THE

NEW RAMBLER

Journal of the Johnson Society of London

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CONTENTS

COMMEMORATIVE ADDRESS

Given in Westminster Abbey on 12th. December, 1964.

by Mrs. Michael Waterhouse.

My Friends,

We are met together this morning to do honour to the memory of Samuel Johnson.

Let us not think of him today as the great Philosopher. The side of his complex and far-ranging intellect and character on which I would like to dwell for a few minutes is his religion, and the power of prayer in his life. He was an intensely human man, subject to all the fears and failures of his fellow human beings, but clinging to, and always supported by, his faith in God and his deep-rooted religious feelings.

We know from his memoirs that his mind was turned towards religion by his mother from his earliest years; like so many other children he was regularly set to learn his collects and taken to church. As many a teen-ager his church-going lapsed for a few years. Boswell records him saying of himself: "Then I became a sort of lax talker against religion, for I did not much think against it; and this lasted till I went to Oxford, where it would not be suffered....." "I took up Law's Serious Call to a Holy Life, expecting to find it a dull book and perhaps to laugh at it. But I found Law quite an overmatch for me; this was the first occasion of my thinking in earnest of Religion."

This was an age that saw the Church of England at its lowest ebb and in its dreariest stage. An age in which almost all intellectuals openly scoffed and mocked at religion and Christianity, and the world at large followed their example. But Johnson's life and thoughts were deeply permeated by his religious convictions. A contemporary and firm friend of that ardent churchman Wesley, he was a sound member of the Church of England. He was a typical Englishman. Indeed, as G.M. Trevelyan says of him: "He was the most abnormally English creature that God ever created."

It is good for us to remember in this age, which in so many respects in its aspects toward religion resembles that period in the

18th. Century, how Johnson always strongly upheld the Christian faith and quickly quelled those who so often spoke disparagingly against it, or indeed against any faith. He never permitted any immorality or indecency of conversation in his presence, and was never afraid to confess the Christian faith or to uphold it. As he said in the Idler 1771: "Philosophy may infuse stubborness but Religion only can dispel it."

I expect you have been struck, as I have when studying his prayers and meditations, by the realisation that the Book of Common Prayer was always a model for his form of religious expression. Many of his prayers are in Collect form, and he himself said: "I know of no good prayers except those in the Book of Common Prayer."

His prayers and meditations, written at various times between the age of 29 and 75, were solely for his own private use, and were only published after his death when many of his friends were shocked by the publicity given to them.

Prayer was to him a form of self-expression in which we are admitted to the innermost sanctuary of his soul and are able to realise some of the torments of fear and doubt and conscience that beset him. Such as that written on Easter day 1777 in which he says: "I hope for more efficacy of resolution and more diligence of endeavour. When I survey my past life, I discover nothing but a barren waste of time, with some disorders of body and disturbance of mind very near to madness, which I hope that He that made me will suffer to extenuate many faults, and excuse many difficulties. Yet much remains to be repented and reformed."

Or there is the occasion when he awoke after a slight stroke in 1783, described by him in a letter to Mrs. Thrale: "I went to bed, and in a short time waked and sat up as has long been my custom, when I felt a confusion and indistinctness in my head which lasted, I suppose about half a minute; I was alarmed and prayed to God that however he might afflict my body he would spare my understanding This prayer, that I might try the integrity of my faculties, I made in Latin verse. The lines I knew were not very good, but I knew them not to be very good, I made them easily and concluded myself to be unimpaired in my faculties."

At the very end Johnson's last days were serene and peaceful despite

the horror of death that had beset him all his life. Boswell tells us that, amid all the sufferings of his last illness, that gentleness of character which had often surprised many who had known him well, now became more marked than ever, and for several days before the end the old spectres of fear and gloom which had for long dogged his life were altogether and finally exorcised. His temper became unusually patient and gentle; he ceased to think with terror of death and what lies beyond it, and he spoke much of the mercy of God and the propitiation of Christ. In this serene frame of mind he died.

Bunyan's Mr. Fearing had a Slough of Dispond in his mind, a Slough that he carried everywhere with him. ....."When we came to the Hill Difficulty he made no stick at that, nor did he much fear the Lions. For you must know that his trouble was not about such things as these, his fear was about Acceptance at the last. But when he came to the River where was no Bridge, there again he was in a heavy case; now he said he should be drowned for ever and so never see that Face with Comfort that he had come so many miles to behold. And here also I took notice of what was very remarkable, for the water of that River was lower this time than ever I saw it in all my life, so he went over at the last not much above wet shod."

For many years this Society has been greatly indebted to its Vice-President, Professor James Clifford of Columbia University, N.Y., for the steady support which he gives to the Johnson Society of London; many of our discussions have enhanced value owing to the contributions made to them by academic visitors from the United States, who have been directed to our meetings by Professor Clifford. Nothing can add to his international standing but our readers will be pleased to know that, in addition to the appointments which he already holds in Columbia University, he has recently been appointed to the W.P. Trent Chair of English at Columbia.

In making this acknowledgment it is only right that we should also pay tribute to two of our other Vice-Presidents, Dr. Powell, of the University of Oxford and Sir Sydney Roberts of the University of Cambridge, who also give us valuable support in this way.

JOHNSON'S FRIEND BARETTI

by

F.W.M. Draper, Esq., Ph.D., L ès L F.S.A.

This is the story of a proud and able man, perhaps not very well educated, save by himself, violent and suspicious, overbearing and tactless, whose pride was outraged by his poverty, who arrived here as a stranger, was received as an intellectual equal by some of the best brains in London, made many friendships and some bitter enmities, and came to regard England as his native country. Giuseppe Marc' Antonio Baretti was born at Turin in 1719 and died in 1789. Destined for the priesthood and then for architecture, he eventually became a merchant's clerk, but left home on his father's marriage to a young dancer and began to devote himself to literature. He worked diligently at this until 1750, when he became involved in a dispute with a Professor at the University of Turin and saw vanish all chance of public employment for which he had hoped. However he received the offer of an engagement at the Italian Opera House in London and left for England in 1751.

It is uncertain whether he took up any appointment at the Opera House but he certainly started to teach Italian soon after his arrival in England. Boswell describes him as "an Italian of considerable literature who ---- had been employed in the capacity both of a language master and an author." In 1753 he was introduced to Johnson by Charlotte Lennox, who was one of his pupils. Johnson in turn brought Baretti to the Thrales, a connection destined to afford him for several years much material comfort, and eventually much unhappiness. In 1788 he wrote that he could not easily have met with a worse misfortune than Mrs. Thrale's acquaintance. I suppose it is not to be expected that he would admit his own responsibility for any part of the dislike or even hatred that grew up between them.

Baretti never regretted his decision to settle in this country. Langton told Boswell on Johnson's authority that Baretti had read a paper in the Spectator "and observing the genius and energy of mind that it exhibits, it greatly quickened his curiosity to visit our country; as he thought if such were the lighter periodical essays of our authors, their production on more weighty occasions must be wonderful indeed." His

residence here, even after the shattering experience of his trial, not only confirmed this preconceived estimate of our literary standards, but established in his mind a love for the English way of life that endured until his death. Boswell writes that he soon formed an intimacy with Johnson. The letter to Lord Chesterfield was written in 1755 and that in later years Johnson found a copy which he had dictated to Baretti. Two days after the letter was written Johnson asked Thomas Warton, Professor of Poetry at Oxford, for an Italian book needed for work which Baretti was doing; in 1758 when Baretti visited Oxford Johnson described him to Warton as "a gentleman particularly entitled to the notice and kindness of a Professor of Poesy." Baretti was engaged at this time on his Italian Dictionary, which published in 1760, with an introduction by Johnson, made him a great reputation and passed into several editions.

In 1760 Baretti made up his mind to return to Italy. He travelled by way of Portugal, Spain and the South of France, taking with him Edward Southwell, to whom he acted as cicerone. On the eve of his departure Johnson had advised him to write an account of his travels and to this suggestion we owe the charming "Journey from London to Genoa," published by Tom Davies in 1770. In one of the letters written to him in Italy Johnson takes the opportunity of reminding him that "his friends here expect such a book of travels as has not often been seen" and the book did not disappoint his mentor, for it ran through three editions in the year of its publication. Baretti's stay in Italy was not a happy one; he became embroiled with one literary adversary after another. Johnson's letter of July 20th. 1762, speaks of his quarrel with an Abbott of the Celestine order. He was tactless and aggresive and the publication of a periodical called La Frustra Letteraria (the literary scourge) in which he lashed at the many bad books of the day, brought him many enemies. In a letter of 1768 printed among the correspondence of David Garrick Dr. Samuel Sharpe, with whom Baretti was to cross swords later, wrote very bluntly: "If you wish to expose Baretti to your Italian friends, borrow of Mr. Garrick his Frustra Letteraria, where he has treated his countrymen and countrywomen with such outrageous satire and insolence, as it not to be paralleled in any other book."

Literary quarrels were not the whole of Baretti's difficulties in Italy. He was very poor. The proceeds of his writings were not sufficient to provide a livelihood and he was compelled to borrow money from his brothers.

But in England he had a host of friends, he appreciated the English way of life, and in the unhappiness which ill-health and unpopularity brought him he decided to return to this country, which he reached in the autumn of 1766. His English friends were delighted to see Baretti settled down to literary pursuits, publishing an Account of the Manners and Customs of Italy, which brought him £200 and election to the Society of Antiquaries.

I suppose that the best known fact about Baretti is that he was tried for murder. I will therefore pass over the events of the next three years and proceed directly to an account of the proceedings. His case rested on a plea of self-defence, but an acquittal was by no means a foregone conclusion. What turned the scale was the inconsistency of the evidence for the prosecution and mustering in court of a number of distinguished men to attest his good character. Baretti was not only hot-blooded and violent, he was also afflicted with bad sight. In addition Johnson thought him timid and it seems that all these characteristics had their importance in the affair.

The facts are that on October 6th. 1769, Baretti was accosted in the Haymarket by a lady of the town. He resented her actions and words and hit her in the face. He was then struck and jostled by her bullies. He took to his heels and, drawing a little knife, swung it as he ran. In so doing he killed one assailant and wounded another. A great crowd collected, he gave himself up to a constable who kept a shop in Panton Street, and was committed by Sir John Fielding to Tothill Fields prison. After a coroner's inquest lasting two days Baretti was admitted to bail and was charged at the Old Bailey with the wilful murder of Evan Morgan, or alternatively with manslaughter. And now this foreigner, who in his own country had made so many enemies, discovered that in England he had friends willing to speed to his aid in time of need. These men not only came to court to testify on his behalf, they were at pains to plan his defence, for we hear from Boswell of a meeting in Chancery Lane, in the chambers of Mr. Cox the solicitor, which Steevens, Burke, Johnson and others attended. The trial took place on October 23rd. 1769, and, as a foreigner, Baretti had the right to be tried by a half-foreign jury. This privilege he refused. An account of the proceedings can be found in the Sessional Reports, a copy of which is preserved at the Guildhall Library.

The woman, whose name was Elizabeth Ward, gave evidence as follows.

"I was in the Haymarket on the 6th. of October, and between nine and ten in the evening. There was another woman with me, whom I never saw before. She sat upon a step of a door, and I sat down by her. As this gentleman went past, the other girl asked him to give her a glass of wine ... He went a little further on, and then turned back and struck me a great blow on the side of my face."

Q. - "What was you doing?"

E. Ward. - "I was looking at the girl, and he came unawares to me. When I screamed out, three young men came to him: they asked him how he could strike a woman."

Q. - "Did you not say something about your patten?"

E. Ward. - "Upon my word I did not, nor did I hear it mentioned."

Q. - "Did you not say he ought to be clove down with a patten?"

E. Ward - "No, I did not."

Q. - "Did you hear the young men say so?"

E. Ward - "I did not. One of them asked him how he could strike a woman, and they shoved one another against him, and shoved him off the pavement."

Q. - "Whereabouts was this?"

E. Ward. - "This was at the corner of Panton Street. They shoved him off into the Haymarket, into where the coaches go. Then he drawed his knife out of the case and held it in his hand."

After the stabbing Evan Morgan was carried to the Middlesex Hospital while a messenger was sent to the Royal Academicians' club in Gerrard Street. After a time he returned with Sir Joshua Reynolds and others to the constable's shop in Panton Street where Baretti was detained.

In a long written statement Baretti shows what a panic had seized him. "A great number of people surrounded me presently, many beating me, and all damning me in a most frightful manner. I was a Frenchman in their opinion, which made me apprehensive I must expect no favour nor protection, but only outrage and blows. There is generally a great puddle at the corner of Panton Street, even when the weather is fine ... I was in the greatest horror lest I should run against some stones, as I have such bad eyes ... I gave a quick blow to one who beat off my hat with his fist ... I hope it will be seen, that my knife was neither a weapon of offence or defence: I wear it to carve fruit and sweetmeats, and not to kill my fellow creatures. It is a general custom in France, not to put knives on the table, so that even ladies wear them in their pockets for general use ..."

Baretti's bail had been Burke, Garrick, Sir Joshua Reynolds and Fitzherbert, and now, in Boswell's words, "never did such a constellation enlighten the awful Sessions-House, emphatically called Justice-Hall; Mr. Burke, Mr. Garrick, Mr. Beauclerk, and Dr. Johnson." It is hard to understand why Boswell omitted the testimony of Sir Joshua and Goldsmith. He must certainly have been present at the trial, for he discussed it the previous evening at Johnson's house. The conversation had turned on human feeling for the distresses of others and Johnson had said that Providence allows us a certain degree of sympathy and no more. "But suppose now, Sir", said Boswell, "that one of your intimate friends were apprehended for an offence for which he might be hanged."

Johnson: "I should do what I could to bail him, and give him any other assistance; but if he were once fairly hanged, I should not suffer."

Boswell: "Would you eat your dinner that day, Sir?"

Johnson: "Yes, Sir; and eat it as if he were eating with me. Why, there's Baretti, who is to be tried for his life tomorrow, friends have risen up for him on every side; yet if he should be hanged, none of them will eat a slice of plum-pudding the less."

Boswell went on to speak of a letter of Tom Davies, telling Foote that "he had not been able to sleep, from the concern he felt on account of 'This sad affair of Baretti', begging him to try if he could suggest anything that might be of service; and, at the same time, recommending to him an industrious young man who kept a pickleshop."

Johnson: "Ay, Sir, here you have a specimen of human sympathy; a friend hanged, and a cucumber pickled. We know not whether Baretti or the pickle-man has kept Davies from sleep: nor does he know himself."

But next day there was no dialectic or sophistry about Johnson's performance in court. A friend was in danger and he put forth his strength. Boswell says that he "gave his evidence in a slow, deliberate, and distinct manner, which was uncommonly impressive." But what an unfair account of Baretti's act does Boswell give! Johnson, he says, "appeared for the only time I suppose in his life as a witness in a Court of Justice, being called to give evidence to the character of Mr. Baretti, who having stabbed a man in the street, was arraigned at the Old Bailey for murder." "Stabbed a man in the street " What a wrong impression

one gets of the incident! The mutual dislike of the two men, to which I shall refer again, is sharply etched by Boswell's wilfully mischosen language. I will give Johnson's evidence in full.

Dr. Johnson: "I believe I began to be acquainted with Mr. Baretti about the year '53 or '54. I have been intimate with him. He is a man of literature, a very studious man, a man of great diligence. He gets his living by study. I have no reason to think he was ever disordered with liquor in his life. A man that I never knew to be otherwise than peaceable, and a man that I take to be rather timorous."

Qu. "Was he addicted to pick up women in the street?"
Dr.J. "I never knew that he was."
Qu. "How is he as to eyesight?"
Dr.J. "He does not see me now, nor do I see him. I do not believe he could be capable of assaulting anybody in the street without great provocation." After the trial Baretti wrote to Charlemont, "Those I had about me did their part so well that they have made me an Englishman for ever."

In the year after his acquittal Baretti made up his mind to visit Italy again and writing from Genoa in 1770 he states "My constant love waits on Mrs. Garrick, Johnson, the Burkes, the Reynoldses, et cetera." With so many friends it is certainly remarkable that he was never nominated for membership of the Club. Baretti returned to London toward the end of 1771, he was now 52. The exact date of his introduction to the Thrales is not known. Dr. Campbell met him at their dinner table in March, 1775, but Baretti was installed at Streatham well before this date and had been teaching Italian to Queeney Thrale since 1773. In the Queeney Letters Lord Landsdown prints a charming document which he calls Queeney's covenant. "I do seriously and solemnly promise, that from tomorrow forwards I will come down every day (Sundays excepted) at nine o'clock in the morning to Mr. Baretti and read or write whatever Italian he shall bid me during a full hour, but no more. Then to come again at three o'clock and do the same for another hour, and no more. And I promise further, that whether I am in good humour or out of humour, I will be ernest and very attentive to my lesson, as if I were in the very best humour, nor will I look about me with a vacant and weary countenance, so that the said Mr. Baretti (alias taskmaster) shall have no reason, no, not the least shadow of a reason to complain of my disattention, unwillingness, and reluctance. And I

promise all the above under my hand and seal.

Hester Maria Thrale

Witnesses by Sam: Johnson LL.D.

Hester Lynch Thrale."

Queeney was ten years old when she subscribed to this document. When Thrale built the new library at Streatham and hung up over the books the portrait of his favourite friends, it was Reynolds who painted them all. Baretti's portrait, painted in 1774, is among them. It represents him sitting in a high backed leather chair holding a book close to his face, for it will be remembered that he was as short-sighted as Johnson, whom Reynolds portrayed in the same attitude. Reynold's art focusses our attention on Baretti's head; it is overbearing, proud, humourless, big-featured face with a nascent second chin. The great nose and the dark heavy, arched eyebrows and full lips are not incompatible with the tales of sarcasm, haughtiness and intolerance related by Mrs. Thrale. It is sad to relate that on July 6th. 1776 Baretti quitted Streatham without saying farewell to anyone. On this day Mrs. Thrale wrote in her diary, "This day is made remarkable by the departure of Mr. Baretti, who has since October, 1773 been our almost constant inmate, companion, and, I vainly hoped our friend. On November 11th. 1773, Mr. Thrale let him have £50. and at our return from France £50. more, besides his clothes and pocket money: in return to all this, he instructed our eldest daughter .... at the beginning of the year 1776, we proposed visiting Italy under his conduct, but were prevented by an unfortunate and unforseen calamity: that Baretti, however, might not be disappointed of money as well as of pleasure, Mr. Thrale presented him with 100 guineas "

Towards the end of his life he had financial worries, in particular that caused by the irregular payment of his pension. He suffered from an internal complaintfrom which he died on May 6th. 1789, at his house in Edward Street, Cavendish Square, part of what is now Wigmore Street He was buried in Marylebone Cemetery, which lies between Marylebone High Street and Baker Street. This Cemetery has now been converted into a public park, round the boundary wall of which the old tombstones have been ranged. Among them may stand the last memorial to Baretti, but the stones are so defaced that it is impossible to tell. In the burial register of Old Marylebone Parish Church he is described by English christian names, with his first name last, "Mark Antony Joseph Baretti."

THE JOHNSON CLUB

At present two Societies meet regularly in London, England, to honour the memory of Samuel Johnson. Our own Johnson Society of London, the third Saturday in the month, from October until April; and The Johnson Club, which holds its initial meeting in Johnson's House in Gough Square and then adjourns to Fleet Street, where a dinner is served. At the meetings of both these groups a paper is read. Through the kindness of Mr. G.F.C. Bryant the Editor has had access to a volume of the papers read before the Johnson Club in 1899. The volume with its information and illustrations is most interesting. It is also of value to consider some of the views expressed about Johnson by those who wrote in the closing years of the Victorian era. The book is published by T. Fisher Unwin of London and from it our annotations are taken. From the Preface we learn that the Johnson Club was founded at the old Cock Tavern, in Fleet Street, on December 13th. 1884, exactly one hundred years after the death of Dr. Johnson. The Founder Member of the Club and its first Prior was Mr. T. Fisher Unwin; among the early Priors were F. Carruthers Gould in 1890. Dr. Birkbeck Hill in 1891 and 1892, and Mr. Augustine Birrell in 1895.

The book is illustrated by charming drawings. Two of them show the old doorway and sign of the Cock Tavern in Fleet Street and another is a drawing of the original fireplace in the room where the meetings were held. The legend tells us that this building has now been demolished and the Fleet Street Branch of the Bank of England built on the site. Another illustration shows Johnson's lodging in the Temple, with the old paved walk of Inner Temple Lane and figures of people in the costume of the eighteenth century; this leads to Fountain Court which is now so greatly altered by new buildings. The drawing of Johnson's House in Gough Square, with an inset showing the oak staircase, makes one realise how little the Square has altered in spite of the new buildings which now surround it, a carpenter with his square cap and apron is shown in the drawing. Yet another drawing shows what the legend says are the arms of the Johnson Club; it depicts a large platter as background, and in front of it the two volumes of the Dictionary, a pint pot, with a retractable lid, and beneath them a long clay pipe. The legend below the picture is a saying of Johnson's, "I look upon it that he who does not mind his belly will hardly mind anything else."

In his preface to the Clarenden Press, Powell-Hill edition of Boswell's Life of Johnson, Dr. Powell pays generous tribute to the work of his predecessor. In this volume Dr. Birkbeck Hill gives an account of Boswell's proof sheets. He tells us that they were bought by Mr. R.B. Adam who lived at Buffalo, N.Y. on the shores of Lake Erie and within sound of the roar of the waters of Niagara. In 1893 he lent these papers to Dr. Birkbeck Hill who spent three months examining them in the pleasant village of Barnstaple, looking out over the blue waters of Massachusetts Bay. He found that Boswell wrote in a large clear hand, which was easy to read. Dr. Hill records this rather interesting occurrence. There was an old gentleman of the village who, eighty years before, when sailing with his father in the Cape Cod and Boston packet, had been captured by an English frigate. Dr. Hill observes, I wish that he had chanced to drop in when I had the proofs open at the passage where Johnson, breathing out threatening and slaughter against the Americans roared out a tremendous volley which one might fancy could be heard across the Atlantic. We are told that Boswell's decendants, Sir Alexander Boswell and his daughter, Mrs. Vassall, both showed a contemptuous ignorance of their great ancestor, James Boswell. Dr. Hill tells us that the sheets which he examined were a revise and not the first proof sheets. The date of publication of the book was May 16th. 1790, twenty years after the death of Johnson.

Some interesting insight into the use of the Dictionary and the philological outlook are seen in the following quotation. The Reader sometimes suggests a doubt or a correction. He does not like the repetition where Johnson says, We may be excused for not caring much about other peoples children, for there are many who care very little about their own children, he would strike out the last word. Boswell replies, "The repetition is the Johnsonian mode." Miss Hawkins, in her memoirs mentions this "Johnsonian mode." In this way, she writes, I heard him take the part of Sir Matthew Hale, saying, "If Hale had anything to say let Hale say it." The proof reader queried senility. A good word, Boswell replied, it is not however in Johnson's Dictionary. Aversion from entails was objected to. Boswell would not admit the objection. It is, he wrote, right as in Johnson's letter. Averse from is legitimate language. In his Dictionary Johnson says that averse to is very frequently but improperly used. The marginal notes on the proof sheets show that Boswell was prejudiced against individuals; when he omitted names it was often possible to realise from the asterisks how many letters there were in the name, and hence to deduce the name of

the author who is being quoted. The following is an illuminating note regarding Johnson's habits. In the descriptions of Johnson there are two curious suppressions. Garrick, Boswell writes, sometimes used to take him off, squeezing a lemon into a punch bowl, with uncouth gesticulations, looking round the company and calling out, "Who's for poonsh" Boswell added in the margin, and hands not over clean. He must have been a stout man says Garrick, who would have been for it. The Reader queried, Should not this have been omitted? The suggestion was taken, and the addition was scored through. In an account of Johnson with which Boswell was favoured by one of his friends after the words, powerful mind, the following paragraph came in the proof: He valued himself a good deal on being able to do everything for himself. He visited without a servant when he went to stay at the houses of his friends, and found few or no occasions to employ the servants belonging to the family, he knew how to mend his own stockings, to darn his linen, or to sew a button on his cloaths. Johnson would often say, I am not a helpless man.--- Johnson generally took his man with him, the negro Frank Barber, but in his visit to Heale he had left him at home. That he gave but little trouble to servants we know from Mrs. Piozzi, who said that he required less attendance, sick or well, than ever I saw any human creature. That to some extent he could use a needle is shown by the books which he bound in his old age. The art he had acquired in his father's shop.

Dr. Birkbeck Hill writes of the Boswell Centenary as follows: One hundred and thirty years ago, in this very month of May, a young Scottish gentleman had the impudence to publish to the world the letters which passed between himself and a friend. In one of them, written when he was but twenty one, he said: I am thinking of the perfect knowledge which I shall acquire of men and manners, of the intimacies which I shall form with the learned and ingenious, and he not only picked up many amusing literary anecdotes, but he interwove them into a book which is unsurpassed in its kind in any language, and which is read again and again with never failing pleasure by all classes of men wherever the English tongue is spoken. Writing of Boswell's account of his travels in Corsica, Dr. Hill makes these observations: On his return he published a journal which might well be a model to all travellers. It tells all that is needful to be told, and it is so brief that it can easily be read at a sitting. There is no word painting in it. That oppressive art had not been invented. Boswell happily knew the exact limits of his literary powers. He found, he confesses, a great difficulty in describing

visible objects, and so he left them undescribed. Johnson pronounced his book in a very high degree curious and delightful. It moved Gray strangely, though he uttered about it that ridiculous paradox which Macaulay, nearly seventy years later, worked into a long and splendid passage of extravagant rhetoric. It proves, said the poet, that any fool may write a most valuable book by chance, if he will only tell us what he heard and saw with veracity. If Gray had lived out his full share of life and had read the Journal of a Tour to the Hebridies and The Life of Johnson, he would, we may hope, have admitted that it was no chance that in these books produced such perfect success. He, at all events, who had had the courage to suppress more than one exquisite stanza in his Elegy, knew that the perfection of a work is attained scarcely less by what an author leaves out than by what he puts in. There are, perhaps, no books of the same length as Boswell's, two Journals and his life of Johnson' in which we wish for so few omissions. Great as was his vanity, he seldom let it mar his writings When he displays it very often and very openly, he never wearies his reader. Almost always it is connected with the main thread of his narrative It was with some reason that in his moments of self complacency it seemed to him that his Life of Johnson was in one respect like the Odyssey amidst a thousand entertaining and instructive episodes the hero is never long out of sight; for they are all in some degree connected with him Dr Birkbeck Hill that Goldsmith, whose failings were almost as great and as ridiculous as Boswell's, like all real humourists, was himself aware of them. In his writings he laughs at them and at himself, sometimes disguising himself under the Vicar of Wakefield and his two sons, sometimes under the Man in Black in the Citizen of the World. In private life these failings were a constant source of vexation to him, while they often exposed him to unveiled contempt of his company. He wrote then awkwardly; like his clothes, they never fitted him. Boswell managed his far better. Over Goldsmith's clumsy vanity and his jealous irritability we all grieve; Boswell we would no more have changed than Falstaff. He likes praise, he likes to be talked about, he likes to know great people, and he no more cares to conceal his likings than Sancho Panza cared to conceal his appetite. He is entirely free from hypocrisy.

Mr. H.W. Massingham, who was a well known journalist in his day, contributes a paper on "Some Johnson Characteristics." He writes Here is a piece of work of Johnson's which, in addition to being one of the most impressive combinations of satire and argument in the English language, fully explains his moral outlook. Soame Jenkins, outvying

Pope, had written a jaunty tract on the origin of evil, which treated poverty and all the ills of life as proper and not unpleasing accidents in the general scheme, especially designed to bring out the goodness of the Creator and the virtues of his creatures. Partial evil was universal good, and so on. Johnson would have none of this. Poverty and crime were not things to be laid with rose water. Life said Johnson must be seen before it can be known--- Johnson has been called the last of the Tories; but he really was a Gallio caring for none of these things, and saying generally that he would not give half a guinea to live under one form of government more than another. Johnson was a confirmed individualist. --- Politics to him were a mere game of the ins and outs, in which no sensible man, with books and good talk, and friends at his club, would dream of taking a hand. The Whigs he hated, for he thought they were opposed to all order, and theories of equality and natural rights were his bêtes noires.--- Johnson's sturdy sense was right, more especially as, having the root of the matter in him, he saw that the end of government was not, as the cant of the Whigs went, the establishment of any fanciful system of political balance, but the social well being of the whole people. What a wise saying is this, for instance: A decent provision for the poor is the true test of civilization. Gentlemen of education were pretty much the same in all countries; the condition of the lower orders, the poor especially, was the true mark of national discrimination. Humanitarian as he was, he would not overstate his case. Marriages made in heaven? Nonsense! the Lord Chancellor might make them all, and no one would be a penny the worse.

One would have thought that this touchstone of commonsense applied to literature would have produced splendid results. So in a sense it did. Johnson has contributed many imperishable sayings to the English language. Unfortunately, in literary letters he had a divided life. Macaulay has exaggerated the contrast between Johnson talking at his ease in the Club or at Mrs. Thrale's tea table, and Dr. Johnson penning Ramblers in his study. Still there is a difference. Talk was to the Doctor the wine of life; it stirred his pulses, quickened his powerful but rather sluggish intellect, brought out his humour, drove off his besetting melancholy. Alone in Bolt Court, with blue devils, his pen lagged, and he produced, with some profoundly interesting work, a good deal of lumber. Another comment by Mr. Massingham on the duration of the work of critics deserves consideration. As a critic Johnson is excellent, intelligent, shrewd, knowing, and his worth may be gauged by comparing it with his, and even with the critical school of the earlier years of the nineteenth century; He has been abused for his mistakes. What critic is without

them? What about the Edinburgh reviewers? How many of Francis Jeffrey's literary verdicts remain? I was reading an article the other day to show that not one was worth the paper it was written on. What will Carlyle's historical criticism be worth fifty years hence? What are Mr. Froude's worth now? And finally from this paper there is an interesting note on Johnson's affection for Streatham. An occasion inspiring the deep personal sorrow that the severing of old ties always awoke in him, was the leave taking of the house at Streatham, which, after Mrs. Thrale's second Marriage, was no longer a home for him, and of the Church where he had worshipped for so many years, he said pathetically Templum valedixi cum osculo. How deep a meaning is to be attached to the translation of this Latin Sentence.

Johnson writing on gardens observes, "The work of a correct and regular writer is a garden accurately formed and diligently planted, varied with shades and planted with flowers; the composition of Shakespeare is a forest, in which oaks extend their branches, and pines tower in the air, interspersed sometimes with weeds and brambles, and sometimes giving shelter to myrtles and to roses; filling the eye with awful pomp, and gratifying the mind with endless diversity. Other poets display cabinets of precious rarities, minutely finished, wrought into shape, and polished into brightness. Shakespeare opens a mine which contains gold and diamonds in inexhaustible plenty, though clouded with incrustations, debased by impurities, and mingled with a mass of meaner minerals.

Samuel Johnson writing to James Boswell, on a retreat in which to relax suggests, "You have done right in taking your uncle's house. Some change in the form of life, gives from time to time a new epoch of existence. In a new place there is something new to be done, and a different system of thoughts rises in the mind. I wish I could gather currants in your garden. Now fit up a little study, and have your books ready to hand; do not spare a little money, to make your habitation pleasing to yourself.

We have received the first issue of the News Letter of the Johnson Society of the Great Lakes Region. The Society is established for the consideration of British and Colonial Literature from 1660-1798.

DR. JOHNSON'S SUMMERHOUSE

When the Thrale's house in Streatham was demolished the Summerhouse in which Samuel Johnson sat and talked and worked was bought by Mr. Alfred Page, a Chartered Accountant, who removed it to the garden of his house in Knockholt. This house has now been demolished but fortunately the Summerhouse has been purchased by the L.C.C. and restored to its former neighbourhood. We are indebted to Mr. A.J. Pyatt for the following interesting note, which appeared in the issue of The Times on Tuesday, September 15th. 1964; we also have to thank The Times Publishing Company Limited for permission to republish Mr. Pyatt's article.

DR. JOHNSON'S SUMMER HOUSE RETURNS

From A Correspondent

On a recent Sunday morning stroll, carefully timed to finish at the Pied Bull precisely at opening time, I walked across Streatham common and having a few minutes to spare looked in at the Rookery, a pleasant little park adjoining the common and famed locally for its sunken flower garden, a mass of colour at this time of the year. To my surprise and curiosity an old summer house had been erected on the lawn by the flower garden. It had certainly not been there the previous week.

It was very old, no doubt about that, and as I stood looking at it a park keeper came along and when I asked him where the summer house came from he told me gloomily that a gang of men from the L.C.C. brought it along in a lorry, unloaded the venerable relic and made a fine old mess of his cherished lawn.

Upon further prodding he recollected that the summer house came from an old house at Streatham, pulled down many years ago. The thought came to me that the old house might have been Streatham Place, the home of Mr. Thrale, the wealthy brewer and patron of Samuel Johnson, so the next day I rang up the Parks Department of the L.C.C and immediately struck oil.

Yes, they told me, the summer house came from Streatham Place and was associated with Johnson. Further investigations provided me with the complete story of the old summer house.

FAMOUS GUEST

Dr. Johnson spent the happiest years of his life at Streatham Place, a fine 100-acre estate situated at the Streatham end of Tooting Bec common. The grounds contained a circular gravel walk, a shrubbery, a lake with a drawbridge, a fine lawn and a splendid vegetable garden, the site of which is covered today by Thrale Road.

Over a period of some sixteen years the complacent Mr. Thrale and his sharp-tongued young wife, Hester, patiently endured the uncouth habits and, at times, intolerable rudeness of their famous guest.

Johnson was particularly fond of the summer house and it is believed that in it he wrote part of The Lives of the Poets and sat for the fine portrait by Reynolds.

When Streatham Place was demolished in 1863, just 100 years after Mr. Thrale took his young bride there, the summer house was removed to Ash Grove at Knockholt, in Kent. This old house recently shared the same fate and the summer house was presented to the L.C.C. and after necessary repairs had been carried out by the Parks Department, at a cost of some £400, it was re-erected in the Rookery a short while ago.

The summer house is a good example of eighteenth-century rustic work and is constructed of split logs with a conical roof, shortly to be rethatched. A low seat runs right round the interior, capable of seating 10 or a dozen people. It is well sited against a background of fine old trees, just under a mile from its original home.

GUSTS OF LAUGHTER

If it could speak, what tales the old summer house could tell of Johnson and his friends who came to visit him at Streatham. Goldsmith, Burke, Garrick, Reynolds, Burney and Boswell must have known it well. What tremendous arguments and gusts of laughter it must have overheard; the long and intimate conversations with Hester Thrale, who knew Johnson better than anybody else and who was a great influence in his life;

a fact not readily apparent to readers of Boswell who was jealous of her.

But after the death of Mr. Thrale in 1781, Mrs. Thrale began to tire of Johnson, and Boswell observed:-

"Mr. Thrale's death was a very essential loss to Johnson who, although he did not foresee all that afterwards happened, was sufficiently convinced that the comforts which Mr. Thrale's family afforded him would now in a great measure cease."

And so it proved, for one day in the summer of 1782 when Johnson was staying at Streatham, Mrs. Thrale informed him that his presence was no longer welcome there. (I wonder if this unhappy scene took place in the old summer house?) A year or so later Mrs. Thrale remarried and shortly afterwards Johnson died, a sick and lonely old man, at his lodgings in Bolt Court off Fleet Street.

And now, after 100 years' exile, the old summer house has come back to Streatham where, surely, it will become a place of pilgrimage for Johnsonians. Surely the youthful sages and young philosophers of Streatham, meditating where the Great Cham himself once sat, cannot fail to gather inspiration from him.

William Law recommended that the Christians should spend definite time each day in meditation, self examination, religious reading and prayer. When in his Dictionary Johnson defined Perfection he makes a quotation from Law. "The question is not, whether gospel perfection can be fully attained; but whether you come as near it as a sincere conscience and careful diligence can carry you." In No. 7 of the Rambler Johnson writes, "This is that conquest of the world and of ourselves, which has always been considered as the perfection of human nature; and this is only to be obtained by fervent prayer, steady resolutions, and frequent retirement from folly and vanity, from the cares of avarice, and the joys of intemperance, from the lulling sounds of deceitful flattery, and the tempting sight of prosperous wickedness.

JOHNSON AND BOSWELL AFLOAT

by

Assistant Professor Francis E. Skipp
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Samuel Johnson, even at sixty-two, did not attach much importance to temporal dangers. His account of a passage in a small sailing craft from the Isle of Skye to the Isle of Coll is complete in one paragraph. Yet for all his restraint, the dangers through which he passed are unmistakably suggested. In his Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland he wrote: "Having waited some days at Armidel, we were flattered at last with a wind that promised to convey us to Mull. We went on board a boat that was taking in kelp and left the Isle of Sky behind us. We were doomed to experience, like others, the danger of trusting to the wind, which blew against us, in a short time, with such violence, that we, being no seasoned sailors, were willing to call it a tempest. I was sea-sick and lay down. Mr. Boswell kept the deck. The master knew not whither to go; and our difficulties might perhaps have filled a very pathetic page, had not Mr Maclean of Col, who, with every other qualification which insular life requires, is a very active and skilful mariner, piloted us safe into his harbor.[1] This narrative, though laconic in comparison to what Boswell was to make of it, was given point even while the proofs of Johnson's Journey were in press when this very Mr. Maclean, on a passage between Ulva and Inch Kenneth, was drowned. But although Johnson was able to insert this fact into his narrative, an insertion remarked upon by the reviewers of his book both in the Gentleman's Magazine and the Critical Review, none saw this event, occurring as it did in waters where Johnson "might perhaps have filled a very pathetic page," as giving a frightening perspective upon Boswell's and Johnson's experience.[2] - Nor did the same periodicals reviewing Boswell's Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides ten years later speak of the desperate and dark hours which passed before the

1. Samuel Johnson, Johnson's Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland, ed., R.W. Chapman (Oxford University Press, 1924), pp. 108-109, hereafter Johnson's Journey.
2. For reviews of Johnson's Journey see Monthly Review, LII (1775) 47-65, 158-162; Critical Review, XXXIX (1775), 33-44; Gentleman's Magazine, XLV (1775), 35-38, 83-86; same review, slightly cut, in Scots Magazine (Edinburgh), XXXVII (1775), 26-29.

voyagers from Skye came to safe anchorage at Coll, nor remark the brilliance with which Boswell had reported them.[3] And yet the dangers had been formidable, a fact seen more clearly in Boswell's private record of the experience (which I quote hereafter unless otherwise noted) than in his published account.[4]

The departure from Skye offered no difficulties. Boswell and Johnson had come across the peninsula at the southwest corner of the island to Sir Alexander M'Donald's house at Armadale near the Sound of Sleat. There the travellers met with a stroke of luck, for they met there "a Mr. Simpson from Islay, who had a vessel along with him of twelve tons, and readily agreed to land us in Mull. This was a much better opportunity for us than going in Sir Alexander's open boat." In the light of events that soon were to take place, it is indeed well that the passage was made in a decked craft, but decked though it was, Mr. Simpson's boat was no very pretentious thing. Boswell tells us that "there was a little room or den at the forecastle, with two beds, and a fire in it," and from the information that she was "of twelve tons," we can estimate her size. "Mast and Sail in Europe and Asia" is a book on the characteristics and antecedents of sailing craft engaged in commerce around the end of the nineteenth century - characteristics which in small craft had changed little in 150 years. Its author, H. Warington Smyth, records the fact that a skiff "built at Peterhead in 1890 to the order of a Banffshire crew measured 37 feet keel and 42 feet 6 inches over stems, 15 feet beam, 5 feet deep, and 15 tons register."[5] Since this skiff of fifteen tons measured forty-two feet along its deck from bow to stern and was fifteen feet broad at its widest point, we can estimate that Mr. Simpson's vessel was about thirty-five feet on deck and twelve feet in breadth, scarcely a size to reassure a landsman.

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3. For reviews of Boswell's Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides see Monthly Review, LXXIV (1786), 277-282; Critical Review, LX (1785), 337-344; Gentleman's Magazine, LV (1785), 756-757, 959 (Letter), 967-969 (Letter); 978; Scots Magazine, XLVII (1785), 589-595.
4. For the published account, see Boswell's Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides with Samuel Johnson, LL.D., ed., R.W. Chapman (Oxford University Press, 1924), pp. 347-350 (hereafter Boswell's Tour); for the private record see Boswell's Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides, ed., Frederick A. Pottle and Charles H. Bennett (New York, 1936), pp. 245-252, hereafter Private Papers.
5. H. Warington Smyth, Mast and Sail in Europe and Asia (London, 1906), p. 11n.

This little craft was heavily built with the full lines of a cargo vessel, qualities which helped her owner show a profit, but which made her a poor thing against a head wind, a shortcoming that was to bear critically upon the fate of the travellers. Sometime after ten o'clock in the morning on October 3, 1773, Hugh MacDonald, Simpson's skipper, came hurrying up to Boswell and Johnson, who already had waited two days for a fair wind and safe weather, with the news that the wind had shifted in their favour and the boat was at anchor offshore, ready to sail. It was not until about one in the afternoon, however, that they, together with the young Laird of Coll and his servant, "set sail very briskly." We might surmise that Hugh MacDonald had chafed during the hours he waited for his distinguished passengers to prepare to leave, for the distance from Armadale Bay at Skye to Tobermory on Mull was thirty-five nautical miles by the shortest course. His boat could not sail much faster than five knots under the best of circumstances. Furthermore, he knew that even if helped by an ebbing tide he would soon sail through the ebb's depression into the succeeding flood tide, and that therefore he could not expect much help from the current. As a consequence, the earliest that he could hope to reach Tobermory that evening after a passage of seven hours was eight o'clock. At Tobermory's latitude - 56° 40' north - the sun sets on October third around five-thirty, and shortly after six the last of the twilight fades and it is dark.[6] Today, with excellent lighthouses and lighted buoys to keep the sailor clear of the dangers darkness brings with it, there are no hazards that cannot be avoided by prudence. In 1773 matters were quite otherwise. Robert Louis Stevenson, who came of several generations of lighthouse engineers, tells us in his essay, "A Family of Engineers," that "In 1786 ..... the extended and formidable coast of Scotland was lighted at a single point - the Isle of May, in the jaws of the Firth of Forth, where on a tower already a hundred and fifty years old, an open coalfire blazed in an iron chauffer. The whole archipelago, thus nightly plunged in darkness, was shunned by seagoing vessels."[7]

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6. Local times computed from The Nautical Almanac for the Year 1964 (Washington, United States Government Printing Office, 1962, and London, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1962), from data for October 3.
7. Robert Louis Stevenson, "A Family of Engineers," The Works of Robert Louis Stevenson, ed., Charles Curtis Bigelow and Temple Scott (New York, 1906), X, 288-289.

Hugh MacDonald, then, knew that as he rounded Ardnamurchan Point night would shut down upon him and he would have a dozen miles of Mull Sound to navigate in the dark before he could let his anchor go in Tobermory's snug harbour. He could easily steer a half mile too far to the east as he rounded Rudhanan Gall just north of his destination and strike the New Rocks, but a good moon was expected[8] and so long as he could distinguish the loom of the land he would be safe. Deep water - far deeper, at any rate, than the three and a half or four feet he needed for his boat - reached right up to shore, and there were no other outlying dangers which threatened.

According to Boswell, the little boat for the first few hours sailed at a great rate with the wind blowing steadily from a favourable quarter - from the east, probably, at an angle of about 120 degrees to their south-westerly course. Johnson almost immediately became sick and went below, for it had begun to rain. When Boswell went to the forecastle for dinner he found Johnson "quite in a state of annihiliation" and exulted in his own sea-worthiness until the boiled mutton, boiled herring, beer, and punch made Boswell himself "woefully sick," whereupon he "was obliged to get above board, though it rained hard." Their progress was rapid. MacDonald said that if they continued to sail so well, he would land them that night on Iona, the travellers' next objective, off the southwest tip of Mull. The rain, furthermore, seems to have been only sporadic throughout the afternoon and the early hours of the night, for Boswell writes that after they had rounded Ardnamurchan Point the moon shone through the clouds and he had "pretty distinctly seen not only the land of Mull, but up the Sound, and the country of Morvern as at one end of it." But at Ardnamurchan Point the wind shifted. Hugh MacDonald had probably feared it might if experience had taught him what the Sailing Directions for the West Coast of Scotland tell us today: "In October the Icelandic LOW begins to deepen again.....Strong winds and gales are frequent, winds of Beaufort force 7 or higher (32-38 miles an hour. Whole trees in motion; inconvenience felt in walking against it) occurring from 30 to more than 40 percent of the observations."[9] From

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8. Private Papers, p. 248.
9. Sailing Directions for the West Coast of Scotland, Hydrographic Office Publication No. 147 (United States Government Printing Office, 1952), pp. 12, 14; hereafter Sailing Directions.

the events of the night that followed, it is probable that the east wind veered toward the south and began to freshen. With the wind then blowing directly out of the Sound of Mull, Boswell writes, "We were then obliged to tack, and get forward in that tedious manner. As we advanced the storm grew greater and the sea very rough." It is unlikely that a bluff-bowed craft of the sort in which Boswell and Johnson were sailing could make progress if it attempted to sail closer to the wind than about sixty degrees either side of the wind's axis. Furthermore, since the craft probably had little depth of keel, it lost in leeway much of the distance to windward it gained in its tacking. The islands of Coll, Canna, and Eigg now lay scattered in an irregular arc from west to northeast, roughly astern and downwind, and the possibility of turning and running before the wind to shelter somewhere among them was proposed. Simpson declared himself willing to try for the island of Coll if the young laird or his servant would undertake to pilot the boat into the harbour, "but as the island is low land," says Boswell, "it was dangerous to run upon it in the dark. The Laird of Coll and his servant seemed a little dubious." Canna was too far away - about twentyfive nautical miles - and Eigg was considered too dangerous. Old Hugh MacDonald throughout the discussion continued to drive his boat toward Mull, but the wind and sea continued to rise, and now the possibility of another danger probably occurred to those aboard who were seamen. H. Warington Smyth reports that in full-bowed Scotch craft "it was no unusual thing for one or two bow timbers to be broken, through slamming in a headwind and heavy sea."[10] As MacDonald continued to tack up Mull Sound, the motion must have been violent. The little ship's bow rose steeply to each sea, then, pitching into the trough, slammed its apple cheeks into the oncoming wave, sending spray to the mast-head. Boswell tells us how Johnson, during the deliberations about the course to take, had asked from his bunk where they were heading. When told it was a question of Coll or Mull he cried, "Coll for my money." Boswell in the Published Tour remarks, "The truth is, he knew nothing of the danger we were in," and wrote to Johnson upon the publication of Johnson's Journey, "You treat the storm too lightly. Coll and all the islanders thought we were really in danger."[11] To be sure, Johnson had placed in Hugh MacDonald and the Laird of Coll more confidence than the circumstances warranted. But apart from

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10. Smyth, p.101.
11. Private Papers, p.250n.

considerations of danger, Johnson's sturdy fortitude, his buoyancy even under severe discomfort show him in a most admirable and engaging light. It was eleven-thirty before the decision to turn away from the wind and run for Coll was made, and when the little craft turned downwind and sailed for some moments in the trough of the sea, she must have rolled her bulwarks under. The vessel had been sailing in darkness and rain for several hours and her position was something less than a certainty. The run to Coll was about eleven miles. The harbour at Loch Eatharna was a half mile across at its mouth. And precisely at the centre of the mouth, hidden by the sea except at low tide, was the rock, Bogha More.

The tides in the Hebrides - rising and falling about twelve feet at Coll in October - create swift currents, and the Sailing Directions inform us that "through the Islands of Coll, Tiree, and Skerrymore... The rate of these currents varies over most of the area from 3 to 5 knots."[12] During the two-hour run from the mouth of Mull Sound to Loch Eatharna harbour such currents, had they not been reckoned with some accuracy, could have set the craft several miles above or below its destination. Starting from an uncertain position, the vessel's chances of making a successful landfall were poor. What is more, the Sailing Directions declare ominously, "Strangers are advised to give Tiree and Coll a wide berth."[13] While a one-eyed sailor steered (suggesting to the twentieth century reader "The Waste Land" and death by water), MacDonald, Coll, and Coll's servant lay in the bows, no doubt with dry mouths and knocking hearts, watching for their landfall. The wind was behind them, and carrying more sail than they would have wished for downwind going in case a navigational error should require them suddenly to turn and claw away from Coll's rocky shore, they raced toward the island. Boswell recalled "terrible plunging in a rough sea," but his impressions may have been a confused carry-over from the hours of beating into Mull Sound. The motion on the run to Coll must have been a giddy side to side rolling giving the sensation, probably not far from fact, that the little ship was kept under control only with difficulty.

Fortunately, MacDonald was a good rule-of-thumb navigator or a

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12. Sailing Directions, p.18.
13. Ibid., p.128.

lucky Scot or both, for they made landfall not far above the harbour. The Laird of Coll, no stranger, cried "thank GOD, we're safe " and piloted them past Bogha More into the relatively quiet waters of the anchorage. When the anchor was down, Boswell went below to Johnson and found him "lying in philosophic tranquility, with a greyhound of Coll's at his back keeping him warm." Thus ended a passage of between thirteen and fourteen hours, the last half of which was sailed under conditions which only can be called desperate. Boswell says, "I saw tonight what I never saw before, a prodigious sea with immense billows coming upon a vessel, so as that it seemed hardly possible to escape. There was something grandly horrible in the sight. I am glad I have seen it once." The contemporary Critical Review, commenting on Johnson's "Journey," put it this way: "On leaving Sky the travellers afterwards visit Coll, Mull, Ulva, Inch Kenneth, Icolmkill, and other lesser islands to which they were conducted by Mr. Maclean, the young gentleman who has since been unfortunately drowned on that coast."[14]

Conducted indeed! Johnson's account was a spare one, but Coll's drowning would surely have provoked a modern reviewer to set down some inferences from it bearing upon Johnson's brush with death. The Critical Review showed where its interest lay when it declared,

> A bare description of the Hebrides would prove a very jejune and uninteresting work. To render it agreeable as well as instructive it is necessary that the writer should present us with more than a superficial account of the several islands, and that he investigate the genius and character of the inhabitants. Such an inquiry can only be conducted by a person who is conversant in moral speculations, and is endowed with intellectual penetration capable of tracing the peculiarities of manners and action through their various modifications, to the universal principles of human nature.[15]

Nor did the reviewers comment upon the episode either in terms of its human interest or the vividness of the reporting when Boswell, ten years later, published his Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides.

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14. Review of Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland, by Samuel Johnson (London, 1775), Critical Review, XXXIX (1775), 43.
15. Ibid., p. 44.

Scots Magazine saw Boswell's account as showing philosophy in action ("We behold the philosopher enforcing, by his own example, the precepts which he taught"),[16] but said not a word about the dangers. The Critical Review gave nine of its pages to an enthusiastic review which confined its interest to Johnson's mind and character.[17]

These reviewers of 1775 and 1785 were men whose critical principles were those of Johnson himself when he wrote in Rasselas, "the business of the poet is to examine, not the individual but the species; to remark general properties and large experiences." We tend to dwell upon the particular experiences of individual men. But the difference between our attitude and that of the eighteenth century reviewers toward the travellers' peril is not simply a difference in sensibility. We know, as they did not, that had James Boswell been drowned in the Passage of Tiree that wild night we should have been denied what was to be the greatest biography in our language.

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Francis E. Skipp

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16. Scots Magazine, XLVII (1785), 589.
17. Critical Review, LX (1785), 337-345.

REVIEW

Dr. Johnson's Printer: The Life of William Strahan by J.A. Cochrane. Routledge and Kegan Paul 1964. - 225pp. 4 illustrations. 25/-

This is the sympathetic story of a self-made man, William Strahan, printer, and often publisher, of works by Johnson, Hume, Gibbon, Adam Smith, Blackstone, and Arthur Young, and many other famous eighteenth century authors. We are fortunate in having an exceedingly detailed knowledge of eighteenth century printing prices, unlike the century before it, and even the nineteenth century on which much work has still to be done. We have the ledgers of William Strahan, and papers from Woodfall, Newbery (which tell us of the cost of printing

THE IDLER), Bowyer, Collins & Johnstone, and, of course, Nichols's LITERARY ANECDOTES a rich, if sometimes unreliable, source. Mr. Cochrane in the present book has relied chiefly on the Strahan papers in the British Museum, and on some unpublished material in the Library of the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia. It is this latter material, which includes mention of Strahan's political interests (he was an MP in 1774 and again in 1780-84) and some most interesting details about the trade in books between England and America, which is the most immediately rewarding. He adds little to our knowledge of Johnson, and it is a pity that the book was not called simply a life of Strahan, although Johnson keeps popping up through the book in the similar way that Strahan appears in Boswell's various writings; and it is obvious that Boswell did not take to Strahan in the same way that Johnson did. There is a chapter on the Dictionary of of which Strahan was the printer, but this is one of the least interesting chapters in the book as so much of it has been told before, and the material selectively used by James Sledd & Gwin Kolb in DR. JOHNSON'S DICTIONARY (Chicago 1955). Mr. Cochrane quotes fully from Strahan's letters and includes some fascinating statistics of particular interest to present day booksellers and publishers, but somehow the character of the man eludes him, and it is here that Boswell and Johnson and Nichols help to round the portrait, and the notice in the Gentlemans Magazine on his death, supposedly by Nichols, places him certainly: "The good humour and obliging disposition, which he owed to nature, he cultivated with care, and confirmed by habit. His sympathetic heart beat time to the joy and sorrow of his friends. His advice was always ready to direct youth, and his purse open to relieve indigence. Living in times not the purest in the English Annals, he escaped unsullied through the artifices of trade and the corruption of politics. In him a strong and natural sagacity, improved by an extensive knowledge of the world, served only to render respectable his unaffected simplicity of manners, and to make his truly Christian philanthropy more discerning and more useful."

Marguerite E. Dowdeswell.

Our readers will be interested to learn that the volumes of the Johnsonian News Letter, which for long have been out of print are now being reprinted in response to a general demand for them. Particulars may be obtained from the Johnson Reprint Corporation, 111 Fifth Avenue, N.Y.