THE PRINTING OF MRS. PIOZZI'S ANECDOTES OF DR. JOHNSON.

By JAMES LOWRY CLIFFORD.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, NEW YORK CITY.

DURING February, 1786, the firm of T. Cadell, printer in the Strand, was busy preparing Mrs. Piozzi's *Anecdotes of Dr. Johnson* for publication. The sheets were all printed by the beginning of March when suddenly it was found necessary to make some changes in the text. Letters and manuscripts, recently brought to light in the John Rylands Library and in the Pierpont Morgan Library of New York City, tell the story of these interesting last minute alterations.

Two important changes were made, and both involved James Boswell, Mrs. Piozzi's most indefatigable and irrepressible rival. Boswell's *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides with Samuel Johnson, LL.D.*, had appeared in the last of September, 1785, and the Blue-stocking world had been shocked by a passage referring to Mrs. Montagu's *Essay on Shakespeare*. Although Mrs. Piozzi was in Italy, her personal physician, Sir Lucas Pepys, wrote to Rome on December 15th to tell her the news:—

"I suppose you have seen Boswell's Journal of his Tour to the Hebrides, if you have not, you should order it to be sent to you; in it you have already or will find the following or Like Passage—'We Spoke of Mrs. Montagu's Book & I asked Dr. Johnson his Opinion of it—He said Mrs. Thrale, Beauclerk, & I, tried to read it but we never could get through it.' You may easily Conceive this Opinion must have given some sleepless Hours to Mrs. Montagu—it was cruel to Publish such an Opinion if it really was yours, for it was effectually stirring up Strife between you, but I firmly Believe you would think differently of the Book if you
was to read it again—I really wish you so well, that if it is not quite contrary to your Opinion, I wish you could in your Anecdotes soften down the above Harsh Criticism on a Sister Author—not that I ever heard Mrs. Montagu say a Word about the Passage—or do I know that she ever read it, but some time or other she will see it, & I could wish you to have no Enemies.”

Mrs. Piozzi’s other friends also wrote telling of the tempest Boswell’s passage had aroused. Dr. Lort, the antiquary, added on December 31st:

“Poor Mrs. Montagu is almost as much mortified by your opinion of her book as by Mr. Cumberland’s Character of her and her bluestocking Club drawn at length in a volume of Essays he has published called the Observer.”

In a later letter Samuel Lysons, then a law student in the Inner Temple, advised denial, and added that the Bishop of Peterborough joined him in this request.

Mrs. Piozzi was in a difficult position. She had seen Boswell’s Journal in manuscript, and at the time had made no strenuous objection to the offensive passage. But as her friends’ urgent pleas required an immediate answer, she wrote back submissively the requested denial.

Mrs. Piozzi’s replies to her English correspondents were very carefully worded, and as Boswell later pointed out, did not deny his statement. She could not bring herself to refute what she knew had been Johnson’s settled opinion of the unlucky Essay. The only recourse left was to evade the issue, and this she proceeded to do. Her letter written to Lysons, as soon as she saw Boswell’s volume, was profuse in assurances of personal admiration for Mrs. Montagu and her work, yet avoiding any direct discussion of the truth of Boswell’s quotation of Dr. Johnson. Accordingly she wrote “as for Dr. Johnson, he had, to my certain knowledge, a true respect for her abilities, and a very

1 J.R.L., English MS. 536, 27. (Pepys gives only a very free rendering of Johnson’s remarks. For the actual passage as quoted by Boswell see Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides with Samuel Johnson, LL.D. (Hill), p. 245).
3 Ibid., 552, 7.
great regard and esteem of her general character."  

But not a word concerning his attitude toward the fatal Essay on Shakespeare.

In answering the persistent Pepys, from what we know of the letter, Mrs. Piozzi continued in much the same vein. She refused to speak for the dead, but reiterated her own present esteem for Mrs. Montagu, and her critical approval of her work. Pepys was delighted with his reply, and set about publicizing this rather qualified disavowal. He wrote immediately on March 3rd to tell what steps he had taken:

“On the Receipt of your Letter I went directly to Mr. Cadell & informed him of your Wish to contradict the Passage in Mr. Boswell's Book about your Opinion of Mrs. Montagu's Book—He was much pleased that I had had the Foresight to have written to you on the Subject, as it had made some Noise.—We agreed that a Postscript should be added to your Anecdotes—and by making use entirely of your Own Words in your letter to me, a Postscript is drawn up, which I think you will approve of, & which is sufficiently justified by their being your own Words though in a letter to me.—I have taken Care likewise to have all this Business well explained to Mrs. Montagu. . . .”

This postscript appeared on leaf X2, immediately following the last page of printed text. Sir Lucas Pepys had, as he hoped, stopped further dissension in the Blue-stocking ranks, but unfortunately he had precipitated Mrs. Piozzi into a serious quarrel with Boswell.

The ramifications of this act of Pepys lead us into one of the major battles of the famous war of “Bozzy and Piozzi.” It is outside the scope of this article to discuss the beginnings or the end of this amusing struggle. The latter aspects of their guerilla warfare are too well known to every Boswell and Piozzi student to be repeated here, but it may be interesting to trace one of the preliminary skirmishes, not generally well known, connected with the second textual change that occurred during the printing of Mrs. Piozzi’s Anecdotes.


Boswell and Mrs. Piozzi, before the death of Dr. Johnson, were already tottering on the verge of their long and acrimonious feud. Later they indulged in many a tilt, but one possibly sanguinary argument was avoided through the quick thinking of young Samuel Lysons. If Pepys pushed Mrs. Piozzi into contention with Boswell, Lysons saved her from a worse situation. It is now our good fortune to be able to reconstruct this episode, and to trace its effect on the printing of that best-seller, the "Anecdotes of Dr. Johnson." First we must go back to a somewhat earlier period.

Dr. Johnson had died in December, 1784, and Tyers's biographical sketch of him appeared in the December number of the Gentleman's Magazine. This article was reviewed by an anonymous correspondent in the January 8th issue of the St. James's Chronicle, where the reviewer takes up individual statements from Tyers's sketch, and points out errors in fact and interpretation. One of the paragraphs of the letter quotes and discusses a phrase referring to the Thrales:—

"('Mrs. Thrale knew how to spread a Table with the utmost Plenty and Elegance.') All who are acquainted with this Lady's domestick History must know that, in the present Instance, Mr. Tyers's Praise of her is unluckily bestowed. Her Husband superintended every Dinner set before his Guests. After his Death she confessed her total Ignorance in culinary Arrangements. Poor Thrale studied an Art of which he loved the Produce, and to which he expired a Martyr. Johnson, repeatedly, and with all the Warmth of earnest Friendship, assured him he was nimis edax rerum, and that such unlimited Indulgence of his Palate would precipitate his End. Little did he think his Intemperance would have proved an Introduction to his Wife's Disgrace, by eventually raising an obscure and penniless Fiddler into sudden Wealth and awkward Notoriety." ¹

Three days later, January 11th, 1785, in the same publication, the anonymous writer continued his criticism of Tyers's sketch.

¹ St. James's Chronicle; or British Evening Post. London, No. 3719, 8th Jan., 1785.
Although in this letter he does not mention the Thrales by name, the correspondent does give a highly laudatory notice to Boswell and his projected biography of Dr. Johnson. He writes:—

"To Mr. Boswell the Publick will be indebted, on the Subject of our Author's Life, for genuine and ample Information as well as Entertainment. He has been happy in Resources that were obvious to none but himself. He was acquainted with the mollia fandi tempora, and improved them to the best Advantage. His playful Importunities, and anxious Solicitations, were alike prevalent with Johnson. If he failed once in an Enquiry, he renewed it at a more lucky Hour, and seldom retired without the Intelligence he sought. During his long Association with the Doctor in England, as well as throughout his Hebridian Tour, he may be pronounced to have lost no Opportunity of Search respecting the past Occurrences of our Author's Life, or his Sentiments relative to Men and Literature; nor will it be suspected by those who are acquainted with Mr. Boswell's active Mind, that his Curiosity permitted one circumstance to escape him that might illustrate the Habits, or exalt the Character of the Sage whom he respected almost to Adoration.

"One Caution, however, may be necessary even to Mr. Boswell. Let him not disgrace his Page by an implicit Adoption of such Narratives as are dictated by those who are intent only on procuring Celebrity to their own equivocal though boasted Friendship and Munificence, without too much Solicitude for the Cause of Truth, or the Memory of Johnson! Let our Biographer be as minute as Mr. Tyers, without his Credulity; nor be persuaded to puff the Living into fallacious Consequence, while he is erecting a Monument worthy of the Dead." ¹

Boswell, in Edinburgh at the time, was delighted with this high praise, and immediately wrote a highly characteristic letter to the Printer of the St. James's Chronicle. This was dated January 18th, and appeared in the issue of January 25th:—

¹ *St. James's Chronicle; or British Evening Post*, London, No. 3720, 11th Jan., 1785.
"I Read in your Paper with the highest Satisfaction a Character of my illustrious Friend Dr. Samuel Johnson, by a Writer who does me the Honour to pay me distinguished Compliments, as the intended Biographer of that great and good Man. I am only afraid, that while he animates my Mind to its best Exertions, he may teach the Publick to expect too much from me. Upon my Honour I have not the least Notion who this Writer is. But his Knowledge of the Intimacy between Dr. Johnson and me, and of my Means of obtaining Information for writing his Life, is so particular, that were it not expressed with more Elegance than I were Master of, I should almost believe that this Essay was written by myself. If the writer will have the Generosity to avow himself in your Paper, I shall be very much obliged to him. But if he has any Objection to a publick Discovery, I entreat he may be kind enough to let me know by a private Note to whom I am indebted for such encouraging Notice, that I may testify my Gratitude, and may be further indebted to him for his Advice in the Progress of my Labours.

"And as my Name has, upon the late much lamented Occasion been often mentioned in the News Papers, I think it proper solemnly to declare, that I have not sent a single Article, nor shall I send one, without being signed with my Name." ¹

When Mrs. Piozzi, in Italy, also saw these letters in the St. James's Chronicle she was properly enraged. Her first thought was that Boswell had been himself the author of all three letters.² In this supposition we now know she was wrong, for Boswell, writing in his Journal a general summary of the first three months of 1785, tells of his discovery of the identity of the unknown correspondent:—

"There was a great deal of writing about my Life of Dr. Johnson in the St. James's Chronicle. I was highly

¹ St. James's Chronicle; or British Evening Post, London, No. 3726, 25th Jan., 1785. Dr. Pottle of Yale University, with other suggestions, has pointed out to me that the letters of the 11th and 25th are reprinted in the London Magazine, April, 1785 (Vol. IV, new series, 246-247).

praised, and thought it proper to write in that Paper declaring that since Dr. Johnson's death I had not sent a single paragraph concerning him, nor should send one that was not signed with my name. I begged that the Writer of such praise as animated my mind to its best exertions would have the generosity to avow himself publicly, or at least would let me know privately to whom I was obliged. I had a letter from Mr. Baldwin, the Printer, acquainting me it was Mr. Steevens, who united with Dr. Johnson in an edition of Shakespeare. . . .”

Since Steevens was intimately connected with the *St. James's Chronicle*, it is not surprising to find “the Puck of commentators” using this connection to set two of his acquaintances at each other’s throats. Mrs. Piozzi, however, was ignorant of the true author of the letters. Nursing her grievance, she could not refrain from noticing the affront in her *Anecdotes of Dr. Johnson* which was slowly being compiled during her travels about Italy.

A copy of the *Anecdotes* in her handwriting is now in the possession of the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York City. Although this manuscript is undoubtedly her final version of the work, this is not the copy used by Cadell in printing the book in London. Not only does it bear no marks of having been used by the printers, but we have other evidence that this copy was not the one sent to Cadell. During the last days of September, 1785, the Piozzis were at Leghorn. There she wrote in her Journal: “In this Town I got my Anecdotes of Dr. Johnson’s last 20 years, transcribed for the Press;—& sent it to Mr. Cadell by the Ship Piedmont, Joel Forster Captain.” Furthermore, on the 20th of October, writing to Cadell, she refers to the “clear transcript” lately sent to England, as being

“such as I hope will do for you to print from; though there may be some errors, perhaps many, which have escaped me, as I am wholly unused to the business of sending manuscripts.

---

to the press, and must rely on you to get everything done properly when it comes into your hands.""  

The original version, which she obviously kept with her in Italy, corresponds to the printed book in all but a few details. In the manuscript, immediately following the Latin epitaph which Dr. Johnson wrote for Mr. Thrale, there is a page of script curiously crossed out and defaced. But fortunately the ink used in cancellation has faded much more than that of the original passage, and with care it is possible to read the first version underneath. Here we find Mrs. Piozzi's reaction to the St. James's Chronicle letters:—

"Such was the Character of Henry Thrale, when given by Samuel Johnson. but what must be the Character of him, who in a Letter written to the Printer of the St. James's Chronicle—dated the 8:th of January 1785 in order to distress the unoffending Survivor, dares even to deride the parted Dead; and represent the greatest Writer of our Age and Nation, as a wretched Retailer of Latin Scraps, gather'd up to ridicule an Infirmity [caused?] by his best Friend's Illness and ending in his Death. For this letter too Mr. Boswell is not ashamed I see to return his publick Thanks, accepting with apparent Pleasure the Praises of a Scribbler who delights in the Uneasiness that he can cause to a Family where Mr. [Boswell?] never received anything but Civilities. Society [petty?] Men make Aaron the Moor a Model for their Imitation. I hoped it was reserved for him alone to say:

'Oft have I digg'd up dead Men from their Graves,  
And set them upright at their dear Friend's Doors,  
Even when their sorrow was almost forgot;  
And on their Skins as on the Bark of Trees,  
Have with my Knife carved in Roman Letters,  
Let not your Sorrows die tho' I be dead.'""  

---

1 Piozzi, H. L., Autobiography, etc. (Hayward), 2nd ed., vol. 1, p. 273.  
2 Holograph copy in the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York City, p. 81. The quotation is from Shakespeare's Titus Andronicus, Act V, Scene I, lines 135-140. Mrs. Piozzi evidently quoted from memory from a contemporary edition.
This passage in the manuscript is crossed out in an ingenious way. The words were first altered so as to change the sense, and then portions of the whole crossed out with horizontal and rotary scratches. Upon examination the handwriting seems obviously the same in each case, so we may be safe in ascribing this particular deletion to Mrs. Piozzi herself. But this cancellation, we now know, was not made before the printer's copy was made, nor was it her better judgment which was responsible for the omission of the angry attack on Boswell from the printed Anecdotes. This last was done without her advice or permission.

The manuscript, sent from Leghorn in October, 1785, was a long time on the way. The public had been notified in advance of the impending publication, and became restive over the long delay. Finally, Lysons, who had acted as intermediary in selling the book to Cadell, wrote to her on February 7th, 1786:

"You have, I dare say, received Cadell's letter acquainting you with the arrival of your Book, which was so long, performing Quarantine, and in the Warehouse, that I began to fear it would never arrive, and the Papers began to be witty about it—I was sitting with Cadell when it was brought to him, and had a peep at it, all that I saw, I can assure you surpassed my expectations, great as they were. . . .

". . . The public are very eager to see it, and when they have seen it, I think they must like it, Cadell says it may be out the latter end of this month." ¹

Lysons did not have an opportunity to read through the whole manuscript until the sheets were all printed. Then for the first time he saw the passage in question and wrote to her at Rome on March 3rd:

"Mr. Cadell sent me your Anecdotes to look over previous to their publication, I cannot tell you how much I admired them, and the ease and elegance with which they are related, one Thing struck me, as a mistake, I mean the part wherein Mr. Boswell's Letter to the Saint James's Chronicle is mentioned I lost no time, but searched immediately at all the Coffee Houses for the papers in question, but without

¹ J.R.L., English MS., 552, 7.
success, however my anxiety for the welfare of your little volume, would not let me rest 'till I had seen them; which I did at last with some difficulty at the stamp office—and here I found the fact was as I feared, in the Letter to that Paper of the 8th of July [sic] in which you are so grossly insulted, not a syllable is mentioned of Mr. Boswell, and in that of the 11th of Jany. in which Mr. Boswell is so flatter’d, for which of course he returns the letter of thanks of the 18th of Jany. your name is not mentioned, or alluded to, so that it is very probable that Mr. Boswell might never have seen the paper of the 8th. of Jany.

"Having satisfied myself with regard to these points, I was very well convinced that the Book, must not come out, with such an Error, the consequences of which could not but have been very unpleasant, but what was to be done, it was just ready for publication, and a delay of six weeks would have been very improper, and no one here was authorized to make any correction—however I made extracts of all the principal matter, with the dates from the St. James’s Chronicle and consult'd Sir Lucas Pepys, the Bishop of Peterborough and Dr. Lort, who were all unanimously of opinion that the necessity of the Case was such that we must run the hazard of incurring your displeasure by doing so bold a thing as leaving out the whole passage, and filling up the vacancy with a Translation of the Epitaph which Dr. Lort was so good as to make. If you should wish to make any alterations, it may be done in a second Edition & I see there are one or two Errata which I shall point out to Cadell, before a second comes out, I shall expect the first to be sold in a week—The Bishop of Peterborough thinks that even mentioning Boswell, would be taking more notice of him than he deserves even if the fact had been as you supposed, we promised to indemnify Cadell, and take all the blame on ourselves—in making the alteration, I have mentioned."  

From Lysons's letter it seems probable that the sheets were all printed when this change was accomplished. Some copies

1 J.R.L., English MS., 552, 8.
may even have been bound. A cancel was necessary, but it is
difficult to be sure just how much was reprinted.

Although it was not general practice in the eighteenth century
to cancel a whole sheet if individual pages might be inserted,
the evidence in this case points to such a procedure. Dr. Lort’s
translation of the Latin epitaph on Thrale, which was substituted
for the banished passage, occupies part of leaves K3 and K4.
No stubs or other evidence are present to indicate that the whole
of signature K is not an intiger. In the copies examined by the
writer the paper is wove, without watermarks, and the stitching
appears to be normal. In fact nothing is unusual about the make-
up of the sheet in question, with one important exception: it
carries an asterisk before the signature K1. This would be sus-
picious under any circumstances, but in the light of Lysons’s
letter it is more than suggestive. Leaves K3 and K4, and their
conjugates K5 and K6, were necessarily reprinted. Likewise K
carries the asterisk in the signature, so it, with K8, also was re-
printed. Thus K2 and K7 remain as the only leaves for which
some evidence of resetting is not present. Until some evidence
is found to the contrary the entire sheet * K. can be considered to
have been cancelled.¹

Whatever was the means used in making the change, the
process took considerable time, for March was nearly over before
the finished volume was ready for the public. There seems to be
some misunderstanding about the actual date of publication of the
Anecdotes. Horace Walpole wrote to Sir Horace Mann on March
28th that “Two days ago appeared Madam Piozzi’s ‘Anecdotes’
of Dr. Johnson.”² Seccombe and others doubtless have been
relying on this letter when they make the statement that the book
appeared on March 26th. But the fact has been overlooked that,
in 1786, March 26th came on a Sunday.

A study of the contemporary newspapers gives no definite
solution of the problem. In the St. James’s Chronicle of Thursday,
March 23rd, appears an announcement that the book will be

¹ I am indebted to Dr. R. W. Chapman for aid in the above bibliographical
analysis. My thanks are also due to Dr. L. F. Powell and Mr. J. M. Osborn of
Oxford for continued help in the preparation of this paper.
² The Letters of Horace Walpole (ed. Mrs. Paget Toynbee, Oxford, 1905),
vol. 13, p. 372.
published on Saturday the 25th. Other papers of the 25th carry no references to the *Anecdotes*, but on Monday the 27th nearly all carry the advertisement:

"This Day is published,
Elegantly printed in one Volume, small Octavo,
Price 4s. in Boards
*ANECDOTES* of the late SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL.D.
during the last twenty Years of his Life. By
HESTER LYNCH PIOZZI
Printed for T. Cadell, in the Strand." ¹

It seems certain, however, that the date of publication was the 25th, for Lysons wrote to Mrs. Piozzi on the 28th:

"... it was published last Saturday, Lady day, and the whole Edition, of a thousand, sold off in less time, I believe, than Amelia. ..." ²

According to all witnesses, Walpole, Lysons, Cadell, *et al.*, every copy was distributed before night. Thus it would seem that before most of the papers could print an announcement of the publication the first edition was exhausted.

The demand for the book continued strong, and the daily newspapers announced a second edition on April 5th, a third on April 11th, and a fourth on May 5th. But in spite of Cadell’s advertisements, these are not all actually separate editions in the strict sense of the word. In a letter to Mrs. Piozzi on May 8th, he tells something of his publishing procedure:

"I must own at the same time that I have consulted the reputation of the Work more than our profit for I preferred having Second, third & fourth Editions upon the Title page to printing a numerous Edition at first—If indeed I had cast off three or four Thousand at once the profit wou’d have been more considerable, but as a length of time must have elapsed

¹ *The Morning Herald*, No. 160; *The Morning Chronicle and London Advertizer*, No. 5261, etc. *The Public Advertizer* of Monday the 27th has "Saturday March 25th will be published ..." The advertisements continue through Tuesday, 28th March, and then on Wednesday the announcements of the forthcoming second edition begin.

before I cou'd have advertised even a Second Edition the World wou'd have concluded that the Sale was not so extensive. I therefore printed One thousand Copies of the first Edition—these were sold off in a few hours—within the week I had a Second Edition of a thousand Copies ready. The Sale of these was equally rapid—In two days I had a third Edition of 500 Copies and at the same time set about preparing for a fourth if the demand continued—the demand did continue, and I had the fourth Edition of one thousand Copies ready for publication as soon as the third was sold off. The fourth is now selling, and I have little doubt but I shall be obliged speedily to announce a fifth Edition. . . ."

An examination of the four so-called editions shows that from a bibliographical standpoint, they were actually three editions, the second consisting of two separate issues. But to prevent confusion the editions are hereafter referred to by the number appearing on the title page. The text of all the editions, except for correction of errata, etc., is exactly the same, and considered page-for-page the volumes are practically identical. Yet enough minor differences can be discerned in the setting of the type to indicate the printing procedure.

The first sheets were probably all printed by the beginning of March, yet the book did not appear until the 25th. In the meantime the type was no doubt distributed in accordance with normal printing practice. When Cadell decided to prepare a second edition, his compositors setting the text followed the first edition line-for-line. Occasionally, however, the end of a paragraph has been slightly altered. In nearly all cases the second setting is an improvement on the first. In the second edition there are eight paragraph endings which differ in setting when compared with the first. In comparing Cadell's second edition with his third, no differences can be found except those on the title page, but between the third and the fourth editions there are four changes.

1 J.R.L., English MS. 554, 18.
2 These occur throughout the volume, on leaves C4, D2, K7v, 17, Q, S7, T2, T8v.
3 On leaves D5v, M2, M5, O8.
At the same time, while type was being reset, certain errata were corrected. Mr. S. C. Roberts, in his recent edition of the *Anecdotes* (1925), lists twenty-one small changes in text between the first and the fourth edition. The distribution of these alterations gives additional evidence as to the printing procedure. A scrutiny reveals that while there are many differences between the first and the second, and the third and the fourth editions, there are no changes between the so-called second and the third editions. Thus we may be safe in saying that the third is actually only a re-issue of the second, using the same setting of type. Evidently, then, after the sheets for the third were printed, the type was again distributed.

Cadell soon found that a new edition would be necessary, and again set up practically the same text. Lysons wrote to Mrs. Piozzi on April 21st:

"The fourth Edition of your Anecdotes is now printing, with all speed, the third being nearly sold off. . . .

"I wish you had been here, to make a few alterations in the present Edition, if you should have thought them necessary, I corrected as many Errata as I could see, which were evidently errors of the Press or the Transcriber. . . ."  

Lysons claims credit for correcting press errors which had crept into the former edition, but several new ones escaped his attention in the last setting. For instance, in the postscript *Hebrides* appears as *Hedrides*. On the whole Cadell's fourth edition is an improvement over the first, in format, punctuation, and exactness of text.

The signature *K*, indicating the cancelled sheet, appears in all editions, but this may be merely the result of the compositor's blind following of copy. The asterisk indicated that the sheet had been reset in the first instance, but the fact that it was

---


2 These changes are distributed as follows: seven corrections between the first and the second; eight corrections between the third and the fourth; one mistake in the second not in the first (thereafter uncorrected); four errata in the fourth not in the third; and one passage slightly different in all three—(p. 156, line 1).

3 *J.R.L.*, English MS. 552, 10.
not removed in later editions is in accord with printing house procedure, and is without further significance for us.

In the meantime, as we have seen, Mrs. Piozzi far away in Italy was oblivious to the last minute changes made in her book. She was, however, well pleased with the efforts of Pepys and Lysons in her behalf, and wrote to Cadell from Rome on 28th March: "I hasten to tell you that I am perfectly pleased and contented with the alterations made by my worthy and amiable friends in the 'Anecdotes of Johnson's Life.'"¹

Furthermore she had already on the 25th written to Lysons to thank him for his "diligent friendship in making the alteration." She is voluble in her relief:—

"Why, my shoulders would have ached for a year with the blows I should have received! And justly, there's the astonishment; for I protest to you I thought I had seen that Mr. Boswell returned thanks for the impudent letter of the 8th of January, and very angry I was naturally enough; but one gets the papers, here so irregularly—and, in short, I made a gross mistake, and have been happy enough to light on true friends who were sufficiently interested in my welfare to correct me."²

So Mrs. Piozzi confessed her fault, but it must be admitted that she had not been without some provocation. Steevens's letter of the 11th, though it did not mention the Thrales by name, was full of innuendo which would immediately be applied to Mrs. Piozzi by London readers. Boswell, too, must surely have seen the other letter of the 8th, written by the same reviewer, and it may be imagined that he felt a complacent pleasure in publicly commending the writer who had so castigated his absent rival. Still, one may also wonder how many letters the exuberant Scot and the malicious Steevens would have written to the newspapers had not Lysons found the St. James's Chronicle copies at the Stamp Office.

Happily, this quarrel with Boswell was avoided, and Mrs. Piozzi, for the time being in a chastened mood, wished to hide

¹ Piozzi, H. L., Autobiography, etc. (Hayward), 2nd ed., vol. 1, p. 273.
all traces of her former resentment. Her first step probably was to remove the offending passage from her own manuscript copy of the *Anecdotes*, and she took particular pains to insure its illegibility. One contingency she failed, however, to foresee: she did not have available the same type of ink which had been used in transcribing the original. As a result to-day we are able to read her *Anecdotes* as she originally intended them to be published, and with the help of her correspondence, to reconstruct an interesting episode in eighteenth-century printing.