

Vir excellentissime, nostræ reipublicæ princeps, te ex animo salutamus, ac virum tantum, bonisque omnibus tam probatum, nostris adesse comitibus gaudemus.

Virum tibi conjunctissimum, patriæque et virtutis fautoribus carissimum, ac, dum vixerit, integritatis, prudentiæ, omnisque virtutis exemplum, in sedes altiores accessitum, tecum lugemus. Sed bonorum animis, omnium desiderio, "Manet mansurumque est quidquid in eo amavimus, quidquid admirati sumus. Placide quiescat."

Præclara quidem nostræ reipublicæ felicitas videtur, quum inter tam multos virtute eximios nemo ob amorem erga illam insignem se reddere potest; quum omnia prospere pulchreque eveniunt. Florentibus rebus, summâ hujus reipublicæ tranquillitate, summâ concordia, respublica mihi quidem et aliis multis ut confido carissima tuis auspiciis evasit nova; * olim quidem terris nunc re et legibus a vobis disjuncta; ut aliam sese libertatis vindicem exhibeat, alium amicitiae vinculum adjiciat. Perduret atque valeat. Vale, vir excellentissime.

Et tu, honoratissime, cui virticem ætate provento albentem civiles usque ambiunt honores; et vos, Conciliarii, Curatoresque honorandi, quibus faventibus et adjutantibus, vigent res summa nostraque Academia, valete.

Vale et tu, Præses reverende et, si mihi liceat, carissime, cujus præsidic lumen veritatis, patrum auspiciis in nostræ Academiæ penetralibus olim ac censum, fulsit fulgetque novo semper purioreque splendore. Esto sempiternum.

Valete Professores eruditissimi ac præstantissimi! Quibus eloquemur verbis quantâ observantiâ vos habemus, quam gratis animis vestrum in nos assiduorum laborum, curæque vigilantis recordamur? Sit vobis hoc excelsum et pene divinum munus et præmium. Omnibus qui merentur certissime eveniet.

Amici sodalesque carissimi, iterum denique, post aliquod temporis intervallum, convenimus, ut his sedibus amatis, quas veluti beatorum insulas dolentes reliquimus, nostræ custodibus juventutis merito honoratis, nobis invicem et illis valedicemus. Quis enim, quum temporis inter camænas et cum amicis acti reminiscitur, dolorem non sentiat quod his omnibus nimium cito sese eripere, marique incerto ac tumultuoso se committere oporteat, nunquam rediturum, nunquam sodalium ora jucunda aspecturum! Interjecto jam nunc brevi tantum triennio, multos optime dilectos oculis animoque frustra requirimus.

Quid ego non audio tantum? Eorum quos inter-lectissimos habuimus, alter mortii occubuit, alter in terris externis abest. Quid illos aut alios quos amavimus a me nominari necesse sit? Quisque vestrum eos requirit, quisque desiderat. Valeant omnes qui absunt, et vos, amici fratresque, valete!

Vos quoque valete, omnes qui adestis, — senes atque juvenes, quibus fortuna fida et quibus perfida, — matronæ virginesque, quibus sit decor quibusque desit; — vobis adsint ante omnia virtus,

"Lis nunquam, toga rara, mens quieta,
Vires ingenue, salubre corpus;
Quod sitis esse velitis, nihilque malitis."

* Anno 1820, resp. Maine a rep. Mass. se separavit.

XCVI.

A BOWDOIN PRIZE DISSERTATION.

*Example.**Essay on the Literary Character of Dr. Samuel Johnson.*

While an author is living, it is not extraordinary that mankind should form an erroneous estimate of his works. The influence which prejudice and partiality often possess over the minds of his contemporaries, is incompatible with a correct decision of his merits. It is not until time has effaced the recollection of party feelings, when the virtues and foibles of the man are forgotten, and the warm emotions of friendship or resentment are no longer felt, that the merit of an author can be fairly ascertained. So variable is public opinion, which is often formed without examination, and liable to be warped by caprice, that works of real merit are frequently left for posterity to discover and admire, while the pompous efforts of impertinence and folly are the wonders of the age. The gigantic genius of Shakspeare so far surpassed the learning and penetration of his times, that his productions were then little read and less admired. There were few who could understand, and still fewer who could relish the beauties of a writer whose style was as various as his talents were surprising. The immortal Milton suffered the mortification of public neglect, after having enriched the literature of his country with a poem, which has since been esteemed the most beautiful composition in his language; and his poetical talents, which entitled him to a reputation the most extensive and gratifying, could scarcely procure for him, in his own times, a distinction above contemporary authors who are now forgotten. Ignorance and interest, envy and political rancor, have concealed from public notice works, which the enlightened intelligence of after ages have delighted to rescue from oblivion; and it is no less common for posterity to forget ephemeral productions, which were the admiration of the day in which they were produced.

In a retrospect of the literature of any age, the mind views the respective authors as a group of statues, which a cursory glance of the eye discovers at a distance; and although, on a nearer examination, it could admire the features and beauties discoverable in those of a diminutive appearance, yet the energetic expression and lofty attitude of some who overtop the rest, exclusively attract our notice and command attention. Perhaps there has been no age concerning which this remark is more justly applicable, than the eighteenth century. In that period, a most numerous army of authors took the field, greater perhaps in number, but not exceeding in height of stature, excellence of skill, or brilliance of achievement, the great men of the three preceding centuries.

In contemplating this collection of writers, the attention is necessarily withdrawn from those over whom the towering genius of Dr. Johnson seems to bend, and is attracted by the colossal statue which represents the gigantic powers of his mind. Whether we regard the variety of his talents, the soundness of his judgment, the depth of his penetration, the acuteness of his sagacity, the subtleness of his reasoning faculty, or the extent of his knowledge, he is equally the subject of astonishment and admiration.

It will not, perhaps, be hazardous to affirm, that within the range of an

cient and modern history, it is difficult, if not impossible, to point out a single individual, in whom was discoverable so various a combination of literary accomplishments. It may also be safely affirmed, that he seemed to possess a mind which actually contained a greater and more variegated mass of knowledge than any other person has been known to possess. It will not, however, be surprising, that his productions excited the wonder and astonishment of mankind, when we reflect, that he had a memory which at any moment could furnish him with all that he had ever read, and a judgment which could exactly combine and compare, analyze and aggregate, the most subtle reasoning, and a love of learning never satiated by indulgence. A clear head and nice discrimination, a logical method and mathematical precision, rendered him one of the most powerful reasoners of his age. A character so eminent, it is not likely could pass his own times without much animadversion and much praise. As he was the most conspicuous literary man of his nation, it is not matter of surprise, that we find written of him more than it would be safe implicitly to credit, and presumption universally to disbelieve. Soon after his death, he was very justly compared to the sick lion in the fable, whom, while living, few had the temerity to attack, but against whom, when in the defenceless state of a corpse, all in whom the malignancy of envy, or the voice of prejudice, or the excitement of resentment existed, united their assaults with rancor and bitterness. In many, the gratification of these feelings was like the fury of canine madness. They bit with the mordacity of the viper; but the impassive metal rendered retributive justice to their efforts, and the good sense of mankind reprobated their folly.

It is a delightful employment to trace through the stages of infantine imbecility, the growth of a genius, which, in the progressive gradations of its maturity, expands like the majestic branches of "the Pride of the Forest," by slow degrees, and native hardihood, acquiring strength and enlargement, and becoming at last a sublime emblem of independence, of fortitude, and durability. The development of Dr. Johnson's mind, is a subject, from the contemplation of which, we may derive much pleasure and improvement. It was not like a sickly and tender plant, to be nursed with the most anxious solicitude. It possessed a native vigor and energy, which neither the disadvantages of an unpropitious culture could retard, nor the blasts of adverse fortune could depress. The tempestuous storms, to which a nature essentially hardy would have yielded, it bore with inflexible firmness; and, like a rock in the midst of the ocean, just protruding above the waves, by which it is sometimes overflowed, and at the reflux of the billows, with haughty pride becomes again visible, it withstood the conflict of contending elements. Undaunted by difficulties, from which a mind not underserving of respect would involuntarily have recoiled, we observe it, in the progress of his life, stemming the current of adversity, rather in the pride of triumph, than in the humiliation of despondence. In following him through the dangers and hardships which he too frequently had to encounter, we may observe how wonderfully his mind gained efficiency by resistance; and, like an impetuous torrent, overleaping the barriers of its course, with renovated strength he overwhelmed opposition.

The ninth year of the eighteenth century gave birth to the man, who was afterwards to become the glory of his country, the champion of his language, and the honor and ornament of the literature of his age. Among some of the biographers of Dr. Johnson, we discover a disposition to indulge in tales of absurdity; ascribing to him a jingle of boyish rhymes at the age of three years, and leading readers to suppose him to have mounted his Pegasus before he was entirely out of the cradle. Little appears to have been known respecting his early childhood, and much less with regard to the progress he made in learning under his earliest teachers, both of which were perhaps of no consequence; stories of such strange precocity usually carry with themselves their own refutation. The earliest intelli-

gence upon which we may rely, informs us, that Johnson, while at the Litchfield school, had a standing scarcely respectable. The only talent by which he was then in any wise distinguished, was a remarkable tenacity of memory. This, it will be seen, was of the utmost importance to him. After a preparatory course in classical literature, we find him, at the age of nineteen, entered as a commoner in Pembroke College, Oxford, assisting the studies of a young gentleman, by whose aid he was maintained. The performance which first brought him into notice, was the translation of Pope's "Messiah" into Latin, which possessed no other poetical merit than purity of diction. Circumstances occurred, which deprived him of the only support upon which he relied; the gentleman under his charge changing his plan of education. After various discouragements, and embarrassments in his pecuniary resources, he was compelled to quit the university, where his residence, with little interruption, had been continued nearly three years. Having endeavored to obtain the means of living by assisting at a public school, in a short time he relinquished an employment, which yielded him little pleasure, and which became the more irksome from a disgust he had taken with the person by whom it was patronized. It was at this period, that a resort to his pen became necessary for the support of his life. A translation of a voyage to Abyssinia, by Jerome Lobo, a Portuguese missionary, it is believed, was the first literary effort by which he attempted to raise a revenue. In this production, Johnson discovers much of that purity and energy of diction, by which he was afterwards distinguished. An easy flow of language, with a strength of expression, gave a dignity to the translated author he did not naturally possess. The flexibility and harmony of the English tongue added an importance and interest to the performance, to which, for its subsequent reputation, it was much indebted.

In March, 1737, Johnson, in company with David Garrick, made his entry into London, each to try his fortune on the extensive theatre of the metropolis. The former, hitherto the child of disaster and disappointment, determined to enlarge the sphere in which to crowd his way; and both were equally undaunted by the failure of their schemes.

The biographers of Johnson are unable to fix with certainty the period at which the Tragedy of "Irene" was finished. Though there appears some evidence of its completion prior to his arrival in London, it was doomed, if written at that time, to slumber in obscurity, until the fortune and friendship of Garrick, who, in 1747, became one of the managers of Drury Lane Theatre, enabled him to produce it on the stage. With respect to the merits of this production, an observation which was judiciously applied to Addison's "Cato," may, with equal justice, be made: "It wants much of that contrivance and effect, which is best understood by those who are skilled in writing for the stage." It is, in a great measure, destitute of that style, and those incidents, which would render it interesting to an audience; and will much better delight a reader in the retirement of the closet, than the confused assemblage of the theatre. The language is dignified and forcible, and the sentiments worthy of its author. Literary men, who are pleased with "chill philosophy," and "unaffected elegance," will admire it; readers of taste will be delighted with the beauty of some of its sentiments, and many elegant passages which it contains, which will long preserve it from oblivion. Garrick, upon being asked why he did not produce another tragedy from his Litchfield friend, replied, "when Johnson writes tragedy, passion sleeps, and declamation roars." Johnson himself appears to have been in some degree sensible of the truth of such a remark, as this was his first and only attempt. Having had a run of thirteen nights, Irene was never after revived.

About the year 1738, we find him again invoking his muse, in an imitation of Juvenal's Third Satire, to which he gave the name of "London." It has been thought, that, under the name of Thales, he addresses his friend Savage, whose life he subsequently wrote, and with whom he had previously

passed many of his dissipated hours. Savage was a man of very great genius, but of an irregular and dissipated life, from the contamination of which, nothing but good principles, deep rooted which he had early imbibed, could have preserved the morals of Johnson.

If not among the most important of his efforts, this poem, and "The Vanity of Human Wishes," another similar to it, in imitation of the Tenth Satire of Juvenal, may be esteemed among his most happy attempts. The spirit and energy with which he wrote, fully equals the poignancy of the Roman satirist. Juvenal and Johnson were both engaged in the cause of virtue, and the poetic fire and sarcastic severity of the imitation is well worthy of the original. The lines of the English author flow with all that grace and dignity with which the Latin poet abounds. That he should have written with the same ardor and animation, is natural; and the accusatorial strain of invective in which he writes, does ample justice to the censorial department of the satirist. It is related that Mr. Pope, after reading his "London," observed, in allusion to the passage from Terence, which was once applied to Milton, "Ubi, ubi est, diu celari non potest," — a remark which proved truly prophetic.

It is a melancholy reflection, that the superior talents of this eminent writer, at the age of thirty, were scarcely able to provide him with an income adequate to his wants. Being bred to no profession, he was compelled to resort to his pen as a last resource. Many of his schemes in publication failed for want of encouragement, and others, in which he succeeded, proved of little benefit to him. We find some of his fugitive pieces at this time appearing in the "Gentleman's Magazine," and among them several very masterly touches in biographical delineation. In biography, Johnson peculiarly excelled. The "Lives of the Poets," which he at a much later period sent into the world, will remain a lasting monument of his genius, and critical sagacity. Few perhaps, more feelingly illustrated Juvenal's axiom,

"Haud facile emergunt, quorum virtutibus obstat
Res angusta domi."

But the independence of his spirit, and the native energy of his mind, rendered him little sensible to the sombre shades by which fortune had surrounded him.

His parliamentary speeches, which appeared about this time, are a model of purity of diction, copiousness of language, and flowing eloquence. In reflecting how scanty were the materials from which they were written, our surprise and admiration are equally excited. His biographers relate, that frequently he was only informed who were the speakers, the order in which they spoke, and the sides they took. At best, the notes which were procured were of but little use to him; and it is well known, he was but once in Parliament-house for this purpose. We are charmed with the dignity and energy which these speeches possess. Without disparagement, some of them may be compared to the ancient specimens of the Grecian and Roman orators. In force of style, harmony of diction, and copiousness of expression, they equal any instances of ancient or modern eloquence.

There is no view in which Johnson appears less advantageous than as a political writer. His warmest friends are ready to acknowledge, that his reputation would have suffered no loss, had he never meddled with politics. His arguments, indeed, were ingenious; but strong prejudices and partialities gave to his pen a direction which his understanding could not approve, and, in moments of cooler reflection, his conscience must have condemned. With the sentiments of a warm tory and rigid high-churchman, his character was frequently exposed to much severity of aspersion; but, possessed with the genius and reputation of the greatest scholar of his age, and the virtues of a man, over whom morality and religion had much influence, he might well defy the attacks of his enemies.

At about the age of forty, he commenced a work which added to his reputation, and gave him, with no inconsiderable degree of justice, the name of the English moralist.

With very little assistance, he completed, in a course of two years, the publication of the "Rambler," giving to the world, on stated days, two papers in a week. It appears, that, though those essays amounted to two hundred and eight, he received but ten numbers from the pens of his friends.

The disadvantages under which an author labors, in periodical publications, whose frequency leaves little time for the interruptions of recreation or necessity, he has most feelingly described. "He that condemns himself to compose on a stated day, will often bring to his task an attention dissipated, a memory embarrassed, an imagination overwhelmed, a mind distracted with anxieties, a body languishing with disease; he will labor on a barren topic till it is too late to change it; or, in the ardor of invention, diffuse his thoughts into wild exuberance, which the present hour cannot suffer judgment to examine or reduce."

For depth of moral reflection, the "Rambler" of Johnson must ever be preëminent. The ethics of the ancients are not stored with a more valuable mass of moral instruction; and in vain may we search for the principles of the purest philosophy, so beautifully blended with the loveliness of virtue. It was not probable that the frailties or peculiarities of mankind could escape his acute penetration, which was ever on the alert,

"To mark the age, shoot folly as it flies,
And catch the manners living as they rise."

From an early period, he had accustomed himself to a habit of close thinking. His active and vigorous mind always first matured what he had to advance, and his confidence in his assertions was owing to deductions which resulted from the deepest reasoning.

The moralizing "Rambler" is always dignified in his sentiments, logical in his inferences, and energetic in his style. Though many of his papers assume a gravity which forbids trifling, his remarks are sententious and forcible. They do not always partake of the sombre shades of melancholy, and seldom seem to participate of a cynical severity. The strain of morality which flows from his pen, discovers a mind at times under the influence of gloomy reflections, and inclined to indulge in the sober feelings of a man prone to look upon the darkest side. Instruction and sublimity may be found in his papers. The majority of mankind will admire them in the retirement of the closet, when the mind is inclined to serious advice; and the friends of virtue will ever rejoice that the great learning of the critic and scholar has so successfully labored in her service. The papers of the "Idler," and those of the "Adventurer," written by Johnson, exhibit the same powers of mind, and fewer of his peculiar faults.

As a Latin poet, he can only be ranked with other admired writers, who attempted metrical excellence in a language that allows no new expressions. The most successful writer can do no more than imitate the flowers which he has discovered on classic ground, and display to the world his acquaintance with its productions. He may heat his mind with the spirit with which the poets of antiquity have written. He may imitate a portion of their taste, and, as far as he is able, copy their style. His productions, in their language, will still fail of originality, and savor of imitation.

There can be little doubt but that the affair in which Johnson was connected with Lauder, was always to himself a source of regret. His integrity, it may safely be presumed, would have withholden him from giving countenance to an attempt to injure the reputation of the immortal Milton, had he been at first, as he afterwards was, convinced of the injustice of the cause in which he engaged. The recantation he extorted from the person

who had thus inveigled him into this infamous plan, made honorable amends to the injured character of the poet. That he had been made a dupe to the duplicity of the enemy of Milton, could, in his own feelings, be but little alleviated by an acknowledgment of his crime. As he harboured no malevolence of feeling towards this sublime writer, posterity have little of which to accuse him; as the best men may at times be deceived, especially when the influence of party feelings fosters their prejudices, and gives to the judgment, for a moment, a bias, which calm reflection, and dispassionate examination, afterwards perceives, acknowledges, and corrects.

His "English Dictionary" will long remain a lasting record of the powerful mind of Dr. Johnson. By it, he has fixed the standard of our language, and, with the most indefatigable labor and acuteness, given precision to the meaning of our words, which, hitherto, had been too much neglected by the lexicographers who preceded him. He has pruned of their excrescences the indeterminate signification of many terms, and placed in appropriate gradations the fluctuating import of many expressions. Until his time there had been no author upon whose judgment the world seemed implicitly to rely; and time has since proved, that the stupendous labor, and powerful talents of Johnson have left nothing for succeeding lexicographers to do in defining the English language.

His benevolent feelings often engaged him in the service of many for whom he had little friendship, and who could lay no claim to the assistance of his pen. The number of dedications, prologues, and recommendatory effusions which issued from it, in behalf of indigent merit, or unassuming modesty, at once illustrates the kindness of his heart, and the disinterestedness of his motives.

During a season, in which his mind was oppressed with the gloomy reflections of affliction, occasioned by the loss of his aged mother, to whom he was tenderly and affectionately attached, it is related, that he wrote his "Rasselas." This elegant specimen of Oriental imagery, we are told, was written during the evenings of a single week, to enable him to defray the funeral expenses of his deceased parent. Perhaps there is no prosaic effusion, in which the exuberance and harmony of our language has been more artfully combined, or more fully displayed. It is here that he discovers those surprising powers of imagination, which were the astonishment and admiration of mankind. Though the strain of moralizing reflection, which pervades the whole story, seems to partake of the gloomy shades which occasionally overshadowed his mind, it may yet be questioned, if the world will again soon be favored with a trifle, from any pen, in which it may be, at the same time, more delighted and improved.

In the poetry of Dr. Johnson, if we do not discover the harmony which delights a musical ear, we are fully compensated by an energy of expression, a lofty style, and a critical elegance of diction. The majesty of his numbers resembles the tones of a powerful instrument, not discordant by the strength of their parts. His versification cannot boast of an unbroken melody, but his measures flow like the slow and solemn progress of a mighty river, rather than like the graceful glidings of a shallow stream. If he does not possess the smoothness of poetical numbers, the ear is not fatigued by the sameness of his style; and we may continue to be delighted with the variety and dignity of his expressions, when we should be glad to be relieved from the monotonous harmony of poets of more musical ears.

Johnson had for some time been solicited by his bookseller to undertake the editorial department in a splendid edition of the British Poets. This was the last great effort of his mind. His reputation needed not, at this period, an accession to give permanency to his fame; yet another laurel was added to grace his brow.

This stupendous publication, which was to be comprised in seventy volumes, in the course of a few years was offered to the world, with the lives

of each author prefixed, containing critical observations on their writings. These prefaces were afterwards republished in four separate volumes, to which was given the title of Johnson's "Lives of the Poets." It is here that the philosophical talents of this great man were fully developed. If a vigorous understanding, a sound judgment, a scrutinizing penetration, comprehensive knowledge, and a discriminating sagacity, were qualifications for such an undertaking, it would have been difficult to discover an individual whose native energy of mind, and critical talents, more peculiarly fitted him than Johnson. He possessed the ability to discern, the judgment to commend, and the taste to admire the excellences of his authors, while, at the same time, he had the independence to condemn their failings, ever should his animadversions be in opposition to public opinion. The man who would singly dispute the admiration of his contemporaries, chooses for himself a hazardous undertaking. But the mind of Johnson did not deign to stoop to vulgar prejudices, and his nobleness of spirit spurned at opposing the dictates of truth and sound judgment, though error was popular in the best of company. When we compare the decision of his criticisms with the rules of taste, and the learned Institutes of Aristotle and Quintilian, we are irresistibly compelled to revere his opinions. The "Lives of the English Poets" may justly be considered as the noblest specimen of elegant and solid criticism which any age has produced. It is, however, a matter of surprise, that he should have included many in his list of English Poets, who are much less entitled to this distinction, than others, who are omitted. In all his work he gives no excuse for excluding the admired author of the Fairy Queen.

His enemies accuse him of writing, in his life of Milton, with a mind warped by unmanly prejudice, and mingling the feelings of party spirit and bigotry in his delineation of the poet. If he has not bestowed the just meed of panegyric as the biographer of Milton, all must allow that he has done him ample justice as his commentator. His criticism of "Paradise Lost" would have done honor to any pen. As that poem is a production which the genius of Milton only could have produced, so the criticism of Johnson is such as only Johnson could have written.

His "Life of Pope" is a masterly effort of acute judgment and critical skill. He was, perhaps, as justly able to estimate the genius and poetical talents of that English bard, as any man living. Friendship had induced him to write the "Life of Savage," which is prized as one of the finest pieces of biography now extant. His other lives more or less partake of the genius of a writer, who, for nervous elegance and justness of sentiment, has scarcely a competitor. His two prefaces, the one to his "English Dictionary," the other to an edition of Shakspeare, which was published under his superintendance, will long remain the astonishment and admiration of mankind. Few writers have obtained any approach to competition with these pieces. Though entirely different in their subject, the same closeness of thought, purity of diction, nervous strength, and dignity of style, in each are equally conspicuous. Never had an estimate of the genius and merits of Shakspeare been given to the world, to which it would have been safe to yield implicit credence. The truth was, no one had perfectly understood him. He threw light upon parts of his character, which had never before been exposed to view. Learned investigation enabled Johnson to see his author in an aspect which previous commentators had either never noticed, or never had the sagacity to discern. He compares his performances with the rules which the genius of antiquity had discovered and illustrated, and not with the prejudices of modern arrogance and imbecility. He gave the most exalted commendation to a mind, whose intuitive intelligence rendered the laborious acquirement of knowledge, and the culture of study, as but a secondary assistance to its operations; and, though mankind should place but little value upon his commentaries on the text, they may justly feel indebted for his development of the genius of Shakspeare. It is

not a matter of wonder, that the exquisitely beautiful preface to the edition of Shakspeare's plays, should lay claim to such superlative merit. Whether we regard the abundance and classical selection of its allusions, the accuracy and justice of the criticisms, or its just appreciation of the excellences and defects of the poet, it is equally the subject of admiration.

The literary character of Dr. Johnson, may, perhaps, receive illustration by examining his life, as well as by criticising his writings. That prejudice should have found no place in a mind of such astonishing energy, would seem as wonderful as it must have been rare. It would seem equally strange, if his antipathies were not sometimes manifested in the heat of passion, or in the ardor of debate. The Scotch and Dissenters, the scholars of Cambridge and the Whigs, were often mentioned with more acrimony than discretion. There was, perhaps, no man who more strenuously advocated the principles of subordination, and few who displayed them less in practice. The tempers of men are more under the influence of external circumstances than moral writers in general are disposed to allow. Dr Johnson too severely felt the weight of disappointment and penury in his early years. At a later period, he was gratified by applause and universal adulation. Can it be wonderful, then, that, with the strong feelings of vigorous passions, and the common failings of human nature, he should, at times, be carried away in conversation, and in hasty compositions, farther than his maturer judgment would sanction, or the better feelings of his heart approve. There were few men whose colloquial powers could give more delight to those around him, and scarcely another whose insulted feelings were more awfully dreaded. Though he might not pass for a scientific scholar, the world can have little reason to doubt the extent of his learning, or the unbounded range of his information. His desultory manner of reading made his knowledge more comprehensive than minute; and his quickness of perception gave him an astonishing facility in grasping the ideas of an author without tiring his patience by perusing a whole book. His extraordinary powers of understanding were much cultivated by study, and still more by reflection. The accuracy of his observations, and the justness of his remarks, were the result of mature deliberation and depth of meditation, before he uttered his sentiments; and his memory furnished him with an inexhaustible fund, from which his reasonings were assisted and enforced. The aptness of his illustrations was a strong evidence of the sagacity of his perceptions, and the soundness of his judgment. His observations received additional weight from the loudness of his voice, and the solemnity with which they were delivered. The sophistry of an antagonist always fell a prey to the piercing glance of his penetration; and he became the more elated by triumph when his opponents had been most decided. The great originality which appeared in his writings, resulted from an activity of mind, which habit had accustomed to reason with precision. His conceptions of things sprang not from idle thought or indolent reflection, but from the keen energies of a vigorous intellect, assisted by the efforts of a soaring imagination. His conversation was striking, interesting, and instructive, and required no exertion to be understood, from the perspicuity and force of his remarks; and his zeal for the interests of religion and virtue was often manifested in his discourse. He was expert at argumentation, and the schools of declamation could not boast of a more subtle reasoner, or a more artful sophist, when his side was a bad one; for he often disputed as much for the sake of victory as of truth. His answers were so powerful, that few dared to engage with him. Universal submission, it is likely, gave an apparent dogmatism which he otherwise might not have possessed. If there was an aspect of harsh severity in his retorts, it should be remembered, how frequently they were provoked by the insults of impertinence and the conceit of ignorance. The specious garb of dissimulation he despised. A noble spirit of independence actuated his demeanor. He did not violate the integrity of his feelings by stooping to gratify the pride of rank, when unaccompanied

by a superiority of intellect commensurate with its dignity. His utter abhorrence of flattery and adulation lost him that patronage of the great, which he otherwise might probably sooner have acquired; and he rose to eminence rather by the unassisted efforts of his own genius, than the encouragements of the rich and the learned. He was little indebted to the assistance of his friends for his great reputation. The irresistible energy of his character carried him through all his difficulties with an unbroken spirit, and an unblemished fame. If he paid not his court to the noble, it was not from disrespect to the subordinations of rank in society, but a dislike to the arts of dissimulation, and an aversion to the degradation of science at the shrine of patronage. His sarcastic letter to the Earl of Chesterfield is a noble specimen of his independence of spirit, and his contempt of the servile arts of adulation. It is a feeling exposition of the hardships he had endured, until royal munificence placed him beyond the boundaries of want, and smoothed his descent to the grave.

His knowledge of the Greek language, in comparison with his acquaintance with the Latin, was superficial. In his early years, he had devoted himself so closely to the study of the ancient poets, that it may be questioned, if his familiarity with them in his own times could find a superior. His decisive denunciations against the genuineness of Ossian's poems, created him many opponents, upon a subject, respecting which, "truth had never been established, or fallacy detected."

It is not a little strange, that, in many instances, the biographers of Johnson have appeared like enemies. It may, however, be observed, that few men could have stood the ordeal to which the minuteness of Boswell exposed him, with so much honor to the reputation of their heart and their head. This mighty Caliban of literature is here stripped of every disguise, and held up to public view. Though the world has been delighted and improved by the record of his conversation, in which his learning, his genius, and his undisguised sentiments have so conspicuously shone forth, it cannot but be allowed, that it is informed of much, which it was not important, and, perhaps, was not proper for it to know; and that the coloring which the painter has given to his portrait, will admit of many different shades, from which the partiality of friendship should have guarded his pencil. It is here, however, that we may trace the incredible vastness of an intellect, destined to become the glory of his country, and the pride of English literature.

We may contemplate the gigantic powers of Johnson's mind with feelings similar to those sublime emotions with which we view the boundless expanse of the ocean, fathomless to human measurement, and whose capacity exceeds our conception. In his writings appears more conspicuously than in his conversation the compass and extent of his understanding. His faculties were vigorous, his curiosity and avidity for knowledge insatiable and unlimited, his mind vehement and ardent, the combinations of his fancy various and original, and his imagination neither clouded or depressed by the discipline of study, or the misfortunes of life. His readers are delighted and astonished at the wonderful beauty of his conceptions, and the depth of reflection which his opinions discover. In his style he is dignified and forcible, in his language elegant and copious. He gives to every word its true meaning, and its illustrative purport. His epithets are used with judgment and discrimination. Every thing which he says has a determinate signification, and his words convey no more than the import of his conceptions. If he introduces hard words, their peculiar adaptation to his meaning should atone for his grandiloquism. It should also be remembered, that Cicero introduced Greek terms, when treating upon learned subjects, to supply the deficiency of the Roman language, and that the "great and comprehensive conceptions of Johnson could not easily be expressed by common words."

Should it be thought that the style of this learned author has injured our

language, he must have committed this injury by making it more subordinate to grammatical rules. Foreigners and future generations will be more capable of understanding it, since he has excluded expressions which are only to be found in colloquial intercourse and vulgar phraseology. From his example, men may learn to give to their style energy, perspicuity, and elegance. They may acquire a habit of close thinking, and become accustomed to express their ideas with force and precision.

His political writings will be read and admired only for the dignity and energy of their style. His compositions are a most valuable addition to the literature of his country, and will confer a lasting reputation on his name. They are replete with "useful instruction, and elegant entertainment," and by perusing them, mankind may advance in knowledge and virtue. The efforts of his mind discover a life of study and meditation. His writings display a genius cultivated with industry, and quickened by exertion. His multifarious productions are an honor to the English nation; and his answer to his sovereign might more fairly be allowed, "that he had written his share," if he had not written so well. His mind has been laid open to the public in his printed works, without "reservation or disguise;" and, with all his faults and failings, he is still the admiration of mankind.

XCVII.

ON THE COMPOSITION OF A SERMON.*

On the Choice of Texts.

There are, in general, five parts of a sermon: the exordium, the connexion, the division, the discussion, and the application; but as connexion and division are parts which ought to be extremely short, we can properly reckon only three parts: exordium, discussion, and application. However, we will just take notice of connexion and division after we have spoken a little on the choice of texts, and a few general rules of discussing them.

1. Never choose such texts as have not complete sense; for only impertinent and foolish people will attempt to preach from one or two words which signify nothing.

2. Not only words which have a complete sense of themselves must be taken, but they must also include the complete sense of the writer whose words they are; for it is his language, and they are his sentiments, which you explain. For example, should you take these words of 2 Cor. 1: 3. "Blessed be God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort," and stop here, you will include a complete sense; but it would not be the Apostle's sense. Should you go farther, and add, "who comforteth us in all our tribulation," it would not then be the complete sense of St. Paul, nor would his meaning be wholly taken in, unless you went to the end of the fourth verse. When the complete sense of the sacred writer is taken, you may stop; for there are few texts in Scripture, which do not afford matter sufficient for a sermon, and it is equally inconvenient to take too much text or too little; both extremes must be avoided.

* These directions and remarks are taken from Hannam's "Pulpit Assistant." The student will also find much aid from Gresley's "Treatise on Preaching."

General rules of sermons. 1. A sermon should clearly and purely explain a text, make the sense easily to be comprehended, and place things before the people's eyes, so that they may be understood without difficulty. This rule condemns embarrassment and obscurity, the most disagreeable thing in the world in a gospel pulpit. It ought to be remembered, that the greatest part of the hearers are simple people, whose profit, however, must be aimed at in preaching: but it is impossible to edify them, unless you be very clear. Bishop Burnett says, "a preacher is to fancy himself as in the room of the most unlearned man in the whole parish, and must therefore put such parts of his discourses as he would have all understand, in so plain a form of words, that it may not be beyond the meanest of them. This he will certainly study to do, if his desire be to edify them, rather than to make them admire himself as a learned and high spoken man."

2. A sermon must give the entire sense of the whole text, in order to which it must be considered in every view. This rule condemns dry and barren explications, wherein the preacher discovers neither study nor invention, and leaves unsaid a great number of beautiful things with which his text might have furnished him. In matters of religion and piety, not to edify much is to destroy much; and a sermon cold and poor will do more mischief in an hour, than a hundred rich sermons can do good.

3. The preacher must be wise, in opposition to those impertinent people who utter jests, comical comparisons, quirks, and extravagances; sober, in opposition to those rash spirits who would penetrate all, and curiously dive into mysteries beyond the bounds of modesty; chaste, in opposition to those bold and imprudent geniuses who are not ashamed of saying many things which produce unclean ideas in the mind.

4. A preacher must be simple and grave. Simple, speaking things of good natural sense, without metaphysical speculations; grave, because all sorts of vulgar and proverbial sayings ought to be avoided. The pulpit is the seat of good natural sense, and the good sense of good men.

5. The understanding must be informed, but in a manner, however which affects the heart; either to comfort the hearers, or to excite them to acts of piety, repentance, or holiness.

6. One of the most important precepts for the discussion of a text, and the composition of a sermon, is, above all things, to avoid excess:—

1. There must not be too much genius. I mean, not too many brilliant sparkling, and shining things: for they would produce very bad effects. The auditor will never fail to say, "The man preaches himself; aims to display his genius, and is not animated by the spirit of God, but by that of the world."

2. A Sermon must not be overcharged with doctrine, because the hearers' memories cannot retain it all; and by aiming to keep all, they will lose all. Take care, then, not to charge your sermon with too much matter.

3. Care must also be taken never to strain any particular part, either in attempting to exhaust it, or to penetrate too far into it. Frequently in attempting it, you will distil the subject till it evaporates.

4. Figures must not be overstrained. This is done by stretching metaphor into allegory, or by carrying a parallel too far. A metaphor is changed into an allegory when a number of things are heaped up, which agree to the subject in keeping close to the metaphor. Allegories may sometimes be used very agreeably: but they must not be strained: that is, all that can be said of them must not be said.

5. Reasoning must not be carried too far. This may be done many ways; either by long trains of reasons, composed of a number of propositions chained together, or principles and consequences, which way of reasoning is embarrassing and painful to the auditor. The mind of man loves to be conducted in a more smooth and easy way.

Of connexion. The connexion is the relation of your text to the foregoing or following verses. To find this, consider the scope of the discourse and consult commentators; particularly exercise your own good sense