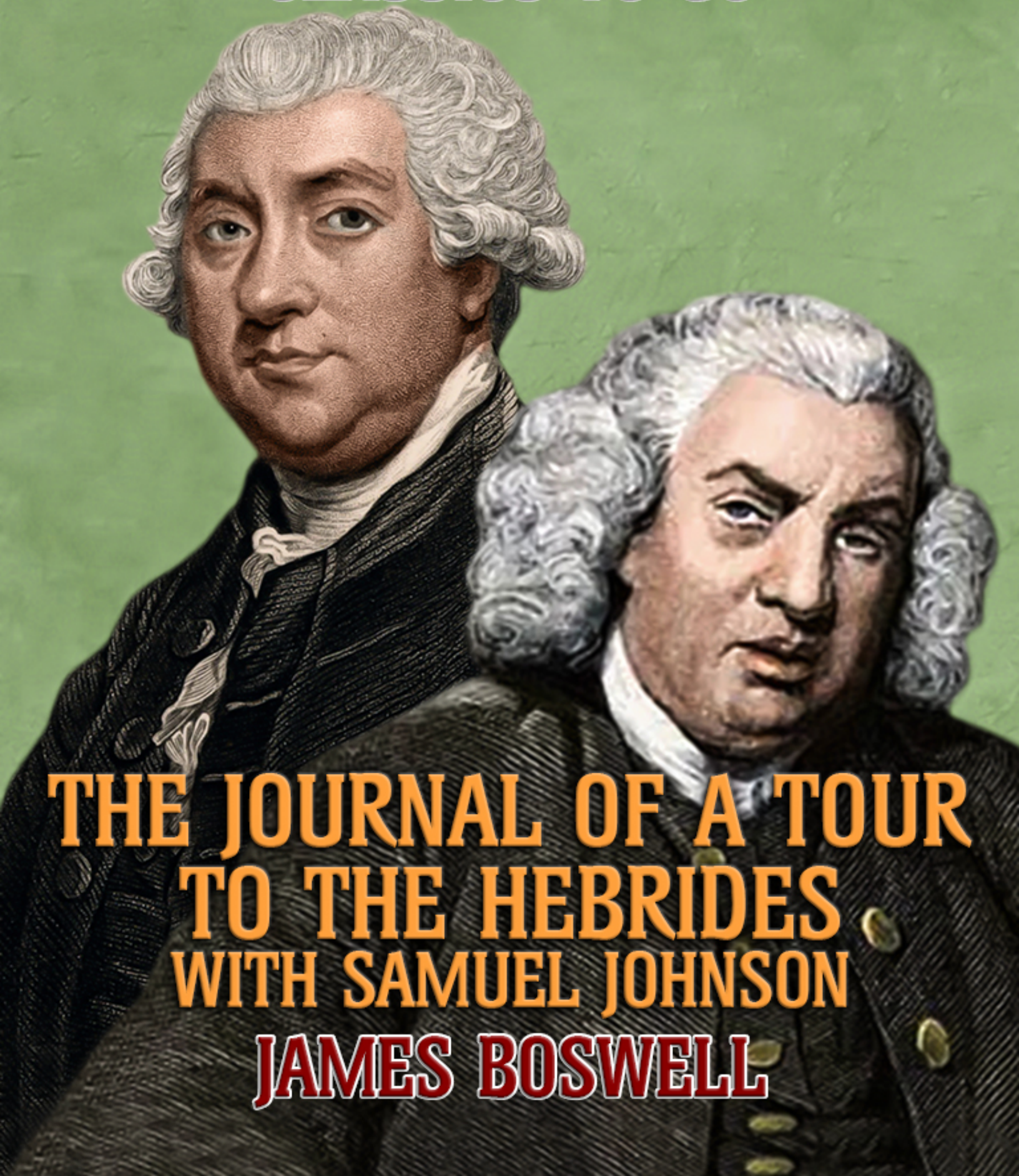
CLASSICS TO GO



# THE JOURNAL OF A TOUR TO THE HEBRIDES

## WITH SAMUEL JOHNSON

JAMES BOSWELL

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## To the Hebrides

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# DEDICATION TO EDMOND MALONE, ESQ.

My Dear Sir,

In every narrative, whether historical or biographical, authenticity is of the utmost consequence. Of this I have ever been so firmly persuaded, that I inscribed a former work to that person who was the best judge of its truth. I need not tell you I mean General Paoli; who, after his great, though unsuccessful, efforts to preserve the liberties of his country, has found an honourable asylum in Britain, where he has now lived many years the object of Royal regard and private respect; and whom I cannot name without expressing my very grateful sense of the uniform kindness which he has been pleased to shew me.

The friends of Doctor Johnson can best judge, from internal evidence, whether the numerous conversations which form the most valuable part of the ensuing pages, are correctly related. To them, therefore I wish to appeal, for the accuracy of the portrait here exhibited to the world.

As one of those who were intimately acquainted with him, you have a tide to this address. You have obligingly taken the trouble to peruse the original manuscript of this tour, and can vouch for the strict fidelity of the present publication. Your literary alliance with our much lamented friend, in consequence of having undertaken to render one of his labours more complete, by your edition of Shakespeare, a work which I am confident will not disappoint the expectations of the publick, gives you

another claim. But I have a still more powerful inducement to prefix your name to this volume, as it gives me an opportunity of letting the world know that I enjoy the honour and happiness of your friendship; and of thus publickly testifying the sincere regard with which I am.

My dear Sir,

Your very faithful and obedient servant,
James Boswell.
London, 20 September 1785.

"He was of an admirable pregnancy of wit, and that pregnancy much improved by continual study from his childhood; by which he had gotten such a promptness in expressing his mind, that his extemporal speeches were little inferior to his premeditated writings. Many, no doubt, had read as much and perhaps more than he; but scarce ever any concocted his reading into judgement as he did."—Baker's Chronicle

Dr Johnson had for many years given me hopes that we should go together, and visit the Hebrides. Martin's Account of those islands had impressed us with a notion that we might there contemplate a system of life almost totally different from what we had been accustomed to see; and, to find simplicity and wildness, and all the circumstances of remote time or place, so near to our native great island, was an object within the reach of reasonable curiosity. Dr

Johnson has said in his Journey, 'that he scarcely remembered how the wish to visit the Hebrides was excited'; but he told me, in summer, 1763, that his father put Martin's Account into his hands when he was very young, and that he was much pleased with it. We reckoned there would be some inconveniencies and hardships, and perhaps a little danger; but these we were persuaded were magnified in the imagination of every body. When I was at Ferney, in 1764, I mentioned our design to Voltaire. He looked at me, as if I had talked of going to the North Pole, and said, 'You do not insist on my accompanying you?' 'No, sir.' 'Then I am very willing you should go.' I was not afraid that our curious expedition would be prevented by such apprehensions; but I doubted that it would not be possible to prevail on Dr Johnson to relinquish, for some time, the felicity of a London life, which, to a man who can enjoy it with full intellectual relish, is apt to make existence in any narrower sphere seem insipid or irksome. I doubted that he would not be willing to come down from his elevated state of philosophical dignity; from a superiority of wisdom among the wise, and of learning among the learned; and from flashing his wit upon minds bright enough to reflect it.

He had disappointed my expectations so long, that I began to despair; but in spring, 1773, he talked of coming to Scotland that year with so much firmness, that I hoped he was at last in earnest. I knew that, if he were once launched from the metropolis, he would go forward very well; and I got our common friends there to assist in setting him afloat. To Mrs Thrale in particular, whose enchantment over him seldom failed, I was much obliged. It was, 'I'll give thee a wind.' 'Thou art kind.' To

attract him, we had invitations from the chiefs Macdonald and Macleod; and, for additional aid, I wrote to Lord Elibank, Dr William Robertson, and Dr Beattie.

To Dr Robertson, so far as my letter concerned the present subject, I wrote as follows:

Our friend, Mr Samuel Johnson, is in great health and spirits; and, I do think, has a serious resolution to visit Scotland this year. The more attraction, however, the better; and therefore, though I know he will be happy to meet you there, it will forward the scheme, if, in your answer to this, you express yourself concerning it with that power of which you are so happily possessed, and which may be so directed as to operate strongly upon him.

His answer to that part of my letter was quite as I could have wished.
It was written with the address and persuasion of the historian of
America.

When I saw you last, you gave us some hopes that you might prevail with Mr Johnson to make that excursion to Scotland, with the expectation of which we have long flattered ourselves. If he could order matters so, as to pass some time in Edinburgh, about the close of the summer session, and then visit some of the Highland scenes, I am confident he would be pleased with the grand features of nature in many parts of this country: he will meet with many persons here who respect him, and some whom I am persuaded he will think not unworthy of his esteem. I wish he would make the experiment. He sometimes cracks his jokes upon us; but he will find that we can distinguish between the stabs of

malevolence, and 'the rebukes of the righteous, which are like excellent oil Note: Our friend Edmund Burke, who by this time had received some pretty severe strokes from Dr Johnson, on account of the unhappy difference in their politicks, upon my repeating this passage to him, exclaimed, 'Oil of vitriol!', and break not the head'. Offer my best compliments to him, and assure him that I shall be happy to have the satisfaction of seeing him under my roof.

To Dr Beattie I wrote,

The chief intention of this letter is to inform you, that I now seriously believe Mr Samuel Johnson will visit Scotland this year: but I wish that every power of attraction may be employed to secure our having so valuable an acquisition, and therefore I hope you will without delay write to me what I know you think, that I may read it to the mighty sage, with proper emphasis, before I leave London, which I must soon. He talks of you with the same warmth that he did last year. We are to see as much of Scotland as we can, in the months of August and September. We shall not be long of being at Marischal College Note: This, I find, is a Scotticism. I should have said, 'It will not be long before we shall be at Marischal College.'. He is particularly desirous of seeing some of the Western Islands.

Dr Beattie did better: ipse venit. He was, however, so polite as to wave his privilege of nil mihi rescribus, and wrote from Edinburgh, as follows:

Your very kind and agreeable favour of the 20th of April overtook me here yesterday, after having gone to Aberdeen, which place I left about a week ago. I am to set out this day for London, and hope to have the

honour of paying my respects to Mr Johnson and you, about a week or ten days hence. I shall then do what I can, to enforce the topick you mentioned; but at present I cannot enter upon it, as I am in a very great hurry; for I intend to begin my journey within an hour or two.

He was as good as his word, and threw some pleasing motives into the northern scale. But, indeed, Mr Johnson loved all that he heard from one whom he tells us, in his Lives of the Poets, Gray found 'a poet, a philosopher, and a good man'.

My Lord Elibank did not answer my letter to his lordship for some time. The reason will appear, when we come to the Isle of Sky. I shall then insert my letter, with letters from his lordship, both to myself and Mr Johnson. I beg it may be understood, that I insert my own letters, as I relate my own sayings, rather as keys to what is valuable belonging to others, than for their own sake.

Luckily Mr Justice (now Sir Robert) Chambers, who was about to sail for the East Indies, was going to take leave of his relations at Newcastle, and he conducted Dr Johnson to that town. Mr Scott, of University College, Oxford, (now Dr Scott, of the Commons) accompanied him from thence to Edinburgh. With such propitious convoys did he proceed to my native city. But, lest metaphor should make it be supposed he actually went by sea, I choose to mention that he travelled in post-chaises, of which the rapid motion was one of his most favourite amusements.

Dr Samuel Johnson's character, religious, moral, political, and literary, nay his figure and manner, are, I believe, more generally known than those of almost any man; yet it may not be superfluous here to attempt a

sketch of him. Let my readers then remember that he was a sincere and zealous Christian, of high Church of England and monarchical principles, which he would not tamely suffer to be questioned; steady and inflexible in maintaining the obligations of piety and virtue, both from a regard to the order of society, and from a veneration for the Great Source of all order; correct, nay stern in his taste; hard to please, and easily offended, impetuous and irritable in his temper, but of a most humane and benevolent heart; having a mind stored with a vast and various collection of learning and knowledge, which he communicated with peculiar perspicuity and force, in rich and choice expression. He united a most logical head with a most fertile imagination, which gave him an extraordinary advantage in arguing; for he could reason close or wide, as he saw best for the moment. He could, when he chose it, be the greatest sophist that ever wielded a weapon in the schools of declamation; but he indulged this only in conversation; for he owned he sometimes talked for victory; he was too conscientious to make errour permanent and pernicious, by deliberately writing it. He was conscious of his superiority. He loved praise when it was brought to him; but was too proud to seek for it. He was somewhat susceptible of flattery. His mind was so full of imagery, that he might have been perpetually a poet. It has been often remarked, that in his poetical pieces, which it is to be regretted are so few, because so excellent, his style is easier than in his prose. There is deception in this: it is not easier, but better suited to the dignity of verse; as one may dance with grace, whose motions, in ordinary walking—in the common step—are awkward. He had a constitutional melancholy, the clouds of which darkened the brightness of his fancy, and gave a gloomy cast to his whole course of thinking: yet, though grave and awful in

his deportment, when he thought it necessary or proper, he frequently indulged himself in pleasantry and sportive sallies. He was prone to superstition, but not to credulity. Though his imagination might incline him to a belief of the marvellous, and the mysterious, his vigorous reason examined the evidence with jealousy. He had a loud voice, and a slow deliberate utterance, which no doubt gave some additional weight to the sterling metal of his conversation. Lord Pembroke said once to me at Wilton, with a happy pleasantry, and some truth, that 'Dr Johnson's sayings would not appear so extraordinary, were it not for his bow-wow way': but I admit the truth of this only on some occasions. The Messiah, played upon the Canterbury organ, is more sublime than when played upon an inferior instrument: but very slight musick will seem grand, when conveyed to the ear through that majestick medium. WHILE THEREFORE DOCTOR JOHNSON'S SAYINGS ARE READ, LET HIS MANNER BE TAKEN ALONG WITH THEM. Let it however be observed, that the sayings themselves are generally great; that, though he might be an ordinary composer at times, he was for the most part a Handel. His person was large, robust, I may say approaching to the gigantick, and grown unwieldy from corpulency. His countenance was naturally of the craft of an ancient statue, but somewhat disfigured by the scars of that evil, which, it was formerly imagined, the royal touch could cure. He was now in his sixty-fourth year, and was become a little dull of hearing. His sight had always been somewhat weak; yet, so much does mind govern, and even supply the deficiency of organs, that his perceptions were uncommonly quick and accurate. His head, and sometimes also his body, shook with a kind of motion like the effect of a palsy: he appeared to be frequently disturbed by cramps, or convulsive contractions, Note: Such they appeared to me: but since

the first edition, Sir Joshua Reynolds has observed to me, 'that Dr Johnson's extraordinary gestures were only habits, in which he indulged himself at certain times. When in company, where he was not free, or when engaged earnestly in conversation, he never gave way to such habits, which proves that they were not involuntary', I still however think, that these gestures were involuntary; for surely had not that been the case, he would have restrained them in the publick streets. of the nature of that distemper called St Vitus's dance. He wore a full suit of plain brown clothes, with twisted-hair buttons of the same colour, a large bushy greyish wig, a plain shirt, black worsted stockings, and silver buckles. Upon this tour, when journeying, he wore boots, and a very wide brown cloth great coat, with pockets which might have almost held the two volumes of his folio dictionary; and he carried in his hand a large English oak stick. Let me not be censured for mentioning such minute particulars. Every thing relative to so great a man is worth observing. I remember Dr Adam Smith, in his rhetorical lectures at Glasgow, told us he was glad to know that Milton wore latchets in his shoes, instead of buckles. When I mention the oak stick, it is but letting Hercules have his club; and, by-and-by, my readers will find this stick will bud, and produce a good joke.

This imperfect sketch of 'the combination and the form' of that Wonderful Man, whom I venerated and loved while in this world, and after whom I gaze with humble hope, now that it has pleased Almighty God to call him to a better world, will serve to introduce to the fancy of my readers the capital object of the following journal, in the course of which I trust they will attain to a considerable degree of acquaintance with him.

His prejudice against Scotland was announced almost as soon as he began to appear in the world of letters. In his London, a poem, are the following nervous lines:

For who would leave, unbrib'd, Hibernia's land
Or change the rocks of Scotland for the Strand
There none are swept by sudden fate away;
But all, whom hunger spares, with age decay.

The truth is, like the ancient Greeks and Romans, he allowed himself to look upon all nations but his own as barbarians: not only Hibernia, and Scotland, but Spain, Italy, and France, are attacked in the same poem. If he was particularly prejudiced against the Scots, it was because they were more in his way; because he thought their success in England rather exceeded the due proportion of their real merit; and because he could not but seen in them that nationality which I believe no liberal-minded Scotsman will deny. He was indeed, if I may be allowed the phrase, at bottom much of a John Bull; much of a blunt 'true born Englishman'. There was a stratum of common clay under the rock of marble. He was voraciously fond of good eating; and he had a great deal of that quality called humour, which gives an oiliness and a gloss to every other quality.

I am, I flatter myself, completely a citizen of the world. In my travels through Holland, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Corsica, France, I never felt myself from home; and I sincerely love 'every kindred and tongue and people and nation'. I subscribe to what my late truly learned and philosophical friend Mr Crosbie said, that the English are better animals than the Scots; they are nearer the sun; their blood is richer, and more mellow: but when I humour any of them in an outrageous contempt of Scotland, I fairly own I treat them as

children. And thus I have, at some moments, found myself obliged to treat even Dr Johnson.

To Scotland however he ventured; and he returned from it in great humour, with his prejudices much lessened, and with very grateful feelings of the hospitality with which he was treated; as is evident from that admirable work, his Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland, which, to my utter astonishment, has been misapprehended, even to rancour, by many of my countrymen.

To have the company of Chambers and Scott, he delayed his journey so long, that the court of session, which rises on the eleventh of August, was broke up before he got to Edinburgh.

On Saturday the fourteenth of August, 1773, late in the evening, I received a note from him, that he was arrived at Boyd's inn, at the head of the Canongate. I went to him directly. He embraced me cordially; and I exulted in the thought, that I now had him actually in Caledonia. Mr Scott's amiable manners, and attachment to our Socrates, at once united me to him. He told me that, before I came in, the Doctor had unluckily had a bad specimen of Scottish cleanliness. He then drank no fermented liquor. He asked to have his lemonade made sweeter; upon which the waiter, with his greasy fingers, lifted a lump of sugar, and put it into it. The Doctor, in indignation, threw it out of the window. Scott said, he was afraid he would have knocked the waiter down. Mr Johnson told me, that such another trick was played him at the house of a lady in Paris. He was to do me the honour to lodge under my roof. I regretted sincerely that I had not also a room for Mr Scott. Mr Johnson and I walked arm-in-arm up the High Street, to my house in

James's court: it was a dusky night: I could not prevent his being assailed by the evening effluvia of Edinburgh. I heard a late baronet, of some distinction in the political world in the beginning of the present reign, observe, that 'walking the streets of Edinburgh at night was pretty perilous, and a good deal odoriferous'. The peril is much abated, by the care which the magistrates have taken to enforce the city laws against throwing foul water from the windows; but, from the structure of the houses in the old town, which consist of many stories, in each of which a different family lives, and there being no covered sewers, the odour still continues. A zealous Scotsman would have wished Mr Johnson to be without one of his five senses upon this occasion. As we marched slowly along, he grumbled in my ear, 'I smell you in the dark!' But he acknowledged that the breadth of the street, and the loftiness of the buildings on each side, made a noble appearance.

My wife had tea ready for him, which it is well known he delighted to drink at all hours, particularly when sitting up late, and of which his able defence against Mr Jonas Hanway should have obtained him a magnificent reward from the East India Company. He shewed much complacency upon finding that the mistress of the house was so attentive to his singular habit; and as no man could be more polite when he chose to be so, his address to her was most courteous and engaging; and his conversation soon charmed her into a forgetfulness of his external appearance.

I did not begin to keep a regular full journal till some days after we had set out from Edinburgh; but I have luckily preserved a good many fragments of his Memorabilia from his very first evening in Scotland.

We had, a little before this, had a trial for murder, in which the judges had allowed the lapse of twenty years since its commission as a plea in bar, in conformity with the doctrine of prescription in the civil law, which Scotland and several other countries in Europe have adopted. He at first disapproved of this; but then he thought there was something in it, if there had been for twenty years a neglect to prosecute a crime which was KNOWN. He would not allow that a murder, by not being DISCOVERED for twenty years, should escape punishment. We talked of the ancient trial by duel. He did not think it so absurd as is generally supposed; 'For,' said he, 'it was only allowed when the question was in equilibria, as when one affirmed and another denied; and they had a notion that Providence would interfere in favour of him who was in the right. But as it was found that in a duel, he who was in the right had not a better chance than he who was in the wrong, therefore society instituted the present mode of trial, and gave the advantage to him who is in the right.'

We sat till near two in the morning, having chatted a good while after my wife left us. She had insisted, that to shew all respect to the Sage, she would give up her own bed-chamber to him, and take a worse. This I cannot but gratefully mention, as one of a thousand obligations which I owe her, since the great obligation of her being pleased to accept of me as her husband.

Sunday, 15th August

Mr Scott came to breakfast, at which I introduced to Dr Johnson, and him, my friend Sir William Forbes, now of Pitsligo; a man of whom too much good cannot be said; who, with distinguished abilities and application in his profession of a banker, is at once a good companion,

and a good Christian; which I think is saying enough. Yet it is but justice to record, that once, when he was in a dangerous illness, he was watched with the anxious apprehension of a general calamity; day and night his house was beset with affectionate inquiries; and, upon his recovery, Te deum was the universal chorus from the hearts of his countrymen.

Mr Johnson was pleased with my daughter Veronica,Note: "The saint's name of Veronica was introduced into our family through my great grandmother Veronica, Countess of Kincardine, a Dutch lady of the noble house of Sommelsdyck, of which there is a full account in Bayle's Dictionary. The family had once a princely right in Surinam. The governour of that settlement was appointed by the States General, the town of Amsterdam, and Sommelsdyck. The States General have acquired Sommelsdyck's right; but the family has still great dignity and opulence, and by intermarriages is connected with many other noble families. When I was at the Hague, I was received with all the affection of kindred. The present Sommelsdyck has an important charge in the Republick, and is as worthy a man as lives. He has honoured me with his correspondence for these twenty years. My great grandfather, the husband of Countess Veronica, was Alexander, Earl of Kincardine, that eminent Royalist whose character is given by Burnet in his History of his own Times. From him the blood of Bruce flows in my veins. Of such ancestry who would not be proud? And, as Nihil est, nisi hoc sciat alter, is peculiarly true of genealogy, who would not be glad to seize a fair opportunity to let it be known " then a child of about four months old. She had the appearance of listening to him. His motions seemed to her to be intended for her amusement; and when he stopped, she fluttered, and

made a little infantine noise, and a kind of signal for him to begin again. She would be held close to him; which was a proof, from simple nature, that his figure was not horrid. Her fondness for him endeared her still more to me, and I declared she should have five hundred pounds of additional fortune.

We talked of the practice of the law. William Forbes said, he thought an honest lawyer should never undertake a cause which he was satisfied was not a just one. 'Sir,' said Mr Johnson, 'a lawyer has no business with the justice or injustice of the cause which he undertakes, unless his client asks his opinion, and then he is bound to give it honestly. The justice or injustice of the cause is to be decided by the judge. Consider, sir; what is the purpose of courts of justice? It is, that every man may have his cause fairly tried, by men appointed to try causes. A lawyer is not to tell what he knows to be a lie: he is not to produce what he knows to be a false deed; but he is not to usurp the province of the jury and of the judge, and determine what shall be the effect of evidence—what shall be the result of legal argument. As it rarely happens that a man is fit to plead his own cause, lawyers are a class of the community, who, by study and experience, have acquired the art and power of arranging evidence, and of applying to the points of issue what the law has settled. A lawyer is to do for his client all that his client might fairly do for himself, if he could. If, by a superiority of attention, of knowledge, of skill, and a better method of communication, he has the advantage of his adversary, it is an advantage to which he is entitled. There must always be some advantage, on one side or other; and it is better that advantage should be had by talents, than by chance. If lawyers were to undertake no causes till they were sure they were just, a man might be precluded altogether from a

trial of his claim, though, were it judicially examined, it might be found a very just claim.' This was sound practical doctrine, and rationally repressed a too refined scrupulosity of conscience.

Emigration was at this time a common topick of discourse. Dr Johnson regretted it as hurtful to human happiness: 'For,' said he, 'it spreads mankind which weakens the defence of a nation, and lessens the comfort of living. Men, thinly scattered, make a shift, but a bad shift, without many things. A smith is ten miles off: they'll do without a nail or a staple. A taylor is far from them: they'll botch their own clothes. It is being concentrated which produces high convenience.'

Sir William Forbes, Mr Scott, and I, accompanied Mr Johnson to the chapel, founded by Lord Chief Baron Smith, for the Service of the Church of England. The Reverend Mr Carre, the senior clergyman, preached from these words, 'Because the Lord reigneth, let the earth be glad.' I was sorry to think Mr Johnson did not attend to the sermon, Mr Carre's low voice not being strong enough to reach his hearing. A selection of Mr Carre's sermons has, since his death, been published by Sir William Forbes, and the world has acknowledged their uncommon merit. I am well assured Lord Mansfield has pronounced them to be excellent.

Here I obtained a promise from Lord Chief Baron Orde, that he would dine at my house next day. I presented Mr Johnson to his Lordship, who politely said to him, 'I have not the honour of knowing you; but I hope for it, and to see you at my house. I am to wait on you tomorrow.' This respectable English judge will be long remembered in Scotland, where he built an elegant house, and lived in it magnificently. His own ample fortune, with the

addition of his salary, enabled him to be splendidly hospitable. It may be fortunate for an individual amongst ourselves to be Lord Chief Baron; and a most worthy man now has the office; but, in my opinion, it is better for Scotland in general, that some of our publick employments should be filled by gentlemen of distinction from the south side of the Tweed, as we have the benefit of promotion in England. Such an interchange would make a beneficial mixture of manners, and render our union more complete. Lord Chief Baron Orde was on good terms with us all, in a narrow country filled with jarring interests and keen parties; and, though I well knew his opinion to be the same with my own, he kept himself aloof at a very critical period indeed, when the Douglas cause shook the sacred security of birthright in Scotland to its foundation; a cause, which had it happened before the Union, when there was no appeal to a British House of Lords, would have left the great fortress of honours and of property in ruins.

When we got home, Dr Johnson desired to see my books. He took down Ogden's Sermons on Prayer, on which I set a very high value, having been much edified by them, and he retired with them to his room. He did not stay long, but soon joined us in the drawing room. I presented to him Mr Robert Arbuthnot, a relation of the celebrated Dr Arbuthnot, and a man of literature and taste. To him we were obliged for a previous recommendation, which secured us a very agreeable reception at St Andrews, and which Dr Johnson, in his Journey, ascribes to 'some invisible friend'.

Of Dr Beattie, Mr Johnson said, 'Sir, he has written like a man conscious of the truth, and feeling his own strength. Treating your adversary with respect, is giving

him an advantage to which he is not entitled. The greatest part of men cannot judge of reasoning, and are impressed by character; so that, if you allow your adversary a respectable character, they will think, that though you differ from him, you may be in the wrong. Sir, treating your adversary with respect, is striking soft in a battle. And as to Hume—a man who has so much conceit as to tell all mankind that they have been bubbled for ages, and he is the wise man who sees better than they—a man who has so little scrupulosity as to venture to oppose those principles which have been thought necessary to human happiness—is he to be surprised if another man comes and laughs at him? If he is the great man he thinks himself, all this cannot hurt him: it is like throwing peas against a rock.' He added 'something much too rough', both as to Mr Hume's head and heart, which I suppress. Violence is, in my opinion, not suitable to the Christian cause. Besides, I always lived on good terms with Mr Hume, though I have frankly told him, I was not clear that it was right in me to keep company with him, 'But', said I, 'how much better are you than your books!' He was cheerful, obliging, and instructive; he was charitable to the poor; and many an agreeable hour have I passed with him: I have preserved some entertaining and interesting memoirs of him, particularly when he knew himself to be dying, which I may some time or other communicate to the world. I shall not, however, extol him so very highly as Dr Adam Smith does, who says, in a letter to Mr Strahan the printer (not a confidential letter to his friend, but a letter which is published Note: This letter, though shattered by the sharp shot of Dr Horne of Oxford's wit, in the character of 'One of the People called Christians', is still prefixed to Mr Home's excellent History of England, like a poor invalid on the piquet guard, or like a list of quack medicines sold by the same

bookseller, by whom a work of whatever nature is published; for it has no connection with his History, let it have what it may with what are called his Philosophical Works. A worthy friend of mine in London was lately consulted by a lady of quality, of most distinguished merit, what was the best History of England for her son to read. My friend recommended Hume's. But, upon recollecting that its usher was a superlative panegyrick on one, who endeavoured to sap the credit of our holy religion, he revoked his recommendation. I am really sorry for this ostentatious alliance; because I admire The Theory of Moral Sentiments, and value the greatest part of An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations. Why should such a writer be so forgetful of human comfort, as to give any countenance to that dreary infidelity which would make us poor indeed!' with all formality): 'Upon the whole, I have always considered him, both in his life time and since his death, as approaching as nearly to the idea of a perfectly wise and virtuous man as perhaps the nature of human frailty will permit.' Let Dr Smith consider: Was not Mr Hume blest with good health, good spirits, good friends, a competent and increasing fortune? And had he not also a perpetual feast of fame? But, as a learned friend has observed to me, 'What trials did he undergo, to prove the perfection of his virtue? Did he ever experience any great instance of adversity?' When I read this sentence, delivered by my old Professor of Moral Philosophy, I could not help exclaiming with the Psalmist, 'Surely I have now more understanding than my teachers!'

While we were talking, there came a note to me from Dr William
Robertson.

Dear Sir,

I have been expecting every day to hear from you, of Dr Johnson's arrival. Pray, what do you know about his motions? I long to take him by the hand. I write this from the college, where I have only this scrap of paper. Ever yours,

W.R.
Sunday.

It pleased me to find Dr Robertson thus eager to meet Dr Johnson. I was glad I could answer, that he was come: and I begged Dr Robertson might be with us as soon as he could. Sir William Forbes, Mr Scott, Mr Arbuthnot, and another gentleman dined with us. 'Come, Dr Johnson,' said I, 'it is commonly thought that our veal in Scotland is not good. But here is some which I believe you will like.' There was no catching him: JOHNSON. 'Why, sir, what is commonly thought, I should take to be true. YOUR veal may be good; but that will only be an exception to the general opinion; not a proof against it.'

Dr Robertson, according to the custom of Edinburgh at that time, dined in the interval between the forenoon and afternoon service, which was then later than now; so we had not the pleasure of his company till dinner was over, when he came and drank wine with us. And then began some animated dialogue, of which here follows a pretty full note.

We talked of Mr Burke. Dr Johnson said, he had great variety of knowledge, store of imagery, copiousness of language. ROBERTSON. 'He has wit too.' JOHNSON. 'No, sir; he never succeeds there. 'Tis low; 'tis conceit. I used to say. Burke never once made a good joke.

Note: This was one of the points upon which Dr Johnson was strangely heterodox. For, surely, Mr Burke, with his other remarkable qualities, is also distinguished for his wit, and for wit of all kinds too; not merely that power of language which Pope chooses to denominate wit.

True wit is Nature to advantage drest;
What oft was thought, but ne'er so well exprest.

but surprising allusions, brilliant sallies of vivacity, and pleasant conceits. His speeches in Parliament are strewed with them. Take, for instance, the variety which he has given in his wide range, yet exact detail, when exhibiting his Reform Bill. And his conversation abounds in wit. Let me put down a specimen. I told him, I had seen, at a blue stocking assembly, a number of ladies sitting round a worthy and tall friend of ours, listening to his literature. 'Ay,' said he, 'like maids round a May-pole.' I told him, I had found a perfect definition of human nature, as distinguished from the animal. An ancient philosopher said, man was a 'two-legged animal without feathers', upon which his rival sage had a cock plucked bare, and set him down in the school before all the disciples, as a 'Philosophick Man'. Dr Franklin said, man was 'a tool-making animal', which is very well; for no animal but man makes a thing, by means of which he can make another thing. But this applies to very few of the species. My definition of man is, 'a Cooking Animal'. The beasts have memory, judgment and all the faculties and passions of our mind, in a certain degree; but no beast is a cook. The trick of the monkey using the cat's paw to roast a chestnut is only a piece of shrewd malice in that turpissima bestia, which humbles us so sadly by its similarity to us. Man alone can dress a good dish; and every man whatever is more or less a cook, in seasoning what he himself eats. 'Your definition is good,' said Mr

> Burke, 'and I now see the full force of the common proverb. "There is REASON in roasting of eggs".' When Mr Wilkes, in his days of tumultuous opposition, was borne upon the shoulders of the mob. Mr Burke (as Mr Wilkes told me himself, with classical admiration,) applied to him what Horace says of Pindar,
>
> … numerisque fertur LEGE solutis.

Sir Joshua Reynolds, who agrees with me entirely as to Mr Burke's fertility of wit said, that this was 'dignifying a pun'. He also observed, that he has often heard Burke say, in the course of an evening, ten good things, each of which would have served a noted wit (whom he named) to live upon for a twelvemonth.

> I find, since the former edition, that some persons have objected to the instances which I have given of Mr Burke's wit, as not doing justice to my very ingenious friend; the specimens produced having, it is alleged, more of conceit than real wit and being merely sportive sallies of the moment, not justifying the encomium which they think with me, he undoubtedly merits. I was well aware, how hazardous it was to exhibit particular instances of wit, which is of so airy and spiritual a nature as often to elude the hand that attempts to grasp it. The excellence and efficacy of a bon mot depend frequently so much on the occasion on which it is spoken, on the particular manner of the speaker, on the person of whom it is applied, the previous introduction, and a thousand minute particulars which cannot be easily enumerated, that it is always dangerous to detach a witty saying from the group to which it belongs, and to see it before the eye of the spectator, divested of those concomitant circumstances, which gave it animation, mellowness, and relief. I ventured, however, at all

hazards to put down the first instances that occurred to me, as proofs of Mr Burke's lively and brilliant fancy; but am very sensible that his numerous friends could have suggested many of a superior quality. Indeed, the being in company with him, for a single day, is sufficient to shew that what I have asserted is well founded; and it was only necessary to have appealed to all who know him intimately, for a complete refutation of the heterodox opinion entertained by Dr Johnson on this subject. HE allowed Mr Burke, as the reader will find hereafter, to be a man of consummate and unrivalled abilities in every light except that now under consideration; and the variety of his allusions, and splendour of his imagery, have made such an impression on ALL THE REST of the world, that superficial observers are apt to overlook his other merits, and to suppose that wit is his chief and most prominent excellence; when in fact it is only one of the many talents that he possesses, which are so various and extraordinary, that it is very difficult to ascertain precisely the rank and value of each. What I most envy Burke for, is, his being constantly the same. He is never what we call humdrum; never unwilling to begin to talk, nor in haste to leave off.' BOSWELL. 'Yet he can listen.' JOHNSON. 'No; I cannot say he is good at that. So desirous is he to talk, that, if one is speaking at this end of the table, he'll speak to somebody at the other end. Burke, sir, is such a man, that if you met him for the first time in the street where you were stopped by a drove of oxen, and you and he stepped aside to take shelter but for five minutes, he'd talk to you in such a manner, that, when you parted, you would say, this is an extraordinary man. Now, you may be long enough with me, without finding any thing extraordinary.' He said, he believed Burke was intended for the law; but either had not money enough to follow it, or had not diligence enough.

He said, he could not understand how a man could apply to one thing, and not to another. Robertson said, one man had more judgment, another more imagination. JOHNSON. 'No, sir; it is only, one man has more mind than another. He may direct it differently; he may, by accident, see the success of one kind of study, and take a desire to excel in it. I am persuaded that, had Sir Isaac Newton applied to poetry, he would have made a very fine epick poem. I could as easily apply to law as to tragick poetry.' BOSWELL. 'Yet, sir, you did apply to tragick poetry, not to law.' JOHNSON. 'Because, sir, I had not money to study law. Sir, the man who has vigour, may walk to the east, just as well as to the west, if he happens to turn his head that way.' BOSWELL. 'But, sir, 'tis like walking up and down a hill; one man will naturally do the one better than the other. A hare will run up a hill best, from her fore-legs being short; a dog down.' JOHNSON. 'Nay, sir; that is from mechanical powers. If you make mind mechanical, you may argue in that manner. One mind is a vice, and holds fast; there's a good memory. Another is a file; and he is a disputant, a controversialist. Another is a razor; and he is sarcastical.' We talked of Whitefield. He said, he was at the same college with him, and knew him 'before he began to be better than other people' (smiling); that he believed he sincerely meant well, but had a mixture of politicks and ostentation: whereas Wesley thought of religion only. Note: That cannot be said now, after the flagrant part which Mr John Wesley took against our American brethren, when, in his own name, he threw amongst his enthusiastic flock, the very individual combustibles of Dr Johnson's Taxation no Tyranny: and after the intolerant spirit which he manifested against our fellow Christians of the Roman Catholick Communion, for which that able champion, Father O'Leary, has given him so hearty a drubbing. But I

should think myself very unworthy, if I did not at the same time acknowledge Mr John Wesley's merit, as a veteran 'Soldier of Jesus Christ', who has, I do believe, 'turned many from darkness into light, and from the power of Satan to the living God'. Robertson said, Whitefield had strong natural eloquence, which, if cultivated, would have done great things. JOHNSON. 'Why, sir, I take it, he was at the height of what his abilities could do, and was sensible of it. He had the ordinary advantages of education; but he chose to pursue that oratory which is for the mob.' BOSWELL. 'He had great effect on the passions.' JOHNSON. 'Why, sir, I don't think so. He could not represent a succession of pathetick images. He vociferated, and made an impression. THERE, again, was a mind like a hammer.' Dr Johnson now said, a certain eminent political friend of ours was wrong, in his maxim of sticking to a certain set of MEN on all occasions. 'I can see that a man may do right to stick to a PARTY,' said he;' that is to say, he is a WHIG, or he is a TORY, and he thinks one of those parties upon the whole the best, and that to make it prevail, it must be generally supported, though, in particulars, it may be wrong. He takes its faggot of principles, in which there are fewer rotten sticks than in the other, though some rotten sticks to be sure; and they cannot well be separated. But, to bind one's self to one man, or one set of men (who may be right to-day and wrong to-morrow), without any general preference of system, I must disapprove.' Note: If due attention were paid to this observation, there would be more virtue, even in politicks. What Dr Johnson justly condemned, has, I am sorry to say, greatly increased in the present reign. At the distance of four years from this conversation, 21st February 1777, My Lord Archbishop of York, in his 'Sermon before the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts', thus

indignantly describes the then state of parties: 'Parties once had a PRINCIPLE belonging to them, absurd perhaps, and indefensible, but still carrying a notion of DUTY, by which honest minds might easily be caught.

'But they are now COMBINATIONS OF INDIVIDUALS, who, instead of being the sons and servants of the community, make a league for advancing their PRIVATE INTERESTS. It is their business to hold high the notion of POLITICAL HONOUR. I believe and trust, it is not injurious to say, that such a bond is no better than that by which the lowest and wickedest combinations are held together; and that it denotes the last stage of political depravity.'

To find a thought, which just shewed itself to us from the mind of JOHNSON, thus appearing again at such a distance of time, and without any communication between them, enlarged to full growth in the mind of MARKHAM, is a curious object of philosophical contemplation. That two such great and luminous minds should have been so dark in one corner—that THEY should have held it to be 'wicked rebellion in the British subjects established in America, to resist the abject condition of holding all their property at the mercy of British subjects remaining at home, while their allegiance to our common Lord the King was to be preserved inviolate'—is a striking proof to me, either that 'He who fitteth in Heaven', scorns the loftiness of human pride, or that the evil spirit, whose personal existence I strongly believe, and even in this age am confirmed in that belief by a Fell, nay, by a Hurd, has more power than some choose to allow.

He told us of Cooke, who translated Hesiod, and lived twenty years on a translation of Plautus, for which he

was always taking subscriptions; and that he presented Foote to a club, in the following singular manner: 'This is the nephew of the gentleman who was lately hung in chains for murdering his brother.'

In the evening I introduced to Mr Johnson Note: It may be observed, that I sometimes call my great friend, MR Johnson, sometimes DR Johnson, though he had at this time a doctor's degree from Trinity College, Dublin. The University of Oxford afterwards conferred it upon him by a diploma, in very honourable terms. It was some time before I could bring myself to call him Doctor; but as he has been long known by that title, I shall give it to him in the rest of this Journal. two good friends of mine, Mr William Nairne, advocate, and Mr Hamilton of Sundrum, my neighbour in the country, both of whom supped with us. I have preserved nothing of what passed, except that Dr Johnson displayed another of his heterodox opinions—a contempt of tragick acting. He said, 'the action of all players in tragedy is bad. It should be a man's study to repress those signs of emotion and passion, as they are called.' He was of a directly contrary opinion to that of Fielding, in his Tom Jones; who makes Partridge say, of Garrick, 'why, I could act as well as he myself. I am sure, if I had seen a ghost, I should have looked in the very same manner, and done just as he did.' For, when I asked him, 'Would not you, sir, start as Mr Garrick does, if you saw a ghost?' He answered, 'I hope not. If I did, I should frighten the ghost.'

Monday, 16th August

Dr William Robertson came to breakfast. We talked of Ogden on Prayer. Dr Johnson said, 'The same arguments which are used against God's hearing prayer, will serve

against his rewarding good, and punishing evil. He has resolved, he has declared, in the former case as in the latter.' He had last night looked into Lord Hailes's Remarks on the History of Scotland. Dr Robertson and I said, it was a pity Lord Hailes did not write greater things. His lordship had not then published his Annals of Scotland. JOHNSON. 'I remember I was once on a visit at the house of a lady for whom I had a high respect. There was a good deal of company in the room. When they were gone, I said to this lady, "What foolish talking have we had!" "Yes," said she, "but while they talked, you said nothing." I was struck with reproof. How much better is the man who does nothing. Besides, I love anecdotes. I fancy mankind may come, in time, to write all aphoristically, except in narrative; grow weary of preparation, and connection, and illustration, and all those arts by which a big book is made. If a man is to wait till he weaves anecdotes into a system, we may be long in getting them, and get but a few, in comparison of what we might get.'

Dr Robertson said, the notions of Eupham Macallan. a fanatick woman, of whom Lord Hailes gives a sketch, were still prevalent among some of the Presbyterians; and therefore it was right in Lord Hailes, a man of known piety, to undeceive them.

We walked out, that Dr Johnson might see some of the things which we have to shew at Edinburgh. We went to the Parliament House, where the Parliament of Scotland sat, and where the Ordinary Lords of Session hold their courts; and to the New Session House adjoining to it, where our Court of Fifteen (the fourteen Ordinaries, with the Lord President at their head) sit as a court of Review. We went to the Advocates' Library, of which Dr Johnson took a cursory view, and then to what is called the Laigh