THREE DIALOGUES BY HESTER LYNCH THRALE.
FROM THE HITHERTO UNPUBLISHED ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT NOW IN THE POSSESSION OF THE JOHN RYLANDS LIBRARY.
EDITED, WITH AN INTRODUCTION,
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Mrs. Thrale was scarcely a poet worth deep consideration, and she was never truly a great biographer, possibly because she never had time to be. The Three Dialogues which now come before the reader are part of a series of interesting writings that now lie in John Rylands Library, and include a small play entitled “The Fountains,” and a series of didactic and informative dialogues called “Una and Duessa.” The challenge which the Three Dialogues undoubtedly make is to consider Mrs. Thrale in some way other than a significant event in Dr. Johnson’s life; other than a recorder of his sayings and mannerisms and faithful reflector of his character; and to put her once more into the circle of amateur Bluestockings where she rightfully belongs. Three Dialogues, which are not didactic, which are not simple “theatricalisings” of conversations (as Miss Burney calls such things), which are not a series of studiously or otherwise written letters, nor a writing up of travels with a famous literary figure, but which, written in 1779, challenge in lightness, wit, and significance, the skill of the great Fanny Burney in the Diary of that year, and the reputation for wit and drama which Mrs. Montagu had set up, half a generation before, in the twenty-seventh dialogue of Lyttleton’s “Dialogues of the Dead,” are an amazing find after these years.

No reader can possibly mistake Mrs. Thrale’s Dialogues for
something which they are not. They are as witty and as direct and effective as Miss Burney's characterisations, and they definitely put the work of Mrs. Montagu (comic as it is) into the shade.

The many things from the hand of Mrs. Thrale which we now possess seem to lack the fine touch which both these other women displayed with such well-deserved applause and literary reputation, and which took Miss Burney out of the amateur status, and gave Mrs. Montagu a free passage either way she preferred to go, if she could.

If one remembers Mrs. Montagu's Dialogue between Mercury and Mrs. Modish, and omits the definition of the Bon Ton, what remains is simple satire set in speeches, the sort of Dialogue (dangerously near in kin to the didactic) in which the characters without being anything or anybody in particular, inform you what sort of criticism you ought to pass on the type. Mrs. Montagu did it wittily, if not wholly dramatically, but she invited a dramatic and comic criticism. She was stylish, she was almost dramatic, but, as her friends said, also very "satirical." Mrs. Modish says

My friends always told me diversions were necessary, and my Doctor assured me dissipation was good for my Spirits; my husband insisted that it was not, and you know that one loves to oblige one's friends, comply with one's Doctor, and contradict one's husband.

Whatever comedy may be, this is not the kind of comedy we find in Mrs. Thrale's Dialogues. They advance with growing confidence and certainty from the rather formal first Dialogue, set in Mrs. Vesey's Assembly, to the freedom and easy scope of the third Dialogue, each one based simply on a rising quarrel and a peacemaker. The distinction between the work of the two women is not merely that Mrs. Modish is a general figure, and that Johnson, and Burke, and Pepys are individuals. The fact is that Johnson, Burke, Pepys, Mrs. Montagu, are not simply a feeble filling-up of empty hulks as if Mrs. Thrale merely used a name. In the most formal of the Dialogues each personality is for the briefest moment distinct and energetic, yet the compass is so small that although Johnson is Johnson, he is the Johnson who later flung himself so terribly at Pepys over the Lyttleton scandal, and the bewildered Pepys is something that looks like a caricature of Pepys. There is indeed an uneasy element of formality and limitation that makes Mrs. Thrale and Mrs. Montagu allied. However that may be, there is already in the first Dialogue a distinc-
tion, a certain absence of Mrs. Thrale as commentator, that increases through the rest of the work to the final Dialogue, which, in its greater scope and multiplication of characters and freer spirit, outweighs what, in the first especially, and somewhat in the second, was the value of simple cameo.

It is praise for Mrs. Thrale if we say, that although Johnson and Burke act like the people in Boswell and in Miss Burney's Diary, Mr. Seward acts like a man in a play, which indeed he is. Mrs. Montagu may be satirised, Johnson may be faithfully portrayed, but Seward's behaviour in his lodgings and his cheerful promenade through the dumps at Lady Lade's reception is comic; whether it is high comedy or low comedy very few of us will think it worth while to debate. In distinction and wit the second Dialogue stands apart, and gains in force what it lacks in scope. The speeches of Cator and Norman may partake of the power that lies behind the reports in Miss Burney's Diary and Letters, but the rising deftness and brilliance of Baretti is a stroke of genius that must have surprised Mrs. Thrale herself.

In her preface, Mrs. Thrale invites a comparison with Swift in his poem on his death, a comparison which holds good only in those parts where some comment is introduced on her own life and on the companions she thought fit for herself and her daughter. Yet the position is obviously different: "Suppose me dead," wrote the Dean,

Suppose me dead; and then suppose
A Club assembled at the Rose;
Where, from discourse of this and that,
I grow the subject of their chat.

Swift meant to illustrate Rochefoucault's maxim,

In all distresses of our friends,
We first consult our private ends;
While nature, kindly bent to ease us,
Points out some circumstance to please us.

While the purpose occasionally holds, the process is inverted in the Dialogues, Mrs. Thrale being the subject of the chat, which then goes on to this and that, and develops into portraiture of the speakers, if not into a comic scene. However, the Dialogues may best speak for themselves.
A few words may not be amiss on Mrs. Thrale herself,¹ about whose life and work we shall shortly learn more than has been known before. When Miss Burney met her in 1777 she was about thirty-six years old: “a sweet creature, and never angry; she has a temper the most delightful of any woman I ever knew.” Two years later Mrs. Thrale completed the Dialogues, in the midst of grave family and financial worries, throughout which she remained energetic and active. Considering the precarious health of her husband, the thoughts of her own death may have been often enough before her. That she should choose this manner of reflecting upon it, and diverting her mind from it, is another proof of her remarkable and essential vitality, alone amongst a troop of drooping and irritating companions, by many of whom she was later deserted in the face of the public scandal in which she found herself over her marriage to Piozzi in 1784.

The public had long known her as a name associated with those of Mrs. Montagu and Horace Walpole, something on which to tack a witticism in a jest-book, and to consider as part of the tribunal of literary merit, either to be scoffed at or revered. It thus fell to professional libellers and comedians to ridicule her when she became an object of public contempt, as in Peter Pindar’s not so brilliant “Bozzy and Piozzi,” or in the equally wounding defence offered by the enemy of her class, Charles Pigott, in the “Female Jockey Club.”² Pigott, a man of some ability, but obscure and virulent and regularly obscene,

¹ With considerable complacency, Mrs. Piozzi copied out the following lines on herself by an admirer:

“Conundrum—
Why is Mrs. Piozzi like a Kaleidoscope?
The brilliant Colours that appear
Shine like her Wit, distinct and clear;
While Fancy’s fleeting magic Power
Combines to charm each varying hour:
Giving to Trifles light as wind
The Lustre of her Powerful Mind;
Imparting Pleasure and Surprise
Delighting still our Heart and Eyes.”

“I keep the original manuscript,” she adds, “... so don’t think I write comp. to myself.”

² “Female Jockey Club,” The Bluestocking Jockeys, 1794. The Blues are also victims of the wit of Peter Pindar.
was associated with the publisher Lee who was frequently in trouble for his revolutionary publications, and he chose to preface his account of her with Boileau's question:

\[Ay', j'encore depeint la femme bilieuse,\]
\[La Pedante au ton fier; la Bourgeoise ennuyeuse,\]
\[Celle qui d'elle meme fait son seul entretien,\]
\[Celle qui toujours parle, et ne dit jamais rien?\]

In his account, which may be quoted simply because it attempts to run counter to the general attitude of the time, there is much forced scurryility and a good deal of downright ignorance. He makes full play of the material which offered itself in the marriage of a widow of wealth to an Italian musician, but he has something to say of her literary ability:

The private life of this Lady has been scrutinised with much freedom, and criticism appears to have laid aside candour in examining her literary productions. Peter Pindar has ridiculed her unmercifully. Jemmy Boswell has cut her up; and Baretti has abused her. . . . Dr. Johnson also, who had long been a friend to the family, uttered according to his eccentric manner, some growling sarcasms. . . . The Signora's literary talents are above mediocrity; her life of Johnson is full of requisite information, certainly far superior to any similar production from her learned male competitors. Her poetry is by no means contemptible. The account of her travels with her present beloved lord and master is enriched by accurate observations, as well as by a faithful delineation of national character, and may be reckoned her best production. Having been many years in most intimate habits with that renowned bully of literature, Dr. Johnson, she has imbibed all his prejudices, to which she is bigoted with an invincible obstinacy.

This was the age when educated women, like bright school children, were "writing well." There was a consciousness of the affinity of criticism and literary talent that created the literary assemblies, the object of which seemed to be the well-mixing of genius and manners. It was in such an atmosphere that the spare moments of women of talent were spent in what were definitely "literary exercises" in prose and verse, largely inspired by the conversation of the night before in the salons. Out of such an orgy of conversation and verbal debate it is remarkable that we should get anything at all, apart from criticisms and reflections, and political examinations of criticisms. But occasionally there emerged a piece of work, by its very nature "witty," that is worth the preservation.
"I heard," cries another, "at Cadell's, today,
That Johnson's in town, and is writing away;
I was charm'd with his Milton; what judgement and spirit!
Mr. Regicide, sure you'll allow this has merit?
You've read it no doubt, Sir."—"Not I, Sir, indeed—
Read Johnson!—I'd sooner subscribe to the creed . . . ."
"Gud Sir," cries a Scot, springing up from behind,
And presenting his snuffbox, "you're quite o' my mind;
Tho' the doctor would fain give all poets the law,
O'er the spirit of verse he knows nothing at a'.
In spite of his critique, I canna perceive,
What there is in your poem of Adam and Eve;
An' you read Ossian, Milton canna ga doun,
'Tis like after a virgin a mess o' the toun:
On this subject the Doctor does nothing but dream,
For he is too purblind to ken the sublime—"  

Out of all this argument and the stretching of presumptuous wits,
the graciousness of Mrs. Thrale's work and its real quality gave us,
for once, these pictures of her friends, in a setting which was different
from that of the other assemblies mainly because of her own nature
and culture. But the question of Mrs. Thrale's character and her
own peculiar importance and greatness of personality has been ex-
amined in the past and will be re-estimated in the near future, when
once the new papers in the Rylands Library are at the disposal of
such scholars as will tackle the problem anew.

All human race would fain be wits,
And millions miss for one that hits.

THE PERSONALITIES.

A little knowledge of the characters and persons who talk in the
ensuing Dialogues is necessary, since Mrs. Thrale wrote for herself and
those of her friends who knew them all very well in everyday life. It
will be found, however, so far as the more notorious people are con-
cerned, that the pictures tally with what has since become a common
body of information, and the handiest source of reference is always
Fanny Burney's "Diary and Letters." What little flesh and blood
can be added to supplement Mrs. Thrale's sketches of temperaments
in collision, and elucidate her peculiarly domestic allusions, is a gratify-
ingly meagre quantity, and should always be so if the attention of the

1Modern Manners: In a series of Familiar Epistles, "A Conversa-
tione," 1782: Chas. Hoole.
reader is to be primarily on the wit of the Dialogues themselves, and not on the biographies of the interlocutors. Indeed, the contribution to biography made by the Dialogues, at this time of the day, is nil.

Mrs. Vesey (the "Bluestocking of Mayfair") had her salon in Bolton Street, Piccadilly, at the date of the Dialogues, and was famous not so much for her own wit, as for being a centre for that of others. Her arrangement of her guests being governed by a single principle, to prevent them from forming anything that looked like a circle about her, certainly tended to break any lecture-like formality in her receptions, but tended also to the isolated groupings which perplexed a visitor and which only Mrs. Vesey's social genius could prevent from becoming unbearable rudeness.

Then they got into parties as suited them best,  
Each set by themselves, turn'd their backs on the rest:  
To be sure such a gay people knew well what was right,  
But I should have thought it not quite so polite.¹

In circumstances much like these, Mrs. Thrale presents isolated groups at each end of the room, between which the chatter of Mr. Pepys jumps back and forward, while Mrs. Vesey herself does not tarry for the first compliment; she was too busy waving her wand and breaking the circles.

See Vesey's plastic genius make  
A Circle every figure take;  
Nay, shapes and forms, which would defy  
All Science of Geometry.²

It was about Mrs. Vesey, Mrs. Montagu and Mrs. Thrale that the main body of Bluestockings were content to circle, and a disturbance in any of these houses inevitably led to a dispersion of the corps.³

¹ Modern Manners, cit.  
² The Bas Bleu: or Conversation, 1787: Hannah More.  
³ Cf. Rylah MSS., Misc. Letters to H.L.P. From Sir Lucas Pepys, 21 July, 1785:  
"And all the Blue Regiment were disbanded by the death of Mrs. Vesey, & the Marriage of Mrs. Montagu's Nephew, which prevented both those Houses being open & of Course the whole Corps were dispersed."

An additional interest of this volume of MSS resides in the references to Mrs. Piozzi's "Anecdotes" and her famous retraction of her judgment on Mrs. Montagu: "I wish," writes Pepys on 15 Dec., 1785, "you could in your Anecdotes soften down the above Harsh Criticism on a Sister Author."
The portrait of Samuel Johnson is so ready to everybody's mind, that we need only remind ourselves of the most pertinent details. In 1777 Miss Burney described him as ill-favoured, tall and stout, stooping so much as to be almost bent double. It seemed that he was "the most silent creature" unless he was "particularly drawn out." Next year Miss Burney became aware of the freedom with which Dr. Johnson condemned everything of which he disapproved, and thought his readiness to use strong words to people to be "intolerable."

"Madam," said Johnson, "I am always sorry when I make bitter speeches, and I never do it but when I am insufferably vexed." To which Mrs. Thrale replied, "Yes, sir, but you suffer things to vex you, that nobody else would vex at."

Nevertheless Mrs. Piozzi put it on record in her "Anecdotes," that the Doctor considered himself "well-bred to a degree of needless scrupulosity":

"No man," continued he, not observing the amazement of his hearers, "no man is so cautious not to interrupt another; no man thinks it so necessary to appear attentive when others are speaking; no man so steadily refuses preference to himself, or so willingly bestows it on another, as I do."

The vehemence and candour of his attacks in dispute are reflected over and over again in diaries and remembrances of the man.

Johnson's "fear of death" is become one of the most commonly possessed but least understood pieces of information about him. If Johnson might have done it, he would have set on Death in much the same way in which he set on Pepys: and in the Dialogues, after all, he is more concerned with those images of desolation that accompany memories of happy times. Be that as it may, Mrs. Piozzi tells us that "few things offended him more, than prognosticating even the death of an ordinary acquaintance. . . . The danger then of Mr. Garrick, or of Mr. Thrale . . . was an image which no one durst present before his view."

His distaste for Pepys is better known from the later quarrel over the "Life of Lyttleton," but here we see that Johnson had established a habit of snarling at Pepys some years before that incident.

The part of peacemaker falls, as one might expect, on Johnson's friend, Edmund Burke, for whom he felt an extraordinary regard and affection that transcended every kind of difference, including the
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political one mentioned in the Dialogues over the Keppel affair. The remarkable brilliance and wisdom of Burke was generally acknowledged by his enemies, although mainly with the object of having his politics appear the worse. Dr. Johnson's lapse into spitefulness gives Burke the occasion to break up his attack on Pepys by interposing a defence of Keppel. The flow of words is stopped, Pepys is permitted to retreat and Johnson is soothed by his friend without finding himself exactly in the right over the affair, for although perhaps morally justified in protecting himself, he has forgotten to bear with a fool, and has wilfully struck at a harmless creature, and for Johnson, remorse is inevitable.

The well-meaning but fatuous efforts of William Weller Pepys, Master in Chancery, do not lead to a continuance of the friendly conversation in Mrs. Vesey's home. Fanny Burney called him "Prime Minister to Mrs. Montagu," with whom he continued to be the best of friends. Although the picture of Pepys is a strictly Streatham portrait, he does not appear to possess "stores inexhaustible of entertainment," and, indeed, unwarily confesses so much to the reader in his letters. Writing to his friend W. Franks with reference to a slightly untoward incident, he says,

... the account you gave of getting into a front box instead of an upper box was too long and circumstantial for the Importance of the Catastrophe. This I happen to remember because I very often catch myself at relating a story with many circumstances, when perhaps at last, the final Event is not at all interesting, which is certainly a fault in conversation, tries the company very much, and entitles the Relator to the modern application of a "BOAR"... it requires some habit of observation to mark the exact Line where the Company begin to feel they have had enough...

There was everything good about Pepys, especially his intentions; his style is a trifle sententious, however, and he may have carried it into his conversation.

A man may continue to read notwithstanding his Wigg and gown are hanging in his closet, tho' I acknowledge that Attendance upon courts is a most cruel destroyer of Time.

Although Pepys was Laelius in Hannah More's "Bas Bleu," he was always "the Old Gentleman" to his College friends.

In 1781 Pepys wrote to Mrs. Montagu on 4 August, of his trying argument with Johnson over Lyttleton, which in a way is anticipated in the "Dialogues on the Death of Mrs. Thrale." Pepys tried to defend his friend, "but such a day did we pass in disputation... as I trust it will never be my fate to pass again." Mrs. Piozzi wrote that Johnson did not love Pepys but respected his abilities, and that he was sorry he had provoked a man who was defending his dead friend. Yet Johnson had set on him, and, like a page in the Dialogues, Miss Burney reports, "called him off, and harangued and attacked him with... vehemence and continuity..." It happened again on 29 October, 1782, over some lines from Gray and Pope's definition of Wit. Pepys "was hurt and piqued beyond all power of disguise, and in the midst of the discourse, suddenly turned from him, and wishing Mrs. Thrale good-night very abruptly withdrew." In general the position was this:

"He (Johnson) so red, poor Mr. Pepys so pale."

At Streatham it was generally recognised that Pepys should "pant in admiration" of Mrs. Montagu, whose wit in the first Dialogue is set out without much flattery, being shown moving heavily from learned witticisms to no less forced if less weighty comparisons: her best remark (that on Mrs. Thrale's prodigious strong nerves) comes spontaneously, but the spontaneity is unfortunately that of Mrs. Thrale, who with a wicked turn, makes Mrs. Montagu repeat it. In 1779 Mrs. Montagu was not so young, and her reputation had been made years before. Nevertheless she still held the respect and admiration of her acquaintances, and Mrs. Thrale dared not assume more than an equal station with her. Miss Burney tells us that at this time Mrs. Montagu was in "very great estimation" at Streatham, Dr. Johnson praising her knowledge and conversation, and Mrs. Thrale almost claiming a position for her beside Johnson and Burke themselves. In 1774 Miss Scott, in the "Female Advocate," had praised her, not so much skilfully as enthusiastically, without mentioning Mrs. Thrale: while in 1778 it could be still said of her as a public character

1 "Modern Characters from Shakespeare," London, 1778, containing quotations for Beauclerk, Burke, Johnson, Sir John Lade (Lady Lade's son), Mrs. Montagu, Miss More (a wicked reference to her "Percy"), Reynolds, and others. It may well be the compilation of one of the Johnson-Streatham Circle.
For in her age
There is a prone, and speechless dialect,
Such as moves men! besides she hath prosperous art
When she will play with reason, and discourse;
And well she can persuade.

It is unfortunate that so much stress has been placed on Mrs. Montagu's charity to the chimney sweepers' apprentices on May-Day, although such a thing, along with her share with Hannah More in shepherding Mrs. Yearsley before the public, does help to make clearer the essentially amateur and personal status of the Blue Stockings: the "roast-beef and plum-pudding once a year on the lawn" put the uncompromising political and literary enemies of the wealthy amateurs too frequently in mind of the "sympathising guardians" whose protection did not last out till next morning, and who complacently saw poets avoid the tortures of starvation by suicide. Citizen Pigott (whose venom and whose libellous imagination were seldom restrained before these superior amateurs and patrons of genius) remembered against the Female Academy the fate of Chatterton.

Two names in the speech of Johnson call for some comment. Topham Beauclerc, whose behaviour (according to Mrs. Piozzi's "Anecdotes") was a source of constant admiration to Johnson because in society it appeared to be so effortless, is said to have led a gay life, but to have been also a close friend of Johnson's. He was dangerously ill in 1775 and died in 1780. His name is brought in to illustrate a general case; the name of Keppel, however, carries a political sting along with it. It seems to be clear that Admiral Keppel, although engaged against the French, had enemies in the Government who encouraged the accusations made against him by his subordinate Palliser, who applied for his commander's Court Martial after the incident of 27 July. A short contemporary account of the affair is as follows:

On the 23d. of the same month, he came in sight of the French Fleet: and finding them backward to come to a decisive action, he resolved to give chase, and on the 27th. the engagement began, in which the French met with so warm a reception that they stood off, unwilling to hazard the event of a close and general contest.

1 Pigott, op. cit.
2 "Description of the Freedom Box voted by the City of London," Nov. 1779, A Succinct Account of His Public Services.
The disabled ships prevented an immediate pursuit, and the Vice-Admiral of the Blue, neglecting to obey the signal for renewing the attack, the enemy availed themselves of the opportunity, and, favoured by night, took shelter in their own port. The Admiral then returned to Plymouth to refit.

After a short time he sailed again, and continued at sea for some time; the French always carefully avoiding the station he kept. Some time after his return he found, to his great surprise, that the Vice-Admiral of the Blue, whose disobedience was overlooked for the sake of preserving unanimity in the service, charged him with misconduct, and the neglect of duty on the 27th. and 28th. of July.

Although a year had passed, in 1779 the arguments over the "French victory" continued; Keppel was acquitted and presented in February with the Freedom of the City. The importance of the defeat with regard to British prestige at sea was the point that lay behind the bickerings on both sides, the odium shifting gradually but wholly to the shoulders of Palliser:

. . . . that France should so suddenly emerge from the Ruins of the last War, from the Grave of Destruction should so suddenly start up so formidable in her Marine, or to dare even to face a British Fleet confessedly the best fitted out, and the best accomplished this Nation ever sent out. . . .

If all had performed their Duty, if Signals had been obeyed, if the Battle had been renewed again . . . it was an Hundred to One . . . but we had taken, burnt, sunk, and destroyed the whole French Navy. . . .

The charge against Keppel was

attacking the enemy improperly in the morning, having made the signal to chase and attack singly when the enemy were formed in a close line; and neglecting to attack in the evening when the enemy offered battle, whereby they were suffered to escape in the night.

He made his defence and was acquitted in February, 1779: but his words in explanation sent a roar of laughter through the country:

On the Memorable XXVIIIth. July MDCCCLXXVIII
This day the English and the French fleets met;
And fought: but—parted ere the sun was set.
Yet, Keppel had his reason for it, —He
Thought they would fight next day more handsomely.²

¹ "Tears of Britannia," 1779, Advertisement and Postscript.
² "Tales, Apologues etc.," 1778, by William Wallbeck; No. 29. Listed as "On the memorable 27th July, 1778." A note is added: "This
Beckenham Place was the out-of-town residence of John Cator, who had retired after making a pile of money in business: he was, says Miss Burney, "a goodnatured, busy sort of man," and his wife, "a sort of nobody." His personal culture was not exceptional, nor his intellect of the keenest. His part in the second dialogue as a peacemaker in his own house is not in any way comparable to the more accidental but beneficial rôle he played in the noisy Lyttleton business in June, 1781: the report of Miss Burney tallies with the speeches put into Cator's mouth by Mrs. Thrale, and as what Mr. Cator said might well have been said by Mr. Norman, although possibly with a tiny degree less of good nature, the description is of utmost value.

... one happy circumstance, however, attended the quarrel, which was the presence of Mr. Cator, who would by no means be prevented, either by reverence for Dr. Johnson, or ignorance of the subject in question; on the contrary, he gave his opinion, quite uncalled, upon everything that was said by either party, and that with an importance and pomposity, yet with an emptiness and verbosity, that rendered the whole dispute, when in his hands, nothing more than ridiculous, and compelled even the disputants themselves, all inflamed as they were, to laugh. To give a specimen—one speech will do for a thousand.

"As to this here question of Lord Lyttleton, I can't speak to it to the purpose, as I have not read his "Life," for I have only read the "Life of Pope"; I have got the books though, for I sent for them last week, and they came to me on Wednesday, and then I began them; but I have not yet read "Lord Lyttleton." "Pope" I have begun, and that is what I am now reading. But what I have to say about Lord Lyttleton is this here: Mr. Seward says that Lord Lyttleton's steward dunned Mr. Shenstone for his rent. Well, if he was a tenant of Lord Lyttleton's, why should he not pay his rent. . . ."

was the reason the Admiral gave. See his Despatches, and Trial." Wallbeck was associated with the Johnson circle.

An interesting pamphlet entitled Sketches from Nature (1779) pretends to criticise pictures from the brushes of men in public affairs, and includes two by Admiral Keppel: Achilles in Dudgeon, and The Contention of Ajax and Ulysses. The first is as follows: "Achilles has a sublimity in his anger, which serves as an excuse for disfiguring so noble a set of features. We cannot think the artist happy in his choice of a subject, though he is perfectly a master in the execution of it. The serious resentment visible in the warrior's countenance commands our attention, and when that is once given, the applause so critical a piece of painting merits can by no means be withheld. The scene is ingeniously calculated to suit the passions of the character, and presents us with a kind of silent surly gloom on every side . . . On the whole the piece is very capital, though rather unpleasing in its historical matter." Comment is needless.
Mr. Cator had the book in his hand and was reading the "Life of Lyttleton," that he might the better, he said, understand the cause, though not a creature cared if he had never heard of it.

Mr. Cator's friend, who takes on so at Baretti's aspersions of his boy George, is hardly distinguishable from Cator himself except for his quotation from Seneca, which one must suspect to be beyond the equipment of his host, whose quotation from Bacon might possibly be picked up from some dim recollection of Johnson's\(^1\) writings. Mr. Norman, according to Fanny Burney, had also retired on his money, and it appears that George Norman, his son, and Thomas Norman, were his children by a previous wife. Of Boy George, there is only available Baretti's hypothesis:

he may have as many Languages as he has Noses, and he may be as wise as he is rich—he communicates not too much I believe his Money or his Knowledge,

which appears to be founded largely on a criticism of Mr. Norman himself.

Mrs. Thrale's portrait of Baretti reflects more the man's well-known intellectual impatience and biting talk than any of that malice and malignance which were commonly brought against him. He had left the house of the Thrales, where he had been a sort of tutor to the children as well as friend of the family, after violent quarrels in 1776, which, according to Mrs. Piozzi's later accounts, arose from his presumption and insolence in attacking her authority in her house. It ought, however, to be noted, that there exist in Rylands Library, letters written in 1776 by Baretti to Mrs. Thrale which show a continuous solicitude to ease her anxieties concerning her children. He loved Queeney best of all the Thrales, although after 1776 he kept away from Streatham. He continued to do work of high quality in scholarship, and apparently did not find every door of the Johnson Circle closed to him. His was a character in perpetual torment, shifting and changing from day to day. Amongst a series of quotations which Mrs. Thrale wrote down as applicable from one friend of hers to another, there is this one for Cator to say of Baretti:

\(^1\)Johnson adds: "the student must learn by commerce with mankind to reduce his speculation to practice." Cator's mind wanders too swiftly from the point to enable him to make his meaning clear, and Baretti puts it in the correct context for him.
Return he cannot nor
Continue where he is; to shift his Being
Is to exchange one Misery for Another
And every day that comes, comes to destroy
A Day’s work in him.

But elsewhere Mrs. Thrale called Baretti a viper, an evil-speaker in private of his friends, and in public of the country that gave him shelter;¹ and, indeed, she suffered much at his hands. Baretti’s part in the history of Mrs. Piozzi’s reputation is well-enough known and does not enter into this aspect of him; however, I scarcely believe that the feeble play, called the Sentimental Mother, can possibly be from the hand of a man who had such a quick and biting wit, and who had such intimate knowledge of the Thrale household, unless one were to think that sheer nastiness and obscene fury turned a clever man into a cur. Mrs. Thrale presents a confirmation of the Italian exile’s remarkable power over the English idiom: he speaks with more clarity, force and wit, and with more aptness than his hosts. His supercilious rearrangement of his friend’s reference to Bacon is what we might well expect from our knowledge of him.

Mr. Seward, at whose lodgings the third Dialogue opens, was publicly known as a hypochondriac. To Miss Burney he first appeared as a very polite, agreeable young man, though later she found he was reserved and cold, except to a few friends to whom he showed great good-nature and good-will. He was ready to disparage most people, possibly in an attempt to tease and be witty. In the Dialogue he appears almost as a low comic figure, a conscious and considerate buffoon, who passes airily from defeat to defeat but tries to “keep it up” nevertheless. He died in 1799 of dropsy at his lodgings in Dean Street, Soho.

Seward’s first visitor, Sir Richard Jebb, was the family friend and physician of the Thrales. Queeney is made to say of him ¹

Camillo¹
Preserver of my Father and myself
The Medicine of our House.

¹These quotations written down by Mrs. Thrale (after the style of “Modern Characters from Shakespeare,” cited above) are in the Miscellaneous MSS. in Rylands Library. The last reference to Baretti’s ingratitude cited here is in Una and Dussa (Rylands MS.) p. 111.
Sir Richard was called in on every occasion of illness amongst the Thrales, and is here presented as a physician with little faith in medicine: nevertheless with a tendency to ruminate (once the topic is artfully suggested by Seward) on the "surprising things that do occur in the history of human nature." The second visitor who arrives with the invitation from Lady Lade is described by Miss Burney as "not at all a man of letters, but extremely well-bred, nay elegant, in his manners, and sensible and agreeable in his conversation."

Sir Philip Jennings-Clerke, then, was a universal favourite. Seward greets Sir Philip as a lover of a horse, and indeed his love for the animal was generally recognised by his friends. Mrs. Thrale, whose warm friend he was, sent him a horse as a present, which he acknowledges in a letter to her of 10 April, 1781. Sir Philip’s gallantry and assiduousness towards the ladies is corroborated in yet another quotation which Mrs. Thrale assigned as from Hester to Sir Philip:

Out Hyperbolical Fiend! how vexest thou this man;
Talkst thou of nought but Ladies!

But not only did he make such pleasant discourse, but he rang for the chestnuts at Lady Lade’s party, and skilfully put an end to an increasingly rancorous conversation which even the irrelevances of Seward could hardly check. His assumption of dolefulness on remembering the song that Cordwell sang the winter before was something in which he took some pride and by which he got dignity, but all without offence: his seems to have been at times the melancholy mood:

... still to be sad good Sir,
For to speak truth it very well becomes you;
Sorrow so royally in you appears
That I will put the Fashion deeply on
And wear it in my Heart.

Mrs. Thrale gives this quotation as from herself of Sir Philip.

Lady Lade herself, in whose home the second part of the third Dialogue takes place, was sister to Mr. Thrale. Miss Burney said

1 Misc. Letters: from Jennings Clerke, 10 April, 1781 (Rylands MSS.).
2 Sir John Lade (originally John Inskip) was made a baronet 17 March, 1758. He had married, 1755, Anne, sister of Henry Thrale. Died, 1759, in consequence of a fall from his horse. His posthumous son succeeded him—a spendthrift and friend of George IV. On his death, 10 Feb., 1838, the
of her, that tall, ugly, stout and elderly as she was, she dressed showily and after the fashion of more youth than she possessed. She is said not to have been cultivated, presumably after the manner of the Blue-stockings, but that she was "adept in the manners of the world." Her flow of talk is mainly an attack on the several intellectual ladies who visited Streatham and associated with Miss Thrale. Queeney (Hester Maria) Thrale was about fourteen years old at the time of the Dialogues, and is described as "stiff and proud, or else shy and reserved." She was Baretti's favourite, and he admired her reticence and aloofness as a fine characteristic:

"Susan mimicks Queeney in her bashfulness... And how are you yourselves? Pretty well, answers Queeney in a very low voice." 1

She was difficult to handle, and in the "Dialogues" her depression irritates old Lady Lade, but gives some comfort to her father. Sir Philip alone is able to entice her into a reply. Of Mr. Thrale himself it need only be said, that the period of the Dialogue was a time between two break-downs in his health. In July he had just recovered from 2 an illness and he was down again in September. Much respected both by his wife and Dr. Johnson, his brewery and membership in Parliament caused his name to go down to posterity, in the phrase of Peter Pindar, the genius of comic verse,

"Bright in the annals of Election Ale."

The Burneys who are mentioned, Fanny Burney and her father, the Doctor, were both much loved by Mrs. Thrale. Fanny Burney reported a description of herself to Johnson from Mrs. Thrale:

baronetcy expired. The spendthrift son figures largely in the satirical effusions of the day, and his wife no less: see Pigott, op. cit. (4th ed., 1794, p. 43) and "Whig Club" (1794, p. 92). See also Poems by Anthony Pasquin (John Williams), 1768 (containing many contemporary hits in epigram) (p. 115), An Epigrammatic Colloquy occasioned by Sir John Lade's ingenious method of managing his estates:

"Said Hope to Wit, with eager looks,
And sorrow streaming eyes;
In pity, Jester, tell me when
Will Johnny Lade be—wise?
Thy sighs forego, said Wit to Hope,
And be no longer sad;
Tho' other foplings grow to men,
He'll always be a—Lad."

1 Letters from Baretti, 12 May, 1776 (Rylands MSS.).
2 Letters to Mrs. Lambert and Mrs. Byron (Rylands MSS.).
Miss Burney looks so meek and so quiet, nobody would suspect what a comical girl she is; but I believe she has a great deal of malice at heart.

The FANNY BROWN who is also mentioned was a frequent visitor to Streatham and is immortalised as one who had a slovenly way of dressing and whom Dr. Johnson delighted to make ridiculous. Mrs. Thrale is reported to have said in her defence, that she was not very deep, indeed, but she was a sweet, and a very ingenuous girl: which assuredly she must have been. Fanny Brown more than anyone admired SOPHY STREATFIELD, who was one of the more remarkable specimens of the Thrale Bluestockings: she knew Greek and had a nose correspondingly symmetrical. Her easy shedding of tears, and the beautiful picture she represented when crying, was rather too common a joke amongst her friends, who publicly exploited and abused her. Her beauty and her cleverness and learning rather annoyed her companions who could feel envious of such virtues, and, all in all, her kind nature is apt to be overlooked by her censurers.

In June, 1779, Miss Burney compared Miss Brown and Miss Streatham, as follows:

Miss Streatham . . . is indeed, much more really beautiful than Fanny Brown; but Fanny Brown is much more showy, and her open, good-humoured, gay, laughing face inspires an almost immediate wish of conversing and making merry with her.

To Lady Lade all these young women were only differentiated in degree: she would have sympathised with Citizen Pigott's description of the "Blue Stocking Jockeys," who preferred wit to beauty. Whether Mrs. Thrale was known to be swayed by one or the other characteristic at different times in her choice of confidants for herself and her daughter it is difficult to say, but her friend, Mrs. Lambert, took the liberty of reminding her in a letter of 15 Jan., 1781 (?) that,

Beauty is but the powder in the Hair, & Wit only the Feather in the Cap of Virtue; they attract the notice, but 'tis the Helmet that resists the blow: the "Helmet" in this significant lesson being Religion and Morality.

Of CORDWELL and MISS DODSON very little can be easily ascertained, but Sir SAMPSON GIDEON was well known in his day. If ever the approbation of one man tended to damn another, it would be the case if Sir Sampson praised him. Peter Pindar in Ode upon
Ode, brings him swiftly to the mind’s eye, with his family and his history. He was son of a Jewish financier of great influence, and a member of Parliament:

All the Angel Gideons,
That is, my lady, and her daughter fair,
With coal-black eyebrows, and sweet Hebrew air—
The lovely produce of the two religions . . .
Begot between a game hen and an owl.

We must presume that Sir Sampson was the owl. His judgment in any matter of taste is possibly strictly indicated in the same poem:

Sir Sampson too declar’d, with voice divine,
Dat shince he haf turn Chreestian, and eat hog,
He nebber did hear mooshic half sho fine;
No; nebber shince he less de shinnygogue.

The cruelty of the attack need not obscure its deftness nor its accuracy. Nevertheless Sir Sampson was a benefactor to the poor villagers of Beddingham, which unfortunately brought forth in his honour an enthusiastic piece of work1 which described the arrival of the long expected alms to the frostbound and stricken inhabitants: the author, for his part, would as soon associate the name of Gideon with a satire as expect to see a diamond dim in nature: for,

. . . in this huge and complicate distress,
This dearth, this sov’reign winter-wretchedness;
Was there no mercy heav’n directed sent;
No man ordain’d to be its instrument?
Yes, yes, there was—Oh! say whose active care
First rear’d those famished children from despair!
Twas GIDEON!
Blest be his fame,
He ne’er forgets the poor . . .
He seal’d and sent salvation’s edicts down
To thee, sad BEDDINGHAM, from ARLINGTON.

In this way Nature, in its course, brings good but dull men their reward.

The text of the “Dialogues” has been brought into line with the printing practice of Mrs. Thrale’s own day, and this has involved insignificant rearrangement, such as the setting of the names of speakers in capital letters over the paragraph of their speech. I have also taken

1 Sir Sampson Gideon mentioned here is the Baronet (1745-1824); see D.N.B. The quoted panegyric, A Poem to Sir Sampson Gideon, Baronet, London, 1786.
Mrs. Thrale's marginal "directions" and set them into the text in italics, reserving, in addition, the right to italicise the words Scene, Speakers, etc., in the rubrics introducing each new scene. Mrs. Thrale's own italics have been preserved along with her spelling and "punctuation." The Appendix contains for comparison Mrs. Montagu's Dialogue between Mercury and Mrs. Modish, transcribed from the edition of 1760 (the third). How much more "classical" is the design, and how beautifully written is the prose of Mrs. Montagu's work, in contrast to that of Mrs. Thrale, will be readily apparent.

I acknowledge my debts to Dr. Guppy with great pleasure (an incalculable one in kindness and courtesy) for permitting me to handle these Dialogues: and also to Dr. Tyson. It was thought advisable to limit the scope of this article as much as possible in view of such publications as are shortly to appear.
ONE of Dean Swift's happiest Compositions is certainly the little poem on his own Death. My Death would be a slight Event indeed compared with his—it would I think just bear three Dialogues among the people I chiefly lived with, & some of them are insignificant enough too. The first Dialogue will be the favourite with everybody else—but the last was best liked by the Author.
[THE FIRST DIALOGUE.]
A Month after my Death.

Scene: Mrs. Vesey's Assembly—Sunday Night.

Speakers: Johnson, Burke, Pepys & Mrs. Montagu.

PEPYS.

(To Mrs. Vesey) The Society at this House is always charming dear Madam, but you do in a very singular Manner possess the power of attracting every thing superiorly agreeable. Such a Circle!

MRS. MONTAGU.

Ay, is not it? and Mrs. Vessey to do her Justice never describes her magical Circle such as fits herself alone to walk in; her's is the old Ptolemaick System, every thing in it moving under her Influence and She herself remains the Primum Mobile.

PEPYS.

(To Burke) Admirable! did you hear what Mrs. Montagu said?

BURKE.

Yes—I always hear Mrs. Montagu with equal Pleasure and Advantage. (Turning to her) There is no System in which She is not made to shine, for though certainly solid, she is never Opaque.

MRS. MONTAGU.

(Bowing to Burke) Sir, I am pleased with your Compliment, for I am always pleased with Compliments paid to my sex for its Understanding. (To Pepys) & now Mr. Pepys, if we Witches had but the Power of conjuring up into this Circle again our lost Friend Mrs. Thrale, I do verily believe that you would think Enchantment so used, might be legally defended even in the Courts of Judicature, where I believe there has not been a Cause of Witchcraft now subsisting these many many years.¹

¹Capital punishment for Witchcraft abolished Act 9 Geo. II. cap. 5.

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PEPYS.

Why Mrs. Thrale was really a Loss to Society, and it is so difficult to get Companions now a days—Company was never so easily to be met with, but Company and Companions I hold to be separate Ideas. (He now crosses the Room to Johnson & says) We have a sad Loss here of an amiable Friend, Dr. Johnson—Mrs. Thrale Sir—

JOHNSON.

Yes Sir.

PEPYS.

Here is always at this house a mighty happy Selection—too many tho' I think Sir for the purposes of Conversation; any five of them would do better, a mere Galaxy of Wits this, too many good Dishes like poor Mrs. Thrale's Dinners—Dr. Johnson!

JOHNSON.

I do not like to talk of Mrs. Thrale Sir.

PEPYS.

Sir, I suppose nobody presumes to question the Propriety of any Expression that falls from Dr. Johnson, but give me leave to recover my Surprize at least—I had no Idea of your objecting to me for expressing my Concern for the death of that Lady, and you were (peevishly) suppos'd to have had some Loss of her yourself too—

JOHNSON.

(Earnestly) If you suppose it Mr. Pepys, you do not surely observe the Rules of good Breeding in placing that Loss before my Eyes so wantonly.—No Man, should fail to respect the Sorrows of another, as no Man is likely to glide through Life without feeling any; and no Man, I must tell you, Sir—

PEPYS.

God bless me I. . . .

JOHNSON.

(Very loud) Nay but give me leave—I did not interrupt you.—No Man I say has a Right to obtrude unpleasing Images on my Mind, nor force me for his Pleasure upon making ungrateful Comparisons between my past & present State of Existence. Would you declaim
upon the happiness of sound Health to Beauclerc? Would you talk to your Friend (sneeringly) Keppel of the twenty seventh of July?

BURKE.

Mr. Keppel might be talked to concerning the Business of that Day Dr. Johnson, and often is, without any Diminution of that Self Complacency which in Good men ever attends the performance of their Duty, however unsuccessful the Event.

JOHNSON.

Burke you know better, but we have long ago agreed not to talk about publick Affairs—was I wrong though in what I said this moment to Pepys?

BURKE.

Perfectly right unless from the Violence with which It was said. Unless a Man had Stores less inexhaustible of Entertainment than I fear our Friend the Master will be found to have, he should be cautious of introducing Subjects of so delicate a Nature. 'Tis acting at last but like Aaron the Moor,¹ who dug up People's dead Friends I think & set them at their Doors.

JOHNSON.

Why somehow or other I don't much love Pepys, & so I might be tempted to be rough with him—and yet it is unreasonable—you know it is—to be obliged to share Pain with a Creature, with whom one cannot share Pleasure.

¹ The reference to Aaron the Moor is slightly untoward. I owe the following reference to Dr. Tyson. Thrale-Byron Letters, No. 3, 2 June, 1788 (Rylands MSS).

"that unextinguishable viper Baretti... who like Aaron the Moor in Shakespeare's Titus Andronicus, digs up people's dead Friends, & sets them at their doors... even when their Sorrows are almost forgot."

With reference to Baretti, the allusion has some point, which is absent in the simple maladroitness of poor Pepys.
DIALOGUES BY HESTER LYNCH THRALE

MRS. MONTAGU.

(To a Lady.) What was Johnson so loud about at the other End of the Room?—-I could not make it out.

PEPYS.

Why, the oddest Thing in the World—I meant to please him & mentioned Mrs. Thrale's name, but he flew out so fiercely—-It put me in mind of a Thing—-

MRS. MONTAGU.

Ay! flew out—did not he—we heard him quite across the Room; why he burst in your hand like an overcharged Musket, & you seem a little shattered by the Recoil too I protest,—but he has had a Loss you'll allow—Mrs. Thrale, among her other Qualifications, had prodigious strong Nerves—and that's an admirable Quality for a Friend of Dr. Johnson's.

PEPYS.

Oh Madam I have been stunned by him at Streatham many a Time, and Mrs. Thrale not content with his loud Voice would make me exert my own Lungs very often till I have been quite Ill after it—-how She could bear such bawling, & not be totally divested of all Delicacy was a constant Source of Wonder to me—I used to tell her that She put me in Mind . . .

MRS. MONTAGU.

Bless me! yes, She had remarkable good Nerves, & yet carried off so suddenly—-pounced by Death like a Partridge upon the Wing—caught in one of her Flights Mr. Pepys.

PEPYS.

Charming! Charming! Bravo! Bravo! [And now he runs about telling everybody what Mrs. Montagu said last—while Johnson, enquiring what the happy Sallie was & hearing it repeated—leaves the Room, & the Conversation is changed to a worthier Subject.]

[End of the First Dialogue.]
Scene: Beckenham Place after Suppers.
Company: Mr. Cator, Mrs. Cator, Mr. Norman and Mr. Baretti.

BARETTI.
You have heard the News confirmed of the Death of Mrs. Thrale.

CATOR.
Yes, it was a very unexpected Event & proceeded as I have been tould entirely for want of Care.

NORMAN.
Why tis a common Saying—& common Sayings is sometimes worthy observation—that the sensiblest persons does the foolishest Things, for that good Lady did not want for Wit hah Mr. Cator.—

CATOR.
No to be sure, on the contrary was always reckoned I believe above par: and had as I have been tould read a monstrous Sight of Books—but Books will not do Sir, not do every thing I mean to say—Books my Lord Bacon says—I think it is my Lord Bacon as says—Books will never teach the use of Books. A great man that Mr Baretti—our Countryman Bacon & made very pertinent Observations for the time he lived in, very fine Things I have heard of his'n.

BARETTI.
It is very finely said of my Lord Bacon that Books will not teach the use of Books; Mrs Thrale however knew the World well enough too; She had not always a rich Husband, She had wheeled about and about a good deal.

CATOR.
Why with Regard to that there I can't speak to it, not to that there point I mean; but I am of opinion that She did not—that She had not what I call Knowledge of the world. because Mr Baretti She must have perceived how Things went on of late,¹ and She never seemed to

¹ Mrs. Thrale certainly had a turn for expense but she also had a remarkable turn for economy when it was needed. On at least two occasions in her life she cleared off very heavy debts, the reference here possibly being to the business trouble in which Thrale found himself some time previously, the debts of which at the time of the “Dialogues” were still being cleared.
wish to draw the Line by what I could judge She had always a Turn to Expence; now I'm one of those as thinks there's no Pleasure in spending of money when one don't know how long one may have it to Spend—for when I know what my Income is——

NORMAN.

Ay, when I know what my Income is, then I can judge to a Guinea what I'll allot to spend; but when my whole Fortune—The Tot: of it—is in trade, then no Man I'll be bould to say I'll defy any Man in England that's to say no Man can tell how, not but what he may come short I mean—that is in plain Terms to fall through, in such Times as these no Man is safe, no Man's Fortune I mean for as Senecar has it

_Magna Servitus est Magna Fortuna._¹

& when I consider for Example _my_ Fortune . . .

BARETTI.

Why, do you think her Husband suffered her then to distribute as She pleased—his Riches.

CATOR.

I don't at all make a doubt Mr Baretti but She had a proper Influence.

BARETTI.

If She had any Influence at all I think it was an improper one, & that in a high degree too, nothing is in my Mind more despicable than a Man swayed by his Wife.

NORMAN.

Yes Yes Mr Baretti any Man who spends more than what's warrantable is a Man more despicable by half, & though I have had two Wives God be praised & good Portions with each & pretty Rogues too I may say ay & loved them dearly—and I hope this sweet Girl of mine will be as happy as I can make her—that is to be sure I am a matter of Sixty going on, but what of that? I will make her as as happy as I can. ha! ha! ha!

¹Norman must have credit for accuracy and aptness of quotation from Seneca, _De Consolat. ad Polyb._, 26.
CATOR.

You will be a Wag Mr. Norman.

NORMAN.

Well Joking apart, then to the matter of my Wife; though She don’t know nothing at all concerning of my Affairs, that’s only because how that’s because how, I can manage them for myself; but if my Boy George for Example, if my Boy George should marry a Lady of exalted Understanding or just Exempli Gratia such a Lady as Mrs. Thrale . . .

BARETTI.

Sir; George your Boy may for ought I know to the contrary be a Beast, greater than any Beast that I have seen; but if he is not the most ignorant the most impenetrable Blockhead that ever the Almighty has given Permission to infect the Earth with his Folly—he will not be governed by his Wife.

CATOR.

Why you are very severe upon the Ladies Mr Baretti; do you say these things in Italy?

BARETTI.

The Ladies in Italy & elsewhere, have the exclusive Privileges of dressing their heads, and creeping into our hearts, & playing pug’s Tricks, & are — — (He looks & sees Mrs Cator fast asleep) while young at least the most pleasing Beings in the Universe:

Dans le Monde on fait tous pour ces Animaux là. I am the last Man in the World to say in their dispraise any thing, & there is many a pretty Lady to whom I would give in Italy and England a very hearty Kiss, tho’ I am now fifty Years old myself & as many more as I have Toes. . . .

NORMAN.

But what I would beg to know have you ever seen so wanting in my George I am wondering; the Boy don’t seem so deficient tho’ perhaps he don’t put himself out afore you, as what you need take him for any worse than his Neighbours: foolisher fellows than George Norman gets to have wise wives if they can settle handsomely hah! Mr Cator, Women is a Drug now—a mere Drug.
BARETTI.

Sir, Your Boy George is one of the persons whom I hardly ever saw; & as for his Conversation I know it not; he may have as many Languages as he has Noses, and he may be as wise as he is rich — — he communicates not too much I believe his Money or his Knowledge.

CATOR.

Come, Come, lets drink a Glass of Wine to drown Animosities; Come, here's a Good Wife to Mr Thrale & a good Husband to his eldest Daughter—Why General ! (to his wife) what fast asleep I why you won't let this Toast go by I'm sure.

BARETTI.

(To Mrs Cator.)
Madam, here is health and a good Husband to my Hetty Thrale; as for her, Father—he has had—I believe Wife enough.

[End of the Second Dialogue.]

THE THIRD DIALOGUE.

Scene: Seward's Lodging.
Seward alone.

SEWARD.

What have the Ministry provided us no new publick Calamities for to Day's Entertainment, that these cursed printers keep up the bore with repetition of private Concerns.—(Reads) Last Week died at Streatham the Wife of Henry Thrale Esqr.—who if he had any Feeling now, would himself be affected by the incessant recurrence of the paragraph, but the Comfort is—no Man has any Feeling, sad Dogs to be sure, sad Dogs Mankind are; I am not as much hurt at it myself as I thought I should have been, but then I had taken an Emetick the Night before I heard the News—and a Man is so different after the Bile is gone off his Stomach. (Rings the Bell) Richard ! Give me the Draught marked Med. Die.
RICHARD.

Yes Sir.

SEWARD.

See who knocks at the Door; one swallows this Stuff the quicker for hearing somebody knock now. Mere Machinery Mankind is, certainly—Mere Machinery—{*Hides the Bottle*}.

(Enter Sir R. Jebb.)

SIR R. JEBB.

How do you Seward? What, not quacking I hope: the less Medicine, & the more Excercise the better I believe in your Case and Mine.

SEWARD.

No! I never take anything now: *Cave Medicis et Medicinis:* that shall be my Motto in future; Ay!

SIR R. JEBB.

Ay: I wish poor Mrs. Thrale had followed that Axiom too, but I have heard She was always playing some Tricks or other with a Health very valuable to her Friends.

SEWARD.

(Impatiently) Was She? Was She? What did She take? come tell, do; what hurt her? what killed her? hah! how was it? tell.

SIR R. JEBB.

Lord I don't know how to answer when one's interrogated so not I; I never supposed that She poysioned herself.

SEWARD.

But what do you suppose? did She practise any clandestine cruelties upon her person? any secret Mortifications I mean: did you ever ask her Maids if She wore anything?

1 Cf. Swift (*Poem on His Death*):

The Doctors tender of their fame,
Wisely on me lay all the blame.
"We must confess his case was nice:
But he would never take advice."
SIR R. JEBB.
Wore anything! What d'ye mean?

SEWARD.
Aye any Hair Cloth or—or . . .

SIR R. JEBB.
God—you amaze me; such Notions never entered my Head.

SEWARD.
Why I can't tell whether you knew it Sir Rich:d, but She was a very pious Woman; and your pious people do strange Things. No true Devotion without great Oddity, no true Wit without much Madness: Jean Jacques Rousseau who had a great deal of both was of that Opinion, & I've heard you say something like it yourself.

SIR R. JEBB.
Why very surprising Things do occur in the history of human Nature (Somebody knocks) but—It is your Levee Day Mr Seward:

SEWARD.
It is a Day of no great Levity neither, for we're on a grave Subject God knows, drawing our Subjects out of the Grave indeed. —(Enter Sir Philip J. Clerke) Oh, how do you do Sir Philip?

SIR PHILIP.
Sir a good morrow to you, though I did myself the honour to knock at your door, I rather wished (for the sake of your own health) to have heard you was rode out.

SEWARD.
Why we'll allow you Sir Philip to be a Lover of a Horse but in my Mind—

The proper Study of Mankind is Man!

SIR PHILIP.
Well Sir! if Woman come within the Sphere of your Studies, you'll dine perhaps at Lady Lade's today; She commanded me to ask you ——and the Commands of a Lady—Sir
SIR R. JEBB.
Ay Faith! I wish some pretty Lady's Commands had due Weight with our Friend Seward Sir; a Wife is the Thing he wants; one pretty Girl at last is worth all our Faculty.

SIR PHILIP.
Worth every thing in this World Sir; no Pleasure without the Women I think!

SIR R. JEBB.
Of that I seem not quite so confident, all Intellectual Pleasures go on most easily I believe without the Sexual Intercourse; but then a Man can't read always—and

SEWARD.
And so you think a little bickering makes Variety;—why Women are like Bitters to be sure, they do give a Stimulus, but then Marriage is Chamomile Tea, a mere Emetick Sir Richard.

SIR R. JEBB.
Well I wont hear my Prescriptions ridiculed if I can't get them follow'd; and since I am always recommending Marriage, we will have nothing clever said in Abuse of a good Wife; so good morrow Seward—God! (Looking at his Watch) what a Trifler I am!—Sir Philip your most Obedient.

Scene changes to Lady Lade’s, after Dinner.

Company: Mr Thrale, Miss Thrale, Mr Seward, Lady Lade, Miss Dodson & Sir Philip Jennings Clerke.

LADY LADE.
(To Miss Thyale) Come Queeney, have a Glass of Raisin Wine My Dear do; & don't look so pecking;¹ I've a good mind to give this Girl a Spider, as they do sick Turkey Poultas.

¹ "Pecking," low, and fault-finding. It is an interesting enquiry whether sick turkey poultas were given spiders, but progress in it is difficult. Dr. Tyson draws my attention to an article in the Gentleman's Magazine, 1867, Pt. I., p. 731, on "Suffolk Superstitions." "To swallow a spider, or its web, when placed on a small piece of apple, is an acknowledged cure for ague. . . . It is employed not only by the poor, but by the better informed. . . ." The failure of the cure excited astonishment. In another reference ("Old Friends and New Acquaintances," p. 152) the cure for ague was "black-bottle spiders made into pills with fresh butter." I also owe the revelation of this delicate combination to Dr. Tyson. Neither recipe (both seem to be a sort of magic) is reported as successful.
Mr. Thrale.

Pray give her nothing, do let her alone!

Lady Lade.

Lord Mr. Thrale you’re so low & so sulky, you & your beautiful Daughter only make one another worse; I shall be glad when Cordwell comes to keep it up a little & sing us a Song.

Seward.

Who’s to come? Cordwell! Who is Cordwell? a Character

Miss Dodson.

Yes a very good Character I believe he has; (to Sir Philip) He sung a Hunting Song last Winter Sir, if you remember—that you commended vastly

Sir Philip.

Ma’am I beg pardon, I do remember the Gentleman: & not without more Pain than I care to express in this Company. (Sighs).¹

Mr. Thrale.

Nanny, if you like such Blacks about you I do not; & in short if you can find no Company more agreeable to me than such singing Scoundrels I’ll find some other place to go to.

Miss Dodson.

Law! Mr. Thrale I think you’re very Censorious; Mr. Cordwell mayn’t have a great Fortune perhaps, but I believe he’s quite an independent Man, & I never heard he had any but a good Character in my Life; I know he is very well respected by people of undoubted Fortune; Sir Sampson Gideon likes him vastly well as I have heard.

Lady Lade.

Dear Miss Dodshon will you speak to Robert for the Chestnuts.

Sir Philip.

Ma’am I can’t bear to see you take so much Trouble—Women should surely sit still; if you permit us the pleasure of waiting on you ’tis enough & ought to make us happy.

¹ The reference may simply be to the doleful sentimentality of the ballad Cordwell sang, or to some more touching and undiscoverable affair.
MISS DODSON.

Sir you're always exceedingly polite

SIR PHILIP.

Will your Ladyship's Bell ring for them to hear it below?

LADY LADE.

I believe so, though all the Things grows old too, but so does some of the Guests, & I am sure the Mistress of the House; Heigh ho! Mr. Seward! I believe you find this a sad Bore.

SEWARD.

No, no, it is but a pig of Lead as yet, it may grow to a Boar by nursing tho'; (Looking round for applause He sees nobody understands him & goes on.) Well Madam, when did your Ladyship see Mr. Adair?

LADY LADE.

He was here this Morning to bleed my Brother.

SEWARD.

Ay, ay, the Scotch bleed us all round I think, don't they Sir Philip? hah! and, (to Mr. Thrale) Sir, did you bleed freely under Scotch Influence Mr. Thrale?

MR. THRALE.

I do as well as I can Sir.

SEWARD.

When did you see the little Doctor? Burney I mean.

MR. THRALE.

I don't want to see any of the Burneys.

LADY LADE.

Well I but I've left off wondering at any thing: I always thought Miss Burney a monstrous favourite at Streatham: to be sure Miss Streathfield's a great deal handsomer, & has a better Nose: but Lord, what's (with a sneer) Features where Wit is so much concerned?
as for Fanny Brown I own I always did think her a mighty course young Woman, (sneeringly) for Miss Thrale to keep Company with, & as to her Singing I assure you Cordwell's Ballads are ten times more pleasing in my vulgar Notion than all that fine Italian Stuff that one can't understand.

SEWARD.
Oh I saw Browney yester Morn. & She blubbered like the bawd in Hogarth's Harlot's Burial; I hear Sophy Streatfield never looked so lovely as in Tears for her Friend—quite a Guido Rheni.

MR. THRALE.
I wish we might hear no more of them !

SIR PHILIP.
Your Ladyship has lately play'd at Whist a little—shall I be too officious to propose a Game now? Miss Thrale Ma'am you are my old Partner & must not be afraid of me;—We'll win all their Money.

MISS THRALE.
If you'll accept of me Sir . . .

LADY LADE.
Yes, come. Cards & Candles in tother Room.

[They all beak up.]

[End of the Dialogues.]
APPENDIX.

THE TWENTY-SEVENTH DIALOGUE.

BY MRS. MONTAGU.

(“Queen of the Blues.”)

Dialogue XXVII from Lyttleton’s “Dialogues of the Dead.”


Mercury——And a Modern Fine Lady.

MRS. MODISH.

Indeed, Mr. Mercury, I cannot have the pleasure of waiting upon you now. I am engaged, absolutely engaged.

MERCURY.

I know you have an amiable affectionate husband, and several fine children; but you need not be told, that neither conjugal Attachments, maternal affections, nor even the care of a Kingdom’s welfare or a Nation’s glory, can excuse a person who has received a summons to the realms of Death. If the grim messenger was not as peremptory as unwelcome, Charon would not get a passenger (except now and then an hypochondriacal Englishman) once in a century. You must be content to leave your husband and family, and pass the Styx.

MRS. MODISH.

I did not mean to insist on any engagement with my husband and children; I never thought myself engaged to them. I had no engagements but such as were common to women of my Rank. Look on my Chimney-piece, and you will see I was engaged to the Play on Mondays, Balls on Tuesdays, the Opera on Saturdays, and to Card-assemblies the rest of the week, for two months to come; and it would be the rudest thing in the world not to keep my appointments. If you will stay for me till the Summer-season, I will wait on you with all my heart. Perhaps the Elysian Fields may be less detestable than the country in our world. Pray have you a fine Vauxhall and Ranelagh? I think I should not dislike drinking the Lethe Waters when you have a full Season.
Surely you could not like to drink the waters of Oblivion, who have made Pleasure the business, end, and aim of your Life! It is good to drown cares, but who would wash away the remembrance of a Life of Gaiety and Pleasure.

MRS. MODISH.

Diversion was indeed the business of my Life, but as to Pleasure I have enjoyed none since the novelty of my amusements were gone off. Can one be pleased with seeing the same thing over and over again? Late hours and fatigue gave me the Vapours, spoiled the natural cheerfulness of my Temper, and even in youth wore away my youthful vivacity.

MERCURY.

If this way of Life did not give you Pleasure, why did you continue in it? I suppose you did not think it was very meritorious?

MRS. MODISH.

I was too much engaged to think at all: so far indeed my manner of Life was agreeable enough. My friends always told me diversions were necessary, and my Doctor assured me dissipation was good for my Spirits; my husband insisted that it was not, and you know that one loves to oblige one's friends, comply with one's Doctor, and contradict one's husband; and besides I was ambitious to be thought du Bon ton.

MERCURY.

Bon ton! what is that Madam? Pray define it.

MRS. MODISH.

Oh, Sir, excuse me, it is one of the privileges of the Bon ton never to define, or be defined. It is the child and the Parent of Jargon. It is—I can never tell you what it is: but I will try to tell you what it is not. In conversation it is not Wit; in manners it is not Politeness; in behaviour it is not Address; but it is a little like them all. It can only belong to people of a certain rank, who live in a certain manner, with certain persons, who have not certain virtues, and who have certain Vices, and who inhabit a certain Part of the Town. Like a place by courtesy, it gets an higher rank than the person can claim,
but which those who have a legal title to precedence dare not dispute for fear of being thought not to understand the rules of Politeness. Now sir, I have told you as much as I know of it, though I have admired and aimed at it all my Life.

MERCURY.
Then Madam, you have wasted your time, faded your Beauty, and destroyed your health, for the laudable purposes of contradicting your husband, and being this something and this nothing called the Bon ton.

MRS. MODISH.
What would you have me do?

MERCURY.
I will follow your mode of instructing. I will tell you what I would not have had you do. I would not have had you sacrifice your time, your reason, and your Duties to fashion and folly. I would not have had you neglect your husband's happiness, and your children's Education.

MRS. MODISH.
As to my Daughters Education I spared no expence; They had a dancing-master, music-master, and drawing-master; and a French governess to teach them behaviour and the French Language.

MERCURY.
So their religion, sentiments and manners were to be learnt from a dancing-master, music-master, and a chamber-maid! Perhaps they might prepare them to catch the Bon ton. Your daughters must have been so educated as to fit them to be wives without conjugal affection, and mothers without maternal care. I am sorry for the sort of life they are commencing, and for that which you have just concluded. Minos is a sour old Gentleman, without the least smattering of the Bon ton, and I am in a fright for you. The best thing I can advise you is to do in this world as you did in the other, keep happiness in your view, but never take the road that leads to it. Remain on this side Styx; wander about without end or aim; look into the Elysian Fields, but never attempt to enter into them, lest Minos should push you into Tartarus: for duties neglected may bring on a Sentence not much less severe than crimes committed.

FINIS.