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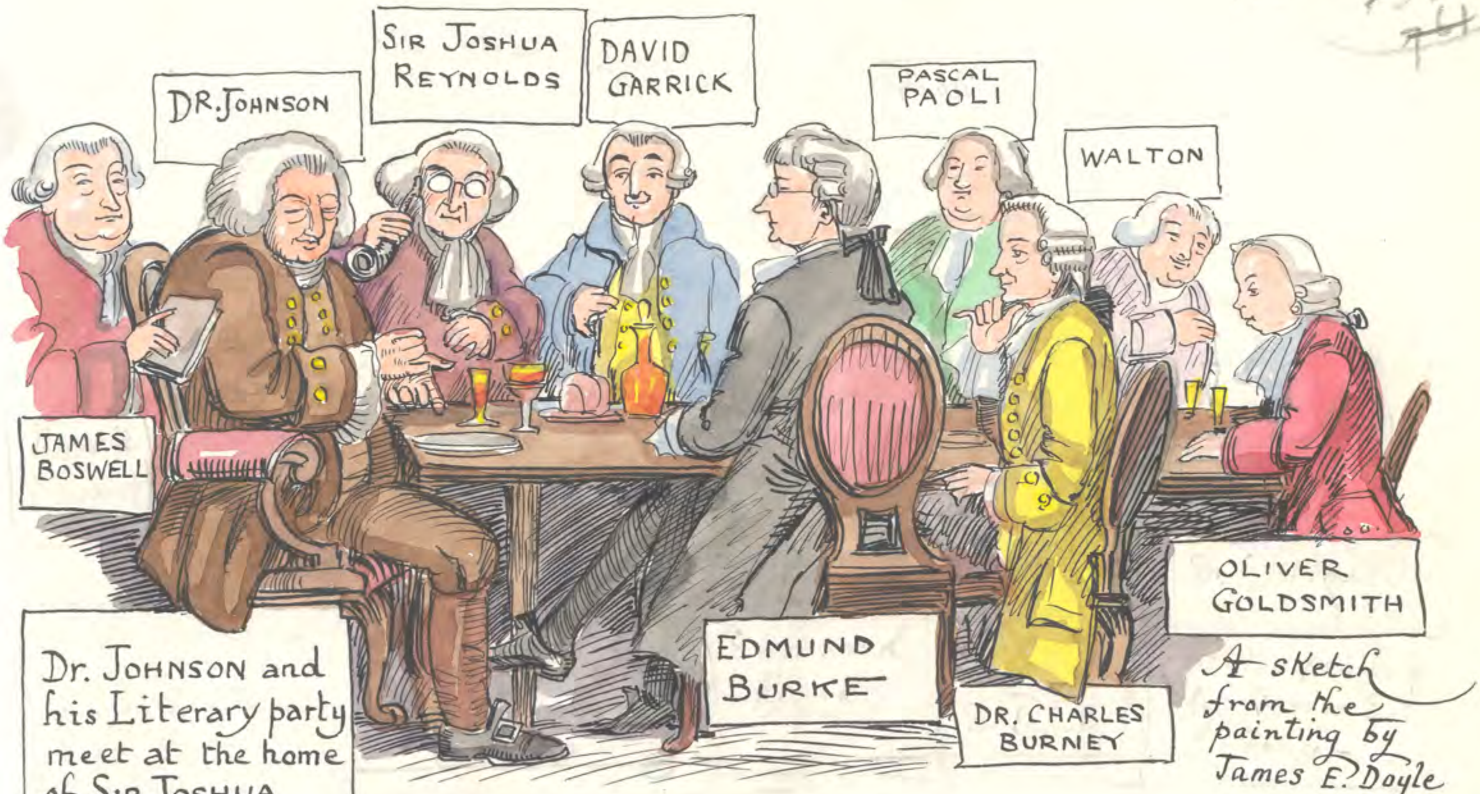


Dr. JOHNSON and his Literary party meet at the home of SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS, on the west side of Leicester Sq.

A sketch from the painting by James E. Doyle

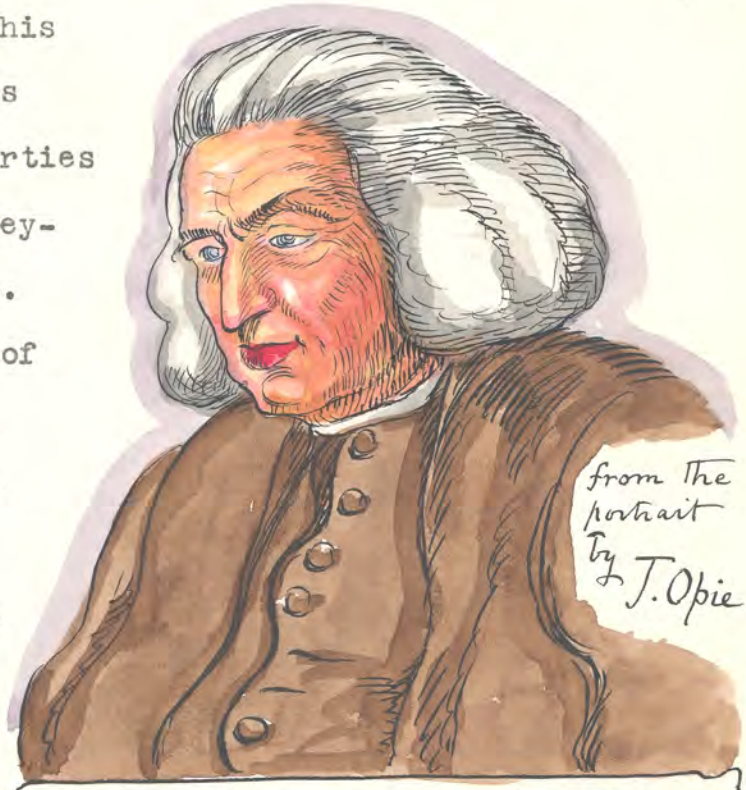
In a reign as long as that of George III, there was opportunity for changes in literature as well as in social life. The changes came in spite of Dr. Samuel Johnson, who, to a very great extent, resented change, and by his personal force and influence delayed literary revolution. He is typical of the new only in the interest roused by his personality. His oddity, his violence, his eccentricities, appealed more to his time than they would to the age of Pope. Having fought his way up from poverty through hardship and struggle, Johnson never lost the marks of the struggle. His natural awkwardness and ungainliness were exaggerated by want and hard work. He was narrow-minded, not from smallness of vision, but from depth and force of conviction. He was a royalist and a man of unreasoning faith, even of superstition. Nevertheless, he was an interesting man, who drew

other interesting men to him. Johnson lives today, not as a writer, but as the friend of many famous writers and men about town. Also, he lives today by what James Boswell, his biographer, wrote about him. Boswell was to Johnson what "Dr. Watson" was to Sherlock Holmes---a satellite and faithful chronicler. Boswell and Johnson, in partnership, created one of the greatest works of the Eighteenth century, Boswell's Life of Johnson.

The burly figure of Johnson, born to grapple with whole libraries, his Atlantean shoulders a little stooped (as under the burden of his times) is the dominant figure of the century---painted on several canvases by his good friend, Sir Joshua Reynolds, the first President of the Royal Academy. The great Doctor's dynamic genius was

imparted through his writings, but more vigorously through his conversations at the meetings of the Johnson Club, or at parties in the homes of Sir Joshua Reynolds and Dr. Charles Burney.

The Doctor had a way of "energizing", clarifying and raising to their highest potential, the poetic imagination of his gifted friends. Doubtless, he had a part in animating the work of Sir Joshua the painter, of David Garrick the actor, and Oliver Goldsmith the poet. Even Burke the parliamentarian, young Sheridan the dramatist, and Frances Burney the novelist, felt inspired by Johnson's conversations, which the faithful Boswell declared roused him to the highest pitch!



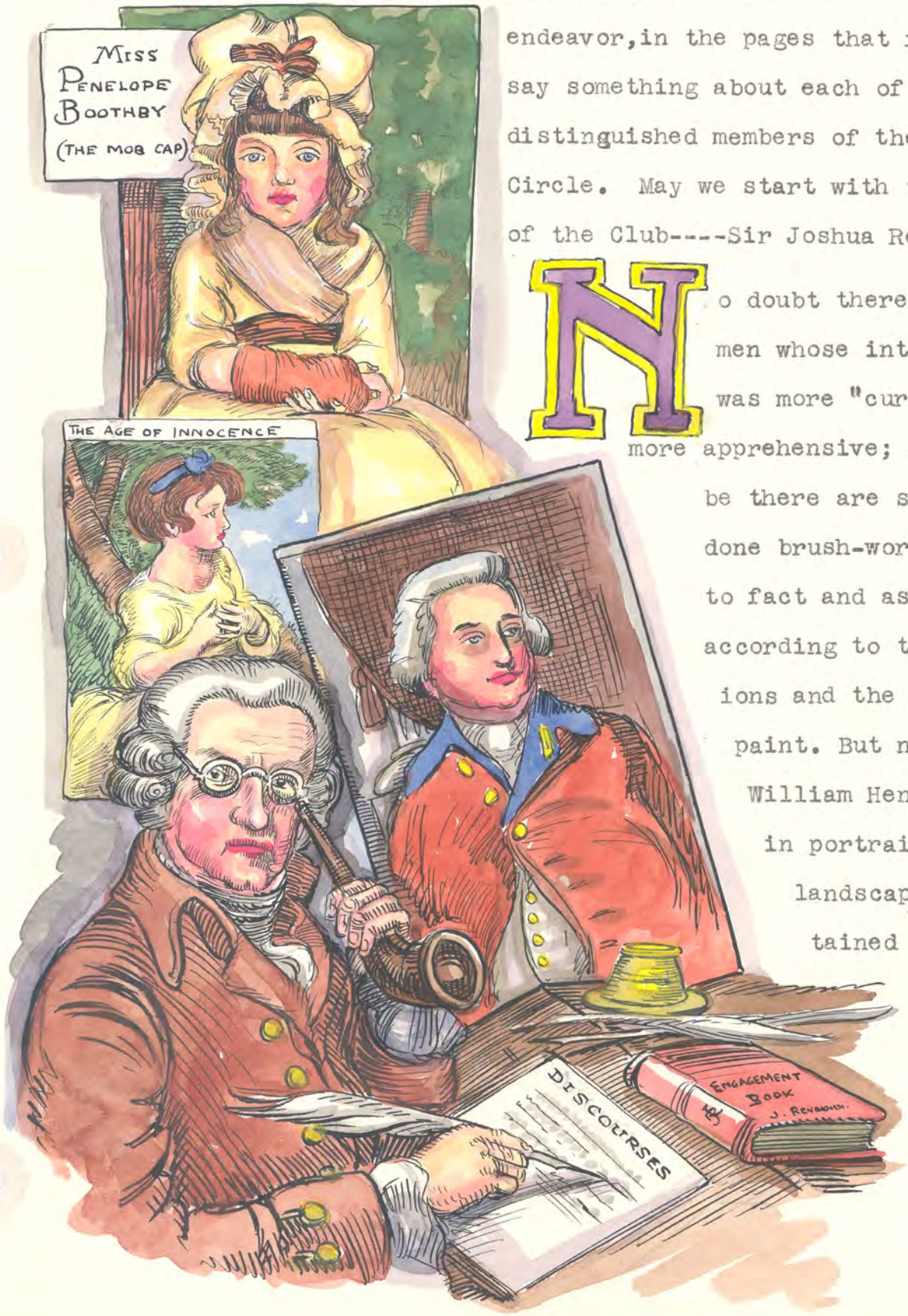
from The portrait by J. Opie

— not the greatest writer, but perhaps the most massive figure of a man of letters. Common sense gave point to his wit, balance to his morality, a Tory limitation to his intellectual sympathy. His contemporaries knew him to be thoroughly honest, provedly intelligent, and yet permeated by every prejudice of the age. He loved to deal with facts, and no partisan had so large a stock of them at his disposal as did Samuel Johnson..

From 1747 on, for eight years, Johnson wrote essays in hot haste, not enjoying it, for a living. At the same time he was engaged on his famous Dictionary, which brought reputation to the Doctor and added luster to the age!

The Literary Club that gathered around

Dr. Johnson was the "happy thought" of Sir Joshua. It began in I764 with nine members,and included (besides Johnson and Reynolds)Burke,Beauclerk,Langton,Dr.Percy,and Goldsmith. We shall endeavor,in the pages that follow,to say something about each of these very distinguished members of the Johnson Circle. May we start with the inaugurator of the Club----Sir Joshua Reynolds.



No doubt there have been men whose intelligence was more "curious" and more apprehensive; and it may be there are some who have done brush-work as close to fact and as eloquent according to the conditions and the rules of paint. But none,says William Henley,"whether in portraiture or landscape,has maintained so lofty and so imperturbable(meaning calm, serene,incapable of being discon-

-certed)a level of excellence,or shown so constant and so exquisite a respect for dignity of style."

The English,as a rule,have regarded art as nothing if not personal,and have valued their painters not according to their special gifts,but as "interesting",or"mysterious",or"engaging" persons.

It is none the less true that Sir Joshua Reynolds,whatever his place in the art of England,was a conspicuous figure in the art of the world before or since his day.

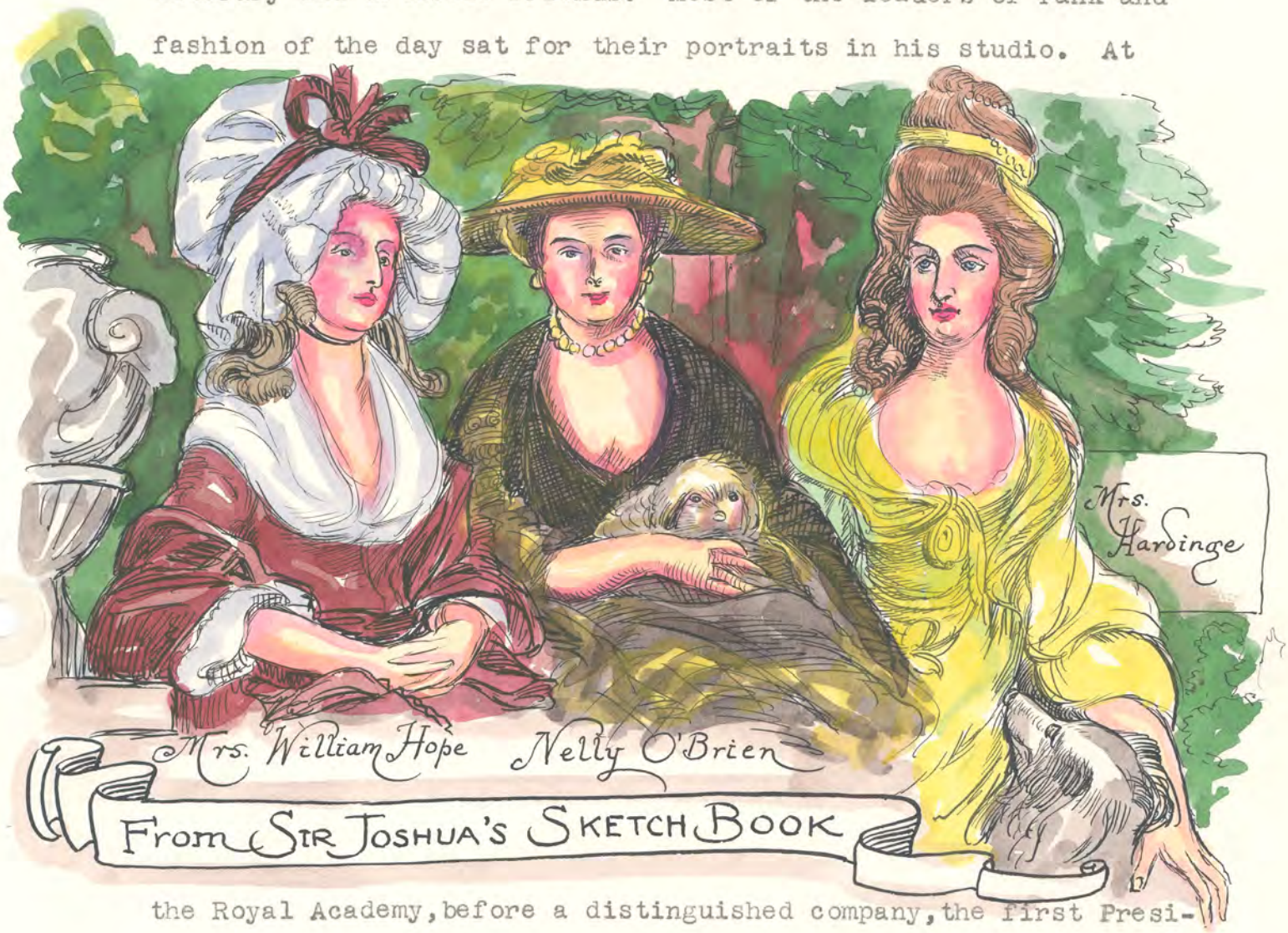
In the eighteenth century,the first real British school of painters appeared under the leadership of Sir Joshua,who,as President of the Royal Academy,won a triumph for British art,painting hundreds of portraits ("Porous fashion-plates" according to some art-critics!)with a rich coloring and dignity that won popular approval. Sir Joshua's love of color was evident in his use of brilliant and fugitive pigments---which accounts for the decay of many of his best works. He used to say jestingly that

what ever is expressed in Common words is never forcibly expressed to the imagination, indeed a very little reflection will shew this ever must be the case, the mode

FACSIMILE OF SIR JOSHUA'S HANDWRITING

COUNTESS SPENCER and her SON

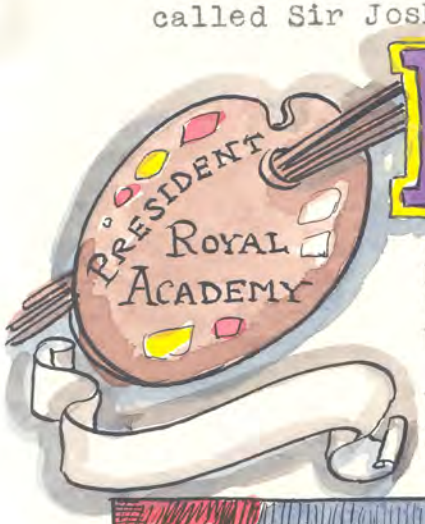
he "came off with flying colors" ! At his grand house in Leicester Fields, Sir Joshua often entertained numerous gatherings of literary and artistic friends. Most of the leaders of rank and fashion of the day sat for their portraits in his studio. At



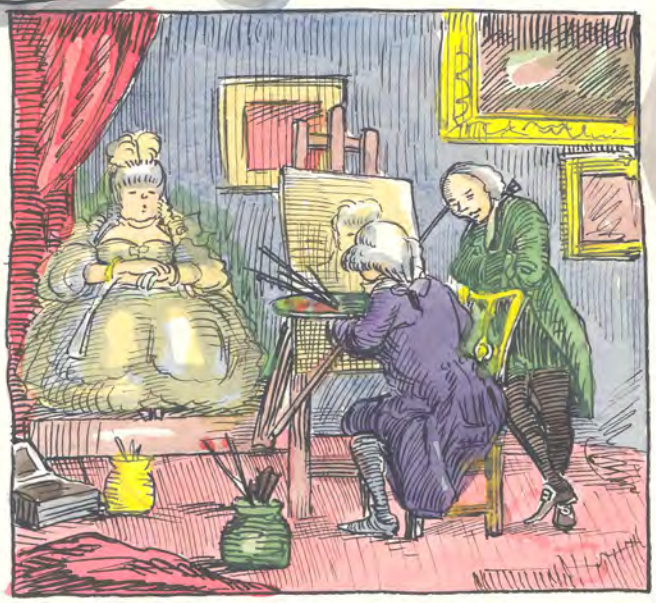
the Royal Academy, before a distinguished company, the first President of the Academy delivered his lectures on Painting. When it was supposed that Dr. Johnson had assisted Sir Joshua in the composition of his "Discourses on Painting", the Doctor indignantly declared that "Sir Joshua Reynolds would as soon get me to paint for him as write for him". Sir Joshua died, full of honors and years, in 1792, and was buried near Sir Christopher Wren in St. Paul's Cathedral.

We shall sum up this brief sketch of

the Romulus of the Johnson Club(so Mrs Thrale said Dr. Johnson called Sir Joshua Reynolds),with Oliver Goldsmith's tribute:

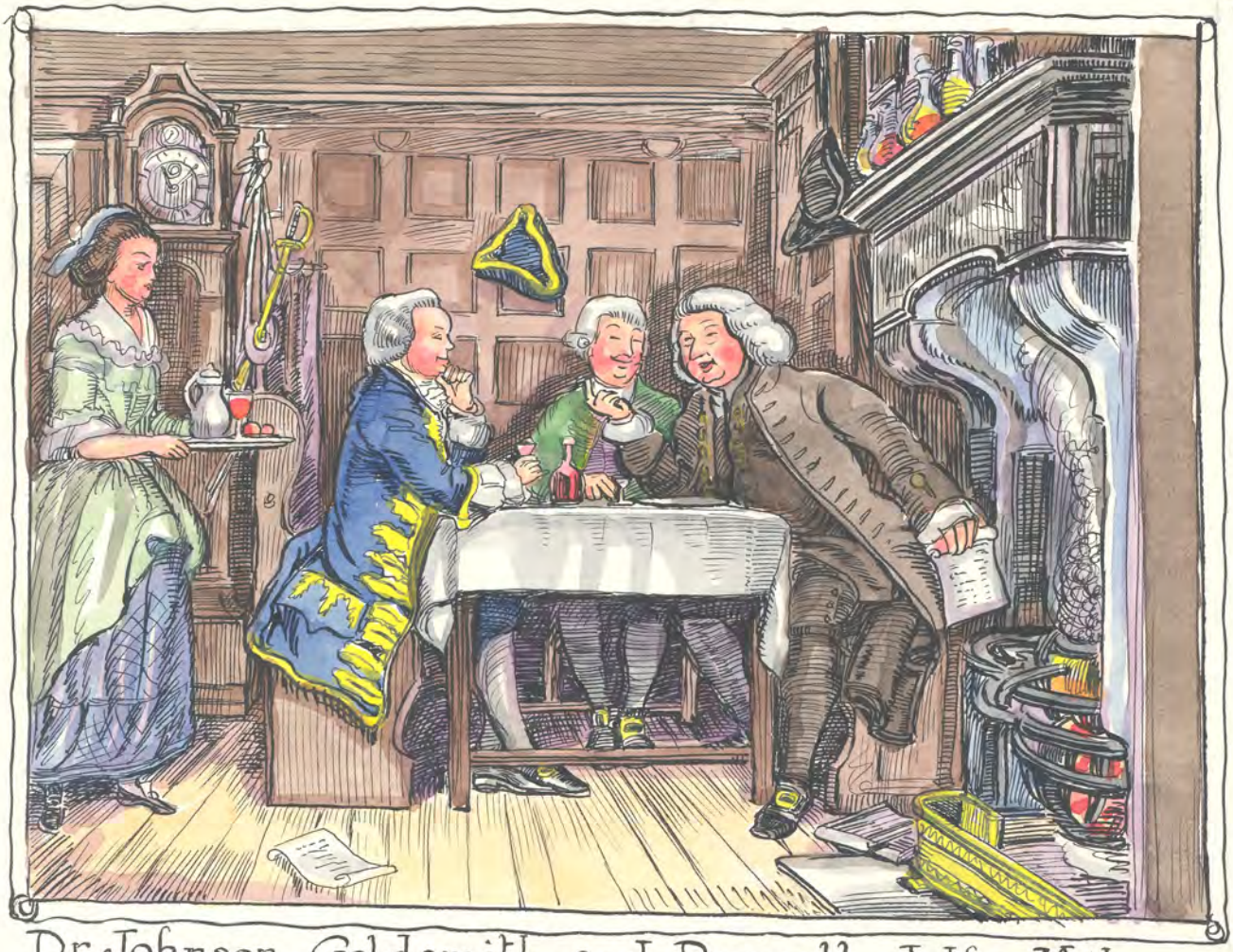


Here Reynolds is laid,and,to tell you my mind,
He has not left a wiser or better behind.
His pencil was striking,resistless,and grand:
His manners were gentle,complying,and bland;
Still born to improve us in every part,
His pencil our faces,his manners our heart.
To coxcombs averse,yet most civilly steering,
When they judged without skill he was still hard
of hearing!
When they talked of their Raphaels,Correggios,and stuff,
He shifted his trumpet and only took snuff.



SIR JOSHUA AT WORK IN HIS STUDIO IN LINCOLN'S FIELDS (DR. GOLDSMITH LOOKS ON)

Oliver Goldsmith had just won a little notice as the writer of essays--- a series of admirably humorous and pungent "Chinese letters" (afterwards published in volume as "The Citizen of the World"), when he made the acquaintance of Dr. Johnson. It was Bishop Percy who arranged for a meeting of Johnson and Goldsmith. When the learned divine called at Dr. Johnson's home,he found,to his great astonishment,that Johnson was "in a marked condition of studied neatness"---without his rusty brown suit,or soiled shirt, or unbuckled shoes,or unpowdered wig. In fact,says Percy,"he had on a new suit of clothes...I could not help inquiring the cause for this sudden and singular transformation". "Why,sir",said Johnson, I hear that Goldsmith,who is a very great sloven,justifies his disregard of cleanliness and decency by quoting my practice;and I am



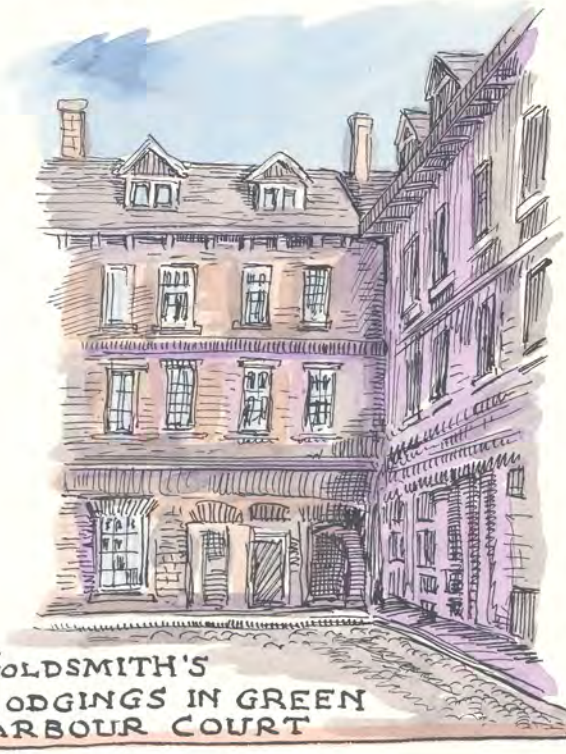
Dr. Johnson, Goldsmith, and Boswell at the Mitre

The Mitre Tavern, on the south side of Fleet Street, was Johnson's favorite resort.

desirous this night to show him a better example." The example was not lost, as the extracts from tailors' bills soon revealed! But the anecdote offers proof of the interest already felt by Johnson in his new friend.

Beyond all question, "Goldy" (as Johnson affectionately called Goldsmith) filled a big place in the circle of celebrated writers who surrounded the Doctor. In the opinion of Dr. Johnson, Goldsmith's poems "The Traveler" and "The Deserted Village" were finer than anything that had appeared since the days of Pope. We get glimpses of Goldsmith's life at school, and college, of his experiences as a vagabond musician in Europe, of his

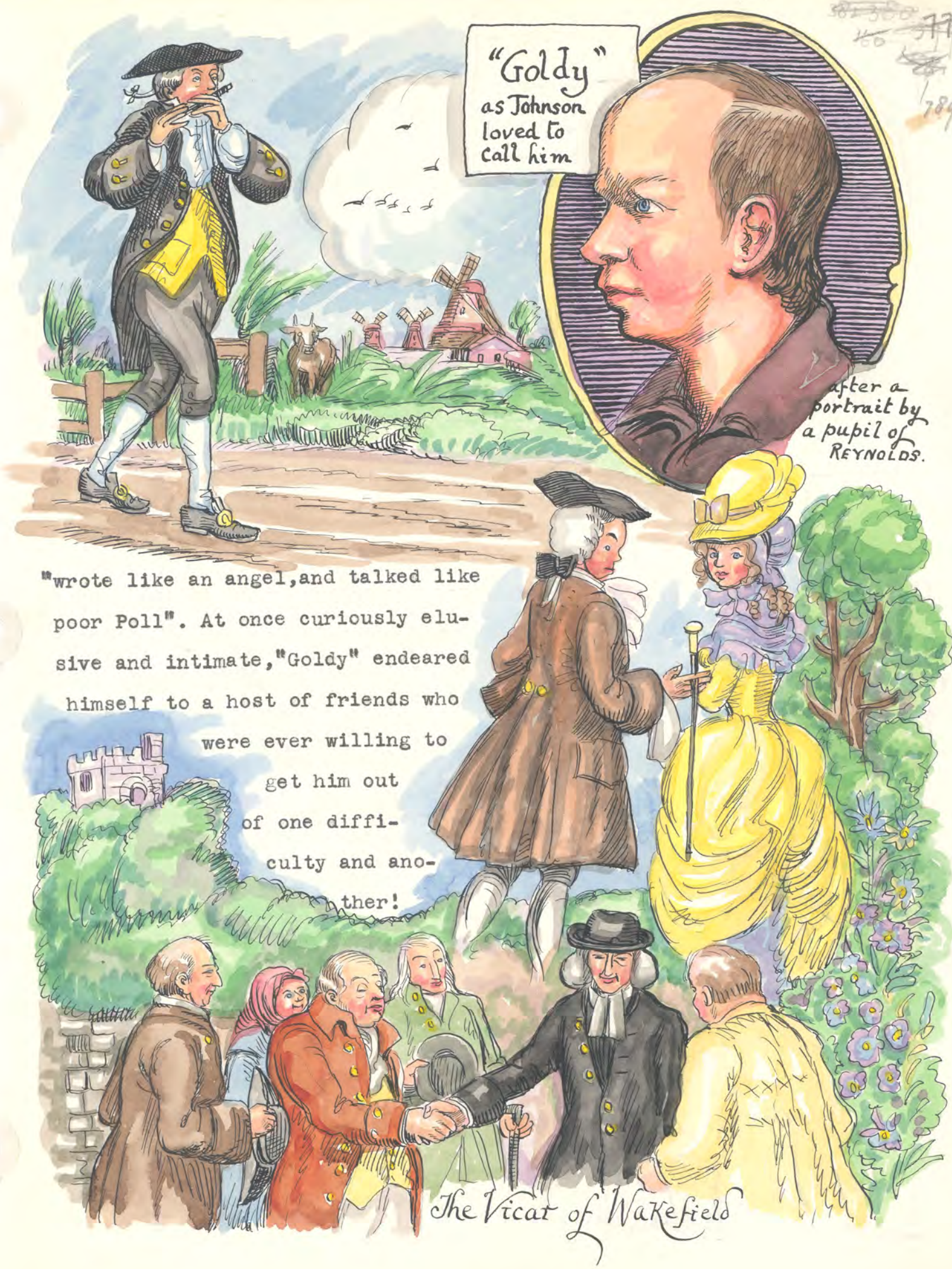
success and failure as a hack-writer and balladist in London, of his attempts to set up in practice as a medical man, and so forth--- in his essays, poems, and in parts of his charming novel, "The Vicar of Wakefield", and in his play "She Stoops to Conquer". His improvidence in squandering his earnings on beggars, on expensive parties, and on extravagantly appointed rooms, and on bright-colored and ostentatious dress, kept poor "Goldy" always in debt. One evening he gave away his blankets to a woman who told him a pitiful tale, and spent the night shivering in bed for lack of adequate covering. During his last years, he sometimes received as much as £800 in twelve months; but the more he earned, the deeper he plunged into debt. When he died at the age of forty-five, he owed £2,000; and his funeral was attended by several of his creditors! He was loved because "e'en his failings leaned to virtue's side". In his big way, Dr. Johnson declared that "Goldy"



GOLDSMITH'S LODGINGS IN GREEN ARBOUR COURT

I ask pardon for taking up so much time
Nor shall I add to it by any other profesions than that I am
Sir your Humble Jewt.
Oliver Goldsmith.

GOLDSMITH JOHNSON BOSWELL


"Goldy"
as Johnson
loved to
call him
after a
portrait by
a pupil of
REYNOLDS.
"wrote like an angel, and talked like
poor Poll". At once curiously elu-
sive and intimate, "Goldy" endeared
himself to a host of friends who
were ever willing to
get him out
of one diffi-
culty and ano-
ther!
The Vicar of Wakefield

Goldsmith's literary power lies in the combined charm of his style and the warmth of his heart. Observe in the following passage with what an"exquisite art of artlessness" the personal feeling and human pathos are described:

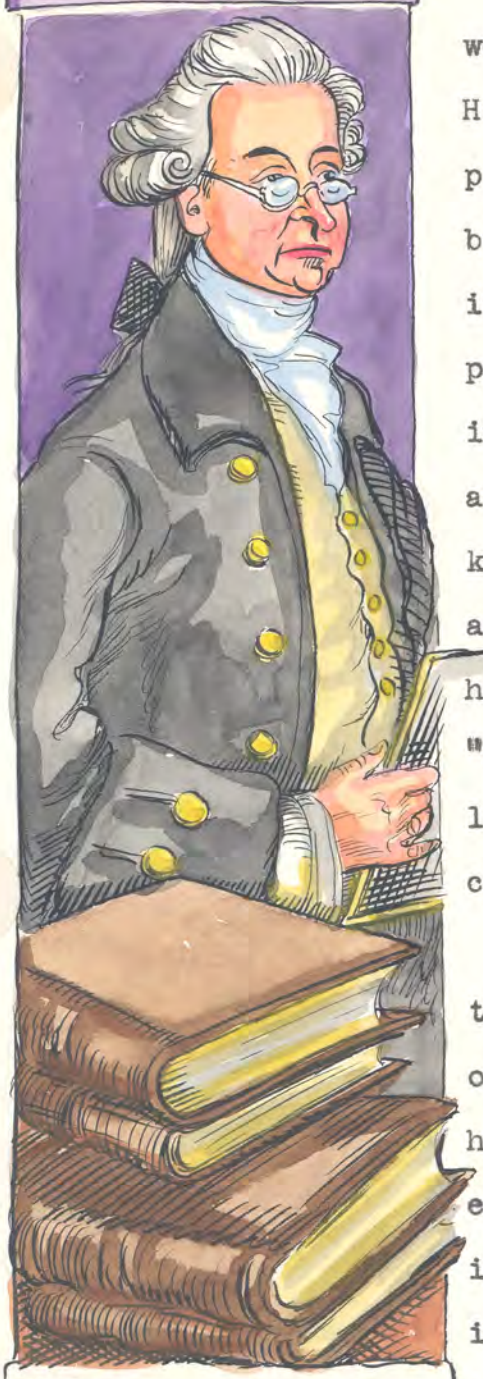
Though poor the peasant's hut,his feasts though small,
He sees his little lot the lot of all;
Sees no contiguous palace rear its head
To shame the meanness of his humble shed;
No costly lord the sumptuous banquet deal
To make him loathe his vegetable meal;
But calm,and bred in ignorance and toil,
Each wish contracting,fits him to the soil.
Cheerful at morn he wakes from short repose,
Breasts the keen air,and carols as he goes;
With patient angle trolls the finny deep;
Or drives his venturous plough-share to the steep;
Or seeks the den where snow-tracks mark the way,
And drags the struggling savage into day.
At night returning,every labor sped,
He sits him down the monarch of a shed;
Smiles by his cheerful fire,and round surveys
His children's looks that brighten at the blaze---
While his loved partner,boastful of her hoard,
Displays her cleanly platter on the board:
And happly too some pilgrim,thither led,
With many a tale repays the nightly bed.

Dr. Johnson saw something of the universality of Goldsmith's genius,and in the epitaph he wrote for Goldsmith's memorial tablet in Westminster,expressed the sentiment in Latin:"nullum quod tetigit non ornavit"---he touched none that he did not adorn.

When this greatly-loved member of the Johnson Club died in I774,in his Temple Chambers in Buck Court,the news came to Sir Joshua Reynolds,who put aside his brushes for the day,and to Edmund Burke,who burst into tears. Today,Goldsmith's gravestone in the Temple is visited by lovers of his delightful essays and poems and novel,which continue to be a source of much gentle entertainment.

Goldsmith and Edmund Burke,the brilliant Whig leader,were always looked upon as the Irish part of the Johnson circle. They

BURKE



His breadth of thought and wealth of expression enabled him to present an idea from many different points of view, so that if his readers do not comprehend his position from one side, they may from another.....

were contemporaries at Trinity College,Dublin. However,in personal quality and mind,they were poles apart. Goldsmith's talk often flashed wit, but,as Johnson remarked,he went on without knowing how to get off. Burke's talk flowed in a perpetual stream,the ebullition of a full mind! Once in illness Johnson said that Burke called forth all his powers: "Were I to see Burke now it would kill me". In general Johnson hated "vile Whigs", and said that the first Whig was the Devil. Yet he loved Burke who was a Whig through and through. "I can live very well with Burke; I love his knowledge,his genius,his diffusion,and affluence of conversation",said the old lexicographer.

Burke was of greater mental stature than mere talker,or orator,statesman,political philosopher, or critic. So his acquaintances found him; and so he seems in all his writings. His chivalric soul was ever engaged in the battle against oppression and injustice---on behalf of Ireland,the American colonies,English constitutional freedom,exploited India, and against the violent tyranny of the mob which he discerned in the French Revolution. The same grand ideas underlie all his work. Read his school-worn speech On Conciliation,or his speeches on the misdemeanours of Warren Hastings in India. He is loved today for the same ideas that Johnson loved in him---Burke teems with practical and solid wisdom,pulsing with an earnestness and emotion that reinforce the truth.

I propose being at Lausanne before the end of next month. I feel as I ought your kind anxiety at my leaving England, but you will not disapprove my chusing the place most agreable to my circumstances and temper, and I need not remind you that all countries are under the care of the same providence.

most affectionately Yours

E Gibbon

Sheffield place
June 30th 1788

Also in the circle of famous men associated with Dr. Johnson was Edward Gibbon, the famous historian of the "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire", the first volume of which appeared in I776. Says Gibbon about his immediate triumph:

"The first impression was exhausted in a few days; a second and third edition was scarcely adequate to the demand, and the bookseller's property was twice invaded by the pirates of Dublin. My book was on every table and almost on every toilette; the historian was crowned by the taste or fashion of the day; nor was the general voice disturbed by the barking of any "profane" critic.

The final volume was completed in I787. Up to this time History had been regarded by English writers merely as the superficial story of nations. The historian told about "what happened". He might, if inspired, decorate the tale a bit with some poetic writing. Or he might even invent some noble speeches for his heroes, and fabri-

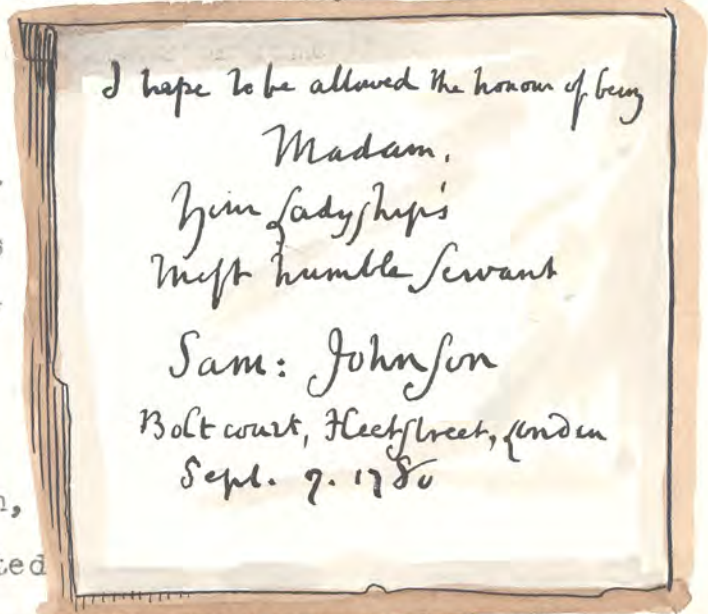
The first volume of the great "DECLINE AND FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE" took the world by storm. HUME could not believe that an Englishman could have written it. It became a source of immortal fame to Gibbon.

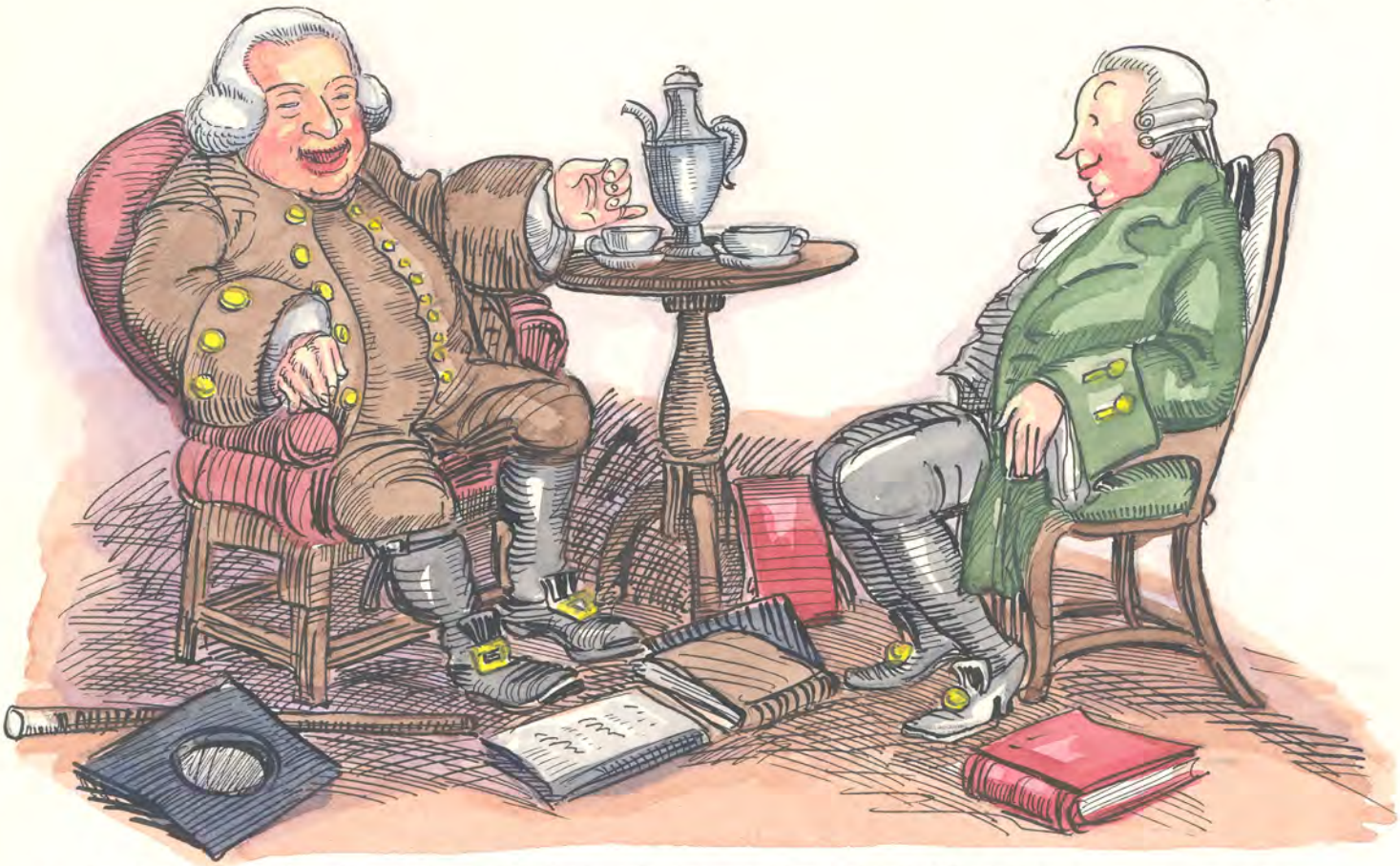
cate a few folk tales about the villains and heroes. But with Gibbon it was different. In his story of the Roman Empire, he attempted to combine thoroughness and accuracy with the power to hammer out the facts into a connected chain of episodes and movements. Also, he exercised a literary gift which fused the whole together into a living work of literature. "Pleasant it is", says the reader "to review with Gibbon the matchless fading pageant of Rome, borne smoothly along on the soft upholstery of his Latinized diction...." Edward Gibbon's life has the simplicity of an epic. His work was to write his history. Nothing else was allowed to rob this idea of its majesty. It has been wittily said of him that he came at last to believe that he was the Roman Empire, or, at all events, something equally majestic and imposing! Having written a magnificent history of the Roman Empire, he felt that he should write the history of the historian! Accordingly we have his Autobiography. These two immortal works, says Augustin Birrell, act and react upon one another: "the historian sends us to the

autobiography,and the autobiography sends us to the history". 794

After the death of his father in I770,Gibbon came into possession of a moderate estate,and he established himself in London. His circle of friends embraced nearly all the eminent men of his day. Sir Joshua Reynolds painted his portrait. He joined Johnson's Literary Club,although,as Dr. Johnson remarked,Lords and ladies don't like having their mouths shut. Gibbon never shut anybody's mouth,and in Johnson's presence rarely opened his own. "He is such an amazing ugly fellow",said Johnson,who objected to the little,fat,pucker-faced mannikin,with a hole for a mouth,too elegant of raiment and manners. Gibbon,who was constantly tapping his snuff-box,nervously conscious of fame,irritated the Doctor no end. "The fellow poisons the whole club to me",cries the Doctor,although he knew very well that Gibbon was accounted "a popular member of the club". Boswell observes that "Mr.Gibbon, with his usual sneer",controverted the Doctor's views;"perhaps in resentment of Johnson's having talked with some disgust of his ugliness",which(continues Boswell)"one would think a Philosopher would not mind". Evidently,Gibbon was not

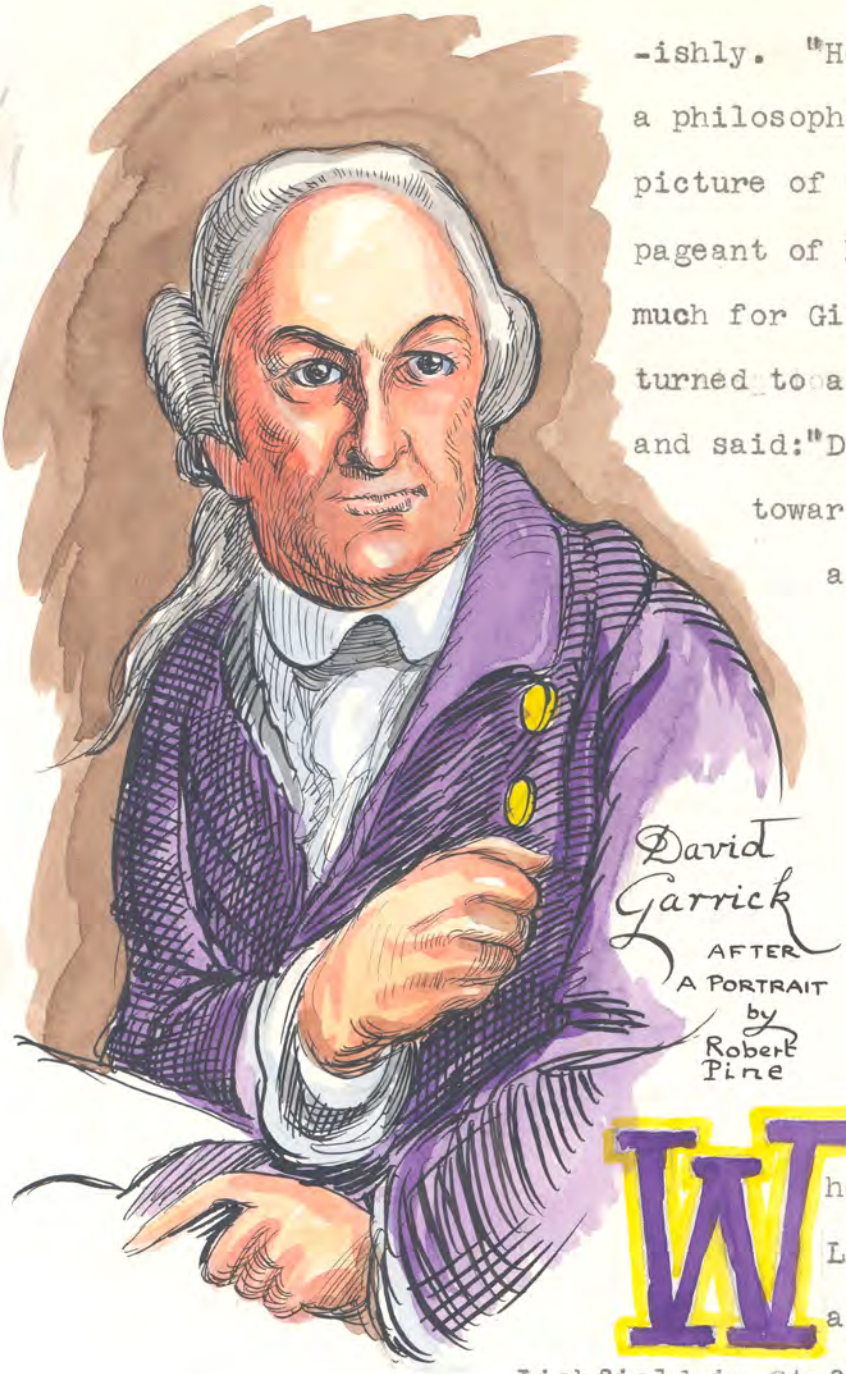
DR. JOHNSON'S HOUSE IN BOLT ~~STREET~~ COURT, FLEET STREET





a philosopher! In the opinion of Augustin Birrell, Gibbon was neither a great thinker nor a great man. He had neither light nor warmth. This is what, doubtless, prompted Sir James Macintosh's famous exclamation, that you might scoop Gibbon's mind out of Burke's without missing it.

But we must do justice to the eminent historian. Avowedly Gibbon wrote for fame. He built his "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" meaning it to last. He got £6,000 for writing it. The booksellers netted £60,000 by printing it. Gibbon did not mind. He did an honest piece of work, and he has had a noble reward. Had he attempted (as a philosopher might attempt) to know the ultimate causes of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire, he must have failed, egregiously, child-



-ishly. "He abated his pretensions as a philosopher, was content to attempt some picture of the thing acted---of the great pageant of history---and succeeded". So much for Gibbon, who, tapping his snuff-box, turned to a lady who knew Dr. Johnson well, and said: "Don't you think, Madam, (looking towards Johnson) that among all your acquaintance, you could find one exception" (to the rule that "every man of any education would rather be called a rascal, than be accused of deficiency in the graces")?" The lady, ~~so~~ we are informed by Boswell, smiled and seemed to acquiesce.

When Doctor Johnson went to London in 1737 (having failed as a teacher at Edial, near Lichfield, in Staffordshire), he was accompanied by "the only pupils that were put under his care"---David Garrick and his brother, George. The Doctor and David Garrick, it is pleasant to believe, remained true friends, though Johnson's outspokenness was sometimes hard for "Davy" to bear. In time, Garrick became one of the celebrated actors of the century. When Boswell spoke of Garrick "assuming the airs of a great man", Johnson denied it. "It is wonderful how little he assumes---fortunam reverenter habet"; and the Doctor went on to speak of Garrick's temptation by the

applause of the world which accompanied the actor everywhere, and how little he was spoiled by it. "He has made a player a higher character", continued Johnson; "he has given away more money than any man in England". Such we may take to be the great moralist's opinion of his life-long friend. But this opinion was tempered occasionally by a certain contempt for, or mistrust of, the theatrical profession.

There was some justification for Dr. Johnson's mistrust of the playhouse and the acting profession of his day. The Middlesex Grand Jury, convening at the opening of the century, found little but condemnation for the Theater. "The plays which are frequently acted in the play-houses in Drury Lane and Lincoln Inn Fields", declared the Jury, "are full of prophane, irreverent, lewd, indecent, and immoral expressions,

COSTUME ON THE STAGE AT THE END OF THE CENTURY.

and tend to the great displeasure of Almighty God, and to the corruption of the auditory both in their principles and their practices."

Peg Woffington, one of Garrick's leading ladies — famous for her beauty and her skill in such different parts as those of noble ladies, homely gossips and dashing minxes.

From the pulpit and press came occasional explamations against the immorality and obscenity of the stage. A mid-century critic may have seen some improvement, for he objected to the theater only on the ground that its entertainment was "piffling" and too trifling to give constructive satisfaction to the audience.

In maintaining a clean stage the celebrated actresses of the day must share the credit. To Garrick's leading ladies, such as Mrs. Clive and Mrs. Abington and Peg Woffington, some slight tribute is due for maintaining a certain excellence in their work.

On this page we have taken the liberty of reproducing the portrait sketch of the beautiful Peg Woffington, and on the next sketches of the great

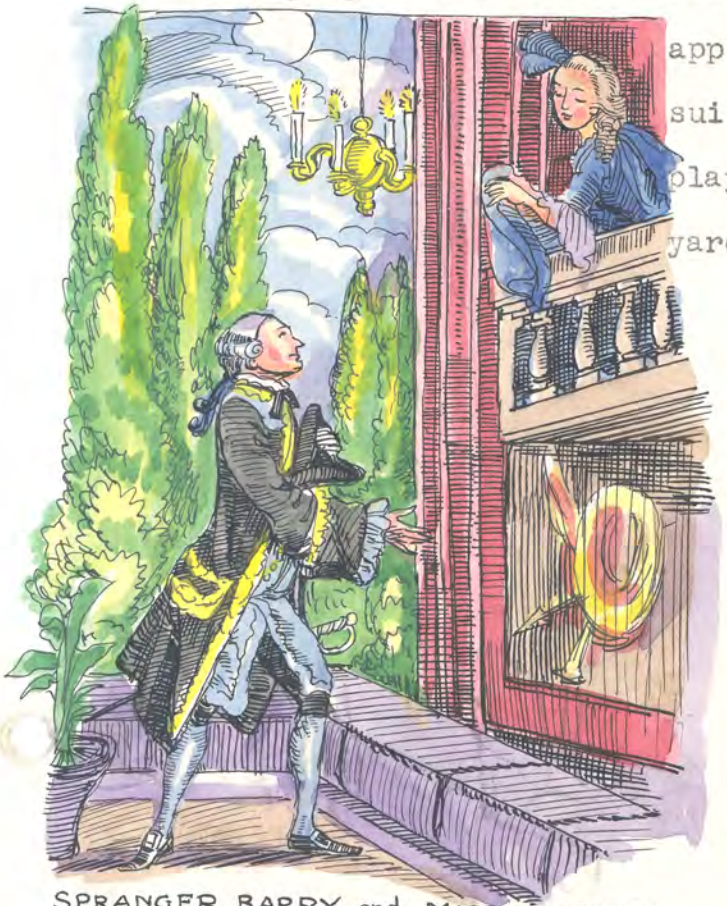
Mrs. Siddons as the TRAGIC MUSE after the painting by Sir Joshua Reynolds P.R.A.

after the portrait by Gainsborough

star of the Eighteenth century stage, Mrs. Siddons, who achieved a success on the London stage as sensational as that of David Garrick himself. Sir Joshua Reynolds's representation of Mrs. Siddons as the Tragic Muse gives us some idea of the high esteem in which her contemporaries held her. Gainsborough's portrait illustrates the fact that Mrs. Siddons was a beautiful woman as well as a great actress. She was the delight of portrait-painters. Dr. Johnson regarded Mrs. Siddons as one of the refining influences of the

times. Lady Macbeth remained her greatest part; but she was also excellent as Katharine in "Henry VIII".

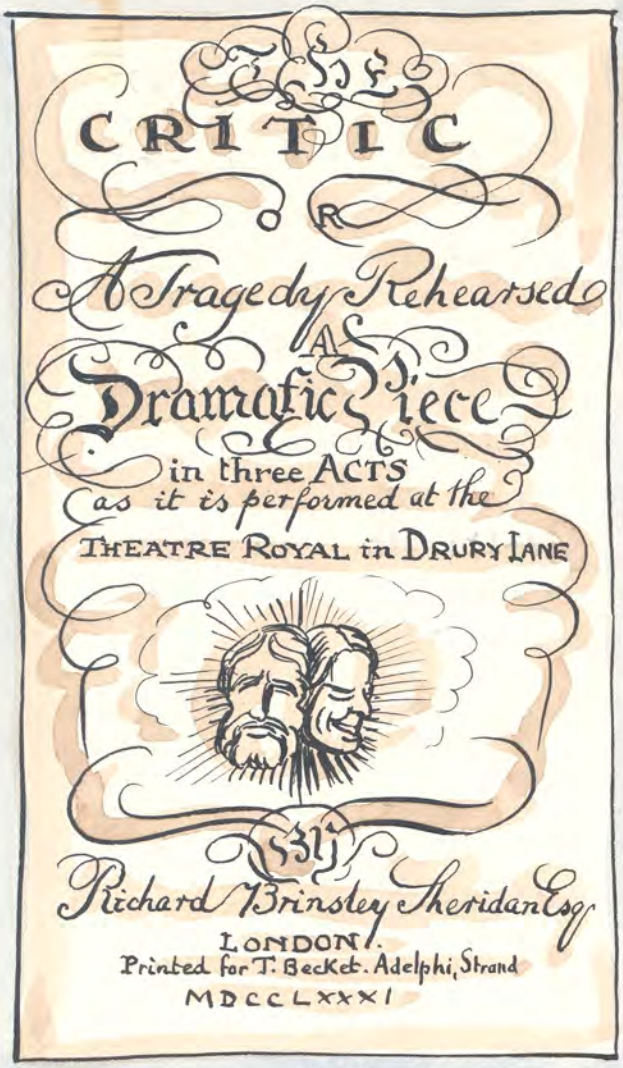
Among David Garrick's beneficial contributions to the theater may be included the revival of Shakespeare's dramas, whereby he managed to rid the playhouses of the scandalous and "piffling" dramas of an earlier day. The rising middle-class folk appreciated "As You Like It", the "Merry Wives of Windsor", and "A Winter's Tale", and little attention was paid to correct costuming of the characters. In "Othello", for example, the hero appeared as a general in the regimental suit of the King's Guard. Mrs. Siddons played Lady Macbeth in a hoop skirt eight yards in circumference!



SPRANGER BARRY and MISS NOSSITER IN THE BALCONY SCENE OF Romeo & Juliet.

Dr. Johnson who assumed quite a proprietary air towards Garrick, spoke of him as "the first man in the world for sprightly conversation". In all respects, Garrick was a great public figure, to whom much id due for raising the social standing of the actor's calling.

In his poem "Retaliation", Goldsmith

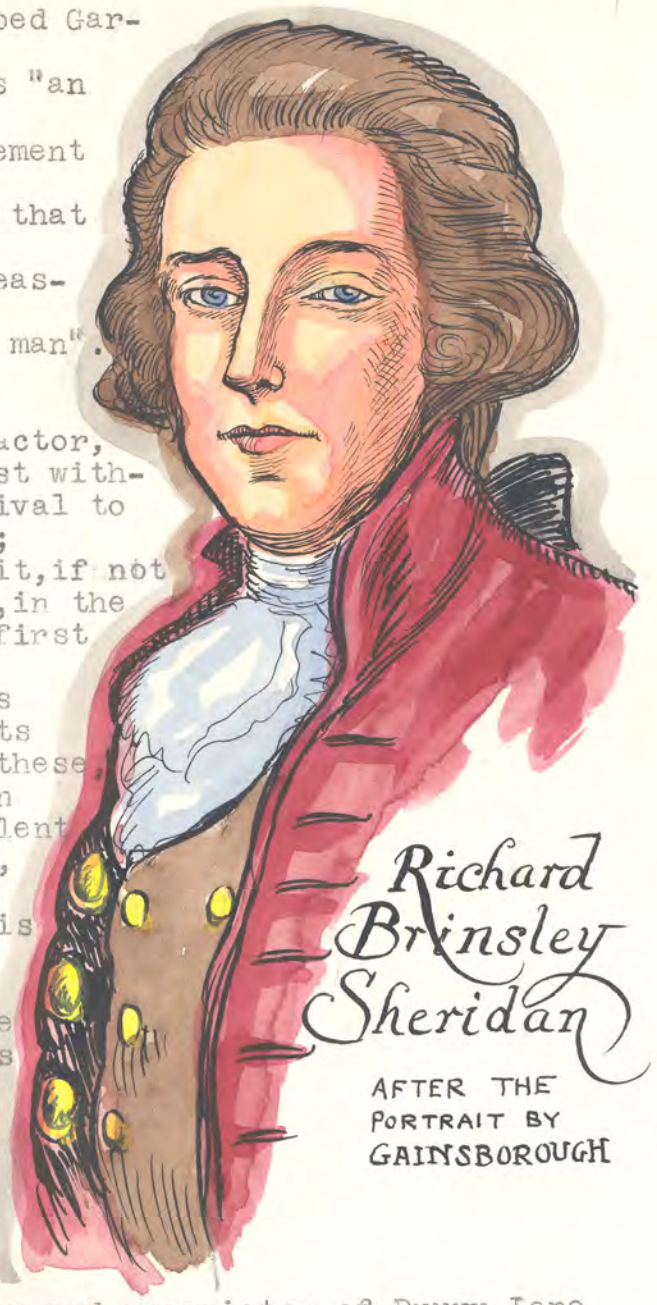


Title-page of First Edition

described Garrick as "an abridgement of all that was pleasant in man".

As an actor,
confest without rival to shine;
As a wit, if not first, in the very first line.
Yet his talents like these, and an excellent heart,
The man had his failings, a dupe to his art;

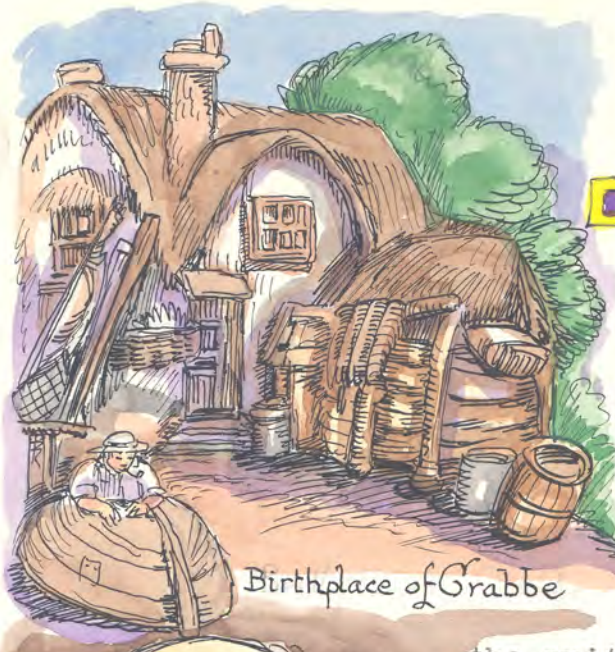
Or the stage he was natural, simple affecting---
'Twas only that when he was off he was acting!



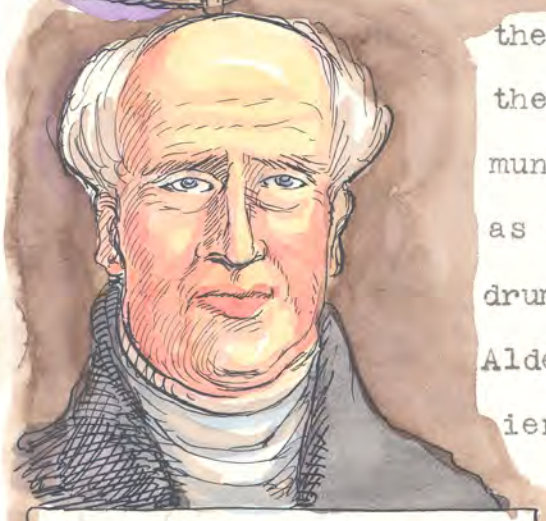
Richard Brinsley Sheridan

AFTER THE PORTRAIT BY GAINSBOROUGH

David Garrick was succeeded as manager and proprietor of Drury Lane Theater by Richard Brinsley Sheridan. In the spring of 1777, Dr. Johnson proposed Sheridan's name to membership in the Club, as "one who had written the two best comedies of the stage". These were "The Rivals", and the first comic opera with original tunes (the progenitor of Gilbert and Sullivan) called "The Duenna". Perhaps by "best" Johnson meant successful. In 1780, Sheridan entered Parliament. With Burke, he was the chief ornament at the trial of Warren Hastings, and he was hailed as one of the great orators in an age of many fine speeches.



Birthplace of Crabbe



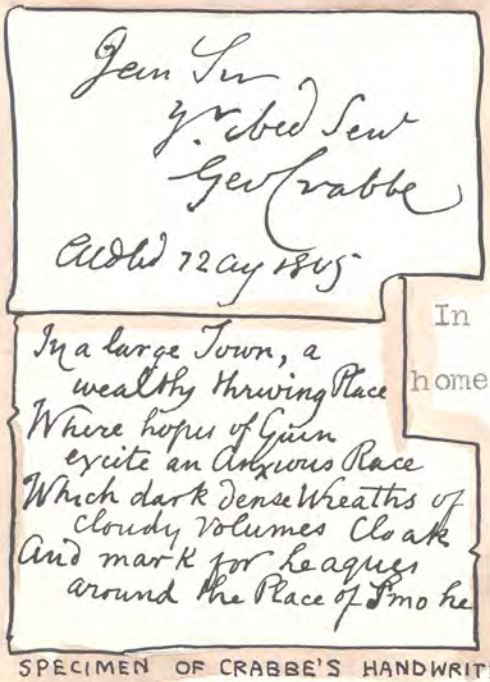
Rev. George Crabbe

Among the several literary men who received help and encouragement from Dr. Johnson, was George Crabbe, the Suffolk poet. Boswell informs us that in 1783, the Doctor "revised Crabb's admirable poem, "The Village", and took the trouble "not only to suggest slight corrections and variations, but to furnish some lines when he thought that he could give the writer's meaning better than in the words of the manuscript". Crabbe worked in a remote community, first as a medical practitioner and then as a preacher, and out of the sordid, dismal, humdrum, forgotten corner of the seacoast village of Aldeburgh in Suffolk, he derived a store of experiences, characters and tales which were the reverse of the idealistic presentations of Goldsmith's "Deserted Village". Crabbe declined to follow the fashion of speaking idealistically of rural life. He says:

I grant indeed that fields and flocks have charms
For him that grazes or him that farms;
But when amid such pleasing scenes I trace
The poor laborious natives of the place.
* * * * *
Then shall I dare these real ills to hide
In tinsel trappings of poetic pride?

In this spirit he describes the barren coast, the home of the smuggler, the community of

A bold and artful, surly, savage race,
Who only skilled to take the finny tribe,
The yearly dinner, or septennial bribe;
Wait on the shore, and, as the waves run high,
On the tossed vessel bend their eager eye,
Which to the coast directs its venturous way,
Theirs, or the ocean's miserable prey.



SPECIMEN OF CRABBE'S HANDWRITING.

George Crabbe is the great realist of English poetry. His subjects, taken mainly from the life of the middle and lower classes, are presented with an uncompromising adherence to visible truth. "I paint the cot, as truth will paint it, and as bards will not", says he. His reaction against the poetic falsification of life carried him, however, to the opposite extreme. He dwells too much upon the dark and sordid aspects of human nature.

A strong light was thrown upon the infamous conditions in English prisons by the work of JOHN HOWARD, F.R.S., one of the greatest of all prison reformers and philanthropists. His great work THE STATE OF THE PRISONS was first published in 1777, and focussed much attention on the abuses of the Penal System of the Eighteenth Century.

It was under the genial patronage of Edmund Burke that Crabbe made the acquaintance of Dr. Johnson, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and others in the Circle.

Dr. Johnson's personality, as we have observed before, is a "transmitted" personality. In the main it is a personality transmitted by means of a great biography. "He comes down to us through Boswell", says Augustin Birrell.

JAMES BOSWELL
from the portrait by
SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS.

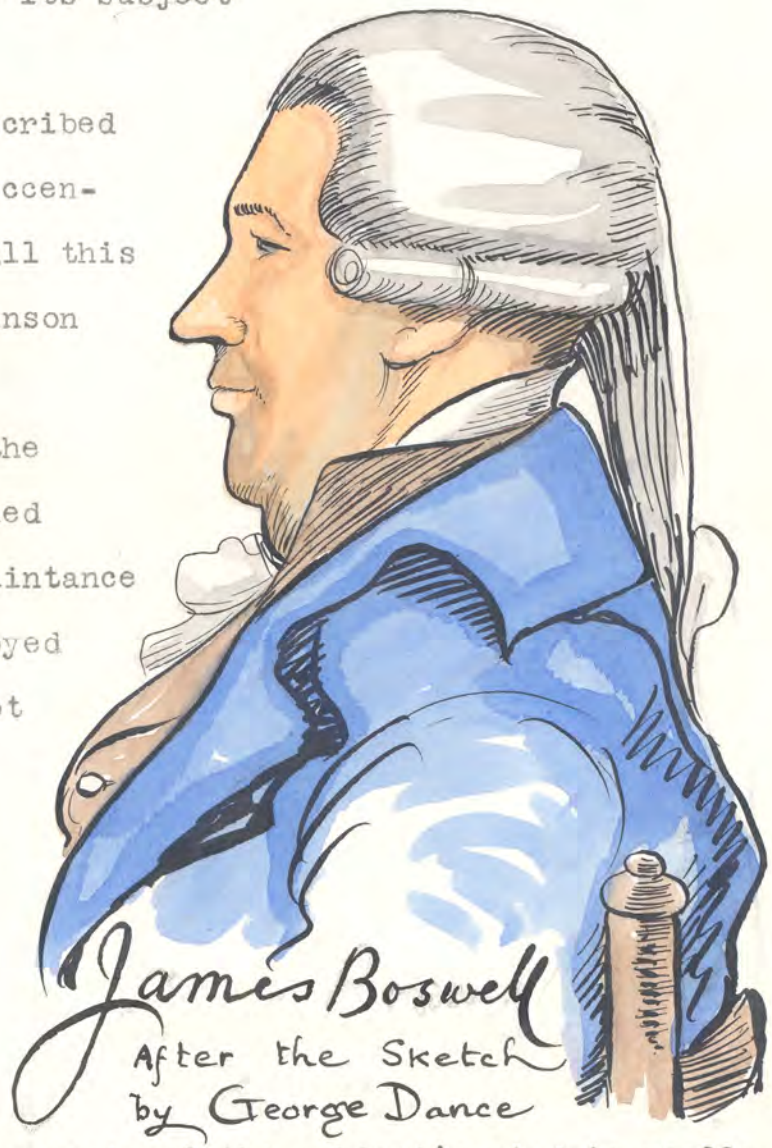
That the Doctor is so living a figure to the world is largely due to his biographer, James Boswell, the son of a Scottish judge, Lord Auchinleck, whose aim was to "make his man live". To do this, Boswell was prepared, like a true artist, to sacrifice everything. The proprieties did not exist for him. He met Johnson in 1763, and till his master's

804 784

> I have had a flow of spirits, and have written above a hundred and fifty lines of my Epistle to you. I am in hopes it will be a Piece that may do us both some honour.
> Adieu Dear Sir
> James Boswell.

death, he("Bozzy") recorded the details of Johnson's daily conversation and activities in a masterpiece of faithful portraiture. Of course, men will never agree whether Boswell's "Life of Johnson" owes more of its greatness to its subject or to its author.

James Boswell has been described as a genial, naive, vain, lazy, eccentric, philandering Scotsman. All this he may have been. But Dr. Johnson (who had no great liking for Scotsmen) liked Boswell from the start. One deep instinct ruled Boswell---a passion for acquaintance with great men. Thus he employed every subtle art (and some not so subtle) to know Hume, Rousseau, Voltaire, and above all Dr. Johnson and the eminent members of his Circle.



James Boswell
After the Sketch
by George Dance

Once close to his great man, Boswell's genius for calling out all the personal aspects of the subject's mind is really uncanny! The biographer concentrated his whole attention upon his idol. When Johnson spoke his eyes goggled with eagerness; he "leant

BOOKSELLER and Man of Letters and Publisher

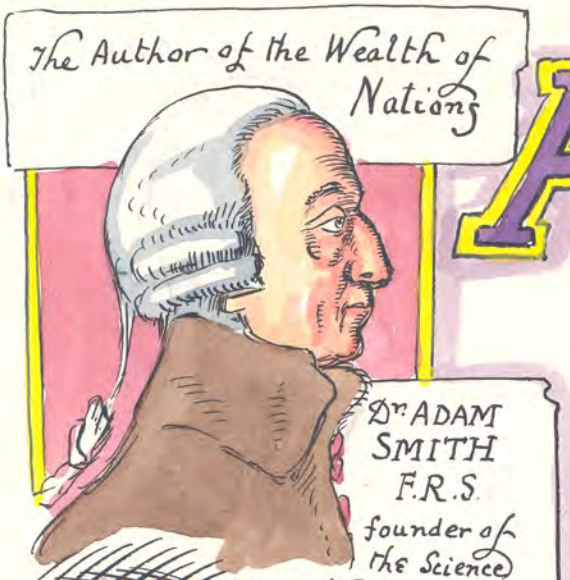
ROBERT DODSLEY from a portrait by REYNOLDS

his ear almost on the doctor's shoulder", says Fanny Burney. "His seemed to listen even to Johnson's breathings as though they had some mystical significance". As a result of such rapt attention, Boswell was able to give us many a minute description of an evening with Dr. Johnson.

In 1773, Dr. Johnson went with Boswell to the Hebrides, and in 1774 with Mr. and Mrs. Thrales to Wales. In 1775, the same friends took him to France. On his return, the University of Oxford conferred the LL.D. degree on him. In the autumn of 1784, after a visit to Lichfield(his birthplace), the Doctor sank very gradually and passed away in perfect serenity on December 13, after saying, "God bless you, my dear," to the beautiful Miss Morris, who came to bid him farewell. He was buried in Westminster Abbey, and among the pall-bearers was Edmund Burke. To the end the character of Samuel Johnson was courageous, sincere, and thoroughly English. His friends loved him, in spite of his peculiarities, for his positive passion of human charity. His conversation, formidable and exhilerating in the extreme, with its rapidity of movement, its surprises, its splendour of illustration, its weight of authority, and its sparkle of humor, was one of the main intellectual features of the Eighteenth century.

Johnson and Boswell Walking together

from a Caricature by Rowlandson



After about ten years, the Club (so we are informed by Boswell)"instead of supping weekly," "resolved to dine together once a fortnight during the meeting of Parliament." Among the new members of the group that met, first at Prince's in Sackville Street, then at Le Telier's in Dover Street, and at Parsloe's in St. James's Street were Thomas Warton (the Poet Laureate), Dr. Adam Smith (the author of "Wealth of Nations"); Dr. Percy (Bishop of Dromore, and author of the "Reliques of Ancient English Poetry", an epoch-making work in the history of the romantic movement); Dr. Charles Burney (the famous authority on Music, and father of Fanny Burney the novelist); and several other eminent writers, politicians, divines, and---Dr. Johnson's famous biographer, James Boswell.

There are a number of persons who did not belong to the Club, but they had a big place in Johnson's circle. Among these are Mr. and Mrs Thrale, in whose home Dr. Johnson was treated with the utmost respect and even affection. Lord Chesterfield's name should be

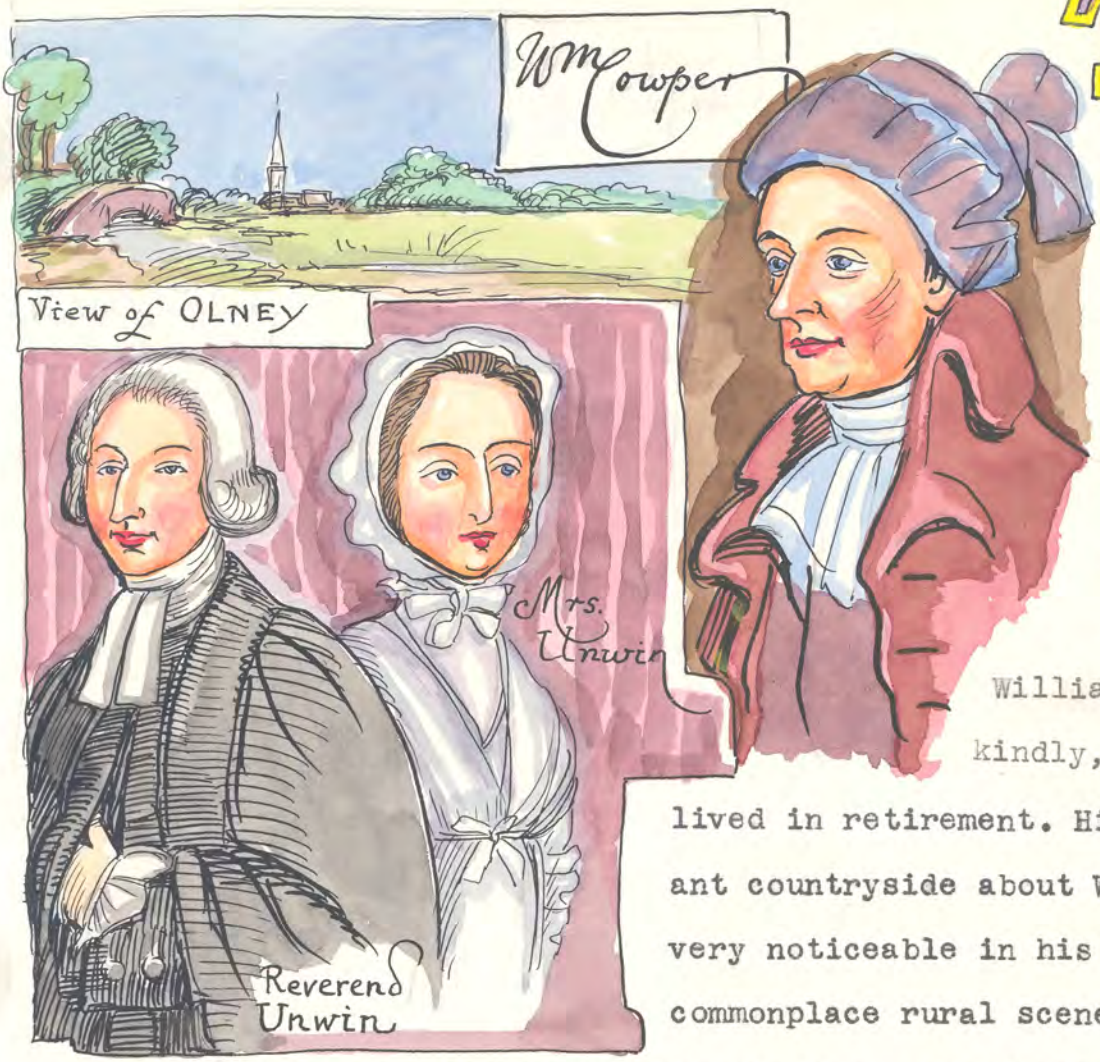
mentioned among the patrons who neglected Dr. Johnson when he was struggling with his "Dictionary" and was in need of financial and moral support. When the Dictionary was completed, Chesterfield came in with tardy offer of help, and the lexicographer indited his famous letter which put dedication and patronage well out of fashion. His Lordship became famous for his "Letters to his Son", which offered some practical and worldly advice to his offspring. Dr. Johnson told Boswell that Chesterfield's "manner was exquisitely elegant", that "almost all of that celebrated nobleman's witty sayings were puns".

We have referred to Lord Chesterfield in connection with the reform of the Calendar. He was an important man under the first two Georges, and held high office for brief periods. The last twenty years of his life was spent in retirement, writing, building, gardening, gambling and collecting--- ways befitting a polite, affluent, and very deaf semi-invalid. "He was a fine embodiment of the admired qualities of his age", says Osgood. These Eighteenth century qualities, which, in the "Letters", he urged his son to cultivate, are good sense, moderation, all the virtues of Horace, touched with a certain French elegance.

We have already noticed that during the Eighteenth century historical writing attained an excellence that has scarce-

~~788~~ ~~78~~ 808 ~~94~~

-ly been surpassed in the work of Edward Gibbon. One other name should be mentioned among the names of eminent English historians: David Hume, a friend of James Boswell, and the author of a "History of England." The History was at first coldly received, but it gradually forced itself into notice, and became the source of a considerable income. For clearness of style and elegance of narrative it stands unrivalled. Macaulay pronounces Hume "an accomplished advocate"---which may be another way of saying that he is not always trustworthy, that he is judicial in his conclusions, and that his judgment is sometimes warped by his sceptical and Tory prejudices. Dr. Johnson, so we are informed by Boswell, "would not allow Mr. David Hume any credit for his political principles, though similar to his own; saying of him, 'Sir, he was a Tory by chance' ". Like another English philosopher, John Locke, Hume demanded a society freed from vested interests and creeds, in which each individual man should have equal and full opportunity.



The "prophets of romance"---Gray, Collins, Thomson, and others---wrote in the "natural" way merely because instinct led them. They were spirits apart from their age. Like them, William Cowper was a shy, kindly, nervous person, who lived in retirement. His loves of the pleasant countryside about Weston Underwood is very noticeable in his intimate relish of commonplace rural scenes. In his The Task, Cowper writes in blank verse and overcomes the stiffness that we see in Thomson. Cowper saw nature more vividly and more sympathetically than Thomson. Cowper indulges in meditations far in advance of his times:

Sketch of Cowper's house at Weston

"Oh for a lodge
in some vast
wilderness,
Some boundless
contiguity of
shade

Where rumor of oppression and deceit,
Of successful or unsuccessful war
Might never reach me more. My ear is pained,
My soul is sick with every day's report
Of wrong and outrage with which earth is filled.
There is no flesh in man's obdurate heart;
It does not feel for man; the natural bond
Of brotherhood is severed as the flax
That falls assunder at the touch of fire....

Pray remember the poor this Winter
Your humble Bellman
W^m Cowper.

In 1765, Cowper made the acquaintance of the Unwin family; and when the Rev. Mr. Unwin died in 1767, the poet moved with the widow and her two children to the village of Olney. Mrs. Unwin, though only seven years his senior, watched over William Cowper (especially when fits of insanity assailed him) with the tenderness and care of a mother. After many years of friendship and love, the poet addressed a poem to Mary Unwin:

Thy spirits have a fainter flow,
I see thee daily weaker grow;
'Twas my distress that brought thee low,
My Mary!

Thy silver locks, once auburn bright,
Are still more lovely in my sight
Than golden beams of orient light,
My Mary!

SUMMER HOUSE AT OLNEY

To the sleepy little Olney on the Ouse in Buckinghamshire, came a famed evangelical preacher of that day, the Rev. John Newton. Cowper became warmly attached to him, and wrote in conjunction with him the "Olney Hymns", several of which are still popular in our churches. "God Moves in a mysterious way", and "O for a closer walk with God" are among the best of Cowper's hymns. Also to Olney came Lady Austen

Lady Austen

JOHN GILPIN'S FAMOUS RIDE
after the drawing by RANDOLPH CALDECOTT.

who cheered the melancholy poet with the merry story of John Gilpin. It is reported that the poet lay awake that night laughing over the tale, and next morning turned it into a jolly ballad---one of the most English ballads of the century. Happy is the youngster who has grown up (as we have) with the rime of John Gilpin in his ears. On this page we have reproduced Caldecott's sketch of Gilpin, in the hope that it will help the eye to appreciate the riotious humor of Cowper's famous poem.

Away went Gilpin, neck or nought,
Away went hat and wig,
He little dreamed when he set out,
Of running such a rig.

* * * * *

The dogs did bark, the children screamed,
Up flew the windows all,
And every soul cried out "Well done!"
As loud as he could bawl.

* * * * *

Now let us sing, long live the King,
And when he next doth ride abroad,

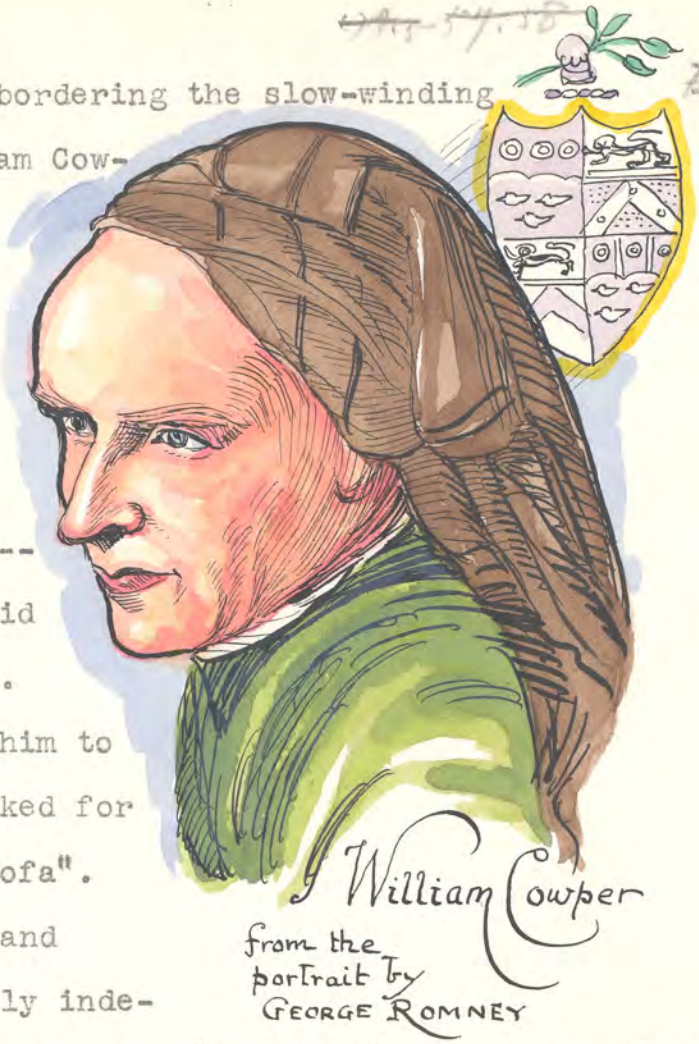
And now the turnpike gates again
Flew open in short space,
The toll-man thinking as before
That Gilpin ran a race.

* * * *

And so he did, and won it too,
For he got first to town,
Nor stopped till where he had got up
He did again get down.

And Gilpin long live he,
May I be there to see.

In the mild, lush country bordering the slow-winding Ouse above Bedford, William Cowper wrote his charming letters, in which were included his observations in light, playful, occasional verse. In our strenuous times, his poetry ---except at its highest moments--- may seem languid and infirm. It did not seem so to his contemporaries.



William Cowper
from the portrait by George Romney

It was Lady Austen who urged him to write blank verse. And when he asked for a subject, she assigned him "The Sofa". Writing thus to occupy his time (and his sane moments), he was singularly independent of theories, movements, and schools. "The Sofa" became the first part of a long poem entitled "The Task", into which he put matters of his immediate experience. In the description of village life and scenes, Cowper has made Olney as classic as Horace his Sabine farm.

Not rural sights alone, but rural sounds
Exhilerate the spirit and restore
The tone of languid nature. Mighty winds
That sweep the skirt of some far-spreading wood
Of ancient growth, make music not unlike
The dash of Ocean on his winding shore,
And lull the spirit while they fill the mind;
Unnumbered branches waving in the blast,
And all their leaves fast fluttering,
all at once.

The Coffee Pot

The Pets.

Cowpers "talking letters" are among the best in English literature. He imparts to matters of apparent insignificance (birds, his pet hares, his garden, the village folk, his spaniels, his ink-pot, etc.) a most delightful importance. His fine humanitarianism is, indeed, one of the finest and most persistent features of his writing.

1786
793
813

Two years before the publication of Cowper's "Task", there appeared the "Poetical Sketches" of William Blake, whose work, like Cowper's, served as a preparation for the imaginative compositions of Wordsworth and Coleridge. Of the "forerunners of romance", Blake exercised at the time the least influence. He was flouted as a madman, his mysticism was ridiculed, and his poetry was decried. (Not until our own day has he come to his reputation and been acknowledged at his true value). Almost insanely individual, he cared nothing what other men thought or wrote. He wrote for his own satisfaction. And, in consequence, his contemporaries ignored him. It remained for a few in his old age, and for many after his death, to realize the eccentric poet-painter's genius, and to see that in defying his own time he had written for posterity.

Mrs. Blake, after a sketch by Frederick Tatham

William Blake after a portrait on ivory by John Linnell

Blake's imagination was amazing. It "verged upon illusion and delirium". To him from every cloud and tree and flower and star there looked a spiritual presence. The poet-painter's works endeavor to "cross the barriers, to enter the unknowable". Where Blake secures instant success is in song----there

is something "almost miraculous", says Grierson, in the manner in which Blake achieved alone and unaided the "purification" of poetic diction and emancipation of rhythm, which Wordsworth and Coleridge later attained to by prayer and fasting. In the following examples we see the spiritual intensity combined with childish simplicity.

Tiger! Tiger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fires of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder and what art
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? And what dread feet?

What the hammer? What the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? What dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears
And watered heaven with their tears,
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the lamb, make thee?

Tiger! Tiger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In the apparently simple lyrics of "The Songs of Innocence", the poet blends in subtle fashion the innocent joy of childhood on which has fallen no shadow of distrust and inhibition, with

the echo of that joy in the heart of those who have children and remember their own childhood. Also there is the passionate reflection of the seer on the significance of this early innocence and joy, and the fate that is in store for it.


The Ancient of Days

The fate that is in store for this innocence of childhood is expressed in "The Songs of Experience".

For example, the "Nurse's Song" in the first volume is full of sympathetic innocence and joy. In the second volume, the same song is weighted down with remorseful memories---with a sense of the illusion of life.

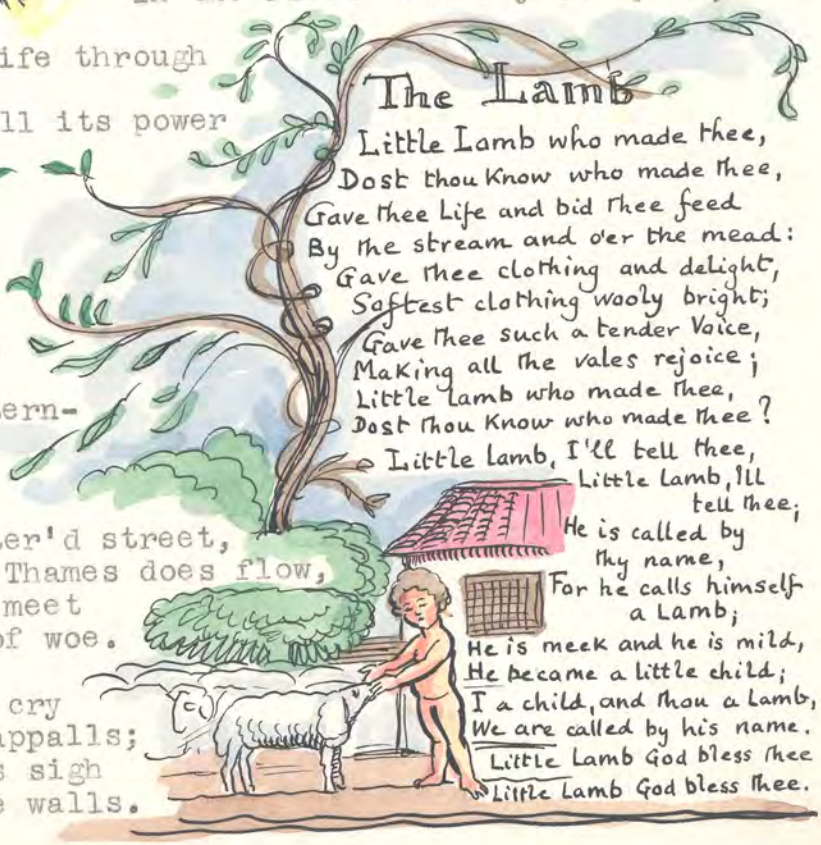
In the first "Chimney Sweeper", Blake has tried to look at life through the eyes of childhood, with all its power of hope and illusion:

Tho' the morning was cold,
Tom was happy and warm;
So if all do their duty
They need not feel harm.

In "London", he voices the sterner truth:

I wander thro' each charter'd street,
Near where the charter'd Thames does flow,
And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

How the Chimney-sweeper's cry
Every black'ning Church appalls;
And the hapless Soldier's sigh
Runs in blood down Palace walls.



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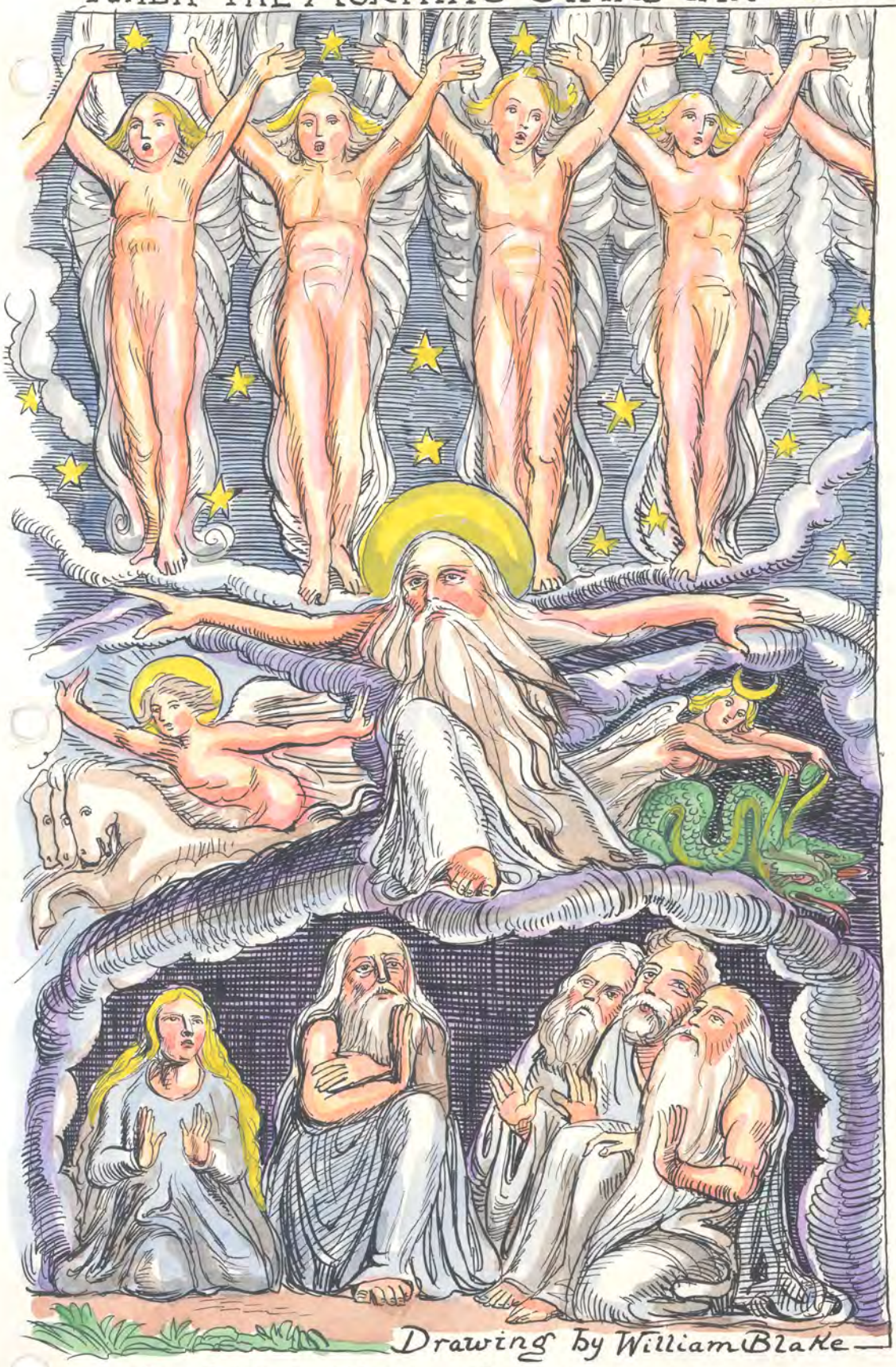
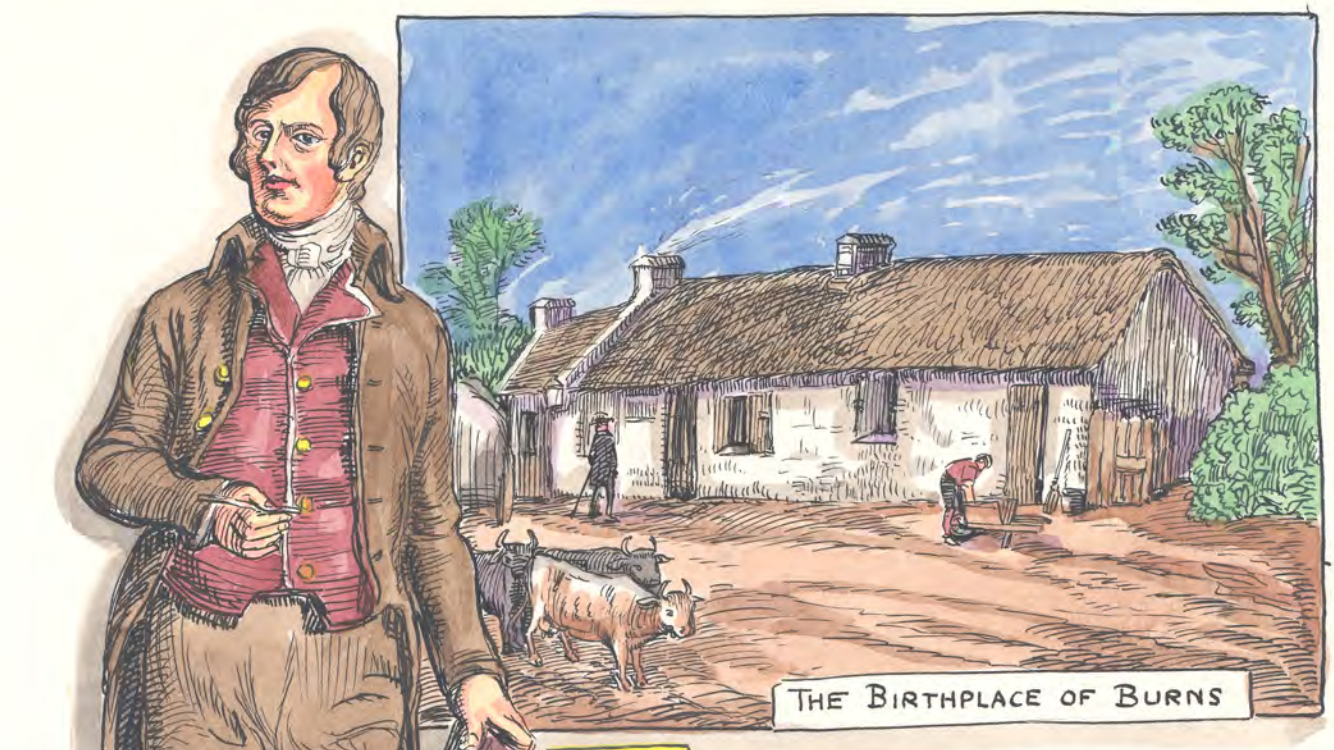
WHEN THE MORNING STARS SANG TOGETHER



Drawing by William Blake

The history of Blake's art as an illustrator and designer is not unlike the history of his poetical career. Under Basire's instruction, the poet became a careful and accomplished engrave. His innacurate drawing of the human form is not due to any incapacity or incomplete training. He is not trying to be "accurate". Rather, he is trying to "express thoughts that transcend nature". Like the poet, the engraver transfigures his representations, to make them the vehicle of his emotions. Blake is the first rebel against the Renaissance imitation of nature. Essentially a mystic and a visionary, the bias of his mind are revealed in the imaginative illustrations to "The Book of Job", "Night Thoughts", and "The Grave".

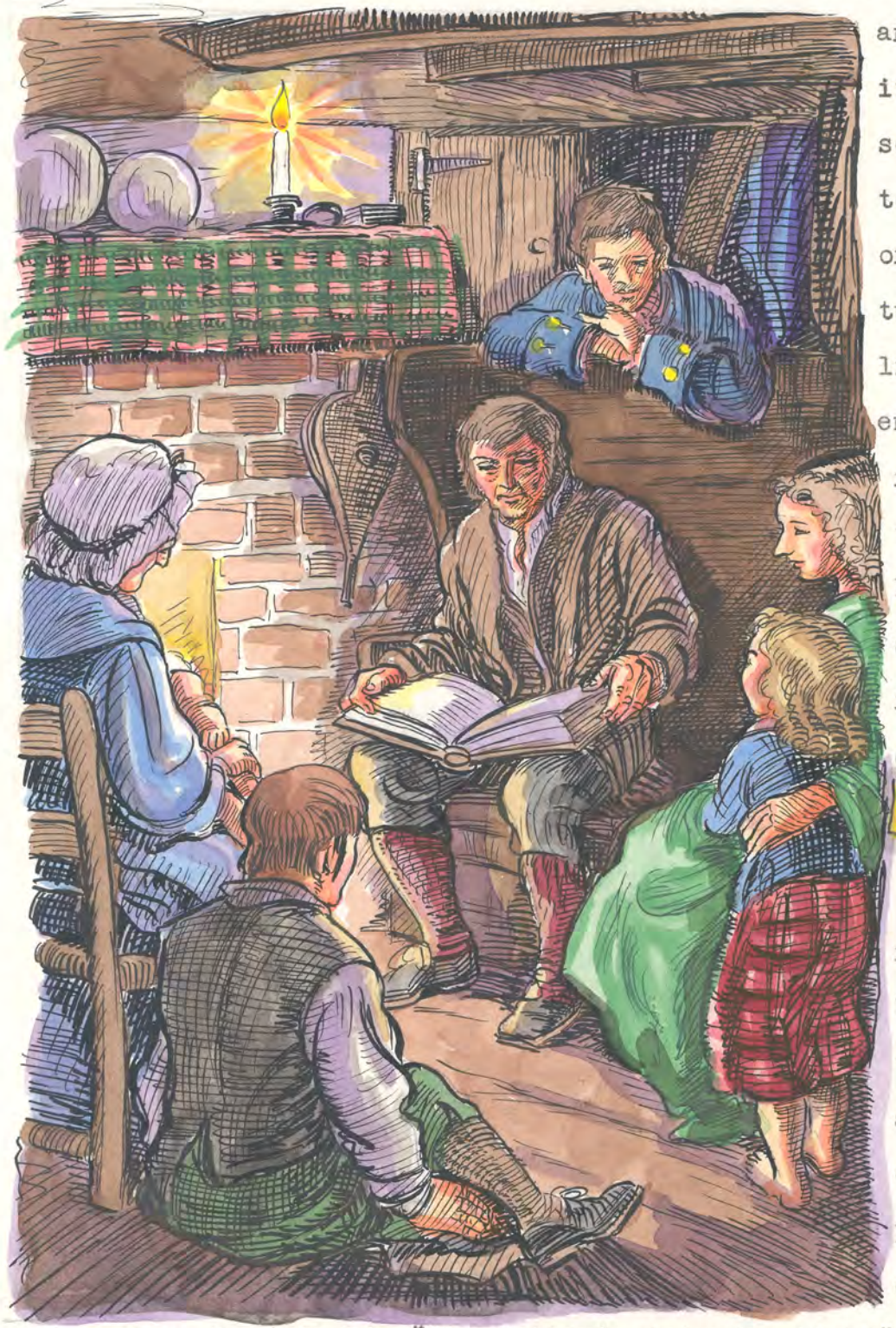


THE BIRTHPLACE OF BURNS

I am ever,
my dear Friend
yours sincerely
Robt. Burns

The peasant poet, Robert Burns, has little in common with William Cowper and William Blake, except originality and independence. But, like Cowper and Blake, Burns was a spirit apart from his age, and a forerunner of the Romantic school. In Burns we shall find almost none of the typical characteristics of the eighteenth century. From the days of Dunbar and Lindsay in the sixteenth century, the poetical genius of Scotland took a long sleep. Now, in the eighteenth century, it awoke once more in the life of Burns, who, according to a brother Scot, Thomas Carlyle, had a sort of "message to mankind". Probably Burns himself was never aware of any "message". He made poems because he loved to do so. There is little

evidence even that he felt like leading poetry into new ways. From the first,he had loved the simple songs of the Scottish countryside,



and he followed the traditions of the native songs. In contrast to the "sensible" man of the eighteenth century,Burns lived a life of "altering emotions". Every feeling of life touched him profoundly. He was keenly susceptible to influences from every quarter.

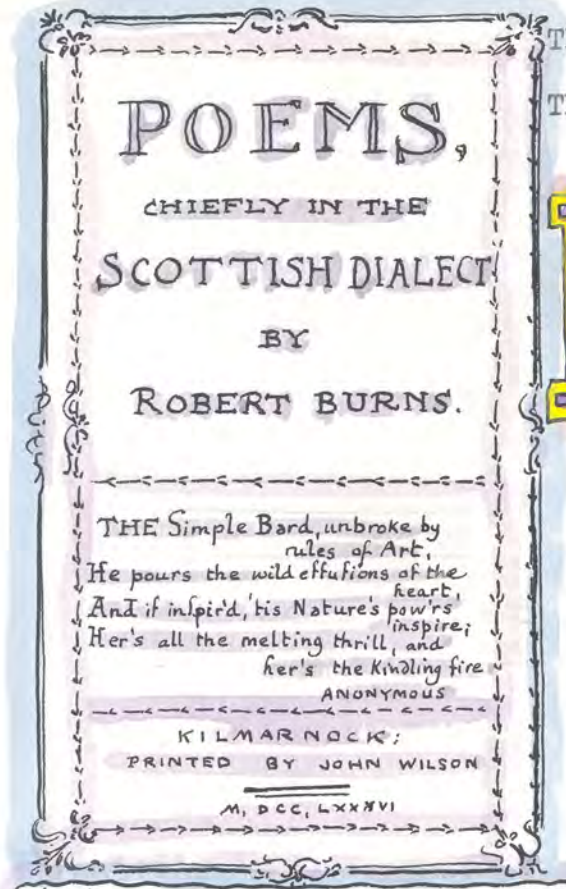
The years spent in his father's humble clay-built cottage near the town of Ayr were among the happiest of his life. The peace and innocence of these early years are described in his "The Cotter's Saturday Night",probably the most famous of his longer poems.

The cheerfu' supper done, wi' serious face,
They round the ingle form a circle wide;
The sire turns o'er,with patriarchal grace,
The big ha'-Bible,ance his father's pride;

His bonnet rev'rently is laid aside,
His lyart haffets wearing thin and bare;
Those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide,
He wales a portion with judicious care,
And "Let us worship God!" he says,with solemn air.

In I784,the father died. Robert and his brother Gilbert took the farm of Mossgiel, near the village of Mauchline,and here, during the next few years,the poet produced his best work. Among the poems that belong to this period are the stinging satires on the bigoted and intolerant clergy of the "Auld Licht" party: "Holy Fair", "Twa Herds",and "Holy Willie's Prayer". They abound in vigorous bursts of merriment which set the countryside in a roar. But there were slighter poems which have all the sweetness and fidelity to nature---all the humor,pathos and melody which have endeared Bobby Burns to millions in Britain. These poems break away from the type of their time. To London critics they came as "songs" from another planet.

O f a' the airts the wind can blow,
I dearly like the west,
For there the bonny lassie lives,
The lassie I lo'e best;
There wild woods grow and rivers flow,
And monie a mill between;
But day and night my fancy's flight
Is ever wi' my Jean.


POEMS,

CHIEFLY IN THE

SCOTTISH DIALECT

BY

ROBERT BURNS.

THE Simple Bard, unbroke by rules of Art,
He pours the wild effusions of the heart,
And if inspir'd, 'tis Nature's pow'rs inspire;
Her's all the melting thrill, and her's the kindling fire
ANONYMOUS

KILMARNOCK:
PRINTED BY JOHN WILSON

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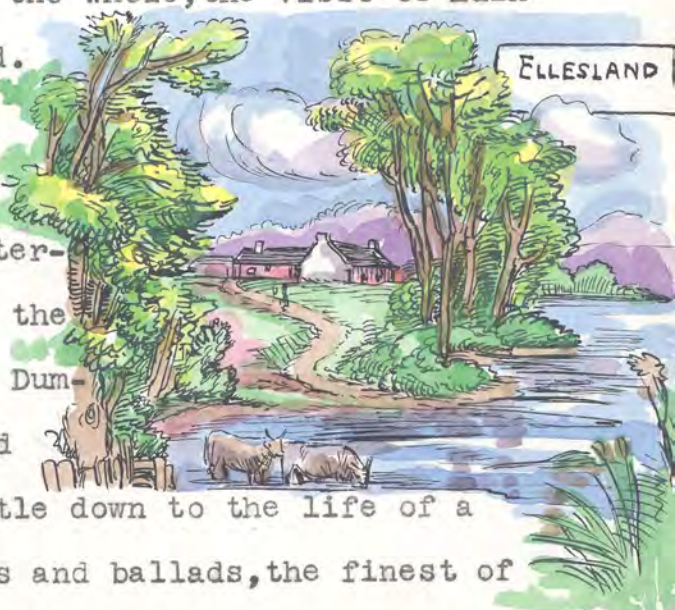
Title-page of Kilmarnock Edition. Its success was instant, "old and young, high and low, all were alike delighted, agitated, transported." Ploughboys and maidservants spent their savings on the irresistible volume.

There's not a bonie flower that springs
By fountain, shaw or green,
There's not a bonie bird that sings,
But minds me of my Jean.

Meanwhile the farm at Mossgiel did not prosper. Troubles of various kinds beset the poet. In 1786, he resolved to seek his fortune in the West Indies, and in order to raise money for his passage, he gathered and published his poems in a tiny volume, which was issued from the press in Kilmarnock. The poems were received with great enthusiasm. So much so, that Burns abandoned the idea of going abroad. Instead, he went to Edinburgh, and for a time was the lion of the literary groups in the Scottish capital. On the whole, the visit to Edinburgh did Burns more harm than good. It raised his hopes which were not to be fulfilled. From this time he showed disappointment and even bitterness in his letters. Returning to the farm at Ellesland, a few miles from Dumfries, he married Jean Armour, an old sweetheart of his, and tried to settle down to the life of a farmer. He wrote a number of songs and ballads, the finest of which is "Tam o' Shanter", wherein we find the best qualities of his humor and verse. Burns


My Jean



So Maggie runs, the witches follow,
Wi' mony an eldritch skriech and hollow.
Now do thy speedy utmost, Meg,
And win the Key-stane o' the brig;
There at them thou thy tail may toss,
A running stream they dare na cross.
But ere the Key-stane she could make, The fient a tail she had to shake ——
The Carlin caught her by the rump, And left poor Maggie scarce a Stump

himself regarded "Tam o' Shanter" as his best work. It was written while he was still a farmer, though eking out his livelihood in the service of King George as a probationary "guager" or exciseman, at £70 a year.

Burns's life was a tragedy---a proud and powerful mind overcome at length in the hard struggle of life. No doubt, as is charitably said, the poet had strong passions and severe temptations---and these he could not resist. Love-making was a common business with him, He composed a song on every pretty girl he knew.

O my Luve's like a red, red rose
That's newly sprung in June.
O my Luve's like the melodie
That's sweetly played in tune.

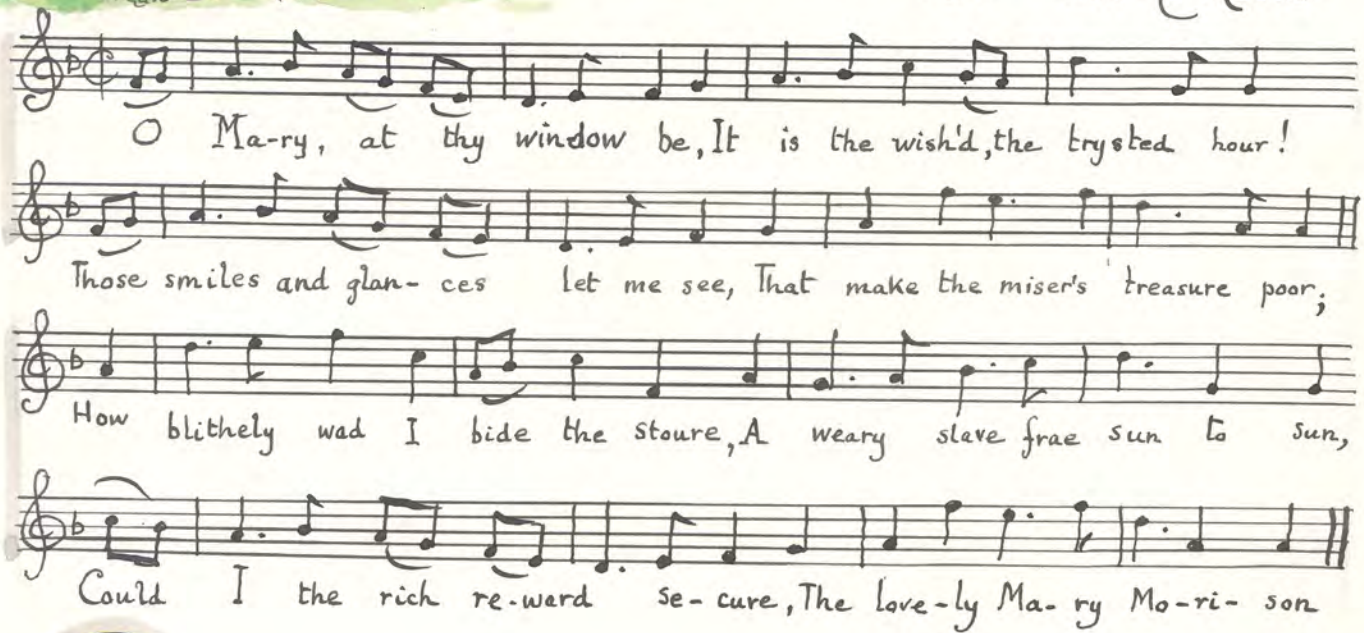
As fair art thou, my bonnie lass,
So deep in luve am I;
And I will luve thee still, my dear,
Till a' the seas gang dry:

Till a' the seas gang dry, my dear,
And the rocks melt wi' the sun;
I will luve thee still, my dear,
While the sands o' life shall run.

And fare thee weel, my only Luve!
And fare thee weel awhile!
And I will come again, my Luve,
Tho' it were ten thousand mile!

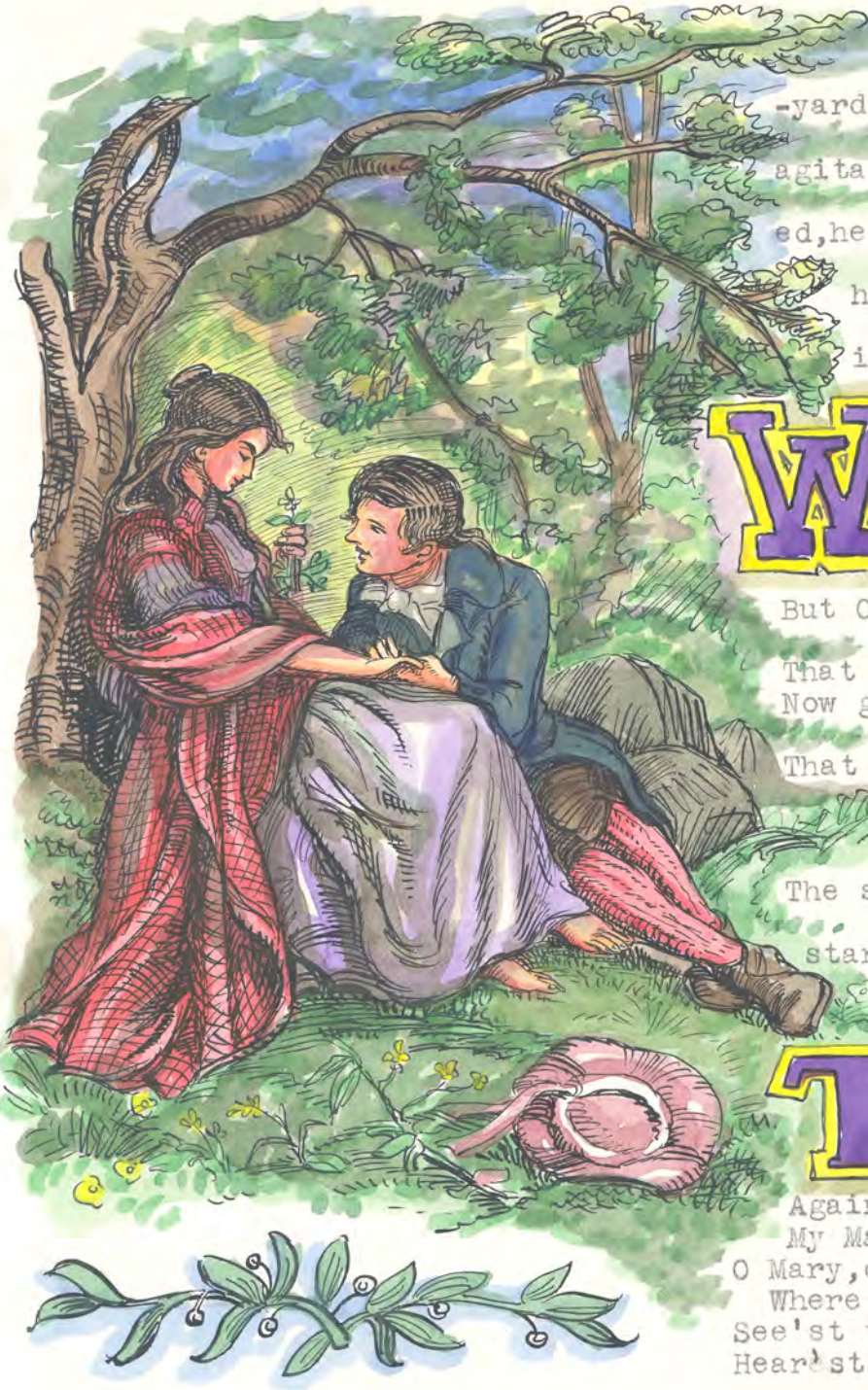
When Burns fell in love, he declared that "rhyme and song were, in a manner, the spontaneous language of my heart." The song "Mary Morison" is said to have been inspired by a real affection. We can hardly keep from reproducing the music:

Slow. Tune: "The Miller"



O Mary, canst thou wreck his peace,
Wha for thy sake wad gladly die;
Or canst thou break that heart of his,
Whase only fault is loving thee?
If love for love thou wilt na gie,
At least be pity to me shown;
A thought ungentle canna be
The thought of Mary Morison.

Years before, he had loved his "Highland Mary" with a deep devotion. Their parting by the banks of Ayr was attended with vows of eternal constancy. Her memory never vanished from the poet's mind. On the anniversary of her death, Burns grew sad and wandered about his farm-



-yard the whole night in deep agitation of mind. As dawn approached,he was persuaded to enter the house,and express his feelings in a song.

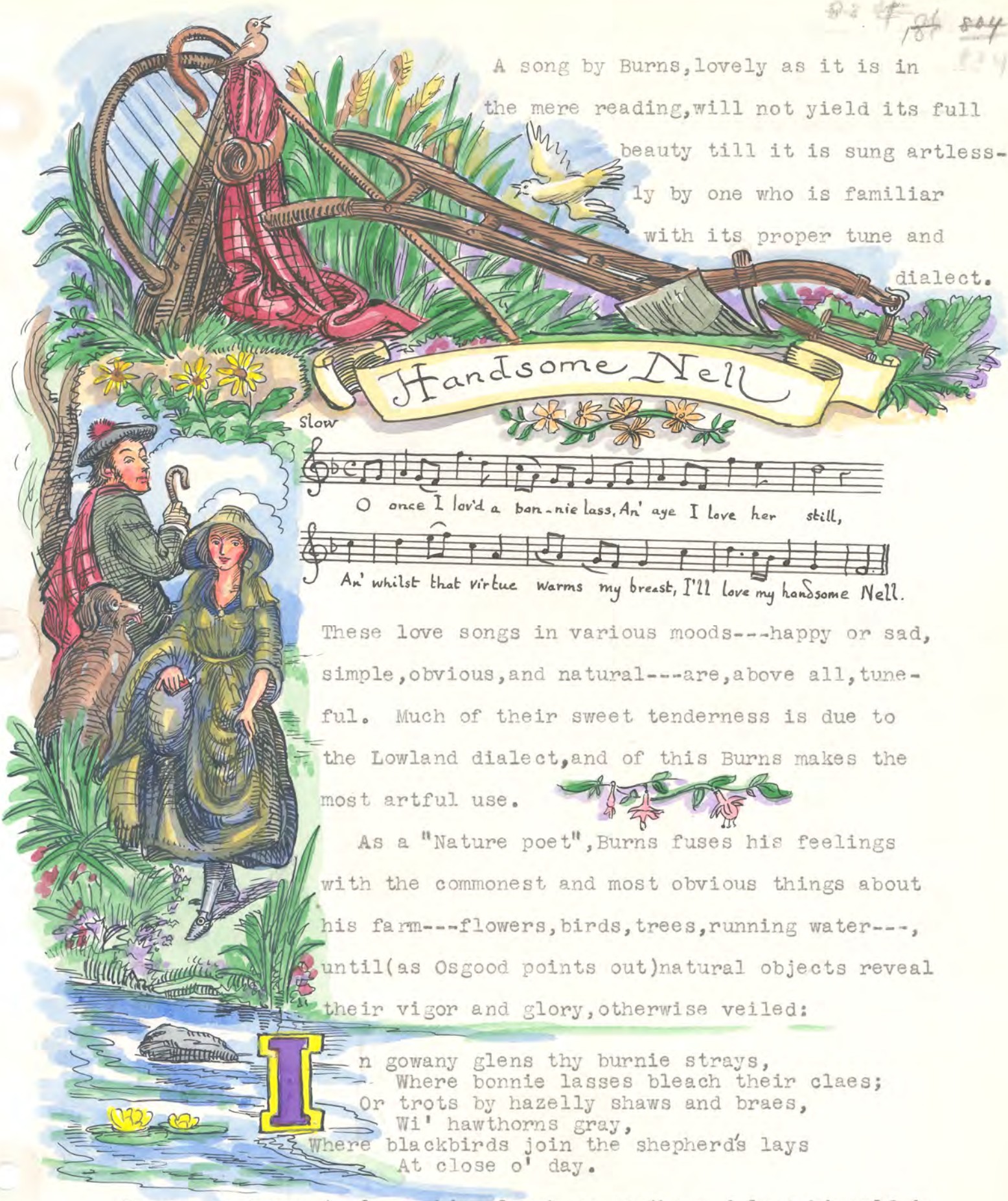
Wi' monie a vow and locked embrace
Our parting was fu' tender;
And pledging aft to meet again,
We tore oursels assunder;
But O! fell Death's untimely frost,
That nipped my flower sae early!
Now green's the sod,and cauld's the clay,
That wraps my Highland Mary.

The song "To Mary in Heaven" starts with the pathetic lines:

Thow lingering star with lessening ray,
That lov'st to greet the early morn,
Again thou usherest in the day
My Mary from my soul was torn.
O Mary,dear departed shade!
Where is thy place of blissful rest?
See'st thou thy lover lowly laid?
Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast?

For Jessie Lewars,a young girl who from sympathy had come into the Burns' home to assist in domestic duties,he scribbled the following beautiful lines:

Oh! wert thou in the cauld,cauld blast,
On yonder lea,on yonder lea,
My plaidie to the angry airt, (airt, point of the compass
I'd shelter thee,I'd shelter thee.
Or did misfortune's bitter storms
Around thee blaw,around thee blaw,
Thy bield should my bosom be, (bield,shelter
To share it a',to share it a'.



A song by Burns, lovely as it is in the mere reading, will not yield its full beauty till it is sung artlessly by one who is familiar with its proper tune and dialect.

These love songs in various moods---happy or sad, simple, obvious, and natural---are, above all, tuneful. Much of their sweet tenderness is due to the Lowland dialect, and of this Burns makes the most artful use.

As a "Nature poet", Burns fuses his feelings with the commonest and most obvious things about his farm---flowers, birds, trees, running water---, until (as Osgood points out) natural objects reveal their vigor and glory, otherwise veiled:

In gowany glens thy burnie strays,
Where bonnie lasses bleach their claes;
Or trots by hazelly shaws and braes,
Wi' hawthorns gray,
Where blackbirds join the shepherd's lays
At close o' day.

Burns was known to leave his plough or scythe and lose himself in long fits of staring at some wee thing. Onee, while he was plowing,

he chanced to uproot a little daisy. In the following lines he expresses his emotions:

Wee, modest, crimson-tipped flow'r,
Thou's met me in an evil hour;
For I maun crush amang the stoure
Thy slender stem:
To spare thee now is past my pow'r,
Thou bonnie gem.

Alas! it's no thy neebor sweet,
The bonnie lark, companion meet,
Bending thee 'mang the dewy weet,
Wi' spreckled breast!
When upward-springing, blythe, to greet
The purpling east.

Cauld blew the bitter-biting north
Upon thy early, humble birth;
Yet cheerfully thou glinted forth
Amid the storm,
Scarce reared above the parent-earth
Thy tender form.

* * * * *

There, in thy scanty mantle clad,
Thy snawie bosom sunward spread,
Thou lifts thy unassuming head
In humble guise;
But now the share uptears thy bed,
And low thou lies!

Then the poet, sad at his hard lot, sees his own misery and misfortune reflected in the fate of the humble little flower.

Ev'n thou who mourn'st the Daisy's fate,
That fate is thine---no distant date;
Stern Ruin's plough-share drives elate,
Full on thy bloom,
Till crushed beneath the furrow's weight
Shall be thy doom!

Similarly, while plowing, the poet chanced to come upon a mouse, whose house is destroyed by the plough.

I'm truly sorry man's dominion
Has broken Nature's social union,
An' justifies that ill opinion
Which makes thee startle
At me, thy poor, earth-born companion
An' fellow-mortal!

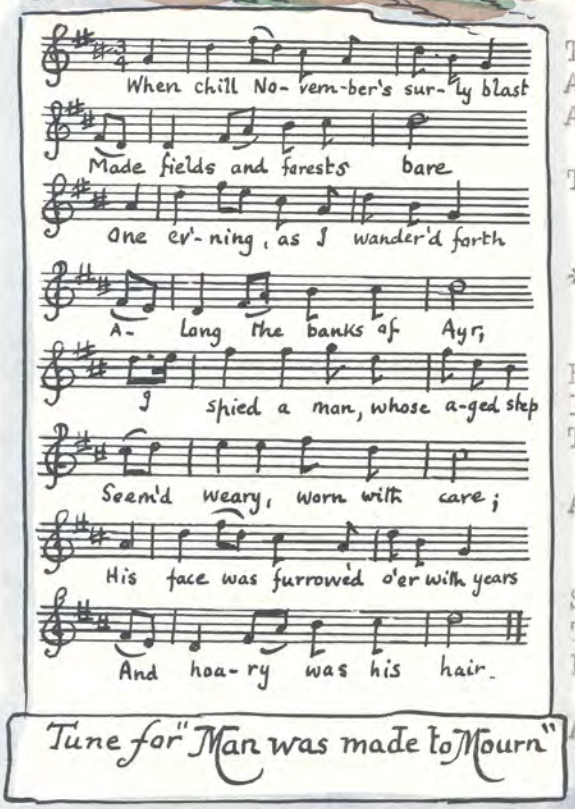
* * * * *

Thou saw the fields laid bare an' waste,
An' weary winter comin fast,
An' cozie here, beneath the blast,
Thou thought to dwell,
Till, crash! the cruel coulter passed
Out thro' thy cell.

* * * * *

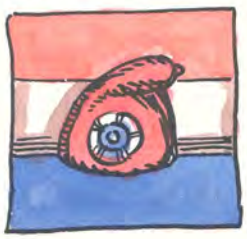
But Mousie, thou art no thy lane, (You are not
In proving foresight may be vain: alone)
The best laid schemes o' mice an' men
Gang aft agley, (Often go wrong)
An' lea'e us naught but grief an' pain,
For promised joy!

Still thou art blest, compared wi' me !
The present only toucheth thee:
But och! I backward cast my e'e,
On prospects drear!
An' forward, tho' I canna see,
I guess and fear!



Tune for "Man was made to Mourn"

At a time when all eyes were fixed on France (as yet unstained with the blood of Revolution), Robert Burns was all agrow with sympathy for the freedom of the peasant from agelong servitude. The verses which he wrote at the time are full of this feeling. He secretly bought some cannon to aid the cause of the Revolutionists. (It is a wonder that he escaped trial and execution for this!) To this feeling, no less than to his Scottish patriotism, is ascribed the thrilling lines of "Scots wha ha wi' Wallace bled" and "A Man's a Man for a' That."

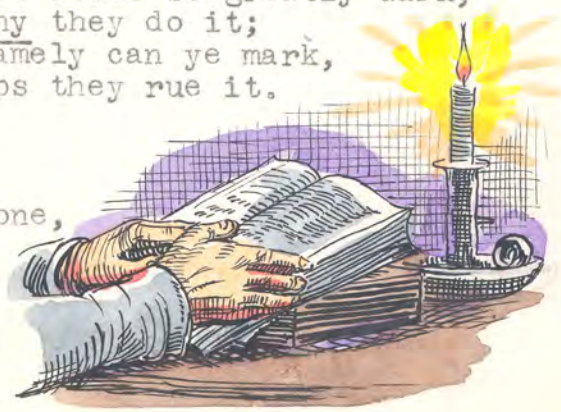


In his superb satirical epistles, warm with affection, to his friends John Lapraik, Smith, "Davie" Sillar, and others, the student will see the "granite morality", the whole-souled scorn of formalism, hypocracy, and corruption against which Burns protested. Of the poet's own moral failings (especially of his dissipation and profligacy) enough has always been made. On the other hand, says John Buchan, sufficient stress has not always been thrown upon Burns' generosity, his manly independence, and his wide sympathies.

On July 21, 1796, with his family around his bed, the great poet of Scotland passed away. A final judgment of Burns as a man may be tempered by the spirit he commends in the "Address to the Unco Guid:"

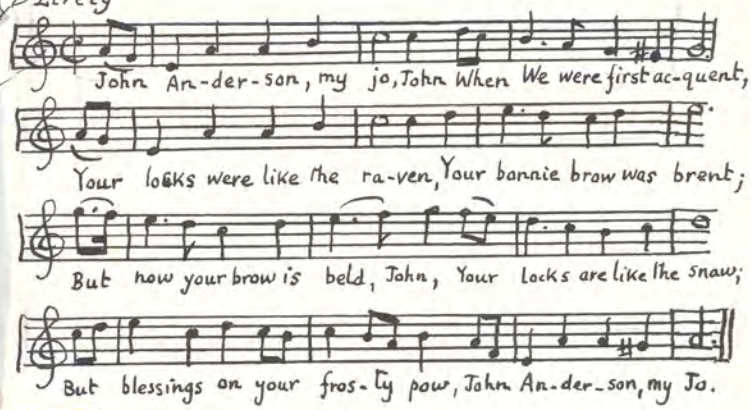
Then gently scan your brother man,
Still gentler sister woman;
Tho' they may gang a kennin wrang,
To step aside is human:
One point must still be greatly dark,
The moving why they do it;
And just as lamely can ye mark,
How far perhaps they rue it.

Who made the heart, 'tis He alone
Decidedly can try us;
He knows each chord---its various tone,
Each spring---its various bias;
Then at the balance let's be mute,
We never can adjust it;
What's done we partly may compute,
But know not what's resisted.



There are few persons who have not sung some of the more familiar songs such as:

John Anderson, My Jo.



John Anderson, my jo, John,
We clamb the hill togither;
And mony a cantie day, John,
We've had wi' ane anither:
Now we maun totter down, John,
And hand in hand we'll go,
And sleep together at the foot,
John Anderson, my Jo!

---or the equally familiar

Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And never brought to mind?
Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And days o' lang syne?

---and the haunting melody of

We banks and braes o' bonie Doon,
How can ye blume sae fair!
How can ye chant, ye little birds,
And I sae fu' o' care!

Thou'll break my heart, thou bonie bird
That sings upon the bough:
Thou minds me o' the happy days
When my fause luve was true.

The great spirit that composed these poems died in abject poverty and in dire distress. But, strange to say, when the great spirit had passed beyond the reach of human aid, the entire nation awoke from its indifference to him, and gave an exhibition of esteem which, had it come a few days earlier, might have rendered hopeful one of the stormiest of lives!