon disreputable practices; and it is probable that these lines in "The Wanderer" were occasioned by his reflections on his own conduct: "Though misery leads to happiness and truth, Unequal to the load this languid youth, (Oh, let none censure, if, untried by grief, If, amidst woe, untempted by relief), He stooped reluctant to low arts of shame, Which then, e'en then, he scorned, and blushed to name."

Whoever was acquainted with him was certain to be solicited for small sums, which the frequency of the request made in time considerable; and he was therefore quickly shunned by those who were become familiar enough to be trusted with his necessities; but his rambling manner of life, and constant appearance at houses of public resort, always procured him a new succession of friends whose kindness had not been exhausted by repeated requests; so that he was seldom absolutely without resources, but had in his utmost exigencies this comfort, that he always imagined himself sure of speedy relief. It was observed that he always asked favours of this kind without the least submission or apparent consciousness of dependence, and that he did not seem to look upon a compliance with his request as an obligation that deserved any extraordinary acknowledgments; but a refusal was resented by him as an affront, or complained of as an injury; nor did he readily reconcile himself to those who either denied to lend, or gave him afterwards any intimation that they expected

to be repaid. He was sometimes so far compassionated by those who knew both his merit and distresses that they received him into their families, but they soon discovered him to be a very incommodious inmate; for, being always accustomed to an irregular manner of life, he could not confine himself to any stated hours, or pay any regard to the rules of a family, but would prolong his conversation till midnight, without considering that business might require his friend's application in the morning; and, when he had persuaded himself to retire to bed, was not, without equal difficulty, called up to dinner: it was therefore impossible to pay him any distinction without the entire subversion of all economy, a kind of establishment which, wherever he went, he always appeared ambitious to overthrow. It must therefore be acknowledged, in justification of mankind, that it was not always by the negligence or coldness of his friends that Savage was distressed, but because it was in reality very difficult to preserve him long in a state of ease. To supply him with money was a hopeless attempt; for no sooner did he see himself master of a sum sufficient to set him free from care for a day than he became profuse and luxurious. When once he had entered a tavern, or engaged in a scheme of pleasure, he never retired till want of money obliged him to some new expedient.

If he was entertained in a family, nothing was any longer to be regarded there but amusement and jollity; wherever Savage entered, he immediately expected that order and business should fly before him, that all should thenceforward be left to hazard, and that no dull principle of domestic management should be opposed to his inclination or intrude upon his gaiety. His distresses, however afflictive, never dejected him; in his lowest state he wanted not spirit to assert the natural dignity of wit, and was always ready to repress that insolence which the superiority of fortune incited, and to trample on that reputation which rose upon any other basis than that of merit: he never admitted any gross familiarities, or submitted to be treated otherwise than as an equal. Once when he was without lodging, meat, or clothes, one of his friends, a man indeed not remarkable for moderation in his prosperity, left a message that he desired to see him about nine in the morning.

Savage knew that his intention was to assist him, but was very much disgusted that he should presume to prescribe the hour of his attendance, and, I believe, refused to visit him, and rejected his kindness.

The same invincible temper, whether firmness or obstinacy, appeared in his conduct to the Lord Tyrconnel, from whom he very frequently demanded that the

allowance which was once paid him should be restored; but with whom he never appeared to entertain for a moment the thought of soliciting a reconciliation, and whom he treated at once with all the haughtiness of superiority and all the bitterness of resentment. He wrote to him, not in a style of supplication or respect, but of reproach, menace, and contempt; and appeared determined, if he ever regained his allowance, to hold it only by the right of conquest.

As many more can discover that a man is richer than that he is wiser than themselves, superiority of understanding is not so readily acknowledged as that of fortune; nor is that haughtiness which the consciousness of great abilities incites, borne with the same submission as the tyranny of affluence; and therefore Savage, by asserting his claim to deference and regard, and by treating those with contempt whom better fortune animated to rebel against him, did not fail to raise a great number of enemies in the different classes of mankind. Those who thought themselves raised above him by the advantages of riches hated him because they found no protection from the petulance of his wit. Those who were esteemed for their writings feared him as a critic, and maligned him as a rival; and almost all the smaller wits were his professed enemies.

Among these Mr. Miller so far indulged his resentment as to introduce him in a farce, and direct him to be personated on the stage in a dress like that which he then wore; a mean insult, which only insinuated that Savage had but one coat, and which was therefore despised by him rather than resented; for, though he wrote a lampoon against Miller, he never printed it: and as no other person ought to prosecute that revenge from which the person who was injured desisted, I shall not preserve what Mr. Savage suppressed; of which the publication would indeed have been a punishment too severe for so impotent an assault.

The great hardships of poverty were to Savage not the want of lodging or food, but the neglect and contempt which it drew upon him. He complained that, as his affairs grew desperate, he found his reputation for capacity visibly decline; that his opinion in questions of criticism was no longer regarded when his coat was out of fashion; and that those who, in the interval of his prosperity, were always encouraging him to great undertakings by encomiums on his genius and assurances of success, now received any mention of his designs with coldness, thought that the subjects on which he proposed to write were very difficult, and were ready to inform him that the event of a poem was uncertain, that an author ought to employ much time in the consideration of his plan, and not presume to sit down to write in consequence of a few cursory ideas and a superficial

knowledge; difficulties were started on all sides, and he was no longer qualified for any performance but “The Volunteer Laureate.”

Yet even this kind of contempt never depressed him: for he always preserved a steady confidence in his own capacity, and believed nothing above his reach which he should at any time earnestly endeavour to attain. He formed schemes of the same kind with regard to knowledge and to fortune, and flattered himself with advances to be made in science, as with riches, to be enjoyed in some distant period of his life. For the acquisition of knowledge he was indeed much better qualified than for that of riches; for he was naturally inquisitive, and desirous of the conversation of those from whom any information was to be obtained, but by no means solicitous to improve those opportunities that were sometimes offered of raising his fortune; and he was remarkably retentive of his ideas, which, when once he was in possession of them, rarely forsook him; a quality which could never be communicated to his money.

While he was thus wearing out his life in expectation that the queen would some time recollect her promise, he had recourse to the usual practice of writers, and published proposals for printing his works by subscription, to which he was encouraged by the success of many who had not a better right to the favour of the public; but, whatever was the reason, he did not find the world equally inclined to favour him; and he observed with some discontent, that though he offered his works at half a guinea, he was able to procure but a small number in comparison with those who subscribed twice as much to Duck. Nor was it without indignation that he saw his proposals neglected by the queen, who patronised Mr. Duck’s with uncommon ardour, and incited a competition among those who attended the court who should most promote his interest, and who should first offer a subscription. This was a distinction to which Mr. Savage made no scruple of asserting that his birth, his misfortunes, and his genius, gave a fairer title than could be pleaded by him on whom it was conferred.

Savage’s applications were, however, not universally unsuccessful; for some of the nobility countenanced his design, encouraged his proposals, and subscribed with great liberality. He related of the Duke of Chandos particularly, that upon receiving his proposals he sent him ten guineas. But the money which his subscriptions afforded him was not less volatile than that which he received from his other schemes; whenever a subscription was paid him, he went to a tavern; and as money so collected is necessarily received in small sums, he never was able to send his poems to the press, but for many years continued his solicitation,

and squandered whatever he obtained.

The project of printing his works was frequently revived; and as his proposals grew obsolete, new ones were printed with fresher dates.

To form schemes for the publication was one of his favourite amusements; nor was he ever more at ease than when, with any friend who readily fell in with his schemes, he was adjusting the print, forming the advertisements, and regulating the dispersion of his new edition, which he really intended some time to publish, and which, as long as experience had shown him the impossibility of printing the volume together, he at last determined to divide into weekly or monthly numbers, that the profits of the first might supply the expenses of the next.

Thus he spent his time in mean expedients and tormenting suspense, living for the greatest part in fear of prosecutions from his creditors, and consequently skulking in obscure parts of the town, of which he was no stranger to the remotest corners. But wherever he came, his address secured him friends, whom his necessities soon alienated; so that he had perhaps a more numerous acquaintance than any man ever before attained, there being scarcely any person eminent on any account to whom he was not known, or whose character he was not in some degree able to delineate. To the acquisition of this extensive acquaintance every circumstance of his life contributed. He excelled in the arts of conversation, and therefore willingly practised them. He had seldom any home, or even a lodging, in which he could be private, and therefore was driven into public-houses for the common conveniences of life and supports of nature. He was always ready to comply with every invitation, having no employment to withhold him, and often no money to provide for himself; and by dining with one company he never failed of obtaining an introduction into another.

Thus dissipated was his life, and thus casual his subsistence; yet did not the distraction of his views hinder him from reflection, nor the uncertainty of his condition depress his gaiety. When he had wandered about without any fortunate adventure by which he was led into a tavern, he sometimes retired into the fields, and was able to employ his mind in study, to amuse it with pleasing imaginations; and seldom appeared to be melancholy but when some sudden misfortune had just fallen upon him; and even then in a few moments he would disentangle himself from his perplexity, adopt the subject of conversation, and apply his mind wholly to the objects that others presented to it. This life, unhappy as it may be already imagined, was yet embittered in 1738 with new

calamities. The death of the queen deprived him of all the prospects of preferment with which he so long entertained his imagination; and as Sir Robert Walpole had before given him reason to believe that he never intended the performance of his promise, he was now abandoned again to fortune.

He was, however, at that time supported by a friend; and as it was not his custom to look out for distant calamities, or to feel any other pain than that which forced itself upon his senses, he was not much afflicted at his loss, and perhaps comforted himself that his pension would be now continued without the annual tribute of a panegyric. Another expectation contributed likewise to support him; he had taken a resolution to write a second tragedy upon the story of Sir Thomas Overbury, in which he preserved a few lines of his former play, but made a total alteration of the plan, added new incidents, and introduced new characters; so that it was a new tragedy, not a revival of the former.

Many of his friends blamed him for not making choice of another subject; but in vindication of himself he asserted that it was not easy to find a better; and that he thought it his interest to extinguish the memory of the first tragedy, which he could only do by writing one less defective upon the same story; by which he should entirely defeat the artifice of the booksellers, who, after the death of any author of reputation, are always industrious to swell his works by uniting his worst productions with his best. In the execution of this scheme, however, he proceeded but slowly, and probably only employed himself upon it when he could find no other amusement; but he pleased himself with counting the profits, and perhaps imagined that the theatrical reputation which he was about to acquire would be equivalent to all that he had lost by the death of his patroness. He did not, in confidence of his approaching riches, neglect the measures proper to secure the continuance of his pension, though some of his favourers thought him culpable for omitting to write on her death; but on her birthday next year he gave a proof of the solidity of his judgment and the power of his genius. He knew that the track of elegy had been so long beaten that it was impossible to travel in it without treading in the footsteps of those who had gone before him; and that therefore it was necessary, that he might distinguish himself from the herd of encomiasts, to find out some new walk of funeral panegyric. This difficult task he performed in such a manner that his poem may be justly ranked among the best pieces that the death of princes has produced. By transferring the mention of her death to her birthday, he has formed a happy combination of topics which any other man would have thought it very difficult to connect in one view, but which he has united in such a manner that the relation between

them appears natural; and it may be justly said that what no other man would have thought on, it now appears scarcely possible for any man to miss.

The beauty of this peculiar combination of images is so masterly that it is sufficient to set this poem above censure; and therefore it is not necessary to mention many other delicate touches which may be found in it, and which would deservedly be admired in any other performance. To these proofs of his genius may be added, from the same poem, an instance of his prudence, an excellence for which he was not so often distinguished; he does not forget to remind the king, in the most delicate and artful manner, of continuing his pension.

With regard to the success of his address he was for some time in suspense, but was in no great degree solicitous about it; and continued his labour upon his new tragedy with great tranquillity, till the friend who had for a considerable time supported him, removing his family to another place, took occasion to dismiss him.

It then became necessary to inquire more diligently what was determined in his affair, having reason to suspect that no great favour was intended him, because he had not received his pension at the usual time.

It is said that he did not take those methods of retrieving his interest which were most likely to succeed; and some of those who were employed in the Exchequer cautioned him against too much violence in his proceedings; but Mr. Savage, who seldom regulated his conduct by the advice of others, gave way to his passion, and demanded of Sir Robert Walpole, at his levee, the reason of the distinction that was made between him and the other pensioners of the queen, with a degree of roughness which perhaps determined him to withdraw what had been only delayed.

Whatever was the crime of which he was accused or suspected, and whatever influence was employed against him, he received soon after an account that took from him all hopes of regaining his pension; and he had now no prospect of subsistence but from his play, and he knew no way of living for the time required to finish it.

So peculiar were the misfortunes of this man, deprived of an estate and title by a particular law, exposed and abandoned by a mother, defrauded by a mother of a fortune which his father had allotted him, he entered the world without a friend;

and though his abilities forced themselves into esteem and reputation, he was never able to obtain any real advantage; and whatever prospects arose, were always intercepted as he began to approach them. The king's intentions in his favour were frustrated; his dedication to the prince, whose generosity on every other occasion was eminent, procured him no reward; Sir Robert Walpole, who valued himself upon keeping his promise to others, broke it to him without regret; and the bounty of the queen was, after her death, withdrawn from him, and from him only.

Such were his misfortunes, which yet he bore, not only with decency, but with cheerfulness; nor was his gaiety clouded even by his last disappointments, though he was in a short time reduced to the lowest degree of distress, and often wanted both lodging and food. At this time he gave another instance of the insurmountable obstinacy of his spirit: his clothes were worn out, and he received notice that at a coffee-house some clothes and linen were left for him: the person who sent them did not, I believe, inform him to whom he was to be obliged, that he might spare the perplexity of acknowledging the benefit; but though the offer was so far generous, it was made with some neglect of ceremonies, which Mr. Savage so much resented that he refused the present, and declined to enter the house till the clothes that had been designed for him were taken away.

His distress was now publicly known, and his friends therefore thought it proper to concert some measures for his relief; and one of them [Pope] wrote a letter to him, in which he expressed his concern "for the miserable withdrawing of this pension;" and gave him hopes that in a short time he should find himself supplied with a competence, "without any dependence on those little creatures which we are pleased to call the Great." The scheme proposed for this happy and independent subsistence was, that he should retire into Wales, and receive an allowance of fifty pounds a year, to be raised by a subscription, on which he was to live privately in a cheap place, without aspiring any more to affluence, or having any further care of reputation. This offer Mr. Savage gladly accepted, though with intentions very different from those of his friends; for they proposed that he should continue an exile from London for ever, and spend all the remaining part of his life at Swansea; but he designed only to take the opportunity which their scheme offered him of retreating for a short time, that he might prepare his play for the stage, and his other works for the press, and then to return to London to exhibit his tragedy, and live upon the profits of his own labour. With regard to his works he proposed very great improvements, which

would have required much time or great application; and, when he had finished them, he designed to do justice to his subscribers by publishing them according to his proposals. As he was ready to entertain himself with future pleasures, he had planned out a scheme of life for the country, of which he had no knowledge but from pastorals and songs. He imagined that he should be transported to scenes of flowery felicity, like those which one poet has reflected to another; and had projected a perpetual round of innocent pleasures, of which he suspected no interruption from pride, or ignorance, or brutality. With these expectations he was so enchanted that when he was once gently reproached by a friend for submitting to live upon a subscription, and advised rather by a resolute exertion of his abilities to support himself, he could not bear to debar himself from the happiness which was to be found in the calm of a cottage, or lose the opportunity of listening, without intermission, to the melody of the nightingale, which he believed was to be heard from every bramble, and which he did not fail to mention as a very important part of the happiness of a country life.

While this scheme was ripening, his friends directed him to take a lodging in the liberties of the Fleet, that he might be secure from his creditors, and sent him every Monday a guinea, which he commonly spent before the next morning, and trusted, after his usual manner, the remaining part of the week to the bounty of fortune.

He now began very sensibly to feel the miseries of dependence.

Those by whom he was to be supported began to prescribe to him with an air of authority, which he knew not how decently to resent, nor patiently to bear; and he soon discovered from the conduct of most of his subscribers, that he was yet in the hands of "little creatures." Of the insolence that he was obliged to suffer he gave many instances, of which none appeared to raise his indignation to a greater height than the method which was taken of furnishing him with clothes. Instead of consulting him, and allowing him to send a tailor his orders for what they thought proper to allow him, they proposed to send for a tailor to take his measure, and then to consult how they should equip him. This treatment was not very delicate, nor was it such as Savage's humanity would have suggested to him on a like occasion; but it had scarcely deserved mention, had it not, by affecting him in an uncommon degree, shown the peculiarity of his character. Upon hearing the design that was formed, he came to the lodging of a friend with the most violent agonies of rage; and, being asked what it could be that gave him such disturbance, he replied with the utmost vehemence of indignation, "That

they had sent for a tailor to measure him.”

How the affair ended was never inquired, for fear of renewing his uneasiness. It is probable that, upon recollection, he submitted with a good grace to what he could not avoid, and that he discovered no resentment where he had no power. He was, however, not humbled to implicit and universal compliance; for when the gentleman who had first informed him of the design to support him by a subscription attempted to procure a reconciliation with the Lord Tyrconnel, he could by no means be prevailed upon to comply with the measures that were proposed.

A letter was written for him to Sir William Lemon, to prevail upon him to interpose his good offices with Lord Tyrconnel, in which he solicited Sir William's assistance “for a man who really needed it as much as any man could well do;” and informed him that he was retiring “for ever to a place where he should no more trouble his relations, friends, or enemies;” he confessed that his passion had betrayed him to some conduct, with regard to Lord Tyrconnel, for which he could not but heartily ask his pardon; and as he imagined Lord Tyrconnel's passion might be yet so high, that he would not “receive a letter from him,” begged that Sir William would endeavour to soften him; and expressed his hopes that he would comply with this request, and that “so small a relation would not harden his heart against him.”

That any man should presume to dictate a letter to him was not very agreeable to Mr. Savage; and therefore he was, before he had opened it, not much inclined to approve it. But when he read it he found it contained sentiments entirely opposite to his own, and, as he asserted, to the truth; and therefore, instead of copying it, wrote his friend a letter full of masculine resentment and warm expostulations. He very justly observed, that the style was too supplicatory, and the representation too abject, and that he ought at least to have made him complain with “the dignity of a gentleman in distress.” He declared that he would not write the paragraph in which he was to ask Lord Tyrconnel's pardon; for, “he despised his pardon, and therefore could not heartily, and would not hypocritically, ask it.” He remarked that his friend made a very unreasonable distinction between himself and him; for, says he, “when you mention men of high rank in your own character,” they are “those little creatures whom we are pleased to call the Great;” but when you address them “in mine,” no servility is sufficiently humble. He then with propriety explained the ill consequences which might be expected from such a letter, which his relations would print in their

own defence, and which would for ever be produced as a full answer to all that he should allege against them; for he always intended to publish a minute account of the treatment which he had received. It is to be remembered, to the honour of the gentleman by whom this letter was drawn up, that he yielded to Mr.

Savage's reasons, and agreed that it ought to be suppressed.

After many alterations and delays, a subscription was at length raised, which did not amount to fifty pounds a year, though twenty were paid by one gentleman; such was the generosity of mankind, that what had been done by a player without solicitation, could not now be effected by application and interest; and Savage had a great number to court and to obey for a pension less than that which Mrs.

Oldfield paid him without exacting any servilities. Mr. Savage, however, was satisfied, and willing to retire, and was convinced that the allowance, though scanty, would be more than sufficient for him, being now determined to commence a rigid economist, and to live according to the exact rules of frugality; for nothing was in his opinion more contemptible than a man who, when he knew his income, exceeded it; and yet he confessed that instances of such folly were too common, and lamented that some men were not trusted with their own money.

Full of these salutary resolutions, he left London in July, 1739, having taken leave with great tenderness of his friends, and parted from the author of this narrative with tears in his eyes. He was furnished with fifteen guineas, and informed that they would be sufficient, not only for the expense of his journey, but for his support in Wales for some time; and that there remained but little more of the first collection. He promised a strict adherence to his maxims of parsimony, and went away in the stage-coach; nor did his friends expect to hear from him till he informed them of his arrival at Swansea. But when they least expected, arrived a letter dated the fourteenth day after his departure, in which he sent them word that he was yet upon the road, and without money; and that he therefore could not proceed without a remittance. They then sent him the money that was in their hands, with which he was enabled to reach Bristol, from whence he was to go to Swansea by water.

At Bristol he found an embargo laid upon the shipping, so that he could not

immediately obtain a passage; and being therefore obliged to stay there some time, he with his usual felicity ingratiated himself with many of the principal inhabitants, was invited to their houses, distinguished at their public feasts, and treated with a regard that gratified his vanity, and therefore easily engaged his affection.

He began very early after his retirement to complain of the conduct of his friends in London, and irritated many of them so much by his letters, that they withdrew, however honourably, their contributions; and it is believed that little more was paid him than the twenty pounds a year, which were allowed him by the gentleman who proposed the subscription.

After some stay at Bristol he retired to Swansea, the place originally proposed for his residence, where he lived about a year, very much dissatisfied with the diminution of his salary; but contracted, as in other places, acquaintance with those who were most distinguished in that country, among whom he has celebrated Mr.

Powel and Mrs. Jones, by some verses which he inserted in The Gentleman's Magazine. Here he completed his tragedy, of which two acts were wanting when he left London; and was desirous of coming to town, to bring it upon the stage. This design was very warmly opposed; and he was advised, by his chief benefactor, to put it into the hands of Mr. Thomson and Mr. Mallet, that it might be fitted for the stage, and to allow his friends to receive the profits, out of which an annual pension should be paid him.

This proposal he rejected with the utmost contempt. He was by no means convinced that the judgment of those to whom he was required to submit was superior to his own. He was now determined, as he expressed it, to be "no longer kept in leading-strings," and had no elevated idea of "his bounty, who proposed to pension him out of the profits of his own labours."

He attempted in Wales to promote a subscription for his works, and had once hopes of success; but in a short time afterwards formed a resolution of leaving that part of the country, to which he thought it not reasonable to be confined for the gratification of those who, having promised him a liberal income, had no sooner banished him to a remote corner than they reduced his allowance to a salary scarcely equal to the necessities of life. His resentment of this treatment, which, in his own opinion at least, he had not deserved, was such, that he broke

off all correspondence with most of his contributors, and appeared to consider them as persecutors and oppressors; and in the latter part of his life declared that their conduct towards him since his departure from London “had been perfidiousness improving on perfidiousness, and inhumanity on inhumanity.”

It is not to be supposed that the necessities of Mr. Savage did not sometimes incite him to satirical exaggerations of the behaviour of those by whom he thought himself reduced to them. But it must be granted that the diminution of his allowance was a great hardship, and that those who withdrew their subscription from a man who, upon the faith of their promise, had gone into a kind of banishment, and abandoned all those by whom he had been before relieved in his distresses, will find it no easy task to vindicate their conduct.

It may be alleged, and perhaps justly, that he was petulant and contemptuous; that he more frequently reproached his subscribers for not giving him more, than thanked them for what he received; but it is to be remembered that his conduct, and this is the worst charge that can be drawn up against him, did them no real injury, and that it therefore ought rather to have been pitied than resented; at least the resentment it might provoke ought to have been generous and manly; epithets which his conduct will hardly deserve that starves the man whom he has persuaded to put himself into his power.

It might have been reasonably demanded by Savage, that they should, before they had taken away what they promised, have replaced him in his former state, that they should have taken no advantages from the situation to which the appearance of their kindness had reduced him, and that he should have been recalled to London before he was abandoned. He might justly represent, that he ought to have been considered as a lion in the toils, and demand to be released before the dogs should be loosed upon him. He endeavoured, indeed, to release himself, and, with an intent to return to London, went to Bristol, where a repetition of the kindness which he had formerly found, invited him to stay. He was not only caressed and treated, but had a collection made for him of about thirty pounds, with which it had been happy if he had immediately departed for London; but his negligence did not suffer him to consider that such proofs of kindness were not often to be expected, and that this ardour of benevolence was in a great degree the effect of novelty, and might, probably, be every day less; and therefore he took no care to improve the happy time, but was encouraged by one favour to hope for another, till at length generosity was exhausted, and officiousness wearied.

Another part of his misconduct was the practice of prolonging his visits to unseasonable hours, and disconcerting all the families into which he was admitted. This was an error in a place of commerce which all the charms of his conversation could not compensate; for what trader would purchase such airy satisfaction by the loss of solid gain, which must be the consequence of midnight merriment, as those hours which were gained at night were generally lost in the morning? Thus Mr. Savage, after the curiosity of the inhabitants was gratified, found the number of his friends daily decreasing, perhaps without suspecting for what reason their conduct was altered; for he still continued to harass, with his nocturnal intrusions, those that yet countenanced him, and admitted him to their houses.

But he did not spend all the time of his residence at Bristol in visits or at taverns, for he sometimes returned to his studies, and began several considerable designs. When he felt an inclination to write, he always retired from the knowledge of his friends, and lay hid in an obscure part of the suburbs, till he found himself again desirous of company, to which it is likely that intervals of absence made him more welcome. He was always full of his design of returning to London, to bring his tragedy upon the stage; but, having neglected to depart with the money that was raised for him, he could not afterwards procure a sum sufficient to defray the expenses of his journey; nor perhaps would a fresh supply have had any other effect than, by putting immediate pleasures into his power, to have driven the thoughts of his journey out of his mind.

While he was thus spending the day in contriving a scheme for the morrow, distress stole upon him by imperceptible degrees. His conduct had already wearied some of those who were at first enamoured of his conversation; but he might, perhaps, still have devolved to others, whom he might have entertained with equal success, had not the decay of his clothes made it no longer consistent with their vanity to admit him to their tables, or to associate with him in public places. He now began to find every man from home at whose house he called; and was therefore no longer able to procure the necessaries of life, but wandered about the town, slighted and neglected, in quest of a dinner, which he did not always obtain.

To complete his misery, he was pursued by the officers for small debts which he had contracted; and was therefore obliged to withdraw from the small number of friends from whom he had still reason to hope for favours. His custom was to lie in bed the greatest part of the day, and to get out in the dark with the utmost

privacy, and, after having paid his visit, return again before morning to his lodging, which was in the garret of an obscure inn. Being thus excluded on one hand, and confined on the other, he suffered the utmost extremities of poverty, and often fasted so long that he was seized with faintness, and had lost his appetite, not being able to bear the smell of meat till the action of his stomach was restored by a cordial. In this distress, he received a remittance of five pounds from London, with which he provided himself a decent coat, and determined to go to London, but unhappily spent his money at a favourite tavern. Thus was he again confined to Bristol, where he was every day hunted by bailiffs. In this exigence he once more found a friend, who sheltered him in his house, though at the usual inconveniences with which his company was attended; for he could neither be persuaded to go to bed in the night nor to rise in the day.

It is observable, that in these various scenes of misery he was always disengaged and cheerful: he at some times pursued his studies, and at others continued or enlarged his epistolary correspondence; nor was he ever so far dejected as to endeavour to procure an increase of his allowance by any other methods than accusations and reproaches.

He had now no longer any hopes of assistance from his friends at Bristol, who as merchants, and by consequence sufficiently studious of profit, cannot be supposed to have looked with much compassion upon negligence and extravagance, or to think any excellence equivalent to a fault of such consequence as neglect of economy. It is natural to imagine, that many of those who would have relieved his real wants, were discouraged from the exertion of their benevolence by observation of the use which was made of their favours, and conviction that relief would be only momentary, and that the same necessity would quickly return.

At last he quitted the house of his friend, and returned to his lodgings at the inn, still intending to set out in a few days for London, but on the 10th of January, 1742-3, having been at supper with two of his friends, he was at his return to his lodgings arrested for a debt of about eight pounds, which he owed at a coffee-house, and conducted to the house of a sheriff's officer.

The account which he gives of this misfortune, in a letter to one of the gentlemen with whom he had supped, is too remarkable to be omitted.

“It was not a little unfortunate for me, that I spent yesterday’s evening with you; because the hour hindered me from entering on my new lodging; however, I have now got one, but such an one as I believe nobody would choose.

“I was arrested at the suit of Mrs. Read, just as I was going upstairs to bed, at Mr. Bowyer’s; but taken in so private a manner, that I believe nobody at the White Lion is apprised of it; though I let the officers know the strength, or rather weakness, of my pocket, yet they treated me with the utmost civility; and even when they conducted me to confinement, it was in such a manner, that I verily believe I could have escaped, which I would rather be ruined than have done, notwithstanding the whole amount of my finances was but threepence halfpenny.

“In the first place, I must insist that you will industriously conceal this from Mrs. S—s, because I would not have her good nature suffer that pain which I know she would be apt to feel on this occasion.

“Next, I conjure you, dear sir, by all the ties of friendship, by no means to have one uneasy thought on my account; but to have the same pleasntry of countenance, and unruffled serenity of mind, which (God be praised!) I have in this, and have had in a much severer calamity. Furthermore, I charge you, if you value my friendship as truly as I do yours, not to utter, or even harbour, the least resentment against Mrs. Read. I believe she has ruined me, but I freely forgive her; and (though I will never more have any intimacy with her) I would, at a due distance, rather do her an act of good than ill-will. Lastly (pardon the expression), I absolutely command you not to offer me any pecuniary assistance nor to attempt getting me any from any one of your friends. At another time, or on any other occasion, you may, dear friend, be well assured I would rather write to you in the submissive style of a request than that of a peremptory command.

“However, that my truly valuable friend may not think I am too proud to ask a favour, let me entreat you to let me have your boy to attend me for this day, not only for the sake of saving me the expense of porters, but for the delivery of some letters to people whose names I would not have known to strangers.

“The civil treatment I have thus far met from those whose prisoner I am, makes me thankful to the Almighty, that though He has thought fit to visit me (on my birth-night) with affliction, yet (such is His great goodness!) my affliction is not without alleviating circumstances. I murmur not; but am all resignation to the divine will. As to the world, I hope that I shall be endued by Heaven with that

presence of mind, that serene dignity in misfortune, that constitutes the character of a true nobleman; a dignity far beyond that of coronets; a nobility arising from the just principles of philosophy, refined and exalted by those of Christianity.”

He continued five days at the officer’s, in hopes that he should be able to procure bail, and avoid the necessity of going to prison.

The state in which he passed his time, and the treatment which he received, are very justly expressed by him in a letter which he wrote to a friend: “The whole day,” says he, “has been employed in various people’s filling my head with their foolish chimerical systems, which has obliged me coolly (as far as nature will admit) to digest, and accommodate myself to every different person’s way of thinking; hurried from one wild system to another, till it has quite made a chaos of my imagination, and nothing done—promised—

disappointed—ordered to send, every hour, from one part of the town to the other.”

When his friends, who had hitherto caressed and applauded, found that to give bail and pay the debt was the same, they all refused to preserve him from a prison at the expense of eight pounds: and therefore, after having been for some time at the officer’s house “at an immense expense,” as he observes in his letter, he was at length removed to Newgate. This expense he was enabled to support by the generosity of Mr. Nash at Bath, who, upon receiving from him an account of his condition, immediately sent him five guineas, and promised to promote his subscription at Bath with all his interest.

By his removal to Newgate he obtained at least a freedom from suspense, and rest from the disturbing vicissitudes of hope and disappointment: he now found that his friends were only companions who were willing to share his gaiety, but not to partake of his misfortunes; and therefore he no longer expected any assistance from them. It must, however, be observed of one gentleman, that he offered to release him by paying the debt, but that Mr. Savage would not consent, I suppose because he thought he had before been too burthensome to him. He was offered by some of his friends that a collection should be made for his enlargement; but he “treated the proposal,” and declared “he should again treat it, with disdain. As to writing any mendicant letters, he had too high a spirit, and determined only to write to some ministers of state, to try to regain his pension.”

He continued to complain of those that had sent him into the country, and objected to them, that he had “lost the profits of his play, which had been finished three years;” and in another letter declares his resolution to publish a pamphlet, that the world might know how “he had been used.”

This pamphlet was never written; for he in a very short time recovered his usual tranquillity, and cheerfully applied himself to more inoffensive studies. He, indeed, steadily declared that he was promised a yearly allowance of fifty pounds, and never received half the sum; but he seemed to resign himself to that as well as to other misfortunes, and lose the remembrance of it in his amusements and employments. The cheerfulness with which he bore his confinement appears from the following letter, which he wrote January the 30th, to one of his friends in London:

“I now write to you from my confinement in Newgate, where I have been ever since Monday last was se’nnight, and where I enjoy myself with much more tranquillity than I have known for upwards of a twelvemonth past; having a room entirely to myself, and pursuing the amusement of my poetical studies, uninterrupted, and agreeable to my mind. I thank the Almighty, I am now all collected in myself; and, though my person is in confinement, my mind can expatiate on ample and useful subjects with all the freedom imaginable. I am now more conversant with the Nine than ever, and if, instead of a Newgate bird, I may be allowed to be a bird of the Muses, I assure you, sir, I sing very freely in my cage; sometimes, indeed, in the plaintive notes of the nightingale; but at others, in the cheerful strains of the lark.”

In another letter he observes, that he ranges from one subject to another, without confining himself to any particular task; and that he was employed one week upon one attempt, and the next upon another.

Surely the fortitude of this man deserves, at least, to be mentioned with applause; and, whatever faults may be imputed to him, the virtue of suffering well cannot be denied him. The two powers which, in the opinion of Epictetus, constituted a wise man, are those of bearing and forbearing, which it cannot indeed be affirmed to have been equally possessed by Savage; and indeed the want of one obliged him very frequently to practise the other. He was treated by Mr. Dagge, the keeper of the prison, with great humanity; was supported by him at his own table, without any certainty of a recompense; had a room to himself, to which he could at any time retire from all disturbance; was allowed to stand at

the door of the prison, and sometimes taken out into the fields; so that he suffered fewer hardships in prison than he had been accustomed to undergo in the greatest part of his life.

The keeper did not confine his benevolence to a gentle execution of his office, but made some overtures to the creditor for his release, though without effect; and continued, during the whole time of his imprisonment, to treat him with the utmost tenderness and civility.

Virtue is undoubtedly most laudable in that state which makes it most difficult; and therefore the humanity of a gaoler certainly deserves this public attestation; and the man whose heart has not been hardened by such an employment may be justly proposed as a pattern of benevolence. If an inscription was once engraved “to the honest toll-gatherer,” less honours ought not to be paid “to the tender gaoler.”

Mr. Savage very frequently received visits, and sometimes presents, from his acquaintances: but they did not amount to a subsistence, for the greater part of which he was indebted to the generosity of this keeper; but these favours, however they might endear to him the particular persons from whom he received them, were very far from impressing upon his mind any advantageous ideas of the people of Bristol, and therefore he thought he could not more properly employ himself in prison than in writing a poem called “London and Bristol Delineated.”

When he had brought this poem to its present state, which, without considering the chasm, is not perfect, he wrote to London an account of his design, and informed his friend that he was determined to print it with his name; but enjoined him not to communicate his intention to his Bristol acquaintance. The gentleman, surprised at his resolution, endeavoured to persuade him from publishing it, at least from prefixing his name; and declared that he could not reconcile the injunction of secrecy with his resolution to own it at its first appearance. To this Mr. Savage returned an answer agreeable to his character, in the following terms:—

“I received yours this morning; and not without a little surprise at the contents. To answer a question with a question, you ask me concerning London and Bristol, why will I add DELINEATED? Why did Mr. Woolaston add the same word to his Religion of Nature? I suppose that it was his will and pleasure to add

it in his case: and it is mine to do so in my own. You are pleased to tell me that you understand not why secrecy is enjoined, and yet I intend to set my name to it. My answer is,—I have my private reasons, which I am not obliged to explain to any one. You doubt my friend Mr. S—

would not approve of it. And what is it to me whether he does or not? Do you imagine that Mr. S— is to dictate to me? If any man who calls himself my friend should assume such an air, I would spurn at his friendship with contempt. You say, I seem to think so by not letting him know it. And suppose I do, what then? Perhaps I can give reasons for that disapprobation, very foreign from what you would imagine. You go on in saying, Suppose I should not put my name to it. My answer is, that I will not suppose any such thing, being determined to the contrary: neither, sir, would I have you suppose that I applied to you for want of another press: nor would I have you imagine that I owe Mr. S— obligations which I do not.”

Such was his imprudence, and such his obstinate adherence to his own resolutions, however absurd! A prisoner! supported by charity! and, whatever insults he might have received during the latter part of his stay at Bristol, once caressed, esteemed, and presented with a liberal collection, he could forget on a sudden his danger and his obligations, to gratify the petulance of his wit or the eagerness of his resentment, and publish a satire by which he might reasonably expect that he should alienate those who then supported him, and provoke those whom he could neither resist nor escape.

This resolution, from the execution of which it is probable that only his death could have hindered him, is sufficient to show how much he disregarded all considerations that opposed his present passions, and how readily he hazarded all future advantages for any immediate gratifications. Whatever was his predominant inclination, neither hope nor fear hindered him from complying with it; nor had opposition any other effect than to heighten his ardour and irritate his vehemence.

This performance was, however, laid aside while he was employed in soliciting assistance from several great persons; and one interruption succeeding another, hindered him from supplying the chasm, and perhaps from retouching the other parts, which he can hardly be imagined to have finished in his own opinion; for it is very unequal, and some of the lines are rather inserted to rhyme to others, than to support or improve the sense; but the first and last parts are worked up

with great spirit and elegance.

His time was spent in the prison for the most part in study, or in receiving visits; but sometimes he descended to lower amusements, and diverted himself in the kitchen with the conversation of the criminals; for it was not pleasing to him to be much without company; and though he was very capable of a judicious choice, he was often contented with the first that offered. For this he was sometimes reprov'd by his friends, who found him surrounded with felons; but the reproof was on that, as on other occasions, thrown away; he continued to gratify himself, and to set very little value on the opinion of others. But here, as in every other scene of his life, he made use of such opportunities as occurred of benefiting those who were more miserable than himself, and was always ready to perform any office of humanity to his fellow-prisoners.

He had now ceased from corresponding with any of his subscribers except one, who yet continued to remit him the twenty pounds a year which he had promised him, and by whom it was expected that he would have been in a very short time enlarged, because he had directed the keeper to inquire after the state of his debts. However, he took care to enter his name according to the forms of the court, that the creditor might be oblig'd to make him some allowance, if he was continued a prisoner, and when on that occasion he appeared in the hall, was treated with very unusual respect. But the resentment of the city was afterwards raised by some accounts that had been spread of the satire; and he was inform'd that some of the merchants intended to pay the allowance which the law required, and to detain him a prisoner at their own expense. This he treated as an empty menace; and perhaps might have hasten'd the publication, only to show how much he was superior to their insults, had not all his schemes been suddenly destroyed.

When he had been six months in prison, he received from one of his friends, in whose kindness he had the greatest confidence, and on whose assistance he chiefly depended, a letter that contain'd a charge of very atrocious ingratitude, drawn up in such terms as sudden resentment dictat'd. Henley, in one of his advertisements, had mention'd "Pope's treatment of Savage." This was supposed by Pope to be the consequence of a complaint made by Savage to Henley, and was therefore mention'd by him with much resentment. Mr. Savage return'd a very solemn protestation of his innocence, but, however, appear'd much disturb'd at the accusation. Some days afterwards he was seiz'd with a pain in his back and side, which, as it was not violent, was not suspected to be

dangerous; but growing daily more languid and dejected, on the 25th of July he confined himself to his room, and a fever seized his spirits. The symptoms grew every day more formidable, but his condition did not enable him to procure any assistance. The last time that the keeper saw him was on July the 31st, 1743; when Savage, seeing him at his bedside, said, with an uncommon earnestness, "I have something to say to you, sir;" but, after a pause, moved his hand in a melancholy manner; and, finding himself unable to recollect what he was going to communicate, said, "'Tis gone!" The keeper soon after left him; and the next morning he died. He was buried in the churchyard of St. Peter, at the expense of the keeper.

Such were the life and death of Richard Savage, a man equally distinguished by his virtues and vices; and at once remarkable for his weaknesses and abilities. He was of a middle stature, of a thin habit of body, a long visage, coarse features, and melancholy aspect; of a grave and manly deportment, a solemn dignity of mien, but which, upon a nearer acquaintance, softened into an engaging easiness of manners. His walk was slow, and his voice tremulous and mournful. He was easily excited to smiles, but very seldom provoked to laughter. His mind was in an uncommon degree vigorous and active. His judgment was accurate, his apprehension quick, and his memory so tenacious, that he was frequently observed to know what he had learned from others, in a short time, better than those by whom he was informed; and could frequently recollect incidents with all their combination of circumstances, which few would have regarded at the present time, but which the quickness of his apprehension impressed upon him. He had the art of escaping from his own reflections, and accommodating himself to every new scene.

To this quality is to be imputed the extent of his knowledge, compared with the small time which he spent in visible endeavours to acquire it. He mingled in cursory conversation with the same steadiness of attention as others apply to a lecture; and amidst the appearance of thoughtless gaiety lost no new idea that was started, nor any hint that could be improved. He had therefore made in coffee-houses the same proficiency as others in their closets; and it is remarkable that the writings of a man of little education and little reading have an air of learning scarcely to be found in any other performances, but which perhaps as often obscures as embellishes them.

His judgment was eminently exact both with regard to writings and to men. The knowledge of life was indeed his chief attainment; and it is not without some

satisfaction that I can produce the suffrage of Savage in favour of human nature, of which he never appeared to entertain such odious ideas as some who perhaps had neither his judgment nor experience, have published, either in ostentation of their sagacity, vindication of their crimes, or gratification of their malice.

His method of life particularly qualified him for conversation, of which he knew how to practise all the graces. He was never vehement or loud, but at once modest and easy, open and respectful; his language was vivacious or elegant, and equally happy upon grave and humorous subjects. He was generally censured for not knowing when to retire; but that was not the defect of his judgment, but of his fortune: when he left his company he used frequently to spend the remaining part of the night in the street, or at least was abandoned to gloomy reflections, which it is not strange that he delayed as long as he could; and sometimes forgot that he gave others pain to avoid it himself.

It cannot be said that he made use of his abilities for the direction of his own conduct; an irregular and dissipated manner of life had made him the slave of every passion that happened to be excited by the presence of its object, and that slavery to his passions reciprocally produced a life irregular and dissipated. He was not master of his own motions, nor could promise anything for the next day.

With regard to his economy, nothing can be added to the relation of his life. He appeared to think himself born to be supported by others, and dispensed from all necessity of providing for himself; he therefore never prosecuted any scheme of advantage, nor endeavoured even to secure the profits which his writings might have afforded him. His temper was, in consequence of the dominion of his passions, uncertain and capricious; he was easily engaged, and easily disgusted; but he is accused of retaining his hatred more tenaciously than his benevolence. He was compassionate both by nature and principle, and always ready to perform offices of humanity; but when he was provoked (and very small offences were sufficient to provoke him), he would prosecute his revenge with the utmost acrimony till his passion had subsided.

His friendship was therefore of little value; for though he was zealous in the support or vindication of those whom he loved, yet it was always dangerous to trust him, because he considered himself as discharged by the first quarrel from all ties of honour and gratitude; and would betray those secrets which in the warmth of confidence had been imparted to him. This practice drew upon him an universal accusation of ingratitude; nor can it be denied that he was very ready to

set himself free from the load of an obligation; for he could not bear to conceive himself in a state of dependence, his pride being equally powerful with his other passions, and appearing in the form of insolence at one time, and of vanity at another. Vanity, the most innocent species of pride, was most frequently predominant: he could not easily leave off, when he had once begun to mention himself or his works; nor ever read his verses without stealing his eyes from the page, to discover in the faces of his audience how they were affected with any favourite passage.

A kinder name than that of vanity ought to be given to the delicacy with which he was always careful to separate his own merit from every other man's, and to reject that praise to which he had no claim. He did not forget, in mentioning his performances, to mark every line that had been suggested or amended; and was so accurate as to relate that he owed three words in "The Wanderer" to the advice of his friends. His veracity was questioned, but with little reason; his accounts, though not indeed always the same, were generally consistent. When he loved any man, he suppressed all his faults; and when he had been offended by him, concealed all his virtues; but his characters were generally true, so far as he proceeded; though it cannot be denied that his partiality might have sometimes the effect of falsehood.

In cases indifferent he was zealous for virtue, truth, and justice: he knew very well the necessity of goodness to the present and future happiness of mankind; nor is there perhaps any writer who has less endeavoured to please by flattering the appetites, or perverting the judgment.

As an author, therefore, and he now ceases to influence mankind in any other character, if one piece which he had resolved to suppress be excepted, he has very little to fear from the strictest moral or religious censure. And though he may not be altogether secure against the objections of the critic, it must however be acknowledged that his works are the productions of a genius truly poetical; and, what many writers who have been more lavishly applauded cannot boast, that they have an original air, which has no resemblance of any foregoing writer, that the versification and sentiments have a cast peculiar to themselves, which no man can imitate with success, because what was nature in Savage would in another be affectation. It must be confessed that his descriptions are striking, his images animated, his fictions justly imagined, and his allegories artfully pursued; that his diction is elevated, though sometimes forced, and his numbers sonorous and majestic, though frequently sluggish and encumbered. Of his style the

general fault is harshness, and its general excellence is dignity; of his sentiments, the prevailing beauty is simplicity, and uniformity the prevailing defect.

For his life, or for his writings, none who candidly consider his fortune will think an apology either necessary or difficult. If he was not always sufficiently instructed in his subject, his knowledge was at least greater than could have been attained by others in the same state. If his works were sometimes unfinished, accuracy cannot reasonably be expected from a man oppressed with want, which he has no hope of relieving but by a speedy publication. The insolence and resentment of which he is accused were not easily to be avoided by a great mind irritated by perpetual hardships and constrained hourly to return the spurns of contempt, and repress the insolence of prosperity; and vanity surely may be readily pardoned in him, to whom life afforded no other comforts than barren praises, and the consciousness of deserving them.

Those are no proper judges of his conduct who have slumbered away their time on the down of plenty; nor will any wise man easily presume to say, "Had I been in Savage's condition, I should have lived or written better than Savage."

This relation will not be wholly without its use, if those who languish under any part of his sufferings shall be enabled to fortify their patience by reflecting that they feel only these afflictions from which the abilities of Savage did not exempt him; or those who, in confidence of superior capacities or attainments, disregard the common maxims of life, shall be reminded that nothing will supply the want of prudence; and that negligence and irregularity, long continued, will make knowledge useless, wit ridiculous, and genius contemptible.

SWIFT.

An account of Dr. Swift has been already collected, with great diligence and acuteness, by Dr. Hawkesworth, according to a scheme which I laid before him in the intimacy of our friendship. I cannot therefore be expected to say much of a life, concerning which I had long since communicated my thoughts to a man capable of dignifying his narrations with so much elegance of language and force of sentiment.

Jonathan Swift was, according to an account said to be written by himself, the son of Jonathan Swift, an attorney, and was born at Dublin on St. Andrew's day, 1667: according to his own report, as delivered by Pope to Spence, he was born

at Leicester, the son of a clergyman who was minister of a parish in Herefordshire. During his life the place of his birth was undetermined. He was contented to be called an Irishman by the Irish; but would occasionally call himself an Englishman. The question may, without much regret, be left in the obscurity in which he delighted to involve it.

Whatever was his birth, his education was Irish. He was sent at the age of six to the school at Kilkenny, and in his fifteenth year (1682) was admitted into the University of Dublin. In his academical studies he was either not diligent or not happy. It must disappoint every reader's expectation, that, when at the usual time he claimed the Bachelorship of Arts, he was found by the examiners too conspicuously deficient for regular admission, and obtained his degree at last by SPECIAL FAVOUR; a term used in that university to denote want of merit.

Of this disgrace it may be easily supposed that he was much ashamed, and shame had its proper effect in producing reformation. He resolved from that time to study eight hours a day, and continued his industry for seven years, with what improvement is sufficiently known. This part of his story well deserves to be remembered; it may afford useful admonition and powerful encouragement to men whose abilities have been made for a time useless by their passions or pleasures, and who having lost one part of life in idleness, are tempted to throw away the remainder in despair. In this course of daily application he continued three years longer at Dublin; and in this time, if the observation and memory of an old companion may be trusted, he drew the first sketch of his "Tale of a Tub."

When he was about one-and-twenty (1688), being by the death of Godwin Swift, his uncle, who had supported him, left without subsistence, he went to consult his mother, who then lived at Leicester, about the future course of his life; and by her direction solicited the advice and patronage of Sir William Temple, who had married one of Mrs. Swift's relations, and whose father Sir John Temple, Master of the Rolls in Ireland, had lived in great familiarity of friendship with Godwin Swift, by whom Jonathan had been to that time maintained.

Temple received with sufficient kindness the nephew of his father's friend, with whom he was, when they conversed together, so much pleased, that he detained him two years in his house. Here he became known to King William, who sometimes visited Temple, when he was disabled by the gout, and, being attended by Swift in the garden, showed him how to cut asparagus in the Dutch way. King William's notions were all military; and he expressed his kindness to

Swift by offering to make him a captain of horse.

When Temple removed to Moor Park, he took Swift with him; and when he was consulted by the Earl of Portland about the expedience of complying with a bill then depending for making parliaments triennial, against which King William was strongly prejudiced, after having in vain tried to show the earl that the proposal involved nothing dangerous to royal power, he sent Swift for the same purpose to the king. Swift, who probably was proud of his employment, and went with all the confidence of a young man, found his arguments, and his art of displaying them, made totally ineffectual by the predetermination of the king; and used to mention this disappointment as his first antidote against vanity. Before he left Ireland he contracted a disorder, as he thought, by eating too much fruit. The original of diseases is commonly obscure. Almost everybody eats as much fruit as he can get, without any great inconvenience. The disease of Swift was giddiness with deafness, which attacked him from time to time, began very early, pursued him through life, and at last sent him to the grave, deprived of reason.

Being much oppressed at Moor Park by this grievous malady, he was advised to try his native air, and went to Ireland; but finding no benefit, returned to Sir William, at whose house he continued his studies, and is known to have read, among other books, Cyprian and Irenaeus. He thought exercise of great necessity, and used to run half a mile up and down a hill every two hours.

It is easy to imagine that the mode in which his first degree was conferred left him no great fondness for the University of Dublin, and therefore he resolved to become a Master of Arts at Oxford. In the testimonial which he produced the words of disgrace were omitted; and he took his Master's degree (July 5, 1692) with such reception and regard as fully contented him.

While he lived with Temple, he used to pay his mother at Leicester a yearly visit. He travelled on foot, unless some violence of weather drove him into a waggon; and at night he would go to a penny lodging, where he purchased clean sheets for sixpence. This practice Lord Orrery imputes to his innate love of grossness and vulgarity: some may ascribe it to his desire of surveying human life through all its varieties: and others, perhaps with equal probability, to a passion which seems to have been deeply fixed in his heart, the love of a shilling. In time he began to think that his attendance at Moor Park deserved some other recompense than the pleasure, however mingled with improvement, of Temple's

conversation; and grew so impatient, that (1694) he went away in discontent. Temple, conscious of having given reason for complaint, is said to have made him deputy Master of the Rolls in Ireland; which, according to his kinsman's account, was an office which he knew him not able to discharge. Swift therefore resolved to enter into the Church, in which he had at first no higher hopes than of the chaplainship to the Factory at Lisbon; but being recommended to Lord Capel, he obtained the prebend of Kilroot in Connor, of about a hundred pounds a year. But the infirmities of Temple made a companion like Swift so necessary, that he invited him back, with a promise to procure him English preferment in exchange for the prebend, which he desired him to resign. With this request Swift complied, having perhaps equally repented their separation, and they lived on together with mutual satisfaction; and, in the four years that passed between his return and Temple's death, it is probable that he wrote the "Tale of a Tub," and the "Battle of the Books."

Swift began early to think, or to hope, that he was a poet, and wrote Pindaric Odes to Temple, to the king, and to the Athenian Society, a knot of obscure men, who published a periodical pamphlet of answers to questions, sent, or supposed to be sent, by letters.

I have been told that Dryden, having perused these verses, said, "Cousin Swift, you will never be a poet;" and that this denunciation was the motive of Swift's perpetual malevolence to Dryden. In 1699

Temple died, and left a legacy with his manuscripts to Swift, for whom he had obtained, from King William, a promise of the first prebend that should be vacant at Westminster or Canterbury. That this promise might not be forgotten, Swift dedicated to the king the posthumous works with which he was intrusted; but neither the dedication, nor tenderness for the man whom he once had treated with confidence and fondness, revived in King William the remembrance of his promise. Swift awhile attended the Court; but soon found his solicitations hopeless. He was then invited by the Earl of Berkeley to accompany him into Ireland, as his private secretary; but, after having done the business till their arrival at Dublin, he then found that one Bush had persuaded the earl that a clergyman was not a proper secretary, and had obtained the office for himself. In a man like Swift, such circumvention and inconstancy must have excited violent indignation. But he had yet more to suffer. Lord Berkeley had the disposal of the deanery of Derry, and Swift expected to obtain it; but by the secretary's influence, supposed to have been secured by a bribe, it was bestowed on

somebody else; and Swift was dismissed with the livings of Laracor and Rathbeggin in the diocese of Meath, which together did not equal half the value of the deanery. At Laracor he increased the parochial duty by reading prayers on Wednesdays and Fridays, and performed all the offices of his profession with great decency and exactness.

Soon after his settlement at Laracor, he invited to Ireland the unfortunate Stella, a young woman whose name was Johnson, the daughter of the steward of Sir William Temple, who, in consideration of her father's virtues, left her a thousand pounds. With her came Mrs. Dingley, whose whole fortune was twenty-seven pounds a year for her life. With these ladies he passed his hours of relaxation, and to them he opened his bosom; but they never resided in the same house, nor did he see either without a witness. They lived at the Parsonage when Swift was away, and, when he returned, removed to a lodging, or to the house of a neighbouring clergyman.

Swift was not one of those minds which amaze the world with early pregnancy: his first work, except his few poetical Essays, was the "Dissensions in Athens and Rome," published (1701) in his thirty-fourth year. After its appearance, paying a visit to some bishop, he heard mention made of the new pamphlet that Burnet had written, replete with political knowledge. When he seemed to doubt Burnet's right to the work, he was told by the bishop that he was "a young man," and still persisting to doubt, that he was "a very positive young man."

Three years afterwards (1704) was published "The Tale of a Tub;" of this book charity may be persuaded to think that it might be written by a man of a peculiar character without ill intention; but it is certainly of dangerous example. That Swift was its author, though it be universally believed, was never owned by himself, nor very well proved by any evidence; but no other claimant can be produced, and he did not deny it when Archbishop Sharp and the Duchess of Somerset, by showing it to the queen, debarred him from a bishopric.

When this wild work first raised the attention of the public, Sacheverell, meeting Smalridge, tried to flatter him by seeming to think him the author, but Smalridge answered with indignation, "Not all that you and I have in the world, nor all that ever we shall have, should hire me to write the 'Tale of a Tub.'"

The digression relating to Wotton and Bentley must be confessed to discover want of knowledge or want of integrity; he did not understand the two

controversies, or he willingly misrepresented them. But Wit can stand its ground against Truth only a little while. The honours due to Learning have been justly distributed by the decision of posterity.

“The Battle of the Books” is so like the “Combat des Livres,” which the same question concerning the Ancients and Moderns had produced in France, that the improbability of such a coincidence of thoughts without communication, is not, in my opinion, balanced by the anonymous protestation prefixed, in which all knowledge of the French book is peremptorily disowned.

For some time after, Swift was probably employed in solitary study, gaining the qualifications requisite for future eminence. How often he visited England, and with what diligence he attended his parishes, I know not. It was not till about four years afterwards that he became a professed author; and then one year (1708) produced “The Sentiments of a Church of England Man;” the ridicule of Astrology under the name of “Bickerstaff;” the “Argument against abolishing Christianity;” and the defence of the “Sacramental Test.”

“The Sentiments of a Church of England Man” is written with great coolness, moderation, ease, and perspicuity. The “Argument against abolishing Christianity” is a very happy and judicious irony. One passage in it deserves to be selected:—

“If Christianity were once abolished, how could the free-thinkers, the strong reasoners, and the men of profound learning, be able to find another subject so calculated, in all points, whereon to display their abilities? What wonderful productions of wit should we be deprived of from those whose genius, by continual practice, hath been wholly turned upon raillery and invectives against religion, and would therefore never be able to shine or distinguish themselves upon any other subject! We are daily complaining of the great decline of wit among us, and would take away the greatest, perhaps the only topic we have left. Who would ever have suspected Asgill for a wit, or Toland for a philosopher, if the inexhaustible stock of Christianity had not been at hand to provide them with materials? What other subject, through all art or nature, could have produced Tindal for a profound author, or furnished him with readers? It is the wise choice of the subject that alone adorns and distinguishes the writer. For had a hundred such pens as these been employed on the side of religion, they would have immediately sunk into silence and oblivion.”

The reasonableness of a "Test" is not hard to be proved; but perhaps it must be allowed that the proper test has not been chosen. The attention paid to the papers published under the name of "Bickerstaff," induced Steele, when he projected the Tatler, to assume an appellation which had already gained possession of the reader's notice.

In the year following he wrote a "Project for the Advancement of Religion," addressed to Lady Berkeley, by whose kindness it is not unlikely that he was advanced to his benefices. To this project, which is formed with great purity of intention, and displayed with sprightliness and elegance, it can only be objected, that, like many projects, it is, if not generally impracticable, yet evidently hopeless, as it supposes more zeal, concord, and perseverance than a view of mankind gives reason for expecting. He wrote likewise this year a "Vindication of Bickerstaff," and an explanation of an "Ancient Prophecy," part written after the facts, and the rest never completed, but well planned to excite amazement.

Soon after began the busy and important part of Swift's life. He was employed (1710) by the Primate of Ireland to solicit the queen for a remission of the First Fruits and Twentieth Parts to the Irish Clergy. With this purpose he had recourse to Mr. Harley, to whom he was mentioned as a man neglected and oppressed by the last Ministry, because he had refused to co-operate with some of their schemes.

What he had refused has never been told; what he had suffered was, I suppose, the exclusion from a bishopric by the remonstrances of Sharp, whom he describes as "the harmless tool of others' hate," and whom he represents as afterwards "suing for pardon."

Harley's designs and situation were such as made him glad of an auxiliary so well qualified for his service: he therefore soon admitted him to familiarity, whether ever to confidence some have made a doubt; but it would have been difficult to excite his zeal without persuading him that he was trusted, and not very easy to delude him by false persuasions. He was certainly admitted to those meetings in which the first hints and original plan of action are supposed to have been formed; and was one of the sixteen ministers, or agents of the Ministry, who met weekly at each other's houses, and were united by the name of "Brother." Being not immediately considered as an obdurate Tory, he conversed indiscriminately with all the wits, and was yet the friend of Steele; who, in the Tatler, which began in April, 1709, confesses the advantage of his conversation,

and mentions something contributed by him to his paper. But he was now emerging into political controversy; for the year 1710 produced the Examiner, of which Swift wrote thirty-three papers. In argument he may be allowed to have the advantage: for where a wide system of conduct, and the whole of a public character, is laid open to inquiry, the accuser, having the choice of facts, must be very unskilful if he does not prevail: but with regard to wit, I am afraid none of Swift's papers will be found equal to those by which Addison opposed him.

He wrote in the year 1711 a "Letter to the October Club," a number of Tory gentlemen sent from the country to Parliament, who formed themselves into a club, to the number of about a hundred, and met to animate the zeal and raise the expectations of each other. They thought, with great reason, that the Ministers were losing opportunities; that sufficient use was not made of the ardour of the nation; they called loudly for more changes, and stronger efforts; and demanded the punishment of part and the dismissal of the rest, of those whom they considered as public robbers. Their eagerness was not gratified by the queen, or by Harley. The queen was probably slow because she was afraid; and Harley was slow because he was doubtful; he was a Tory only by necessity, or for convenience; and, when he had power in his hands, had no settled purpose for which he should employ it; forced to gratify to a certain degree the Tories who supported him, but unwilling to make his reconciliation to the Whigs utterly desperate, he corresponded at once with the two expectants of the Crown, and kept, as has been observed, the succession undetermined. Not knowing what to do, he did nothing; and, with the fate of a double dealer, at last he lost his power, but kept his enemies.

Swift seems to have concurred in opinion with the "October Club;"

but it was not in his power to quicken the tardiness of Harley, whom he stimulated as much as he could, but with little effect. He that knows not whither to go, is in no haste to move. Harley, who was perhaps not quick by nature, became yet more slow by irresolution; and was content to hear that dilatoriness lamented as natural, which he applauded in himself as politic. Without the Tories, however, nothing could be done; and, as they were not to be gratified, they must be appeased; and the conduct of the Minister, if it could not be vindicated, was to be plausibly excused.

Early in the next year he published a "Proposal for Correcting, Improving, and Ascertaining the English Tongue," in a Letter to the Earl of Oxford; written

without much knowledge of the general nature of language, and without any accurate inquiry into the history of other tongues. The certainty and stability which, contrary to all experience, he thinks attainable, he proposes to secure by instituting an academy; the decrees of which every man would have been willing, and many would have been proud, to disobey, and which, being renewed by successive elections, would in a short time have differed from itself.

Swift now attained the zenith of his political importance: he published (1712) the "Conduct of the Allies," ten days before the Parliament assembled. The purpose was to persuade the nation to a peace; and never had any writer more success. The people, who had been amused with bonfires and triumphal processions, and looked with idolatry on the General and his friends, who, as they thought, had made England the arbitress of nations, were confounded between shame and rage, when they found that "mines had been exhausted, and millions destroyed," to secure the Dutch or aggrandise the Emperor, without any advantage to ourselves; that we had been bribing our neighbours to fight their own quarrel; and that amongst our enemies we might number our allies. That is now no longer doubted, of which the nation was then first informed, that the war was unnecessarily protracted to fill the pockets of Marlborough; and that it would have been continued without end, if he could have continued his annual plunder. But Swift, I suppose, did not yet know what he has since written, that a commission was drawn which would have appointed him General for life, had it not become ineffectual by the resolution of Lord Cowper, who refused the seal.

"Whatever is received," say the schools, "is received in proportion to the recipient." The power of a political treatise depends much upon the disposition of the people; the nation was then combustible, and a spark set it on fire. It is boasted, that between November and January eleven thousand were sold: a great number at that time, when we were not yet a nation of readers. To its propagation certainly no agency of power or influence was wanting. It furnished arguments for conversation, speeches for debate, and materials for parliamentary resolutions. Yet, surely, whoever surveys this wonder-working pamphlet with cool perusal, will confess that its efficacy was supplied by the passions of its readers; that it operates by the mere weight of facts, with very little assistance from the hand that produced them.

This year (1712) he published his "Reflections on the Barrier Treaty," which carries on the design of his "Conduct of the Allies,"

and shows how little regard in that negotiation had been shown to the interest of England, and how much of the conquered country had been demanded by the Dutch. This was followed by “Remarks on the Bishop of Sarum’s Introduction to his third Volume of the History of the Reformation;” a pamphlet which Burnet published as an alarm, to warn the nation of the approach of Popery. Swift, who seems to have disliked the bishop with something more than political aversion, treats him like one whom he is glad of an opportunity to insult.

Swift, being now the declared favourite and supposed confidant of the Tory Ministry, was treated by all that depended on the Court with the respect which dependents know how to pay. He soon began to feel part of the misery of greatness; he that could say that he knew him, considered himself as having fortune in his power.

Commissions, solicitations, remonstrances crowded about him; he was expected to do every man’s business; to procure employment for one, and to retain it for another. In assisting those who addressed him, he represents himself as sufficiently diligent; and desires to have others believe what he probably believed himself, that by his interposition many Whigs of merit, and among them Addison and Congreve, were continued in their places. But every man of known influence has so many petitions which he cannot grant, that he must necessarily offend more than he gratifies, because the preference given to one affords all the rest reason for complaint. “When I give away a place,” said Lewis XIV., “I make a hundred discontented, and one ungrateful.”

Much has been said of the equality and independence which he preserved in his conversation with the Ministers; of the frankness of his remonstrances, and the familiarity of his friendship. In accounts of this kind a few single incidents are set against the general tenour of behaviour. No man, however, can pay a more servile tribute to the great, than by suffering his liberty in their presence to aggrandise him in his own esteem. Between different ranks of the community there is necessarily some distance; he who is called by his superior to pass the interval, may properly accept the invitation; but petulance and obtrusion are rarely produced by magnanimity; nor have often any nobler cause than the pride of importance, and the malice of inferiority. He who knows himself necessary may set, while that necessity lasts, a high value upon himself; as, in a lower condition, a servant eminently skilful may be saucy; but he is saucy only because he is servile. Swift appears to have preserved the kindness of the great when they wanted him no longer; and therefore it must be allowed, that the childish

freedom, to which he seems enough inclined, was overpowered by his better qualities. His disinterestedness has likewise been mentioned; a strain of heroism which would have been in his condition romantic and superfluous. Ecclesiastical benefices, when they become vacant, must be given away; and the friends of power may, if there be no inherent disqualification, reasonably expect them. Swift accepted (1713) the deanery of St. Patrick, the best preferment that his friends could venture to give him. That Ministry was in a great degree supported by the clergy, who were not yet reconciled to the author of the "Tale of a Tub," and would not without much discontent and indignation have borne to see him installed in an English cathedral. He refused, indeed, fifty pounds from Lord Oxford; but he accepted afterwards a draught of a thousand upon the Exchequer, which was intercepted by the queen's death, and which he resigned, as he says himself, "multa gemens, with many a groan." In the midst of his power and his politics, he kept a journal of his visits, his walks, his interviews with Ministers, and quarrels with his servant, and transmitted it to Mrs. Johnson and Mrs. Dingley, to whom he knew that whatever befell him was interesting, and no accounts could be too minute. Whether these diurnal trifles were properly exposed to eyes which had never received any pleasure from the presence of the Dean may be reasonably doubted: they have, however, some odd attraction; the reader, finding frequent mention of names which he has been used to consider as important, goes on in hope of information; and as there is nothing to fatigue attention, if he is disappointed he can hardly complain. It is easy to perceive, from every page, that though ambition pressed Swift into a life of bustle, the wish for a life of ease was always returning. He went to take possession of his deanery as soon as he had obtained it; but he was not suffered to stay in Ireland more than a fortnight before he was recalled to England, that he might reconcile Lord Oxford and Lord Bolingbroke, who began to look on one another with malevolence, which every day increased, and which Bolingbroke appeared to retain in his last years.

Swift contrived an interview, from which they both departed discontented; he procured a second, which only convinced him that the feud was irreconcilable; he told them his opinion, that all was lost. This denunciation was contradicted by Oxford; but Bolingbroke whispered that he was right. Before this violent dissension had shattered the Ministry, Swift had published, in the beginning of the year (1714), "The Public Spirit of the Whigs," in answer to "The Crisis," a pamphlet for which Steele was expelled from the House of Commons. Swift was now so far alienated from Steele, as to think him no longer entitled to decency, and therefore treats him sometimes with contempt, and sometimes with

abhorrence. In this pamphlet the Scotch were mentioned in terms so provoking to that irritable nation, that resolving “not to be offended with impunity,”

the Scotch lords in a body demanded an audience of the queen, and solicited reparation. A proclamation was issued, in which three hundred pounds were offered for the discovery of the author. From this storm he was, as he relates, “secured by a sleight;” of what kind, or by whose prudence, is not known; and such was the increase of his reputation, that the Scottish nation “applied again that he would be their friend.” He was become so formidable to the Whigs, that his familiarity with the Ministers was clamoured at in Parliament, particularly by two men, afterwards of great note, Aislabie and Walpole. But, by the disunion of his great friends, his importance and designs were now at an end; and seeing his services at last useless, he retired about June (1714) into Berkshire, where, in the house of a friend, he wrote what was then suppressed, but has since appeared under the title of “Free Thoughts on the present State of Affairs.” While he was waiting in this retirement for events which time or chance might bring to pass, the death of the Queen broke down at once the whole system of Tory politics; and nothing remained but to withdraw from the implacability of triumphant Whiggism, and shelter himself in unenvied obscurity.

The accounts of his reception in Ireland, given by Lord Orrery and Dr. Delany, are so different, that the credit of the writers, both undoubtedly veracious, cannot be saved, but by supposing, what I think is true, that they speak of different times. When Delany says, that he was received with respect, he means for the first fortnight, when he came to take legal possession; and when Lord Orrery tells that he was pelted by the populace, he is to be understood of the time when, after the Queen’s death, he became a settled resident.

The Archbishop of Dublin gave him at first some disturbance in the exercise of his jurisdiction; but it was soon discovered, that between prudence and integrity, he was seldom in the wrong; and that, when he was right, his spirit did not easily yield to opposition.

Having so lately quitted the tumults of a party, and the intrigues of a court, they still kept his thoughts in agitation, as the sea fluctuates a while when the storm has ceased. He therefore filled his hours with some historical attempts, relating to the “Change of the Ministers,” and “The Conduct of the Ministry.” He likewise is said to have written a “History of the Four last Years of Queen Anne,” which he began in her lifetime, and afterwards laboured with great

attention, but never published. It was after his death in the hands of Lord Orrery and Dr. King. A book under that title was published with Swift's name by Dr. Lucas; of which I can only say, that it seemed by no means to correspond with the notions that I had formed of it, from a conversation which I once heard between the Earl of Orrery and old Mr. Lewis.

Swift now, much against his will, commenced Irishman for life, and was to contrive how he might be best accommodated in a country where he considered himself as in a state of exile. It seems that his first recourse was to piety. The thoughts of death rushed upon him at this time with such incessant importunity, that they took possession of his mind, when he first waked, for many years together. He opened his house by a public table two days a week, and found his entertainments gradually frequented by more and more visitants of learning among the men, and of elegance among the women. Mrs. Johnson had left the country, and lived in lodgings not far from the deanery. On his public days she regulated the table, but appeared at it as a mere guest, like other ladies. On other days he often dined, at a stated price, with Mr. Worrall, a clergyman of his cathedral, whose house was recommended by the peculiar neatness and pleasantry of his wife. To this frugal mode of living, he was first disposed by care to pay some debts which he had contracted, and he continued it for the pleasure of accumulating money. His avarice, however, was not suffered to obstruct the claims of his dignity; he was served in plate, and used to say that he was the poorest gentleman in Ireland that ate upon plate, and the richest that lived without a coach. How he spent the rest of his time, and how he employed his hours of study, has been inquired with hopeless curiosity. For who can give an account of another's studies? Swift was not likely to admit any to his privacies, or to impart a minute account of his business or his leisure.

Soon after (1716), in his forty-ninth year, he was privately married to Mrs. Johnson, by Dr. Ashe, Bishop of Clogher, as Dr. Madden told me, in the garden. The marriage made no change in their mode of life; they lived in different houses, as before; nor did she ever lodge in the deanery but when Swift was seized with a fit of giddiness. "It would be difficult," says Lord Orrery, "to prove that they were ever afterwards together without a third person."

The Dean of St. Patrick's lived in a private manner, known and regarded only by his friends; till, about the year 1720, he, by a pamphlet, recommended to the Irish the use, and consequently the improvement, of their manufactures. For a man to use the productions of his own labour is surely a natural right, and to like

best what he makes himself is a natural passion. But to excite this passion, and enforce this right, appeared so criminal to those who had an interest in the English trade, that the printer was imprisoned; and, as Hawkesworth justly observes, the attention of the public being, by this outrageous resentment, turned upon the proposal, the author was by consequence made popular.

In 1723 died Mrs. Van Homrigh, a woman made unhappy by her admiration of wit, and ignominiously distinguished by the name of Vanessa, whose conduct has been already sufficiently discussed, and whose history is too well known to be minutely repeated. She was a young woman fond of literature, whom Decanus, the dean, called Cadenus by transposition of the letters, took pleasure in directing and instructing: till, from being proud of his praise, she grew fond of his person. Swift was then about forty-seven, at an age when vanity is strongly excited by the amorous attention of a young woman. If it be said that Swift should have checked a passion which he never meant to gratify, recourse must be had to that extenuation which he so much despised, “men are but men;” perhaps, however, he did not at first know his own mind, and, as he represents himself, was undetermined. For his admission of her courtship, and his indulgence of her hopes after his marriage to Stella, no other honest plea can be found than that he delayed a disagreeable discovery from time to time, dreading the immediate bursts of distress, and watching for a favourable moment. She thought herself neglected, and died of disappointment, having ordered, by her will, the poem to be published, in which Cadenus had proclaimed her excellence and confessed his love. The effect of the publication upon the Dean and Stella is thus related by Delany:—

“I have good reason to believe that they both were greatly shocked and distressed (though it may be differently) upon this occasion.

The Dean made a tour to the south of Ireland for about two months at this time, to dissipate his thoughts and give place to obloquy. And Stella retired (upon the earnest invitation of the owner) to the house of a cheerful, generous, good-natured friend of the Dean’s, whom she always much loved and honoured. There my informer often saw her, and, I have reason to believe, used his utmost endeavours to relieve, support, and amuse her, in this sad situation. One little incident he told me of on that occasion I think I shall never forget. As his friend was an hospitable, open-hearted man, well beloved and largely acquainted, it happened one day that some gentlemen dropped in to dinner, who were strangers to Stella’s situation; and as the poem of ‘Cadenus and Vanessa’ was then the

general topic of conversation, one of them said, ‘Surely that Vanessa must be an extraordinary woman that could inspire the Dean to write so finely upon her.’ Mrs. Johnson smiled, and answered, ‘that she thought that point not quite so clear; for it was well known that the Dean could write finely upon a broomstick.’”

The great acquisition of esteem and influence was made by the “Drapier’s Letters,” in 1724. One Wood, of Wolverhampton, in Staffordshire, a man enterprising and rapacious, had, as is said, by a present to the Duchess of Munster, obtained a patent, empowering him to coin one hundred and eighty thousand pounds of halfpence and farthings for the kingdom of Ireland, in which there was a very inconvenient and embarrassing scarcity of copper coin, so that it was possible to run in debt upon the credit of a piece of money; for the cook or keeper of an alehouse could not refuse to supply a man that had silver in his hand, and the buyer would not leave his money without change. The project was therefore plausible. The scarcity, which was already great, Wood took care to make greater, by agents who gathered up the old halfpence; and was about to turn his brass into gold, by pouring the treasures of his new mint upon Ireland, when Swift, finding that the metal was debased to an enormous degree, wrote letters, under the name of M. B. Drapier, to show the folly of receiving, and the mischief that must ensue by giving gold and silver for coin worth perhaps not a third part of its nominal value. The nation was alarmed; the new coin was universally refused, but the governors of Ireland considered resistance to the king’s patent as highly criminal; and one Whitshed, then Chief Justice, who had tried the printer of the former pamphlet, and sent out the jury nine times, till by clamour and menaces they were frightened into a special verdict, now presented the Drapier, but could not prevail on the grand jury to find the bill.

Lord Carteret and the Privy Council published a proclamation, offering three hundred pounds for discovering the author of the Fourth Letter. Swift had concealed himself from his printers and trusted only his butler, who transcribed the paper. The man, immediately after the appearance of the proclamation, strolled from the house, and stayed out all night, and part of the next day.

There was reason enough to fear that he had betrayed his master for the reward; but he came home, and the Dean ordered him to put off his livery, and leave the house; “for,” says he, “I know that my life is in your power, and I will not bear, out of fear, either your insolence or negligence.” The man excused his fault with great submission, and begged that he might be confined in the house while it was

in his power to endanger the master; but the Dean resolutely turned him out, without taking further notice of him, till the term of the information had expired, and then received him again. Soon afterwards he ordered him and the rest of his servants into his presence, without telling his intentions, and bade them take notice that their fellow-servant was no longer Robert the butler, but that his integrity had made him Mr. Blakeney, verger of St. Patrick's, an officer whose income was between thirty and forty pounds a year; yet he still continued for some years to serve his old master as his butler.

Swift was known from this time by the appellation of The Dean. He was honoured by the populace as the champion, patron, and instructor of Ireland; and gained such power as, considered both in its extent and duration, scarcely any man has ever enjoyed without greater wealth or higher station. He was from this important year the oracle of the traders, and the idol of the rabble, and by consequence was feared and courted by all to whom the kindness of the traders or the populace was necessary. The Drapier was a sign; the Drapier was a health; and which way soever the eye or the ear was turned, some tokens were found of the nation's gratitude to the Drapier.

The benefit was indeed great; he had rescued Ireland from a very oppressive and predatory invasion, and the popularity which he had gained he was diligent to keep, by appearing forward and zealous on every occasion where the public interest was supposed to be involved. Nor did he much scruple to boast his influence; for when, upon some attempts to regulate the coin, Archbishop Boulter, then one of the justices, accused him of exasperating the people, he exculpated himself by saying, "If I had lifted up my finger, they would have torn you to pieces." But the pleasure of popularity was soon interrupted by domestic misery. Mrs. Johnson, whose conversation was to him the great softener of the ills of life, began in the year of the Drapier's triumph to decline, and two years afterwards was so wasted with sickness that her recovery was considered as hopeless. Swift was then in England, and had been invited by Lord Bolingbroke to pass the winter with him in France; but this call of calamity hastened him to Ireland, where perhaps his presence contributed to restore her to imperfect and tottering health. He was now so much at ease, that (1727) he returned to England, where he collected three volumes of Miscellanies in conjunction with Pope, who prefixed a querulous and apologetical Preface.

This important year sent likewise into the world "Gulliver's Travels," a production so new and strange, that it filled the reader with a mingled emotion of

merriment and amazement. It was received with such avidity, that the price of the first edition was raised before the second could be made; it was read by the high and the low, the learned and illiterate. Criticism was for a while lost in wonder; no rules of judgment were applied to a book written in open defiance of truth and regularity. But when distinctions came to be made, the part which gave the least pleasure was that which describes the Flying Island, and that which gave most disgust must be the history of Houyhnhnms.

While Swift was enjoying the reputation of his new work, the news of the king's death arrived, and he kissed the hands of the new king and queen three days after their accession. By the queen, when she was princess, he had been treated with some distinction, and was well received by her in her exaltation; but whether she gave hopes which she never took care to satisfy, or he formed expectations which she never meant to raise, the event was that he always afterwards thought on her with malevolence, and particularly charged her with breaking her promise of some medals which she engaged to send him. I know not whether she had not, in her turn, some reason for complaint. A letter was sent her, not so much entreating, as requiring her patronage of Mrs. Barber, an ingenious Irishwoman, who was then begging subscriptions for her Poems. To this letter was subscribed the name of Swift, and it has all the appearance of his diction and sentiments; but it was not written in his hand, and had some little improprieties. When he was charged with this letter, he laid hold of the inaccuracies, and urged the improbability of the accusation, but never denied it: he shuffles between cowardice and veracity, and talks big when he says nothing. He seems desirous enough of recommencing courtier, and endeavoured to gain the kindness of Mrs. Howard, remembering what Mrs. Masham had performed in former times; but his flatteries were, like those of other wits, unsuccessful; the lady either wanted power, or had no ambition of poetical immortality. He was seized not long afterwards by a fit of giddiness, and again heard of the sickness and danger of Mrs.

Johnson. He then left the house of Pope, as it seems, with very little ceremony, finding "that two sick friends cannot live together;" and did not write to him till he found himself at Chester. He turned to a home of sorrow: poor Stella was sinking into the grave, and, after a languishing decay of about two months, died in her forty-fourth year, on January 28, 1728. How much he wished her life his papers show; nor can it be doubted that he dreaded the death of her whom he loved most, aggravated by the consciousness that himself had hastened it.

Beauty and the power of pleasing, the greatest external advantages that woman can desire or possess, were fatal to the unfortunate Stella. The man whom she had the misfortune to love was, as Delany observes, fond of singularity, and desirous to make a mode of happiness for himself, different from the general course of things and order of Providence. From the time of her arrival in Ireland he seems resolved to keep her in his power, and therefore hindered a match sufficiently advantageous by accumulating unreasonable demands, and prescribing conditions that could not be performed.

While she was at her own disposal he did not consider his possession as secure; resentment, ambition, or caprice might separate them: he was therefore resolved to make “assurance doubly sure,” and to appropriate her by a private marriage, to which he had annexed the expectation of all the pleasures of perfect friendship, without the uneasiness of conjugal restraint. But with this state poor Stella was not satisfied; she never was treated as a wife, and to the world she had the appearance of a mistress. She lived sullenly on, in hope that in time he would own and receive her; but the time did not come till the change of his manners and depravation of his mind made her tell him, when he offered to acknowledge her, that “it was too late.” She then gave up herself to sorrowful resentment, and died under the tyranny of him by whom she was in the highest degree loved and honoured. What were her claims to this eccentric tenderness, by which the laws of nature were violated to restrain her, curiosity will inquire; but how shall it be gratified? Swift was a lover; his testimony may be suspected. Delany and the Irish saw with Swift’s eyes, and therefore add little confirmation. That she was virtuous, beautiful, and elegant, in a very high degree, such admiration from such a lover makes it very probable: but she had not much literature, for she could not spell her own language; and of her wit, so loudly vaunted, the smart sayings which Swift himself has collected afford no splendid specimen.

The reader of Swift’s “Letter to a Lady on her Marriage,” may be allowed to doubt whether his opinion of female excellence ought implicitly to be admitted; for, if his general thoughts on women were such as he exhibits, a very little sense in a lady would enrapture, and a very little virtue would astonish him. Stella’s supremacy, therefore, was perhaps only local; she was great because her associates were little.

In some Remarks lately published on the Life of Swift, his marriage is mentioned as fabulous, or doubtful; but, alas! poor Stella, as Dr. Madden told me, related her melancholy story to Dr. Sheridan, when he attended her as a

clergyman to prepare her for death; and Delany mentions it not with doubt, but only with regret. Swift never mentioned her without a sigh. The rest of his life was spent in Ireland, in a country to which not even power almost despotic, nor flattery almost idolatrous, could reconcile him. He sometimes wished to visit England, but always found some reason of delay. He tells Pope, in the decline of life, that he hopes once more to see him; “but if not,” says he, “we must part as all human beings have parted.”

After the death of Stella, his benevolence was contracted, and his severity exasperated; he drove his acquaintance from his table, and wondered why he was deserted. But he continued his attention to the public, and wrote from time to time such directions, admonitions, or censures, as the exigence of affairs, in his opinion, made proper; and nothing fell from his pen in vain. In a short poem on the Presbyterians, whom he always regarded with detestation, he bestowed one stricture upon Bettesworth, a lawyer eminent for his insolence to the clergy, which, from very considerable reputation, brought him into immediate and universal contempt. Bettesworth, enraged at his disgrace and loss, went to Swift, and demanded whether he was the author of that poem? “Mr. Bettesworth,” answered he, “I was in my youth acquainted with great lawyers, who, knowing my disposition to satire, advised me, that if any scoundrel or blockhead whom I had lampooned should ask, ‘Are you the author of this paper?’ I should tell him that I was not the author; and therefore, I tell you, Mr.

Bettesworth, that I am not the author of these lines.”

Bettesworth was so little satisfied with this account, that he publicly professed his resolution of a violent and corporal revenge; but the inhabitants of St. Patrick’s district embodied themselves in the Dean’s defence. Bettesworth declared in Parliament that Swift had deprived him of twelve hundred pounds a year.

Swift was popular awhile by another mode of beneficence. He set aside some hundreds to be lent in small sums to the poor, from five shillings, I think, to five pounds. He took no interest, and only required that, at repayment, a small fee should be given to the accountant, but he required that the day of promised payment should be exactly kept. A severe and punctilious temper is ill qualified for transactions with the poor: the day was often broken, and the loan was not repaid. This might have been easily foreseen; but for this Swift had made no provision of patience or pity. He ordered his debtors to be sued. A severe creditor

has no popular character; what then was likely to be said of him who employs the catchpoll under the appearance of charity? The clamour against him was loud, and the resentment of the populace outrageous; he was therefore forced to drop his scheme, and own the folly of expecting punctuality from the poor.

His asperity continually increasing, condemned him to solitude; and his resentment of solitude sharpened his asperity. He was not, however, totally deserted; some men of learning, and some women of elegance, often visited him; and he wrote from time to time either verse or prose: of his verses he willingly gave copies, and is supposed to have felt no discontent when he saw them printed. His favourite maxim was “Vive la bagatelle:” he thought trifles a necessary part of life, and perhaps found them necessary to himself.

It seems impossible to him to be idle, and his disorders made it difficult or dangerous to be long seriously studious, or laboriously diligent. The love of ease is always gaining upon age, and he had one temptation to petty amusements peculiar to himself; whatever he did, he was sure to hear applauded; and such was his predominance over all that approached, that all their applauses were probably sincere. He that is much flattered soon learns to flatter himself; we are commonly taught our duty by fear or shame, and how can they act upon the man who hears nothing but his own praises? As his years increased, his fits of giddiness and deafness grew more frequent, and his deafness made conversation difficult; they grew likewise more severe, till in 1736, as he was writing a poem called “The Legion Club,” he was seized with a fit so painful and so long continued, that he never after thought it proper to attempt any work of thought or labour. He was always careful of his money, and was therefore no liberal entertainer, but was less frugal of his wine than of his meat. When his friends of either sex came to him in expectation of a dinner, his custom was to give every one a shilling, that they might please themselves with their provision.

At last his avarice grew too powerful for his kindness; he would refuse a bottle of wine, and in Ireland no man visits where he cannot drink. Having thus excluded conversation, and desisted from study, he had neither business nor amusement; for, having by some ridiculous resolution, or mad vow, determined never to wear spectacles, he could make like little use of books in his latter years; his ideas, therefore, being neither renovated by discourse, nor increased by reading, wore gradually away, and left his mind vacant to the vexations of the hour, till at last his anger was heightened into madness. He, however, permitted one book to be published, which had been the production of former years

—“Polite Conversation,” which appeared in 1738. The “Directions for Servants,” was printed soon after his death. These two performances show a mind incessantly attentive, and, when it was not employed upon great things, busy with minute occurrences. It is apparent that he must have had the habit of noting whatever he observed; for such a number of particulars could never have been assembled by the power of recollection. He grew more violent, and his mental powers declined, till (1741) it was found necessary that legal guardians should be appointed of his person and fortune. He now lost distinction. His madness was compounded of rage and fatuity. The last face that he knew was that of Mrs. Whiteway; and her he ceased to know in a little time. His meat was brought him cut into mouthfuls: but he would never touch it while the servant stayed, and at last, after it had stood perhaps an hour, would eat it walking; for he continued his old habit, and was on his feet ten hours a day. Next year (1742) he had an inflammation in his left eye, which swelled it to the size of an egg, with boils in other parts; he was kept long waking with the pain, and was not easily restrained by five attendants from tearing out his eye.

The tumour at last subsided; and a short interval of reason ensuing; in which he knew his physician and his family, gave hopes of his recovery; but in a few days he sank into a lethargic stupidity, motionless, heedless, and speechless. But it is said that after a year of total silence, when his housekeeper, on the 30th of November, told him that the usual bonfires and illuminations were preparing to celebrate his birthday, he answered, “It is all folly; they had better let it alone.”

It is remembered that he afterwards spoke now and then, or gave some intimation of a meaning; but at last sank into a perfect silence, which continued till about the end of October, 1744, when, in his seventy-eighth year, he expired without a struggle.

When Swift is considered as an author, it is just to estimate his powers by their effects. In the reign of Queen Anne he turned the stream of popularity against the Whigs, and must be confessed to have dictated for a time the political opinions of the English nation. In the succeeding reign he delivered Ireland from plunder and oppression: and showed that wit, confederated with truth, had such force as authority was unable to resist. He said truly of himself, that Ireland “was his debtor.” It was from the time when he first began to patronise the Irish, that they may date their riches and prosperity. He taught them first to know their own interest, their weight, and their strength, and gave them spirit to assert that equality with their fellow-subjects to which they have ever since been making

vigorous advances, and to claim those rights which they have at last established. Nor can they be charged with ingratitude to their benefactor; for they revered him as a guardian, and obeyed him as a dictator.

In his works he has given very different specimens both of sentiments and expression. His “Tale of a Tub” has little resemblance to his other pieces. It exhibits a vehemence and rapidity of mind, a copiousness of images, and vivacity of diction, such as he afterwards never possessed, or never exerted. It is of a mode so distinct and peculiar, that it must be considered by itself; what is true of that, is not true of anything else which he has written. In his other works is found an equable tenour of easy language, which rather trickles than flows. His delight was in simplicity. That he has in his works no metaphor, as has been said, is not true; but his few metaphors seem to be received rather by necessity than choice. He studied purity; and though perhaps all his strictures are not exact, yet it is not often that solecisms can be found; and whoever depends on his authority may generally conclude himself safe. His sentences are never too much dilated or contracted; and it will not be easy to find any embarrassment in the complication of his clauses, any inconsequence in his connections, or abruptness in his transitions. His style was well suited to his thoughts, which are never subtilised by nice disquisitions, decorated by sparkling conceits, elevated by ambitious sentences, or variegated by far-sought learning. He pays no court to the passions; he excites neither surprise nor admiration: he always understands himself, and his readers always understand him: the peruser of Swift wants little previous knowledge; it will be sufficient that he is acquainted with common words and common things; he is neither required to mount elevations, nor to explore profundities; his passage is always on a level, along solid ground, without asperities, without obstruction. This easy and safe conveyance of meaning it was Swift’s desire to attain, and for having attained he deserves praise. For purposes merely didactic, when something is to be told that was not known before, it is the best mode; but against that inattention by which known truths are suffered to lie neglected, it makes no provision; it instructs, but does not persuade.

By his political education he was associated with the Whigs; but he deserted them when they deserted their principles, yet without running into the contrary extreme; he continued throughout his life to retain the disposition which he assigns to the “Church-of-England Man,” of thinking commonly with the Whigs of the State, and with the Tories of the Church. He was a Churchman, rationally zealous; he desired the prosperity, and maintained the honour of the clergy; of

the Dissenters he did not wish to infringe the Toleration, but he opposed their encroachments. To his duty as Dean he was very attentive. He managed the revenues of his church with exact economy; and it is said by Delany, that more money was, under his direction, laid out in repairs, than had ever been in the same time since its first erection. Of his choir he was eminently careful; and though he neither loved nor understood music, took care that all the singers were well qualified, admitting none without the testimony of skilful judges.

In his church he restored the practice of weekly communion, and distributed the sacramental elements in the most solemn and devout manner with his own hand. He came to church every morning, preached commonly in his turn, and attended the evening anthem, that it might not be negligently performed. He read the service, "rather with a strong, nervous voice, than in a graceful manner; his voice was sharp and high-toned, rather than harmonious." He entered upon the clerical state with hope to excel in preaching; but complained that, from the time of his political controversies, "he could only preach pamphlets." This censure of himself, if judgment be made from those sermons which have been printed, was unreasonably severe.

The suspicions of his irreligion proceeded in a great measure from his dread of hypocrisy; instead of wishing to seem better, he delighted in seeming worse than he was. He went in London to early prayers, lest he should be seen at church; he read prayers to his servants every morning with such dexterous secrecy, that Dr. Delany was six months in his house before he knew it. He was not only careful to hide the good which he did, but willingly incurred the suspicion of evil which he did not. He forgot what himself had formerly asserted, that hypocrisy is less mischievous than open impiety. Dr. Delany, with all his zeal for his honour, has justly condemned this part of his character.

The person of Swift had not many recommendations. He had a kind of muddy complexion, which, though he washed himself with Oriental scrupulosity, did not look clear. He had a countenance sour and severe, which he seldom softened by any appearance of gaiety. He stubbornly resisted any tendency to laughter. To his domestics he was naturally rough: and a man of a rigorous temper, with that vigilance of minute attention which his works discover, must have been a master that few could bear. That he was disposed to do his servants good, on important occasions, is no great mitigation; benefaction can be but rare, and tyrannic peevishness is perpetual.

He did not spare the servants of others. Once, when he dined alone with the Earl of Orrery, he said of one that waited in the room, "That man has, since we sat to the table, committed fifteen faults."

What the faults were, Lord Orrery, from whom I heard the story, had not been attentive enough to discover. My number may perhaps not be exact.

In his economy he practised a peculiar and offensive parsimony, without disguise or apology. The practice of saving being once necessary, became habitual, and grew first ridiculous, and at last detestable. But his avarice, though it might exclude pleasure, was never suffered to encroach upon his virtue. He was frugal by inclination, but liberal by principle: and if the purpose to which he destined his little accumulations be remembered, with his distribution of occasional charity, it will perhaps appear that he only liked one mode of expense better than another, and saved merely that he might have something to give. He did not grow rich by injuring his successors, but left both Laracor and the Deanery more valuable than he found them. With all this talk of his covetousness and generosity, it should be remembered that he was never rich. The revenue of his Deanery was not much more than seven hundred a year.

His beneficence was not graced with tenderness or civility; he relieved without pity, and assisted without kindness; so that those who were fed by him could hardly love him. He made a rule to himself to give but one piece at a time, and therefore always stored his pocket with coins of different value. Whatever he did he seemed willing to do in a manner peculiar to himself, without sufficiently considering that singularity, as it implies a contempt of the general practice, is a kind of defiance which justly provokes the hostility of ridicule; he, therefore, who indulges peculiar habits, is worse than others, if he be not better.

Of his humour, a story told by Pope may afford a specimen.

"Dr. Swift has an odd, blunt way, that is mistaken by strangers for ill nature. — 'Tis so odd, that there's no describing it but by facts. I'll tell you one that first comes into my head. One evening Gay and I went to see him: you know how intimately we were all acquainted. On our coming in, 'Heyday, gentlemen' (says the doctor), 'what's the meaning of this visit? How came you to leave the great Lords that you are so fond of, to come hither to see a poor Dean?' — 'Because we would rather see you than any of them.' —

‘Ay, anyone that did not know so well as I do might believe you.

But since you are come, I must get some supper for you, I suppose.’-

-‘No, Doctor, we have supped already.’—‘Supped already? that’s impossible! why, ‘tis not eight o’clock yet: that’s very strange; but if you had not supped, I must have got something for you. Let me see, what should I have had? A couple of lobsters; ay, that would have done very well; two shillings—tarts, a shilling; but you will drink a glass of wine with me, though you supped so much before your usual time only to spare my pocket?’—‘No, we had rather talk with you than drink with you.’—‘But if you had supped with me, as in all reason you ought to have done, you must then have drunk with me. A bottle of wine, two shillings—two and two is four, and one is five; just two-and-sixpence a-piece. There, Pope, there’s half a crown for you, and there’s another for you, sir; for I won’t save anything by you. I am determined.’—This was all said and done with his usual seriousness on such occasions; and, in spite of everything we could say to the contrary, he actually obliged us to take the money.”

In the intercourse of familiar life, he indulged his disposition to petulance and sarcasm, and thought himself injured if the licentiousness of his raillery, the freedom of his censures, or the petulance of his frolics was resented or repressed. He predominated over his companions with very high ascendancy, and probably would bear none over whom he could not predominate. To give him advice was, in the style of his friend Delany, “to venture to speak to him.” This customary superiority soon grew too delicate for truth; and Swift, with all his penetration, allowed himself to be delighted with low flattery. On all common occasions, he habitually affects a style of arrogance, and dictates rather than persuades. This authoritative and magisterial language he expected to be received as his peculiar mode of jocularly: but he apparently flattered his own arrogance by an assumed imperiousness, in which he was ironical only to the resentful, and to the submissive sufficiently serious.

He told stories with great felicity, and delighted in doing what he knew himself to do well; he was therefore captivated by the respectful silence of a steady listener, and told the same tales too often. He did not, however, claim the right of talking alone; for it was his rule, when he had spoken a minute, to give room by a pause for any other speaker. Of time, on all occasions, he was an exact computer, and knew the minutes required to every common operation.

It may be justly supposed that there was in his conversation, what appears so frequently in his Letters, an affectation of familiarity with the great, an ambition of momentary equality sought and enjoyed by the neglect of those ceremonies which custom has established as the barriers between one order of society and another. This transgression of regularity was by himself and his admirers termed greatness of soul. But a great mind disdains to hold anything by courtesy, and therefore never usurps what a lawful claimant may take away. He that encroaches on another's dignity puts himself in his power; he is either repelled with helpless indignity, or endured by clemency and condescension.

Of Swift's general habits of thinking, if his Letters can be supposed to afford any evidence, he was not a man to be either loved or envied. He seems to have wasted life in discontent, by the rage of neglected pride, and the languishment of unsatisfied desire. He is querulous and fastidious, arrogant and malignant; he scarcely speaks of himself but with indignant lamentations, or of others but with insolent superiority when he is gay, and with angry contempt when he is gloomy. From the letters that passed between him and Pope it might be inferred that they, with Arbuthnot and Gay, had engrossed all the understanding and virtue of mankind; that their merits filled the world; or that there was no hope of more. They show the age involved in darkness, and shade the picture with sullen emulation.

When the Queen's death drove him into Ireland, he might be allowed to regret for a time the interception of his views, the extinction of his hopes, and his ejection from gay scenes, important employment, and splendid friendships; but when time had enabled reason to prevail over vexation, the complaints, which at first were natural, became ridiculous because they were useless. But querulousness was now grown habitual, and he cried out when he probably had ceased to feel. His reiterated wailings persuaded Bolingbroke that he was really willing to quit his deanery for an English parish; and Bolingbroke procured an exchange, which was rejected; and Swift still retained the pleasure of complaining.

The greatest difficulty that occurs, in analysing his character, is to discover by what depravity of intellect he took delight in revolving ideas, from which almost every other mind shrinks with disgust. The ideas of pleasure, even when criminal, may solicit the imagination; but what has disease, deformity, and filth, upon which the thoughts can be allured to dwell? Delany is willing to think that Swift's mind was not much tainted with this gross corruption before his long

visit to Pope. He does not consider how he degrades his hero, by making him at fifty-nine the pupil of turpitude, and liable to the malignant influence of an ascendant mind. But the truth is, that Gulliver had described his Yahoos before the visit; and he that had formed those images had nothing filthy to learn.

I have here given the character of Swift as he exhibits himself to my perception; but now let another be heard who knew him better.

Dr. Delany, after long acquaintance, describes him to Lord Orrery in these terms:

“My Lord, when you consider Swift’s singular, peculiar, and most variegated vein of wit, always rightly intended, although not always so rightly directed; delightful in many instances, and salutary even where it is most offensive; when you consider his strict truth, his fortitude in resisting oppression and arbitrary power; his fidelity in friendship; his sincere love and zeal for religion; his uprightness in making right resolutions, and his steadiness in adhering to them; his care of his church, its choir, its economy, and its income; his attention to all those who preached in his cathedral, in order to their amendment in pronunciation and style; as also his remarkable attention to the interest of his successors preferably to his own present emoluments; his invincible patriotism, even to a country which he did not love; his very various, well-devised, well-judged, and extensive charities, throughout his life; and his whole fortune (to say nothing of his wife’s) conveyed to the same Christian purposes at his death; charities, from which he could enjoy no honour, advantage, or satisfaction of any kind in this world: when you consider his ironical and humorous, as well as his serious schemes, for the promotion of true religion and virtue; his success in soliciting for the First Fruits and Twentieths, to the unspeakable benefit of the Established Church of Ireland; and his felicity (to rate it no higher) in giving occasion to the building of fifty new churches in London:

“All this considered, the character of his life will appear like that of his writings; they will both bear to be reconsidered, and re-examined with the utmost attention, and always discover new beauties and excellences upon every examination.

“They will bear to be considered as the sun, in which the brightness will hide the blemishes; and whenever petulant ignorance, pride, malignity, or envy interposes to cloud or sully his fame, I take upon me to pronounce, that the eclipse will not

last long.

“To conclude—No man ever deserved better of his country, than Swift did of his; a steady, persevering, inflexible friend; a wise, a watchful, and a faithful counsellor, under many severe trials and bitter persecutions, to the manifest hazard both of his liberty and fortune.

“He lived a blessing, he died a benefactor, and his name will ever live an honour to Ireland.”

In the poetical works of Dr. Swift there is not much upon which the critic can exercise his powers. They are often humorous, almost always light, and have the qualities which recommend such compositions, easiness and gaiety. They are, for the most part, what their author intended. The diction is correct, the numbers are smooth, and the rhymes exact. There seldom occurs a hard-laboured expression, or a redundant epithet; all his verses exemplify his own definition of a good style; they consist of “proper words in proper places.”

To divide this collection into classes, and show how some pieces are gross, and some are trifling, would be to tell the reader what he knows already, and to find faults of which the author could not be ignorant, who certainly wrote not often to his judgment, but his humour.

It was said, in a Preface to one of the Irish editions, that Swift had never been known to take a single thought from any writer, ancient or modern. This is not literally true; but perhaps no writer can easily be found that has borrowed so little, or that, in all his excellences and all his defects, has so well maintained his claim to be considered as original.

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