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**Hours in a Library New Edition,
with Additions. Vol. II (of 3)**

Leslie, Sir Stephen

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HOURS IN A LIBRARY

VOL. II.

HOURS IN A LIBRARY

BY

LESLIE STEPHEN

NEW EDITION, WITH ADDITIONS

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. II.

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HOURS IN A LIBRARY

DR. JOHNSON'S WRITINGS

A book appeared not long ago of which it was the professed object to give to the modern generation of lazy readers the pith of Boswell's immortal biography. I shall, for sufficient reasons, refrain from discussing the merits of the performance. One remark, indeed, may be made in passing. The circle of readers to whom such a book is welcome must, of necessity, be limited. To the true lovers of Boswell it is, to say the least, superfluous; the gentlest omissions will always mangle some people's favourite passages, and additions, whatever skill they may display, necessarily injure that dramatic vivacity which is one of the great charms of the original. The most discreet of cicerones is an intruder when we open our old favourite, and, without further magic, retire into that delicious nook of eighteenth-century society. Upon those, again, who cannot appreciate the infinite humour of the original, the mere excision of the less lively pages will be thrown away. There remains only that narrow margin of readers whose appetites, languid but not extinct, can be titillated by the promise that they shall not have the trouble of making their own selection. Let us wish them good digestions, and, in spite of modern changes of fashion, more robust taste for the future. I would still hope that to many readers Boswell has been what he has certainly been to some, the first writer who gave them a love of English literature, and the most charming of all companions long after the bloom of novelty has departed. I subscribe most cheerfully to Mr. Lewes's statement that he estimates his acquaintances according to their estimate of Boswell. A man, indeed, may be a good Christian, and an excellent father of a family, without loving Johnson or Boswell, for a sense of humour is not one of the primary virtues. But Boswell's is one of the very few books which, after many years of familiarity, will still provoke a hearty laugh even in the solitude of a study; and the laughter is of that kind which does one good.

I do not wish, however, to pronounce one more eulogy upon an old friend, but to say a few words on a question which he sometimes suggests. Macaulay's well-known but provoking essay is

more than usually lavish in overstrained paradoxes. He has explicitly declared that Boswell wrote one of the most charming of books because he was one of the greatest of fools. And his remarks suggest, if they do not implicitly assert, that Johnson wrote some of the most unreadable of books, although, if not because, he possessed one of the most vigorous intellects of the time. Carlyle has given a sufficient explanation of the first paradox; but the second may justify a little further inquiry. As a general rule, the talk of a great man is the reflection of his books. Nothing is so false as the common saying that the presence of a distinguished writer is generally disappointing. It exemplifies a very common delusion. People are so 3 impressed by the disparity which sometimes occurs, that they take the exception for the rule. It is, of course, true that a man's verbal utterances may differ materially from his written utterances. He may, like Addison, be shy in company; he may, like many retired students, be slow in collecting his thoughts; or he may, like Goldsmith, be over-anxious to shine at all hazards. But a patient observer will even then detect the essential identity under superficial differences; and in the majority of cases, as in that of Macaulay himself, the talking and the writing are palpably and almost absurdly similar. The whole art of criticism consists in learning to know the human being who is partially revealed to us in his spoken or his written words. Whatever the means of communication, the problem is the same. The two methods of inquiry may supplement each other; but their substantial agreement is the test of their accuracy. If Johnson, as a writer, appears to us to be a mere windbag and manufacturer of sesquipedalian verbiage, whilst, as a talker, he appears to be one of the most genuine and deeply feeling of men, we may be sure that our analysis has been somewhere defective. The discrepancy is, of course, partly explained by the faults of Johnson's style; but the explanation only removes the difficulty a degree further. 'The style is the man' is a very excellent aphorism, though some eminent writers have lately pointed out that Buffon's original remark was *le style c'est de l'homme*. That only proves that, like many other good sayings, it has been polished and brought to perfection by the process of attrition in numerous minds, instead of being struck out at a blow by a solitary thinker. From a purely logical point of view, Buffon may be correct; but the very essence of an aphorism is that slight exaggeration which makes it more 4 biting whilst less rigidly accu-

rate. According to Buffon, the style might belong to a man as an acquisition rather than to natural growth. There are parasitical writers who, in the old phrase, have 'formed their style,' by the imitation of accepted models, and who have, therefore, possessed it only by right of appropriation. Boswell has a discussion as to the writers who may have served Johnson in this capacity. But, in fact, Johnson, like all other men of strong idiosyncrasy, formed his style as he formed his legs. The peculiarities of his limbs were in some degree the result of conscious efforts in walking, swimming, and 'buffeting with his books.' This development was doubtless more fully determined by the constitution which he brought into the world, and the circumstances under which he was brought up. And even that queer Johnsonese, which Macaulay supposes him to have adopted in accordance with a more definite literary theory, will probably appear to be the natural expression of certain innate tendencies, and of the mental atmosphere which he breathed from youth. To appreciate fairly the strangely cumbrous form of his written speech, we must penetrate more deeply than may at first sight seem necessary beneath the outer rind of this literary Behemoth. The difficulty of such spiritual dissection is, indeed, very great; but some little light may be thrown upon the subject by following out such indications as we possess.

The talking Johnson is sufficiently familiar to us. So far as Boswell needs an interpreter, Carlyle has done all that can be done. He has concentrated and explained what is diffused, and often unconsciously indicated in Boswell's pages. When reading Boswell, we are half ashamed of his power over our sympathies. It is like turning over a portfolio of sketches, caricatured, inadequate, and each giving only some imperfect aspect of the original. Macaulay's smart paradoxes only increase our perplexity by throwing the superficial contrasts into stronger relief. Carlyle, with true imaginative insight, gives us at once the essence of Johnson; he brings before our eyes the luminous body of which we had previously been conscious only by a series of imperfect images refracted through a number of distorting media. To render such a service effectually is the highest triumph of criticism; and it would be impertinent to say again in feeble language what Carlyle has expressed so forcibly. We may, however, recall certain general conclusions by way of preface to the

problem which he has not expressly considered, how far Johnson succeeded in expressing himself through his writings.

The world, as Carlyle sees it, is composed, we all know, of two classes: there are 'the dull millions, who, as a dull flock, roll hither and thither, whithersoever they are led,' and there are a few superior natures who can see and can will. There are, in other words, the heroes, and those whose highest wisdom is to be hero-worshippers. Johnson's glory is that he belonged to the sacred band, though he could not claim within it the highest, or even a very high, rank. In the current dialect, therefore, he was 'nowise a clothes-horse or patent digester, but a genuine man.' Whatever the accuracy of the general doctrine, or of certain corollaries which are drawn from it, the application to Johnson explains one main condition of his power. Persons of colourless imagination may hold—nor will we dispute their verdict—that Carlyle overcharges his lights and shades, and brings his heroes into too startling a contrast with the vulgar herd. Yet it is undeniable that the 6 great bulk of mankind are transmitters rather than originators of spiritual force. Most of us are necessarily condemned to express our thoughts in formulas which we have learnt from others and can but slightly tinge with our feeble personality. Nor, as a rule, are we even consistent disciples of any one school of thought. What we call our opinions are mere bundles of incoherent formulæ, arbitrarily stitched together because our reasoning faculties are too dull to make inconsistency painful. Of the vast piles of books which load our libraries, ninety-nine hundredths and more are but printed echoes: and it is the rarest of pleasures to say, Here is a distinct record of impressions at first hand. We commonplace beings are hurried along in the crowd, living from hand to mouth on such slices of material and spiritual food as happen to drift in our direction, with little more power of taking an independent course, or of forming any general theory, than the polyps which are carried along by an oceanic current. Ask any man what he thinks of the world in which he is placed: whether, for example, it is on the whole a scene of happiness or misery, and he will either answer by some cut-and-dried fragments of what was once wisdom, or he will confine himself to a few incoherent details. He had a good dinner to-day and a bad toothache yesterday, and a family affliction or blessing the day before. But he is as

incapable of summing up his impressions as an infant of performing an operation in the differential calculus. It is as rare as it is refreshing to find a man who can stand on his own legs and be conscious of his own feelings, who is sturdy enough to react as well as to transmit action, and lofty enough to raise himself above the hurrying crowd and have some distinct belief as to whence it is coming and whither it is going. Now Johnson, as one of 7 the sturdiest of mankind, had the power due to a very distinct sentiment, if not to a very clear theory, about the world in which he lived. It had buffeted him severely enough, and he had formed a decisive estimate of its value. He was no man to be put off with mere phrases in place of opinions, or to accept doctrines which were not capable of expressing genuine emotion. To this it must be added that his emotions were as deep and tender as they were genuine. How sacred was his love for his old and ugly wife; how warm his sympathy wherever it could be effective; how manly the self-respect with which he guarded his dignity through all the temptations of Grub Street, need not be once more pointed out. Perhaps, however, it is worth while to notice the extreme rarity of such qualities. Many people, we think, love their fathers. Fortunately, that is true; but in how many people is filial affection strong enough to overpower the dread of eccentricity? How many men would have been capable of doing penance in Uttoxeter market years after their father's death for a long-passed act of disobedience? Most of us, again, would have a temporary emotion of pity for an outcast lying helplessly in the street. We should call the police, or send her in a cab to the workhouse, or, at least, write to the *Times* to denounce the defective arrangements of public charity. But it is perhaps better not to ask how many good Samaritans would take her on their shoulders to their own homes, care for her wants, and put her into a better way of life.

In the lives of most eminent men we find much good feeling and honourable conduct; but it is an exception, even in the case of good men, when we find that a life has been shaped by other than the ordinary conventions, or that emotions have dared to overflow the well-worn channels of respectability. The love which we feel for Johnson is due to the fact that the pivots upon which his life turned are invariably noble motives, and not mere obedience to custom. More than one modern writer has expressed a fraternal affection for

Addison, and it is justified by the kindly humour which breathes through his 'Essays.' But what anecdote of that most decorous and successful person touches our hearts or has the heroic ring of Johnson's wrestlings with adverse fortune? Addison showed how a Christian could die—when his life has run smoothly through pleasant places, secretaryships of state, and marriages with countesses, and when nothing—except a few overdoses of port wine—has shaken his nerves or ruffled his temper. A far deeper emotion rises at the deathbed of the rugged old pilgrim, who has fought his way to peace in spite of troubles within and without, who has been jeered in Vanity Fair and has descended into the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and escaped with pain and difficulty from the clutches of Giant Despair. When the last feelings of such a man are tender, solemn, and simple, we feel ourselves in a higher presence than that of an amiable gentleman who simply died, as he lived, with consummate decorum.

On turning, however, from Johnson's life to his writings, from Boswell to the 'Rambler,' it must be admitted that the shock is trying to our nerves. The 'Rambler' has, indeed, high merits. The impression which it made upon his own generation proves the fact; for the reputation, however temporary, was not won by a concession to the fashions of the day, but to the influence of a strong judgment uttering itself through uncouth forms. The melancholy which colours its pages is the melancholy of a noble nature. The tone of thought reminds us of Bishop Butler, ⁹ whose writings, defaced by a style even more tiresome, though less pompous than Johnson's, have owed their enduring reputation to a philosophical acuteness in which Johnson was certainly very deficient. Both of these great men, however, impress us by their deep sense of the evils under which humanity suffers, and their rejection of the superficial optimism of the day. Butler's sadness, undoubtedly, is that of a recluse, and Johnson's that of a man of the world; but the sentiment is fundamentally the same. It may be added, too, that here, as elsewhere, Johnson speaks with the sincerity of a man drawing upon his own experience. He announces himself as a scholar thrust out upon the world rather by necessity than choice; and a large proportion of the papers dwell upon the various sufferings of the literary class. Nobody could speak more feelingly of those sufferings, as no one had a

closer personal acquaintance with them. But allowing to Johnson whatever credit is due to the man who performs one more variation on the old theme, *Vanitas vanitatum*, we must in candour admit that the 'Rambler' has the one unpardonable fault: it is unreadable.

What an amazing turn it shows for commonplaces! That life is short, that marriages from mercenary motives produce unhappiness, that different men are virtuous in different degrees, that advice is generally ineffectual, that adversity has its uses, that fame is liable to suffer from detraction;—these and a host of other such maxims are of the kind upon which no genius and no depth of feeling can confer a momentary interest. Here and there, indeed, the pompous utterance invests them with an unlucky air of absurdity. 'Let no man from this time,' is the comment in one of his stories, 'suffer his felicity to depend on the death of his aunt.' Every actor, of course, uses the same dialect. A 10 gay young gentleman tells us that he used to amuse his companions by giving them notice of his friends' oddities. 'Every man,' he says, 'has some habitual contortion of body, or established mode of expression, which never fails to excite mirth if it be pointed out to notice. By premonition of these particularities, I secured our pleasantries.' The feminine characters, Flirtillas, and Cleoras, and Euphelias, and Penthesileas, are, if possible, still more grotesque. Macaulay remarks that he wears the petticoat with as ill a grace as Falstaff himself. The reader, he thinks, will cry out with Sir Hugh, 'I like not when a 'oman has a great pear! I spy a great pear! under her muffler.' Oddly enough Johnson gives the very same quotation; and goes on to warn his supposed correspondents that Phyllis must send no more letters from the Horse Guards; and that Belinda must 'resign her pretensions to female elegance till she has lived three weeks without hearing the politics of Button's Coffee House.' The Doctor was probably sensible enough of his own defects. And yet there is a still more wearisome set of articles. In emulation of the precedent set by Addison, Johnson indulges in the dreariest of allegories. Criticism, we are told, was the eldest daughter of Labour and Truth, but at last resigned in favour of Time, and left Prejudice and False Taste to reign in company with Fraud and Mischief. Then we have the genealogy of Wit and Learning, and of Satire, the Son of Wit and Malice, and an account of their various quarrels, and the decision of Jupiter. Neither

are the histories of such semi-allegorical personages as Almamoulin, the son of Nouradin, or of Anningait and Ayut, the Greenland lovers, much more refreshing to modern readers. That Johnson possessed humour of no mean order, we know from Boswell; but no critic could have divined his power from the clumsy gambols in which he occasionally recreates himself. Perhaps his happiest effort is a dissertation upon the advantage of living in garrets; but the humour struggles and gasps dreadfully under the weight of words. 'There are,' he says, 'some who would continue blockheads' (the Alpine Club was not yet founded), 'even on the summit of the Andes or the Peak of Teneriffe. But let not any man be considered as unimprovable till this potent remedy has been tried; for perhaps he was found to be great only in a garret, as the joiner of Aretæus was rational in no other place but his own shop.'

How could a man of real power write such unendurable stuff? Or how, indeed, could any man come to embody his thoughts in the style of which one other sentence will be a sufficient example? As it is afterwards nearly repeated, it may be supposed to have struck his fancy. The remarks of the philosophers who denounce temerity are, he says, 'too just to be disputed and too salutary to be rejected; but there is likewise some danger lest timorous prudence should be inculcated till courage and enterprise are wholly repressed and the mind congested in perpetual inactivity by the fatal influence of frigorick wisdom.' Is there not some danger, we ask, that the mind will be benumbed into perpetual torpidity by the influence of this soporific sapience? It is still true, however, that this Johnsonese, so often burlesqued and ridiculed, was, as far as we can judge, a genuine product. Macaulay says that it is more offensive than the mannerism of Milton or Burke, because it is a mannerism adopted on principle and sustained by constant effort. Facts do not confirm the theory. Milton's prose style seems to be the result of a conscious effort to run 12 English into classical moulds. Burke's mannerism does not appear in his early writings, and we can trace its development from the imitation of Bolingbroke to the last declamation against the Revolution. But Johnson seems to have written Johnsonese from his cradle. In his first original composition, the preface to Father Lobo's 'Abyssinia,' the style is as distinctive as in the 'Rambler.' The Parliamentary reports in the 'Gentleman's Magazine'

make Pitt and Fox [1] express sentiments which are probably their own in language which is as unmistakably Johnson's. It is clear that his style, good or bad, was the same from his earliest efforts. It is only in his last book, the 'Lives of the Poets,' that the mannerism, though equally marked, is so far subdued as to be tolerable. What he himself called his habit of using 'too big words and too many of them' was no affectation, but as much the result of his special idiosyncrasy as his queer gruntings and twitchings. Sir Joshua Reynolds indeed maintained, and we may believe so attentive an observer, that his strange physical contortions were the result of bad habit, not of actual disease. Johnson, he said, could sit as still as other people when his attention was called to it. And possibly, if he had tried, he might have avoided the fault of making 'little fishes talk like whales.' But how did the bad habits arise? According to Boswell, Johnson professed to have 'formed his style' partly upon Sir W. Temple, and on 'Chambers's Proposal for his Dictionary.' The statement was obviously misinterpreted: but there is a glimmering of truth in the theory that the 'style was formed'—so far as those words have any meaning—on the 'giants of the seventeenth century,' and especially upon Sir Thomas Browne. Johnson's taste, 13 in fact, had led him to the study of writers in many ways congenial to him. His favourite book, as we know, was Burton's 'Anatomy of Melancholy.' The pedantry of the older school did not repel him; the weighty thought rightly attracted him; and the more complex structure of sentence was perhaps a pleasant contrast to an ear saturated with the Gallicised neatness of Addison and Pope. Unluckily, the secret of the old majestic cadence was hopelessly lost. Johnson, though spiritually akin to the giants, was the firmest ally and subject of the dwarfish dynasty which supplanted them. The very faculty of hearing seems to change in obedience to some mysterious law at different stages of intellectual development; and that which to one generation is delicious music is to another a mere droning of bagpipes or the grinding of monotonous barrel-organs.

Assuming that a man can find perfect satisfaction in the versification of the 'Essay on Man,' we can understand his saying of 'Lycidas,' that 'the diction is harsh, the rhymes uncertain, and the numbers displeasing.' In one of the 'Ramblers' we are informed that the accent in blank verse ought properly to rest upon every second

syllable throughout the whole line. A little variety must, he admits, be allowed to avoid satiety; but all lines which do not go in the steady jog-trot of alternate beats as regularly as the piston of a steam engine, are more or less defective. This simple-minded system naturally makes wild work with the poetry of the 'mighty-mouthed inventor of harmonies.' Milton's harsh cadences are indeed excused on the odd ground that he who was 'vindicating the ways of God to man' might have been condemned for 'lavishing much of his attention upon syllables and sounds.' Moreover, the poor man did his best by introducing sounding proper 14 names, even when they 'added little music to his poem.' an example of this feeble, though well-meant expedient, being the passage about the moon, which—

The Tuscan artist views,
At evening, from the top of Fiesole
Or in Valdarno, to descry new lands, &c.

This profanity passed at the time for orthodoxy. But the misfortune was, that Johnson, unhesitatingly subscribing to the rules of Queen Anne's critics, is always instinctively feeling after the grander effects of the old school. Nature prompts him to the stateliness of Milton, whilst Art orders him to deal out long and short syllables alternately, and to make them up in parcels of ten, and then tie the parcels together in pairs by the help of a rhyme. The natural utterance of a man of strong perceptions, but of unwieldy intellect, of a melancholy temperament, and capable of very deep, but not vivacious emotions, would be in stately and elaborate phrases. His style was not more distinctly a work of art than the style of Browne or Milton, but, unluckily, it was a work of bad art. He had the misfortune, not so rare as it may sound, to be born in the wrong century; and is, therefore, a giant in fetters; the amplitude of stride is still there, but it is checked into mechanical regularity. A similar phenomenon is observable in other writers of the time. The blank verse of Young, for example, is generally set to Pope's tune with the omission of the rhymes, whilst Thomson, revolting more or less consciously against the canons of his time, too often falls into mere

pompous mouthing. Shaftesbury, in the previous generation, trying to write poetical prose, becomes as pedantic as Johnson, though in a different style; and Gibbon's mannerism is a familiar example of a similar escape from a monotonous simplicity into awkward complexity. Such writers are like men who have been chilled by what Johnson would call the 'frigorifick' influence of the classicism of their fathers, and whose numbed limbs move stiffly and awkwardly in a first attempt to regain the old liberty. The form, too, of the 'Rambler' is unfortunate. Johnson has always Addison before his eyes; to whom it was formerly the fashion to compare him for the same excellent reason which has recently suggested comparisons between Dickens and Thackeray—namely, that their works were published in the same external shape. Unluckily, Johnson gave too much excuse for the comparison by really imitating Addison. He has to make allegories, and to give lively sketches of feminine peculiarities, and to ridicule social foibles of which he was, at most, a distant observer. The inevitable consequence is, that though here and there we catch a glimpse of the genuine man, we are, generally, too much provoked by the awkwardness of his costume to be capable of enjoying, or even reading him.

In many of his writings, however, Johnson manages, almost entirely, to throw off these impediments. In his deep capacity for sympathy and reverence, we recognise some of the elements that go to the making of a poet. He is always a man of intuitions rather than of discursive intellect; often keen of vision, though wanting in analytical power. For poetry, indeed, as it is often understood now, or even as it was understood by Pope, he had little enough qualification. He had not the intellectual vivacity implied in the marvellously neat workmanship of Pope, and still less the delight in all natural and artistic beauty which we generally take to be essential to poetic excellence. His contempt for 'Lycidas' is sufficiently significant upon that head. Still more characteristic is the incapacity to under-stand Spenser, which comes out incidentally in his remarks upon some of those imitations, which even in the middle of the eighteenth century showed that sensibility to the purest form of poetry was not by any means extinct amongst us. But there is a poetry, though we sometimes seem to forget it, which is the natural expression of deep moral sentiment; and of this Johnson has written enough to reveal

very genuine power. The touching verses upon the death of Levett are almost as pathetic as Cowper; and fragments of the two imitations of Juvenal have struck deep enough to be not quite forgotten. We still quote the lines about pointing a moral and adorning a tale, which conclude a really noble passage. We are too often reminded of his melancholy musings over the

Fears of the brave and follies of the wise,

and a few of the concluding lines of the 'Vanity of Human Wishes,' in which he answers the question whether man must of necessity

Roll darkling down the torrent of his fate,

in helplessness and ignorance, may have something of a familiar ring. We are to give thanks, he says,

For love, which scarce collective man can fill;
For patience, sovereign o'er transmuted ill;
For faith, that, panting for a happier seat,
Counts death kind nature's signal for retreat;
These goods for man, the laws of heaven ordain,
These goods He grants, who grants the power to gain,
With these celestial wisdom calms the mind,
And makes the happiness she does not find.

These lines, and many others which might be quoted, are noble in expression, as well as lofty and tender in feeling. Johnson, like Wordsworth, or even more deeply than Wordsworth, had felt all the 'heavy and the weary weight of all this unintelligible world;' and, though he stumbles a little in the narrow limits of his versification, he bears himself nobly, and manages to put his heart into his poetry. Coleridge's paraphrase of the well-known lines, 'Let obser-

vation with extensive observation, observe mankind from China to Peru,' would prevent us from saying that he had thrown off his verbiage. He has not the felicity of Goldsmith's 'Traveller,' though he wrote one of the best couplets in that admirable poem; but his ponderous lines show genuine vigour, and can be excluded from poetry only by the help of an arbitrary classification.

The fullest expression, however, of Johnson's feeling is undoubtedly to be found in 'Rasselas.' The inevitable comparison with Voltaire's 'Candide,' which, by an odd coincidence, appeared almost simultaneously, suggests some curious reflections. The resemblance between the moral of the two books is so strong that, as Johnson remarked, it would have been difficult not to suppose that one had given a hint to the other but for the chronological difficulty. The contrast, indeed, is as marked as the likeness. 'Candide' is not adapted for family reading, whereas 'Rasselas' might be a textbook for young ladies studying English in a convent. 'Candide' is a marvel of clearness and vivacity; whereas to read 'Rasselas' is about as exhilarating as to wade knee-deep through a sandy desert. Voltaire and Johnson, however, the great sceptic and the last of the true old Tories, coincide pretty well in their view of the world, and in the remedy which they suggest. The world is, they agree, full of misery, and the optimism which would deny the reality of the misery is childish. *Il faut cultiver notre jardin* is the last word of 'Candide,' and 18 Johnson's teaching, both here and elsewhere, may be summed up in the words 'Work, and don't whine.' It need not be considered here, nor, perhaps, is it quite plain, what speculative conclusions Voltaire meant to be drawn from his teaching. The peculiarity of Johnson is, that he is apparently indifferent to any such conclusion. A dogmatic assertion, that the world is on the whole a scene of misery, may be pressed into the service of different philosophies. Johnson asserted the opinion resolutely, both in writing and in conversation, but apparently never troubled himself with any inferences but such as have a directly practical tendency. He was no 'speculatist' — a word which now strikes us as having an American twang, but which was familiar to the lexicographer. His only excursion to the borders of such regions was in the very forcible review of Soane Jenyns, who had made a jaunty attempt to explain the origin of evil by the help of a few of Pope's epigrams. Johnson's sledge-hammer

smashes his flimsy platitudes to pieces with an energy too good for such a foe. For speculation, properly so called, there was no need. The review, like 'Rasselas,' is simply a vigorous protest against the popular attempt to make things pleasant by a feeble dilution of the most watery kind of popular teaching. He has no trouble in remarking that the evils of poverty are not alleviated by calling it 'want of riches,' and that there is a poverty which involves want of necessities. The offered consolation, indeed, came rather awkwardly from the elegant country gentleman to the poor scholar who had just known by experience what it was to live upon fourpence-halfpenny a day. Johnson resolutely looks facts in the face, and calls ugly things by their right names. Men, he tells us over and over again, are wretched, and there is no use in denying it. 19 This doctrine appears in his familiar talk, and even in the papers which he meant to be light reading. He begins the prologue to a comedy with the words—

Pressed with the load of life, the weary mind
Surveys the general toil of human kind.

In the 'Life of Savage' he makes the common remark that the lives of many of the greatest teachers of mankind have been miserable. The explanation to which he inclines is that they have not been more miserable than their neighbours, but that their misery has been more conspicuous. His melancholy view of life may have been caused simply by his unfortunate constitution; for everybody sees in the disease of his own liver a disorder of the universe; but it was also intensified by the natural reaction of a powerful nature against the fluent optimism of the time, which expressed itself in Pope's aphorism, *Whatever is, is right*. The strongest men of the time revolted against that attempt to cure a deep-seated disease by a few fine speeches. The form taken by Johnson's revolt is characteristic. His nature was too tender and too manly to incline to Swift's misanthropy. Men might be wretched, but he would not therefore revile them as filthy Yahoos. He was too reverent and cared too little for abstract thought to share the scepticism of Voltaire. In this miserable world the one worthy object of ambition is to do one's duty, and