

Classic Poetry Series

Samuel Johnson
- poems -

Publication Date:

2004

Publisher:

Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive

Samuel Johnson(1709 - 1784)

Samuel Johnson (often referred to as Dr Johnson) (18 September 1709 – 13 December 1784) was an English author. Beginning as a Grub Street journalist, he made lasting contributions to English literature as a poet, essayist, moralist, novelist, literary critic, biographer, editor and lexicographer. Johnson was a devout Anglican and political conservative, and has been described as "arguably the most distinguished man of letters in English history". He is also the subject of "the most famous single work of biographical art in the whole of literature": James Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson*.

Johnson was born in Lichfield, Staffordshire, and attended Pembroke College, Oxford for a year, before his lack of funds forced him to leave. After working as a teacher he moved to London, where he began to write essays for *The Gentleman's Magazine*. His early works include the biography *The Life of Richard Savage*, the poems *London* and *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, and the play *Irene*.

After nine years of work, Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language* was published in 1755; it had a far-reaching impact on Modern English and has been described as "one of the greatest single achievements of scholarship". The *Dictionary* brought Johnson popularity and success; until the completion of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, 150 years later, Johnson's was viewed as the pre-eminent British dictionary. His later works included essays, an influential annotated edition of William Shakespeare's plays, and the widely read novel *Rasselas*. In 1763, he befriended James Boswell, with whom he later travelled to Scotland; Johnson described their travels in *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland*. Towards the end of his life, he produced the massive and influential *Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets*, a collection of biographies and evaluations of 17th- and 18th-century poets.

Johnson had a tall and robust figure, but his odd gestures and tics were confusing to some on their first encounter with him. Boswell's *Life*, along with other biographies, documented Johnson's behaviour and mannerisms in such detail that they have informed the posthumous diagnosis of Tourette syndrome (TS), a condition unknown in the 18th century. After a series of illnesses he died on the evening of 13 December 1784, and was buried in Westminster Abbey. In the years following his death, Johnson began to be recognised as having had a lasting effect on literary criticism, and even as the only great critic of English literature.

A Short Song Of Congratulation

LONG-EXPECTED one and twenty
Ling'ring year at last has flown,
Pomp and pleasure, pride and plenty
Great Sir John, are all your own.

Loosen'd from the minor's tether,
Free to mortgage or to sell,
Wild as wind, and light as feather
Bid the slaves of thrift farewell.

Call the Bettys, Kates, and Jenneys
Ev'ry name that laughs at care,
Lavish of your Grandsire's guineas,
Show the spirit of an heir.

All that prey on vice and folly
Joy to see their quarry fly,
Here the gamester light and jolly
There the lender grave and sly.

Wealth, Sir John, was made to wander,
Let it wander as it will;
See the jocky, see the pander,
Bid them come, and take their fill.

When the bonny blade carouses,
Pockets full, and spirits high,
What are acres? What are houses?
Only dirt, or wet or dry.

If the Guardian or the Mother
Tell the woes of willful waste,
Scorn their counsel and their pother,
You can hang or drown at last.

Samuel Johnson

Anacreon: Ode 9

Lovely courier of the sky,
Whence and whither dost thou fly?
Scattering, as thy pinions play,
Liquid fragrance all the way:
Is it business? is it love?
Tell me, tell me, gentle dove.
'Soft Anacreon's vows I bear,
Vows to Myrtale the fair;
Graced with all that charms the heart,
Blushing nature, smiling art.
Venus, courted by an ode,
On the bard her dove bestow'd:
Vested with a master's right,
Now Anacreon rules my flight;
His the letters that you see,
Weighty charge, consign'd to me:
Think not yet my service hard,
Joyless task without reward;
Smiling at my master's gates,
Freedom my return awaits;
But the liberal grant in vain
Tempts me to be wild again.
Can a prudent dove decline
Blissful bondage such as mine?
Over hills and fields to roam,
Fortune's guest without a home;
Under leaves to hide one's head,
Slightly shelter'd, coarsely fed:
Now my better lot bestows
Sweet repast and soft repose;
Now the generous bowl I sip,
As it leaves Anacreon's lip:
Void of care, and free from dread,
From his fingers snatch his bread,
Then with luscious plenty gay,
Round his chamber dance and play;
OR from wine as courage springs,
O'er his face extend my wings;
And when feast and frolic tire

Drop asleep upon his lyre.
This is all, be quick and go,
More than all thou canst not know;
Let me now my pinions ply,
I have chatter'd like a pye.'

Samuel Johnson

Autumn

Alas! with swift and silent pace,
Impatient time rolls on the year;
The Seasons change, and Nature's face
Now sweetly smiles, now frowns severe.

'Twas Spring, 'twas Summer, all was gay,
Now Autumn bends a cloudy brow;
The flowers of Spring are swept away,
And Summer fruits desert the bough.

The verdant leaves that play'd on high,
And wanton'd on the western breeze,
Now trod in dust neglected lie,
As Boreas strips the bending trees.

The fields that waded with golden grain,
As russet heaths are wild and bare;
Not moist with dew, but drench'd in rain,
Nor health nor pleasure wanders there.

No more, while through the midnight shade
Beneath the moon's pale orb I stray,
Soft pleasing woes my heart invade,
As Progne pours the melting lay.

From this capricious clime she soars,
O! would some god but wings supply!
To where each morn the Spring restores,
Companion of her flight I'd try.

Vain wish! me fate compels to bear
The downward season's iron reign,
Compels to breathe the polluted air,
And shiver on a blasted plain.

What bliss to life can Autumn yield,
If glooms, and showers, and storms prevail;
And Ceres flies the naked field,
And flowers and fruits, and Phoebus fail.

Oh! what remains, what lingers yet,
To cheer me in the darkening hour!
The grape remains! the friend of wit,
In love, and mirth, of mighty power.

Haste - press the clusters, fill the bowl;
Apollo! shoot thy parting ray:
This gives the sunshine of the soul,
This god of health, and verse, and day.

Still - still the jocund train shall flow,
The pulse with vigorous rapture beat;
My Stella with new charms shall glow,
And every bliss in wine shall meet.

Samuel Johnson

Burlesque

Of the modern versifications of
ancient legendary tales. - An impromptu.

The tender infant, meek and mild,
Fell down upon the stone:
The nurse took p the squealing child,
But still the child squeal'd on.

Samuel Johnson

Drury-Lane Prologue Spoken By Mr. Garrick

1 When Learning's triumph o'er her barb'rous foes
2 First rear'd the stage, immortal Shakespear rose;
3 Each change of many-colour'd life he drew,
4 Exhausted worlds, and then imagin'd new:
5 Existence saw him spurn her bounded reign,
6 And panting Time toil'd after him in vain:
7 His pow'rful strokes presiding Truth impress'd,
8 And unresisted Passion storm'd the breast.

9 Then Jonson came, instructed from the school,
10 To please in method, and invent by rule;
11 His studious patience, and laborious art,
12 By regular approach essay'd the heart;
13 Cold Approbation gave the ling'ring bays,
14 For those who durst not censure, scarce could praise.
15 A mortal born he met the general doom,
16 But left, like Egypt's kings, a lasting tomb.

17 The Wits of Charles found easier ways to fame,
18 Nor wish'd for Jonson's art, or Shakespear's flame,
19 Themselves they studied, as they felt, they writ,
20 Intrigue was plot, obscenity was wit.
21 Vice always found a sympathetic friend;
22 They pleas'd their age, and did not aim to mend.
23 Yet bards like these aspir'd to lasting praise,
24 And proudly hop'd to pimp in future days.
25 Their cause was gen'ral, their supports were strong,
26 Their slaves were willing, and their reign was long;
27 Till Shame regain'd the post that Sense betray'd,
28 And Virtue call'd Oblivion to her aid.

29 Then crush'd by rules, and weaken'd as refin'd,
30 For years the pow'r of tragedy declin'd;
31 From bard, to bard, the frigid caution crept,
32 Till Declamation roar'd, while Passion slept.
33 Yet still did Virtue deign the stage to tread,
34 Philosophy remain'd, though Nature fled.
35 But forc'd at length her ancient reign to quit,
36 She saw great Faustus lay the ghost of wit:

37 Exulting Folly hail'd the joyful day,
38 And pantomime, and song, confirm'd her sway.

39 But who the coming changes can presage,
40 And mark the future periods of the stage?--

41 Perhaps if skill could distant times explore,
42 New Behns, new Durfoys, yet remain in store.
43 Perhaps, where Lear has rav'd, and Hamlet died,
44 On flying cars new sorcerers may ride.
45 Perhaps, for who can guess th' effects of chance?
46 Here Hunt may box, or Mahomet may dance.

47 Hard is his lot, that here by Fortune plac'd,
48 Must watch the wild vicissitudes of taste;
49 With ev'ry meteor of caprice must play,
50 And chase the new-blown bubbles of the day.
51 Ah! let not censure term our fate our choice,
52 The stage but echoes back the public voice.
53 The drama's laws the drama's patrons give,
54 For we that live to please, must please to live.

55 Then prompt no more the follies you decry,
56 As tyrants doom their tools of guilt to die;
57 'Tis yours this night to bid the reign commence
58 Of rescu'd Nature, and reviving Sense;
59 To chase the charms of Sound, the pomp of Show,
60 For useful Mirth, and salutary Woe;
61 Bid scenic Virtue form the rising age,
62 And Truth diffuse her radiance from the stage.

Samuel Johnson

Epitaph On Sir Thomas Hanmer, Bart.

Thou who survey'st these walls with curious eye,
Pause at this tomb where Hanmer's ashes lie;
His various worth through varied life attend,
And learn his virtues while thou mourn'st his end.
His force of genius burn'd in early youth,
With thirst of knowledge, and with love of truth;
His learning, joined with each endearing art,
Charm'd every ear, and gain'd every heart.
Thus early wise, the endanger'd real to aid,
His country call'd him from the studious shade;
In life's first bloom his public toils began,
At once commenced the senator and man.
In business dexterous, weighty in debate,
Thrice ten long years he labour'd for the state;
In every speech persuasive wisdom flow'd,
In every act refulgent virtue glow'd;
Suspended faction ceased from rage and strife,
To hear his eloquence, and praise his life.
Resistless merit fix'd the senate's choice,
Who hail'd him Speaker with united voice.
Illustrious age! how bright thy glories shone,
When Hanmer fill'd the chair - and Anne the throne.
Then when dark art obscured each fierce debate,
When mutual frauds perplex'd the maze of state,
The Moderator firmly mild appear'd -
Beheld with love - with veneration heard.
This task perform'd - he sought no gainful post
Nor wish'd to glitter at his country's cost;
Strict on the right he fix'd his stedfast eye,
With temperate zeal, and wise anxiety;
Nor e'er from Virtue's paths was lured aside,
To pluck the flowers of pleasure or of pride.
Her gifts despis'd, Corruption blush'd and fled,
And Fame pursued him where Conviction led.
Age call'd, at length, his active mind to rest,
With honour sated, and with cares oppress'd;
To letter'd ease retired and honest mirth,
To rural grandeur, and domestic worth:
Delighted still to please mankind, or mend,

The patriot's fire yet sparkled in the friend.
Calm Conscience then, his former life survey'd,
And recollected toils endeared the shade,
Till Nature call'd him to the general doom,
And Virtue's sorrow dignified his tomb.

Samuel Johnson

Evening Ode

To Stella:

Evening now from purple wings
Sheds the grateful gifts she brings;
Brilliant drops bedeck the mead,
Cooling breezes shake the reed;
Shake the reed, and curl the stream
Silver'd o'er with Cynthia's beam;
Near the chequer'd, lonely grove,
Hears, and keeps thy secrets, love!
Stella, thither let us stray,
Lightly o'er the dewy way.
Phoebus drives his burning car,
Hence, my lovely Stella, far;
In his stead, the queen of night
Round us pours a lambent light:
Light that seems but just to show
Breasts that beat, and cheeks that glow;
Let us now, in whisper'd joy,
Evening's silent hours employ,
Silent best, and conscious shades,
Please the hearts that love invades,
Other pleasures give them pain,
Lovers all but love disdain.

Samuel Johnson

Friendship

Friendship! peculiar boon of Heaven,
The noble mind's delight and pride,
To men and angels only given,
To all the lower world denied.

While love, unknown among the bless'd,
Parent of thousand wild desires,
The savage and the human breast
Torments alike with raging fires.

With bright, but oft destructive gleam,
Alike o'er all his lightnings fly,
Thy lambent glories only beam
Around the favourites of the sky.

Thy gentle flows of guiltless joys
On fools and villains ne'er descend;
In vain for thee the tyrant sighs,
And hugs a flatterer for a friend.

Directness of the brave and just,
Oh guide us through life's darksome way!
And let the tortures of mistrust
On selfish bosoms only prey.

Nor shall thine ardours cease to glow,
When souls to peaceful climes remove.
What raised our virtue here below
Shall aid our happiness above.

Samuel Johnson

From Boethius

O Thou! whose power o'er moving worlds presides,
Whose voice created, and whose wisdom guides,
On darkling man in pure effulgence shine,
And cheer the clouded mind with light divine.
'Tis thine alone to calm the pious breast
With silent confidence and holy rest;
From thee, great God! we spring; to thee we bend;
Path, motive, guide, original, and end.

Samuel Johnson

From Boethius: De Consolatione Philosophiae; Book II. Metre 2.

Though countless as the grains of sand
That roll at Eurus' loud command;
Though countless as the lamps of night
That glad us with vicarious light;
Fair plenty, gracious queen, should pour
The blessings of a golden shower,
Not all the gifts of fate combin'd
Would ease the hunger of the mind,
But swallowing call the mighty store,
Rapacity would call for more;
For still where wishes most abound
Unquench'd the thirst of gain is found;
In vain the shining gifts are sent,
For none are rich without content.

Samuel Johnson

From Boethius: De Consolatione Philosophiae; Book Ii. Metre 4.

Wouldst thou to some steadfast seat,
Out of Fortune's power retreat?
Wouldst thou, when fierce Eurus blows,
Calmly rest in safe repose?
Wouldst thou see the foaming main,
Tossing rave, but rave in vain?
Shun the mountain's airy brow,
Shun the sea-sapp'd sand below;
Soon th' aspiring fabric falls,
When loud Auster shakes her walls,
Soon the treach'rous sands retreat,
From beneath the cumbrous weight.
Fix not where the tempting height
Mingles danger with delight;
Safe upon the rocky ground,
Firm and low thy mansion found;
There, 'mid tempest's loudest roars,
Dashing waves and shatter'd shores,
Thou shalt sit and smile to see
All the world afraid but thee,
Lead a long and peaceful age,
And deride the utmost rage.

Samuel Johnson

From Boethius: De Consolatione Philosophiae; Book Iii. Metre 5

The man who pants for ample sway,
Must bid his passions all obey;
Must bid each wild desire be still,
Nor yoke his reason with his will:
For though beneath thy haughty brow
Warm India's supple sons should bow,
Though northern climes confess thy sway,
Which erst in frost and freedom lay,
If Sorrow pine, or Avarice crave,
Bow down and own thyself a slave.

Samuel Johnson

From The Medea Of Euripides

The rites derived from ancient days
With thoughtless reverence we praise,
The rites that taught us to combine
The joys of music and of wine,
And bid the feast, and song and bowl
O'erfill the saturated soul:
But ne'er the flute or lyre applied
To cheer despair or soften pride;
Nor call them to the gloomy cells
Where Wants repines and Vengeance swells;
Where Hate sits musing to betray,
And murder meditates his prey!
To dens of guilt and shades of care,
Ye sons of melody, repair;
Nor deign the festive dome to cloy
With superfluity of joy,
Ah! little needs the minstrel's power
To speed the light convivial hour,
The board with varied plenty crown'd
May spare the luxuries of sound.

Samuel Johnson

from The Vanity of Human Wishes

The Tenth Satire of Juvenal, Imitated

Let observation with extensive view,
Survey mankind, from China to Peru;
Remark each anxious toil, each eager strife,
And watch the busy scenes of crowded life;
Then say how hope and fear, desire and hate,
O'erspread with snares the clouded maze of fate,
Where wav'ring man, betray'd by vent'rous pride
To tread the dreary paths without a guide,
As treach'rous phantoms in the mist delude,
Shuns fancied ills, or chases airy good.
How rarely reason guides the stubborn choice,
Rules the bold hand, or prompts the suppliant voice,
How nations sink, by darling schemes oppress'd,
When vengeance listens to the fool's request.
Fate wings with ev'ry wish th' afflictive dart,
Each gift of nature, and each grace of art,
With fatal heat impetuous courage glows,
With fatal sweetness elocution flows,
Impeachment stops the speaker's pow'rful breath,
And restless fire precipitates on death.

But scarce observ'd the knowing and the bold,
Fall in the gen'ral massacre of gold;
Wide-wasting pest! that rages unconfi'd,
And crowds with crimes the records of mankind,
For gold his sword the hireling ruffian draws,
For gold the hireling judge distorts the laws;
Wealth heap'd on wealth, nor truth nor safety buys,
The dangers gather as the treasures rise.

Let hist'ry tell where rival kings command,
And dubious title shakes the madd'd land,
When statutes glean the refuse of the sword,
How much more safe the vassal than the lord,
Low sculks the hind beneath the rage of pow'r,
And leaves the wealthy traitor in the Tow'r,
Untouch'd his cottage, and his slumbers sound,
Tho' confiscation's vultures hover round.

The needy traveller, serene and gay,
Walks the wild heath, and sings his toil away.
Does envy seize thee? crush th' upbraiding joy,
Increase his riches and his peace destroy,
New fears in dire vicissitude invade,
The rustling brake alarms, and quiv'ring shade,
Nor light nor darkness bring his pain relief.
One shews the plunder, and one hides the thief.

Yet still one gen'ral cry the skies assails,
And gain and grandeur load the tainted gales,
Few know the toiling statesman's fear or care,
Th' insidious rival and the gaping heir.

Once more, Democritus, arise on earth,
With cheerful wisdom and instructive mirth,
See motley life in modern trappings dress'd,
And feed with varied fools th' eternal jest:
Thou who couldst laugh where want enchain'd caprice,
Toil crush'd conceit, and man was of a piece;
Where wealth unlov'd without a mourner died;
And scarce a sycophant was fed by pride;
Where ne'er was known the form of mock debate,
Or seen a new-made mayor's unwieldy state;
Where change of fav'rites made no change of laws,
And senates heard before they judg'd a cause;
How wouldst thou shake at Britain's modish tribe,
Dart the quick taunt, and edge the piercing gibe?
Attentive truth and nature to decry,
And pierce each scene with philosophic eye.
To thee were solemn toys or empty show,
The robes of pleasure and the veils of woe:
All aid the farce, and all thy mirth maintain,
Whose joys are causeless, or whose griefs are vain.

Such was the scorn that fill'd the sage's mind,
Renew'd at ev'ry glance on humankind;
How just that scorn ere yet thy voice declare,
Search every state, and canvas ev'ry pray'r.

Unnumber'd suppliants crowd Preferment's gate,

Athirst for wealth, and burning to be great;
Delusive Fortune hears th' incessant call,
They mount, they shine, evaporate, and fall.
On ev'ry stage the foes of peace attend,
Hate dogs their flight, and insult mocks their end.
Love ends with hope, the sinking statesman's door
Pours in the morning worshiper no more;
For growing names the weekly scribbler lies,
To growing wealth the dedicator flies,
From every room descends the painted face,
That hung the bright Palladium of the place,
And smok'd in kitchens, or in auctions sold,
To better features yields the frame of gold;
For now no more we trace in ev'ry line
Heroic worth, benevolence divine:
The form distorted justifies the fall,
And detestation rids th' indignant wall.

...

When first the college rolls receive his name,
The young enthusiast quits his ease for fame;
Through all his veins the fever of renown
Spreads from the strong contagion of the gown;
O'er Bodley's dome his future labours spread,
And Bacon's mansion trembles o'er his head.
Are these thy views? proceed, illustrious youth,
And virtue guard thee to the throne of Truth!
Yet should thy soul indulge the gen'rous heat,
Till captive Science yields her last retreat;
Should Reason guide thee with her brightest ray,
And pour on misty Doubt resistless day;
Should no false Kindness lure to loose delight,
Nor Praise relax, nor Difficulty fright;
Should tempting Novelty thy cell refrain,
And Sloth effuse her opiate fumes in vain;
Should Beauty blunt on fops her fatal dart,
Nor claim the triumph of a letter'd heart;
Should no disease thy torpid veins invade,
Nor Melancholy's phantoms haunt thy shade;
Yet hope not life from grief or danger free,
Nor think the doom of man revers'd for thee:

Deign on the passing world to turn thine eyes,
And pause awhile from letters, to be wise;
There mark what ills the scholar's life assail,
Toil, envy, want, the patron, and the jail.
See nations slowly wise, and meanly just,
To buried merit raise the tardy bust.
If dreams yet flatter, once again attend,
Hear Lydiat's life, and Galileo's end.

Nor deem, when learning her last prize bestows
The glitt'ring eminence exempt from foes;
See when the vulgar `scape, despis'd or aw'd,
Rebellion's vengeful talons seize on Laud.
From meaner minds, tho' smaller fines content
The plunder'd palace or sequester'd rent;
Mark'd out by dangerous parts he meets the shock,
And fatal Learning leads him to the block:
Around his tomb let Art and Genius weep,
But hear his death, ye blockheads, hear and sleep.

...

Enlarge my life with multitude of days,
In health, in sickness, thus the suppliant prays;
Hides from himself his state, and shuns to know,
That life protracted is protracted woe.
Time hovers o'er, impatient to destroy,
And shuts up all the passages of joy:
In vain their gifts the bounteous seasons pour,
The fruit autumnal, and the vernal flow'r,
With listless eyes the dotard views the store,
He views, and wonders that they please no more;
Now pall the tasteless meats, and joyless wines,
And Luxury with sighs her slave resigns.
Approach, ye minstrels, try the soothing strain,
And yield the tuneful lenitives of pain:
No sounds alas would touch th' impervious ear,
Though dancing mountains witness'd Orpheus near;
Nor lute nor lyre his feeble pow'rs attend,
Nor sweeter music of a virtuous friend,
But everlasting dictates crowd his tongue,
Perversely grave, or positively wrong.

The still returning tale, and ling'ring jest,
Perplex the fawning niece and pamper'd guest,
While growing hopes scarce awe the gath'ring sneer,
And scarce a legacy can bribe to hear;
The watchful guests still hint the last offence,
The daughter's petulance, the son's expense,
Improve his heady rage with treach'rous skill,
And mould his passions till they make his will.

Unnumber'd maladies his joints invade,
Lay siege to life and press the dire blockade;
But unextinguish'd Av'rice still remains,
And dreaded losses aggravate his pains;
He turns, with anxious heart and crippled hands,
His bonds of debt, and mortgages of lands;
Or views his coffers with suspicious eyes,
Unlocks his gold, and counts it till he dies.

But grant, the virtues of a temp'rate prime
Bless with an age exempt from scorn or crime;
An age that melts in unperceiv'd decay,
And glides in modest innocence away;
Whose peaceful day Benevolence endears,
Whose night congratulating Conscience cheers;
The gen'ral fav'rite as the gen'ral friend:
Such age there is, and who could wish its end?

Yet ev'n on this her load Misfortune flings,
To press the weary minutes' flagging wings:
New sorrow rises as the day returns,
A sister sickens, or a daughter mourns.
Now kindred Merit fills the sable bier,
Now lacerated Friendship claims a tear.
Year chases year, decay pursues decay,
Still drops some joy from with'ring life away;
New forms arise, and diff'rent views engage,
Superfluous lags the vet'ran on the stage,
Till pitying Nature signs the last release,
And bids afflicted worth retire to peace.

But few there are whom hours like these await,
Who set unclouded in the gulfs of fate.

From Lydia's monarch should the search descend,
By Solon caution'd to regard his end,
In life's last scene what prodigies surprise,
Fears of the brave, and follies of the wise?
From Marlborough's eyes the streams of dotage flow,
And Swift expires a driv'ler and a show.

The teeming mother, anxious for her race,
Begs for each birth the fortune of a face:
Yet Vane could tell what ills from beauty spring;
And Sedley curs'd the form that pleas'd a king.
Ye nymphs of rosy lips and radiant eyes,
Whom Pleasure keeps too busy to be wise,
Whom Joys with soft varieties invite,
By day the frolic, and the dance by night,
Who frown with vanity, who smile with art,
And ask the latest fashion of the heart,
What care, what rules your heedless charms shall save,
Each nymph your rival, and each youth your slave?
Against your fame with fondness hate combines,
The rival batters and the lover mines.
With distant voice neglected Virtue calls,
Less heard and less, the faint remonstrance falls;
Tir'd with contempt, she quits the slipp'ry reign,
And Pride and Prudence take her seat in vain.
In crowd at once, where none the pass defend,
The harmless freedom, and the private friend.
The guardians yield, by force superior plied;
By Int'rest, Prudence; and by Flatt'ry, Pride.
Now Beauty falls betray'd, despis'd, distress'd,
And hissing Infamy proclaims the rest.

Where then shall Hope and Fear their objects find?
Must dull Suspense corrupt the stagnant mind?
Must helpless man, in ignorance sedate,
Roll darkling down the torrent of his fate?
Must no dislike alarm, no wishes rise,
No cries attempt the mercies of the skies?
Enquirer, cease, petitions yet remain,
Which Heav'n may hear, nor deem religion vain.
Still raise for good the supplicating voice,
But leave to Heav'n the measure and the choice.

Safe in his pow'r, whose eyes discern afar
The secret ambush of a specious pray'r.
Implore his aid, in his decisions rest,
Secure whate'er he gives, he gives the best.
Yet when the sense of sacred presence fires,
And strong devotion to the skies aspires,
Pour forth thy fervours for a healthful mind,
Obedient passions, and a will resign'd;
For love, which scarce collective man can fill;
For patience, sov'reign o'er transmuted ill;
For faith, that panting for a happier seat,
Counts death kind Nature's signal of retreat:
These goods for man the laws of Heav'n ordain,
These goods he grants, who grants the pow'r to gain;
With these celestial wisdom calms the mind,
And makes the happiness she does not find.

Samuel Johnson

Gnothi Seauton

When Scaliger, whole years of labour past,
Beheld his lexicon complete at last
And weary of his task, with wond'ring eyes,
Saw, from words pil'd on words, a fabric rise,
He curs'd the industry, inertly strong,
In creeping toil that could persist so long;
And if, enrag'd he cried, heav'n meant to shed
Its keenest vengeance on the guilty head,
The drudgery of words the damn'd would know,
Doom'd to write lexicons in endless woe.

Yes, you had cause, great genius, to repent;
'You lost good days, that might be better spent;'
You well might grudge the hours of ling'ring pain,
And view your learned labours with disdain.
To you were given the large expanded mind,
The flame of genius, and the taste refin'd.
'Twas yours, on eagle wings, aloft to soar,
And, amidst rolling worlds, the great first cause explore,
To fix the aeras of recorded time,
And live in ev'ry age and ev'ry clime;
Record the chiefs, who propt their country's cause;
Who founded empires, and establish'd laws;
To learn whate'er the sage, with virtue fraught,
Whate'er the muse of moral wisdom taught.
These were your quarry; these to you were known,
And the world's ample volume was your own.

Yet, warn'd by me, ye pigmy wits, beware,
Nor with immortal Scaliger compare.
For me, though his example strike my view,
Oh! not for me his footsteps to pursue.
Whether first nature, unpropitious, cold,
This clay compounded in a ruder mould;
Or the slow current, loit'ring at my heart,
No gleam of wit or fancy can impart;
Whate'er the cause, from me no numbers flow,
No visions warm me, and no raptures glow.
A mind like Scaliger's, superior still,

No grief could conquer, no misfortune chill.
Though, for the maze of words, his native skies
He seem'd to quit, 'twas but again to rise;
To mount, once more, to the bright source of day,
And view the wonders of th' ethereal way.
The love of fame his gen'rous bosom fir'd;
Each science hail'd him, and each muse inspir'd.
For him the sons of learning trimm'd the bays,
And nations grew harmonious in his praise.

My task perform'd, and all my labours o'er,
For me what lot has fortune now in store?
The listless will succeeds, that worst disease,
The rack of indolence, the sluggish ease.
Care grows on care, and o'er my aching brain
Black melancholy pours her morbid train.
No kind relief, no lenitive at hand,
I seek, at midnight clubs, the social band;
But midnight clubs, where wit with noise conspires,
Where Comus revels, and where wine inspires,
Delight no more: I seek my lonely bed,
And call on sleep to sooth my languid head.
But sleep from these sad lids flies far away;
I mourn all night, and dread the coming day.
Exhausted, tir'd, I throw my eyes around,
To find some vacant spot on classic ground;
And soon, vain hope! I form a grand design;
Languor succeeds, and all my pow'rs decline.
If science open not her richest vein,
Without materials all our toil is vain.
A form to rugged stone when Phidias gives--
Beneath his touch a new creation lives.
Remove his marble, and his genius dies:
With nature then no breathing statue vies.
Whate'er I plan, I feel my pow'rs confin'd
By fortune's frown, and penury of mind.
I boast no knowledge, glean'd with toil and strife,
That bright reward of a well acted life.
I view myself, while reason's feeble light
Shoots a pale glimmer through the gloom of night;
While passions, error, phantoms of the brain,
And vain opinions, fill the dark domain;

A dreary void, where fears, with grief combin'd,
Waste all within, and desolate the mind.

What then remains? Must I, in slow decline,
To mute inglorious ease old age resign?
Or, bold ambition kindling in my breast,
Attempt some arduous task? Or, were it best,
Brooding o'er lexicons to pass the day,
And in that labour drudge my life away?

Samuel Johnson

Horace: Book 1, Ode 22

The man, my friend, whose conscious heart
With virtue's sacred ardour glows,
Nor taints with death the envenom'd dart,
Nor needs the guard of Moorish bows:

Though Scythia's icy cliffs he treads,
Or horrid Afric's faithless sands;
Or where the fam'd Hydaspes spreads
His liquid wealth o'er barbarous lands.

For while by Chloe's image charm'd,
Too far in Sabine woods I stray'd;
Me singing, careless and unarm'd,
A grisly wolf surprised, and fled.

No savage more portentous stain'd
Apulia's spacious wilds with gore;
None fiercer Juba's thirsty land,
Dire nurse of raging lions, bore.

Place me where no soft summer gale
Among the quivering branches sighs;
Where clouds condensed for ever veil
With horrid gloom the frowning skies;

Place me beneath the burning line,
A clime denied to human race;
I'll sing of Cloe's charms divine,
Her heavenly voice, and beauteous face.

Samuel Johnson

Horace: Book 1, Ode 22

The man, my friend, whose conscious heart
With virtue's sacred ardour glows,
Nor taints with death the envenom'd dart,
Nor needs the guard of Moorish bows:

Though Scythia's icy cliffs he treads,
Or horrid Afric's faithless sands;
Or where the fam'd Hydaspes spreads
His liquid wealth o'er barbarous lands.

For while by Chloe's image charm'd,
Too far in Sabine woods I stray'd;
Me singing, careless and unarm'd,
A grisly wolf surprised, and fled.

No savage more portentous stain'd
Apulia's spacious wilds with gore;
None fiercer Juba's thirsty land,
Dire nurse of raging lions, bore.

Place me where no soft summer gale
Among the quivering branches sighs;
Where clouds condensed for ever veil
With horrid gloom the frowning skies;

Place me beneath the burning line,
A clime denied to human race;
I'll sing of Cloe's charms divine,
Her heavenly voice, and beauteous face.

Samuel Johnson

Horace: Book II. Ode 9

Clouds do not always veil the skies,
Nor showers immerse the verdant plain;
Nor do the billows always rise,
Or storms afflict the ruffled main.

Nor, Valgius, on the Armenian shores
Do the chain'd waters always freeze;
Not always furious Boreas roars,
Or bends with violent force the trees.

But you are ever drown'd in tears,
For Mystes dead you ever mourn;
No setting Sol can ease your cares,
But find you sad at his return.

The wise experienced Grecian sage
Mourn'd not Antilochus so long;
Nor did King Priam's hoary age
So much lament his slaughter'd son.

Leave off, at length, these woman's sighs,
Augustus' number'd trophies sing,
To whom all nations tribute bring.

Niphates rolls an humbler wave,
At length th' undaunted Scythian yields,
Content to live the Roman slave,
And scarce forsakes his native fields.

Samuel Johnson

Horace: Book Iv. Ode 7

The snow dissolv'd, no more is seen;
The fields and woods, behold! are green;
The changing year renews the plain,
The rivers know their banks again;
The sprightly nymph and naked grace
The mazy dance together trace.
The changing year's successive plan
Proclaims mortality to man.
Rough winter's blasts to spring give way,
Spring yields to summer's sovereign ray;
Then summer sinks in autumn's reign,
And winter chills the world again:
Her losses soon the moon supplies,
But wretched man, when once he lies
Where Priam and his sons are laid,
Is nought but ashes and a shade.
Who knows if Jove, who counts our score,
Will toss us in a morning more?
What with your friend you nobly share,
At least, you rescue from your heir.
Not you, Torquatus, boast of Rome,
When Minos once has fix'd your doom,
Or eloquence, or splendid birth,
Or virtue, shall restore to earth.
Hippolytus, unjustly slain,
Diana calls to life in vain;
Nor can the might of Theseus rend
The chains of hell, that hold his friend.

Samuel Johnson

Inspiration

LIFE of Ages, richly poured,
Love of God, unspent and free,
Flowing in the Prophet's word
And the People's liberty!

Never was to chosen race
That unstinted tide confined;
Thine is every time and place,
Fountain sweet of heart and mind!

Secret of the morning stars,
Motion of the oldest hours,
Pledge through elemental wars
Of the coming spirit's powers!

Rolling planet, flaming sun,
Stand in nobler man complete;
Prescient laws Thine errands run,
Frame the shrine for Godhead meet.

Homeward led, the wondering eye
Upward yearned in joy or awe,
Found the love that waited nigh,
Guidance of Thy guardian Law.

In the touch of earth it thrilled;
Down from mystic skies it burned:
Right obeyed and passion stilled
Its eternal gladness earned.

Breathing in the thinker's creed,
Pulsing in the hero's blood,
Nerving simplest thought and deed,
Freshening time with truth and good,

Consecrating art and song,
Holy book and pilgrim track,
Hurling floods of tyrant wrong
From the sacred limits back,—

Life of Ages, richly poured,
Love of God, unspent and free,
Flow still in the Prophet's word
And the People's liberty!

Samuel Johnson

Lines

Written in Ridicule of Certain Poems
{of Thomas Warton} Published in 1777.

Wheresoe'er I turn my view,
All is strange, yet nothing new;
Endless labour all along,
Endless labour to be wrong;
Phrase that time has flung away,
Uncouth words in disarray,
Trick'd in antique ruff and bonnet,
Ode, and elegy, and sonnet.

Samuel Johnson

London - In Imitation Of The Third Satire Of Juvenal

'--Quis ineptae

Tam patiens urbis, tam ferreus ut teneat se?' ~ Juv.

Though grief and fondness in my breast rebel,
When injured Thales bids the town farewell;
Yet still my calmer thoughts his choice commend,
I praise the hermit, but regret the friend,
Who now resolves, from vice and London far,
To breathe in distant fields a purer air,
And, fix'd on Cambria's solitary shore,
Give to St. David one true Briton more.
For who would leave, unbribed, Hibernia's land,
Or change the rocks of Scotland for the Strand?
There none are swept by sudden fate away,
But all, whom hunger spares, with age decay:
Here malice, rapine, accident, conspire,
And now a rabble rages, now a fire;
Their ambush here relentless ruffians lay,
And here the fell attorney prowls for prey;
Here falling houses thunder on your head,
And here a female atheist talks you dead.
While Thales waits the wherry that contains
Of dissipated wealth the small remains,
On Thames's banks, in silent thought we stood
Where Greenwich smiles upon the silver flood
Struck with the seat that gave Eliza birth,
We kneel, and kiss the consecrated earth;
In pleasing dreams the blissful age renew;
And call Britannia's glories back to view;
Behold her cross triumphant on the main,
The guard of commerce, and the dread of Spain,
Ere masquerades debauch'd, excise oppress'd,
Or English honour grew a standing jest.
A transient calm the happy scenes bestow,
And for a moment lull the sense of woe.
At length awakening with contemptuous frown,
Indignant Thales eyes the neighbouring town.
'Since worth (he cries) in these degenerate days,
Wants e'en the cheap reward of empty praise;

In those curs'd walls, devote to vice and gain,
 Since unrewarded science toils in vain;
 Since hope but soothes to double my distress,
 And every moment leaves my little less;
 While yet my steady steps no staff sustains,
 And life still vigorous revels in my veins;
 Grant me, kind Heaven, to find some happier place,
 Where honesty and sense are no disgrace;
 Some pleasing bank where verdant osiers play,
 Some peaceful vale with Nature's painting gay:
 Where once the harass'd Briton found repose,
 And safe in poverty defied his foes;
 Some secret cell, ye powers! indulgent give,
 Let -- live here, for -- has learn'd to live,
 Here let those reign, whom pensions can incite
 To vote a patriot black, a courtier white;
 Explain their country's dear-bought rights away,
 And plead for pirates in the face of day;
 With slavish tenets taint our poison'd youth,
 And lend a lie the confidence of truth
 Let such raise palaces, and manors buy,
 Collect a tax, or farm a lottery;
 With warbling eunuchs fill a licensed stage,
 And lull to servitude a thoughtless age.
 Heroes, proceed! what bounds your pride shall hold?
 What check restrain your thirst of power and gold?
 Behold rebellious Virtue quite o'erthrown,
 Behold your fame, our wealth, our lives your own.
 To such a groaning nation's spoils are given,
 When public crimes inflame the wrath of Heaven:
 But what, my friend, what hope remains for me,
 Who start at theft and blush at perjury?
 Who scarce forbear, though Britain's court he sing
 To pluck a titled poet's borrowed wing;
 A statesman's logic unconvinc'd can hear,
 And dare to slumber o'er the
 Gazetteer
 ;
 Despise a fool in half his pension dress'd,
 And strive in vain to laugh at H--y's jest.
 'Others with softer smiles, and subtler art,
 Can sap the principles, or taint the heart;

With more address, a lover's note convey,
 Or bribe a virgin's innocence away.
 Well may they rise, while I, whose rustic tongue
 Ne'er knew to puzzle right, or varnish wrong,
 Spurn'd as a beggar, dreaded as a spy,
 Live unregarded, unlamented die.
 'For what but social guilt the friend endears?
 Who shares Orgilio's crimes, his fortune shares.
 But thou, should tempting villainy present
 All Marlborough hoarded, or all Villiers spent,
 Turn from the glittering bribe thy scornful eye,
 Nor sell for gold, what gold could never buy,
 The peaceful slumber, self-approving day,
 Unsullied fame, and conscience ever gay.
 'The cheated nation's happy favourites, see!
 Mark whom the great caress, who frown on me!
 London! the needy villain's general home,
 The common sewer of Paris and of Rome;
 With eager thirst, by folly or by fate,
 Sucks in the dregs of each corrupted state.
 Forgive my transports on a theme like this,
 I cannot bear a French metropolis.
 'Illustrious Edward! from the realms of day
 The land of heroes and of saints survey;
 Nor hope the British lineaments to trace,
 The rustic grandeur, or the surly grace,
 But lost in thoughtless ease, and empty show,
 Behold the warrior dwindled to a beau;
 Sense, freedom, piety, refined away,
 Of France the mimic, and of Spain the prey.
 'All that at home no more can beg or steal,
 Or like a gibbet better than a wheel;
 Hiss'd from the stage, or hooted from the court,
 Their air, their dress, their politics import;
 Obsequious, artful, voluble, and gay,
 On Britain's fond credulity they prey.
 No gainful trade their industry can 'scape,
 They sing, they dance, clean shoes, or cure a clap.
 All sciences a fasting Monsieur knows,
 And bid him go to hell, to hell he goes.
 'Ah! what avails it, that, from slavery far,
 I drew the breath of life in English air;

Was early taught a Briton's right to prize,
And lisp the tale of Henry's victories;
If the gull'd conqueror receives the chain,
And flattery subdues when arms are vain?
'Studious to please, and ready to submit,
The supple Gaul was born a parasite:
Still to his interest true, where'er he goes,
Wit, bravery, worth, his lavish'd tongue bestows;
In every face a thousand graces shine,
From every tongue flows harmony divine.
These arts in vain our rugged natives try,
Strain out with faltering diffidence a lie,
And gain a kick for awkward flattery.
'Besides, with justice this discerning age
Admires their wondrous talents for the stage;
Well may they venture on the mimic's art,
Who play from morn to night a borrow'd part;
Practis'd their master's notions to embrace,
Repeat his maxims, and reflect his face;
With every wild absurdity comply,
And view each object with another's eye;
To shake with laughter ere the jest they hear,
To pour at will the counterfeited tear;
And as their patron hints the cold or heat,
To shake in dog-days, in December sweat.
How, when competitors like these contend,
Can surly virtue hope to fix a friend?
Slaves, that with serious impudence beguile,
And lie without a blush, without a smile;
Exalt each trifle, every vice adore,
Your taste in snuff, your judgement in a whore;
Can Balbo's eloquence applaud, and swear
He gropes his breeches with a monarch's air.
'For arts like these preferr'd, admired, caress'd,
They first invade your table, then your breast:
Explore your secrets with insidious art,
Watch the weak hour, and ransack all the heart;
Then soon your ill-placed confidence repay,
Commence your lords, and govern or betray.
'By numbers here from shame or censure free,
All crimes are safe, but hated poverty:
This, only this, the rigid law pursues,

This, only this, provokes the snarling muse.
The sober trader, at a tatter'd cloak,
Wakes from his dream and labours for a joke;
With brisker air the silken courtiers gaze,
And turn the varied taunt of a thousand ways.
Of all the griefs that harass the distress'd,
Sure the most bitter is a scornful jest;
Fate never wounds more deep the generous heart,
Than when a blockhead's insult points the dart.
'Has Heaven reserved, in pity to the poor,
No pathless waste, or undiscover'd shore?
No secret island in the boundless main?
No peaceful desert yet unclaim'd by Spain?
Quick let us rise, the happy seats explore,
And bear oppression's insolence no more.
This mournful truth is everywhere confess'd,
Slow rises worth, by poverty depress'd:
But here more slow, where all are slaves to gold,
Where looks are merchandise, and smiles are sold;
Where won by bribes, by flatteries implored,
The groom retails the favours of his lord.
'But hark! th' affrighted crowd's tumultuous cries
Roll through the streets, and thunder to the skies:
Raised from some pleasing dream of wealth and power,
Some pompous palace, or some blissful bower;
Aghast you start, and scarce with aching sight
Sustain the approaching fire's tremendous light;
Swift from pursuing horrors take your way,
And leave your little all to flames a prey;
Then through the world a wretched vagrant roam,
For where can starving merit find a home?
In vain your mournful narrative disclose,
While all neglect, and most insult your woes.
'Should Heaven's just bolts Orgilio's wealth confound,
And spread his flaming palace on the ground,
Swift o'er the land the dismal rumour flies,
And public mournings pacify the skies;
The laureate tribe in servile verse relate,
How virtue wars with persecuting fate;
With well-feign'd gratitude the pension'd band
Refund the plunder of the beggar'd land.
See! while he builds, the gaudy vassals come,

And crowd with sudden wealth the rising dome
The price of boroughs and of souls restore,
And raise his treasures higher than before:
Now bless'd with all the baubles of the great,
The polish'd marble, and the shining plate,
Orgilio sees the golden pile aspire,
And hopes from angry Heaven another fire.
'Couldst thou resign the park and play content
For the fair banks of Severn or of Trent;
There might'st thou find some elegant retreat,
Some hireling senator's deserted seat;
And stretch thy prospects o'er the smiling land,
For less than rent the dungeons of the Strand;
There prune thy walks, support thy drooping flowers,
Direct thy rivulets, and twine thy bowers;
And, while thy beds a cheap repast afford,
Despise the dainties of a venal lord:
There every bush with nature's music rings,
There every breeze bears health upon its wings;
On all thy hours security shall smile,
And bless thine evening walk and morning toil.
'Prepare for death, if here at night you roam,
And sign your will before you sup from home.
Some fiery fop, with new commission vain,
Who sleeps on brambles till he kills his man;
Some frolic drunkard reeling from a feast,
Provokes a broil and stabs you for a jest.
'Yet even these heroes, mischievously gay,
Lords of the street, and terrors of the way;
Flush'd as they are with folly, youth, and wine
Their prudent insults to the poor confine;
Afar they mark the flambeau's bright approach,
And shun the shining train and golden coach.
'In vain, these dangers past, your doors you close,
And hope the balmy blessings of repose:
Cruel with guilt, and daring with despair,
The midnight murderer bursts the faithless bar;
Invades the sacred hour of silent rest,
And plants, unseen, a dagger in your breast.
'Scarce can our fields (such crowds at Tyburn die)
With hemp gallows and the fleet supply.
Propose your schemes, ye senatorian band,

Whose 'ways and means' support the sinking land;
Lest ropes be wanting in the tempting spring,
To rig another convoy for the king.
'A single jail, in Alfred's golden reign,
Could half the nation's criminals contain;
Fair justice then, without constraint adored,
Held high the steady scale, but sheathed the sword;
No spies were paid, no special juries known;
Bless'd age! but ah! how different from our own!
'Much could I add, - but see the boat at hand,
The tide retiring calls me from the land:
Farewell! - When youth, and health, and fortune spent,
Thou fly'st for refuge to the wilds of Kent;
And tired like me with follies and with crimes,
In angry numbers warn'st succeeding times;
Then shall thy friend, nor thou refuse his aid,
Still foe to vice, forsake his Cambrian shade;
In virtue's cause once more exert his rage,
Thy satire point, and animate thy page.'

Samuel Johnson

On Hearing Miss Thrale Consulting With A Friend About A Gown And Hat

Wear the gown and wear the hat,
Snatch thy pleasures while they last;
Hadst thou nine lives, like a cat,
Soon those nine lives would be pass'd.

Samuel Johnson

On Lyce - An Elderly Lady

Ye nymphs whom starry rays invest,
By flattering poets given,
Who shine, by lavish lovers dress'd,
In all the pomp of heaven.

Engross not all the beams on high,
Which gild a lover's lays,
But as your sister of the sky,
Let Lyce share the praise.

Her silver locks display the moon,
Her brows a cloudy show,
Striped rainbows round her eyes are seen,
And showers from either flow.

Her teeth the night with darkness dyes,
She's starr'd with pimples o'er;
Her tongue like nimble lightning plies,
And can with thunder roar.

But some, Zelinda, while I sing,
Deny my Lyce shines;
And all the pen of Cupid's wing
Attack my gentle lines.

Yet spite of fair Zelinda's eye,
And all her bards express,
My Lyce makes as good a sky,
And I but flatter less.

Samuel Johnson

On Seeing A Bust Of Mrs. Montague

Had this fair figure, which this frame displays,
Adorn'd in Roman time the brightest days,
In every dome, in every sacred place,
Her statue would have breathed an added grace,
And on its basis would have been enroll'd,
'This is Minerva, cast in Virtue's mould.'

Samuel Johnson

On The Death Of Mr. Robert Levet, A Practiser In Physic

CONDEMN'D to Hope's delusive mine,
As on we toil from day to day,
By sudden blasts or slow decline
Our social comforts drop away.

Well tried through many a varying year,
See Levet to the grave descend,
Officious, innocent, sincere,
Of every friendless name the friend.

Yet still he fills affection's eye,
Obscurely wise and coarsely kind;
Nor, letter'd Arrogance, deny
Thy praise to merit unrefined.

When fainting nature call'd for aid,
And hov'ring death prepared the blow,
His vig'rous remedy display'd
The power of art without the show.

In Misery's darkest cavern known,
His useful care was ever nigh,
Where hopeless Anguish pour'd his groan,
And lonely Want retired to die.

No summons mock'd by chill delay,
No petty gain disdain'd by pride;
The modest wants of every day
The toil of every day supplied.

His virtues walk'd their narrow round,
Nor made a pause, nor left a void;
And sure th' Eternal Master found
The single talent well employ'd.

The busy day, the peaceful night,
Unfelt, uncounted, glided by;

His frame was firm--his powers were bright,
Though now his eightieth year was nigh.

Then with no fiery throbbing pain,
No cold gradations of decay,
Death broke at once the vital chain,
And freed his soul the nearest way.

Samuel Johnson

On The Death Of Stephen Grey, F.R.S.

The Electrician

Long hast thou borne the burden of the day,
Thy task is ended, venerable Grey!
No more shall art thy dexterous hand require,
To break the sleep of elemental fire:
To rouse the powers that actuate Nature's frame,
The momentaneous shock, th' electric flame;
The flame, which at first, weak pupil of thy lore,
I saw, condemn'd, alas! to see no more.
Now, hoary sage, pursue thy happy flight
With swifter motion, haste to purer light.
Where Bacon waits with Newton and with Boyle,
To hail thy genius and applaud thy toil,
Where intuition breathes through time and space,
And mocks experiment's successive race;
See tardy science toil at Nature's laws,
And wonders how th' effect obscures the cause.
Yet not to deep research or happy guess
Is view'd the life of hope, the death of peace;
Unbless'd the man, whom philosophic rage
Shall tempt to lose the Christian in the sage;
Not art but goodness pour'd the sacred ray
That cheer'd the parting hours of humble Grey.

Samuel Johnson

One And Twenty

LONG-EXPECTED one and twenty
Ling'ring year at last has flown,
Pomp and pleasure, pride and plenty
Great Sir John, are all your own.

Loosen'd from the minor's tether,
Free to mortgage or to sell,
Wild as wind, and light as feather
Bid the slaves of thrift farewell.

Call the Bettys, Kates, and Jenneys
Ev'ry name that laughs at care,
Lavish of your Grandsire's guineas,
Show the spirit of an heir.

All that prey on vice and folly
Joy to see their quarry fly,
Here the gamester light and jolly
There the lender grave and sly.

Wealth, Sir John, was made to wander,
Let it wander as it will;
See the jocky, see the pander,
Bid them come, and take their fill.

When the bonny blade carouses,
Pockets full, and spirits high,
What are acres? What are houses?
Only dirt, or wet or dry.

If the Guardian or the Mother
Tell the woes of willful waste,
Scorn their counsel and their pother,
You can hang or drown at last.

Samuel Johnson

Parody Of A Translation From The Medea Of Euripides

Ere shall they not, who resolute explore
Times gloomy backward with judicious eyes;
And scanning right the practice of yore,
Shall deem our hoar progenitors unwise.

They to the dome where smoke with curling play
Announced the dinner to the regions round,
Summon'd the singer blithe, and harper gay,
And aided wine with dulcet-streaming sound.

The better use of notes, or sweet or shrill,
By quivering string or modulated wind;
Trumpet or lyre - to their harsh bosoms chill
Admission ne'er had sought, or could not find.

Oh! send them to the sullen mansions dun,
Her baleful eyes where sorrow rolls around;
Where gloom-enamour'd mischief loves to dwell
And murder, all blood-bolter'd, schemes the wound.

When cates luxuriant pile the spacious dish,
And purple nectar glads the festive hour;
The guest, without a want, without a wish,
Can yield no room to music's soothing power.

Samuel Johnson

Part Of The Dialogue Between Hector And Andromache

She ceas'd; then godlike Hector answer'd kind -
(His various plumage sporting in the wind)
'That post and all the rest shall be my care;
But shall I then forsake the unfinish'd war?
How would the Trojans brand great Hector's name!
And one base action sully all my fame,
Acquired by wounds, and battles bravely fought!
Oh! how my soul abhors so mean a thought.
Long have I learnt to slight this feeble breath,
And view with cheerful eyes approaching death.
The inexorable sisters have decreed
That Priam's house and Priam's self shall bleed:
The day shall come, in which proud Troy shall yield,
And spread its smoking ruins o'er the field.
Yet Hecuba's, nor Priam's hoary age,
Whose blood shall quench some Grecian's thirsty rage;
Their souls dismiss'd through many a ghastly wound,
Can in my bosom half that grief create,
As the sad thought of your impending fate:
When some proud Grecian dame shall tasks impose,
Mimic your years, and ridicule your woes:
Beneath Hyperia's waters shall you sweat,
And, fainting, scarce support the liquid weight:
Then shall some Argive loud insulting cry,
'Behold the wife of Hector, guard of Troy!'
Tears, at my name, shall drown those beauteous eyes,
And that fair bosom heave with rising sighs!
Before that day, by some brave hero's hand,
May I lie slain, and spurn the bloody sand!

Samuel Johnson

Song

Not the soft sighs of vernal gales,
The fragrance of the flowery vales,
The murmurs of the crystal rill,
The vocal grove, the verdant hill;
Not all their charms, though all unite,
Can touch my bosom with delight.

Not all the gems on India's shore,
Not all Peru's unbounded store,
Not all the power, nor all the fame,
That heroes, kings, or poets claim;
Nor knowledge which the learn'd approve,
To form one wish my soul can move.

Yet Nature's charms allure my eyes,
And knowledge, wealth, and fame I prize;
Fame, wealth, and knowledge I obtain,
Nor seek I Nature's charms in vain;
In lovely Stella all combine,
And, lovely Stella! thou art mine.

Samuel Johnson

Spring

Stern Winter now, by Spring repress'd
Forbears the long-continued strife;
And Nature, on her naked breast,
Delights to catch the gales of life.

Now o'er the rural kingdom roves,
Soft pleasures with her laughing train,
Love warbles in the vocal groves,
And vegetation plants the plain.

Unhappy! whom to beds of pain
Arthritic tyranny consigns;
Whom smiling Nature courts in vain,
Though rapture sings and beauty shines.

Yet though my limbs disease invades,
Her wings imagination tries,
And bears me to the peaceful shades,
Where ---- 's humble turrets rise.

Here let me through the vales pursue,
A guide - a father - and a friend,
Once more great Nature's works renew,
Once more on Wisdom's voice attend.

From false caresses, causeless strife,
Wild hope, vain fear, alike removed;
Here let me learn the use of life,
When best enjoy'd - when most improved.

Teach me, thou venerable bower,
Cool meditation's quiet seat,
The generous scorn of venal power,
The silent grandeur of retreat.

When pride by guilt to greatness climbs,
Or raging factions rush to war,
Here let me learn to shun the crimes
I can't prevent and will not share.

But lest I fall by subtler foes,
Bright wisdom teach me Curio's art,
The swelling passions to compose,
And quell the rebels of the heart.

Samuel Johnson

Stella In Mourning

When lately Stella's form display'd
The beauties of the gay brocade,
The nymphs, who found their power decline,
Proclaim'd her not so fair as fine.
'Fate! snatch away the bright disguise,
And let the goddess trust her eyes.'
Thus blindly pray'd the fretful pair,
And Fate malicious heard the prayer;
But brighten'd by the sable dress,
As virtue rises in distress,
Since Stella still extends her reign,
Ah! how shall envy soothe her pain?
'Th' adoring youth and envious fair,
Henceforth shall form one common prayer
And love and hate alike implore
The skies - 'That Stella mourn no more.'

Samuel Johnson

Summer

O Phoebus! down the western sky,
Far hence diffuse thy burning ray,
Thy light to distant worlds supply,
And wake them to the cares of day.

Come, gentle Eve, the friend of care,
Come, Cynthia, lovely queen of night!
Refresh me with a cooling breeze,
And cheer me with a lambent light.

Lay me, where o'er the verdant ground
Her living carpet Nature spreads;
Where the green bower with roses crown'd,
In showers its fragrant foliage spreads.

Improve the peaceful hour with wine,
Let music die along the grove;
Around the bowl let myrtles twine,
And every strain be tuned to love.

Come, Stella, queen of all my heart!
Come, born to fill its vast desires!
Thy looks perpetual joy impart,
Thy voice perpetual love inspires.

Whilst all my wish and thine complete,
By turns we languish and we burn,
Let sighing gales our sights repeat,
Our murmurs - murmuring brooks return.

Let me when Nature calls to rest,
And blushing skies the morn foretell,
Sink on the down of Stella's breast,
And bid the waking world farewell.

Samuel Johnson

The City Of God

CITY of God, how broad and far
Outspread thy walls sublime!
The true thy chartered freemen are,
Of every age and clime.

One holy Church, one army strong,
One steadfast high intent,
One working band, one harvest-song,
One King Omnipotent.

How purely hath thy speech come down
From man's primeval youth;
How grandly hath thine empire grown
Of Freedom, Love, and Truth!

How gleam thy watchfires through the night,
With never fainting ray;
How rise thy towers, serene and bright,
To meet the dawning day!

In vain the surge's angry shock,
In vain the drifting sands;
Unharm'd, upon the Eternal Rock,
The Eternal City stands.

Samuel Johnson

The Natural Beauty

To Stella:

Whether Stella's eyes are found
Fix'd on earth or glancing round,
If her face with pleasure glow,
If she sigh at others' woe,
If her easy air express
Conscious worth, or soft distress,
Stella's eyes and air and face
Charm with undiminish'd grace
If on her we see display'd
Pendent gems, and rich brocade,
If her chintz with less expense
Flows in easy negligence;
Still she lights the conscious flame,
Still her charms appear the same;
If she strikes the vocal strings,
If she's silent, speaks, or sings,
If she sit, or if she move,
Still we love, and still approve.
Vain the casual transient glance,
Which alone can please by chance,
Beauty, which depends on art,
Changing with the changing art,
Which demands the toilet's aid,
Pendent gems and rich brocade.
I those charms alone can prize,
Which from constant Nature rise,
Which nor circumstance nor dress
E'er can make or more or less.

Samuel Johnson

The Vanity Of Human Wishes

Let observation with extensive view,
Survey mankind, from China to Peru;
Remark each anxious toil, each eager strife,
And watch the busy scenes of crowded life;
Then say how hope and fear, desire and hate,
O'erspread with snares the clouded maze of fate,
Where wav'ring man, betray'd by vent'rous pride
To tread the dreary paths without a guide,
As treach'rous phantoms in the mist delude,
Shuns fancied ills, or chases airy good.
How rarely reason guides the stubborn choice,
Rules the bold hand, or prompts the suppliant voice,
How nations sink, by darling schemes oppress'd,
When vengeance listens to the fool's request.
Fate wings with ev'ry wish th' afflictive dart,
Each gift of nature, and each grace of art,
With fatal heat impetuous courage glows,
With fatal sweetness elocution flows,
Impeachment stops the speaker's pow'rful breath,
And restless fire precipitates on death.

But scarce observ'd the knowing and the bold,
Fall in the gen'ral massacre of gold;
Wide-wasting pest! that rages unconfined,
And crowds with crimes the records of mankind,
For gold his sword the hireling ruffian draws,
For gold the hireling judge distorts the laws;
Wealth heap'd on wealth, nor truth nor safety buys,
The dangers gather as the treasures rise.

Let hist'ry tell where rival kings command,
And dubious title shakes the madd'd land,
When statutes glean the refuse of the sword,
How much more safe the vassal than the lord,
Low sculks the hind beneath the rage of pow'r,
And leaves the wealthy traitor in the Tow'r,
Untouch'd his cottage, and his slumbers sound,
Tho' confiscation's vultures hover round.

The needy traveller, serene and gay,
Walks the wild heath, and sings his toil away.
Does envy seize thee? crush th' upbraiding joy,
Increase his riches and his peace destroy,
New fears in dire vicissitude invade,
The rustling brake alarms, and quiv'ring shade,
Nor light nor darkness bring his pain relief.
One shews the plunder, and one hides the thief.

Yet still one gen'ral cry the skies assails,
And gain and grandeur load the tainted gales,
Few know the toiling statesman's fear or care,
Th' insidious rival and the gaping heir.

Once more, Democritus, arise on earth,
With cheerful wisdom and instructive mirth,
See motley life in modern trappings dress'd,
And feed with varied fools th' eternal jest:
Thou who couldst laugh where want enchain'd caprice,
Toil crush'd conceit, and man was of a piece;
Where wealth unlov'd without a mourner died;
And scarce a sycophant was fed by pride;
Where ne'er was known the form of mock debate,
Or seen a new-made mayor's unwieldy state;
Where change of fav'rites made no change of laws,
And senates heard before they judg'd a cause;
How wouldst thou shake at Britain's modish tribe,
Dart the quick taunt, and edge the piercing gibe?
Attentive truth and nature to decry,
And pierce each scene with philosophic eye.
To thee were solemn toys or empty show,
The robes of pleasure and the veils of woe:
All aid the farce, and all thy mirth maintain,
Whose joys are causeless, or whose griefs are vain.

Such was the scorn that fill'd the sage's mind,
Renew'd at ev'ry glance on humankind;
How just that scorn ere yet thy voice declare,
Search every state, and canvas ev'ry pray'r.

Unnumber'd suppliants crowd Preferment's gate,
Athirst for wealth, and burning to be great;

Delusive Fortune hears th' incessant call,
They mount, they shine, evaporate, and fall.
On ev'ry stage the foes of peace attend,
Hate dogs their flight, and insult mocks their end.
Love ends with hope, the sinking statesman's door
Pours in the morning worshiper no more;
For growing names the weekly scribbler lies,
To growing wealth the dedicator flies,
From every room descends the painted face,
That hung the bright Palladium of the place,
And smok'd in kitchens, or in auctions sold,
To better features yields the frame of gold;
For now no more we trace in ev'ry line
Heroic worth, benevolence divine:
The form distorted justifies the fall,
And detestation rids th' indignant wall.

...

When first the college rolls receive his name,
The young enthusiast quits his ease for fame;
Through all his veins the fever of renown
Spreads from the strong contagion of the gown;
O'er Bodley's dome his future labours spread,
And Bacon's mansion trembles o'er his head.
Are these thy views? proceed, illustrious youth,
And virtue guard thee to the throne of Truth!
Yet should thy soul indulge the gen'rous heat,
Till captive Science yields her last retreat;
Should Reason guide thee with her brightest ray,
And pour on misty Doubt resistless day;
Should no false Kindness lure to loose delight,
Nor Praise relax, nor Difficulty fright;
Should tempting Novelty thy cell refrain,
And Sloth effuse her opiate fumes in vain;
Should Beauty blunt on fops her fatal dart,
Nor claim the triumph of a letter'd heart;
Should no disease thy torpid veins invade,
Nor Melancholy's phantoms haunt thy shade;
Yet hope not life from grief or danger free,
Nor think the doom of man revers'd for thee:
Deign on the passing world to turn thine eyes,

And pause awhile from letters, to be wise;
There mark what ill the scholar's life assails,
Toil, envy, want, the patron, and the jail.
See nations slowly wise, and meanly just,
To buried merit raise the tardy bust.
If dreams yet flatter, once again attend,
Hear Lydiat's life, and Galileo's end.

Nor deem, when learning her last prize bestows
The glitt'ring eminence exempt from foes;
See when the vulgar 'scape, despis'd or aw'd,
Rebellion's vengeful talons seize on Laud.
From meaner minds, tho' smaller fines content
The plunder'd palace or sequester'd rent;
Mark'd out by dangerous parts he meets the shock,
And fatal Learning leads him to the block:
Around his tomb let Art and Genius weep,
But hear his death, ye blockheads, hear and sleep....

Enlarge my life with multitude of days,
In health, in sickness, thus the suppliant prays;
Hides from himself his state, and shuns to know,
That life protracted is protracted woe.
Time hovers o'er, impatient to destroy,
And shuts up all the passages of joy:
In vain their gifts the bounteous seasons pour,
The fruit autumnal, and the vernal flow'r,
With listless eyes the dotard views the store,
He views, and wonders that they please no more;
Now pall the tasteless meats, and joyless wines,
And Luxury with sighs her slave resigns.
Approach, ye minstrels, try the soothing strain,
And yield the tuneful lenitives of pain:
No sounds alas would touch th' impervious ear,
Though dancing mountains witness'd Orpheus near;
Nor lute nor lyre his feeble pow'rs attend,
Nor sweeter music of a virtuous friend,
But everlasting dictates crowd his tongue,
Perversely grave, or positively wrong.
The still returning tale, and ling'ring jest,
Perplex the fawning niece and pamper'd guest,

While growing hopes scarce awe the gath'ring sneer,
And scarce a legacy can bribe to hear;
The watchful guests still hint the last offence,
The daughter's petulance, the son's expense,
Improve his heady rage with treach'rous skill,
And mould his passions till they make his will.

Unnumber'd maladies his joints invade,
Lay siege to life and press the dire blockade;
But unextinguish'd Av'rice still remains,
And dreaded losses aggravate his pains;
He turns, with anxious heart and crippled hands,
His bonds of debt, and mortgages of lands;
Or views his coffers with suspicious eyes,
Unlocks his gold, and counts it till he dies.

But grant, the virtues of a temp'rate prime
Bless with an age exempt from scorn or crime;
An age that melts in unperceiv'd decay,
And glides in modest innocence away;
Whose peaceful day Benevolence endears,
Whose night congratulating Conscience cheers;
The gen'ral fav'rite as the gen'ral friend:
Such age there is, and who could wish its end?

Yet ev'n on this her load Misfortune flings,
To press the weary minutes' flagging wings:
New sorrow rises as the day returns,
A sister sickens, or a daughter mourns.
Now kindred Merit fills the sable bier,
Now lacerated Friendship claims a tear.
Year chases year, decay pursues decay,
Still drops some joy from with'ring life away;
New forms arise, and diff'rent views engage,
Superfluous lags the vet'ran on the stage,
Till pitying Nature signs the last release,
And bids afflicted worth retire to peace.

But few there are whom hours like these await,
Who set unclouded in the gulfs of fate.
From Lydia's monarch should the search descend,
By Solon caution'd to regard his end,

In life's last scene what prodigies surprise,
Fears of the brave, and follies of the wise?
From Marlborough's eyes the streams of dotage flow,
And Swift expires a driv'ler and a show.

The teeming mother, anxious for her race,
Begs for each birth the fortune of a face:
Yet Vane could tell what ills from beauty spring;
And Sedley curs'd the form that pleas'd a king.
Ye nymphs of rosy lips and radiant eyes,
Whom Pleasure keeps too busy to be wise,
Whom Joys with soft varieties invite,
By day the frolic, and the dance by night,
Who frown with vanity, who smile with art,
And ask the latest fashion of the heart,
What care, what rules your heedless charms shall save,
Each nymph your rival, and each youth your slave?
Against your fame with fondness hate combines,
The rival batters and the lover mines.
With distant voice neglected Virtue calls,
Less heard and less, the faint remonstrance falls;
Tir'd with contempt, she quits the slipp'ry reign,
And Pride and Prudence take her seat in vain.
In crowd at once, where none the pass defend,
The harmless freedom, and the private friend.
The guardians yield, by force superior plied;
By Int'rest, Prudence; and by Flatt'ry, Pride.
Now Beauty falls betray'd, despis'd, distress'd,
And hissing Infamy proclaims the rest.

Where then shall Hope and Fear their objects find?
Must dull Suspense corrupt the stagnant mind?
Must helpless man, in ignorance sedate,
Roll darkling down the torrent of his fate?
Must no dislike alarm, no wishes rise,
No cries attempt the mercies of the skies?
Enquirer, cease, petitions yet remain,
Which Heav'n may hear, nor deem religion vain.
Still raise for good the supplicating voice,
But leave to Heav'n the measure and the choice.
Safe in his pow'r, whose eyes discern afar
The secret ambush of a specious pray'r.

Implore his aid, in his decisions rest,
Secure whate'er he gives, he gives the best.
Yet when the sense of sacred presence fires,
And strong devotion to the skies aspires,
Pour forth thy fervours for a healthful mind,
Obedient passions, and a will resign'd;
For love, which scarce collective man can fill;
For patience, sov'reign o'er transmuted ill;
For faith, that panting for a happier seat,
Counts death kind Nature's signal of retreat:
These goods for man the laws of Heav'n ordain,
These goods he grants, who grants the pow'r to gain;
With these celestial wisdom calms the mind,
And makes the happiness she does not find.

Samuel Johnson

The Vanity Of Wealth

No more thus brooding o'er yon heap,
With avarice painful vigils keep:
Still unenjoy'd the present store,
Still endless sighs are breathed for more.
O! quit the shadow, catch the prize,
Which not all India's treasure buys!
To purchase with heaven has gold the power?
Can gold remove the mortal hour?
In life can love be bought with gold?
Are friendship's pleasures to be sold?
No! - all that's worth a wish - a thought,
Fair virtue gives unbribed, unbought,
Cease then on trash thy hopes to bind,
Let noble views engage thy mind.
With science tread the wondrous way,
Or learn the Muses' moral lay;
In social hours indulge thy soul,
Where mirth and temperance mix the bowl;
To virtuous love resign thy breast,
And be, by blessing beauty, - bless'd.
Thus taste the feast by Nature spread,
Ere youth and all its joys are fled;
Come taste with me the balm of life,
Secure from pomp, and wealth, and strife.
I boast whate'er for man was meant,
In health, and Stella, and content;
And scorn! (oh! let that scorn be thine!)
Mere things of clay, that dig the mine.

Samuel Johnson

The Winter's Walk

Behold, my fair, where'er we rove,
What dreary prospects round us rise,
The naked hill, the leafless grove,
The hoary ground, the frowning skies.

Nor only through the wasted plain,
Stern Winter is thy force confess'd;
Still wider spreads thy horrid reign,
I feel thy power usurp my breast.

Enlivening hope, and fond desire,
Resign the heart to spleen and care;
Scarce frighted love maintains her fire,
And rapture saddens to despair.

In groundless hope, and causeless fear,
Unhappy man! behold thy doom;
Still changing with the changeful year
The slave of sunshine and of gloom.

Tired with vain joys, the false alarms,
With mental and corporeal strife,
Snatch me, my Stella, to thy arms,
And screen me from the ills of life.

Samuel Johnson

The Young Author

When first the peasant, long inclined to roam,
Forsakes his rural sports and peaceful home,
Pleas'd with the scene the smiling ocean yields,
He scorns the verdant meads and flowery fields;
Then dances jocund o'er the watery way,
While the breeze whispers, and the streamers play;
Unbounded prospects in his bosom roll,
And future millions lift his rising soul;
In blissful dreams he digs the golden mine,
And raptur'd sees the new-found ruby shine.
Joys insincere, thick clouds invade the skies,
Loud roar the billows, high the waves arise;
Sickening with fear, he longs to view the shore
And vows to trust the faithless deep no more.
So the Young Author, panting after fame,
And the long honours of a lasting name,
Intrusts his happiness to human kind,
More false, more cruel, than the seas, or wind.
'Toil on, dull crowd' (in ecstasies he cries)
'For wealth or title, perishable prize:
While I those transitory blessings scorn,
Secure of praise from ages yet unborn.' -
This thought once form'd, all counsel comes too late,
He flies to press, and hurries on his fate;
Swiftly he sees the imagined laurels spread,
And feels the unfading wreath surround his head.
Warn'd by another's fate, vain youth, be wise,
Those dreams were Settle's once, and Ogilby's!
The pamphlet spreads, incessant hisses rise,
To some retreat the baffled writer flies;
Where no sour critics snarl, no sneers molest,
Safe from the tart lampoon, and stinging jest;
There begs of Heaven a less distinguish'd lot,
Glad to be hid, and proud to be forgot.

Samuel Johnson

To A Young Lady, On Her Birthday

This tributary verse receive, my fair,
Warm with an ardent lover's fondest prayer,
May this returning day for ever find
Thy form more lovely, more adorn'd thy mind;
All pains, all cares, may favouring heaven remove,
All but the sweet solitudes of love!
May powerful nature join with grateful art,
To point each glance, and force it to the heart!
O then! when conquer'd crowds confess thy sway,
When even proud wealth and prouder wit obey,
My fair, be mindful of the mighty trust,
Alas! 'tis hard for beauty to be just.
Those sovereign charms with strictest care employ;
Nor give the generous pain, the worthless joy;
With his own form acquaint the forward fool,
Shown in the mimic glass of ridicule:
Teach mimic censure her own faults to find,
No more let coquettes to themselves be blind,
So shall Belinda's charms improve mankind.

Samuel Johnson

To Lady Firebrace

At length must Suffolk beauties shine in vain,
So long renown'd in B-n's deathless strain?
Thy charms at least, fair Firebrace, might inspire
Some zealous bard to wake the sleeping lyre:
For such thy beauteous mind and lovely face,
Thou seem'st at once, bright nymph, a
Muse and Grace

.

Samuel Johnson

To Miss --,

{On her playing upon the harpsichord in
a room hung with flower-pieces of her own painting}.

When Stella strikes the tuneful string
In scenes of imitated Spring,
Where beauty lavishes her powers
On beds of never-fading flowers,
And pleasure propagates around
Each charm of modulated sound;
Ah! think not in the dangerous hour,
The nymph fictitious as the flower;
But shun, rash youth, the gay alcove,
Nor tempt the snares of wily love.
When charms thus press on every sense,
What thought of flight or of defence?
Deceitful hope, and vain desire,
For ever flutter o'er her lyre,
Delighting as the youth draws nigh,
To point the glances of her eye,
And forming with unerring art
New chains to hold the captive heart.
But on those regions of delight,
Might truth intrude with daring flight,
Could Stella, sprightly, fair, and young,
One moment hear the moral song,
Instruction with her flowers might spring,
And wisdom warble from her string.
Mark when from thousand mingled dyes
Thou seest one pleasing form arise,
How active light and thoughtful shade,
In greater scenes each other aid;
Mark when the different notes agree
In friendly contrariety,
How passion's well-accorded strife
Gives all the harmony of life.
Thy pictures shall thy conduct frame,
Consistent still, though not the same;
Thy music teach the nobler art,
To tune the regulated heart.

Samuel Johnson

To Miss Hickman, Playing The Spinnet

Bright Stella, form'd for universal reign,
Too well you know to keep the slaves you gain;
When in your eyes resistless lightnings play,
Awed into love our conquer'd hearts obey,
And yield reluctant to despotic sway;
But when your music soothes the raging pain,
We bid propitious heaven prolong your reign,
We bless the tyrant, and we hug the chain.
When old Timotheus struck the vocal string,
Ambition's fury fired the Grecian king:
Unbounded projects labouring in his mind,
He pants for room in one poor world confined.
Thus waked to rage by music's dreadful power,
He bids the sword destroy, the flame devour.
Had Stella's gentle touches moved the lyre,
Soon had the monarch felt the nobler fire:
No more delighted with destructive war,
Ambitious only now to please the fair;
Resign'd his thirst of empire to her charms,
And found a thousand worlds in Stella's arms.

Samuel Johnson

To Miss---,

{On her giving the author a gold and silk net-work purse of her own weaving}.

Though gold and silk their charms unite
To make thy curious web delight,
In vain the varied work would shine,
If wrought by any hand but thine;
Thy hand that knows the subtler art,
To weave those nets that catch the heart.
Spread out by me the roving coin,
Thy nets may catch, but not confine;
Nor can I hope thy silken chain
The glittering vagrants shall restrain.
Why, Stella, was it then decreed
The heart once caught should ne'er be freed.

Samuel Johnson

To Mrs. Thrale On Her Completing Her Thirty-Fifth Year

Oft in danger, yet alive,
We are come to thirty-five;
Long may better years arrive,
Better years than thirty-five.
Could philosophers contrive
Life to stop at thirty-five,
Time his hours should never drive
O'er the bounds of thirty-five
High to soar, and deep to dive,
Nature gives at thirty-five.
Ladies, stop and tend your hive,
Trifle not at thirty-five;
For, howe'er we boast and strive,
Life declines from thirty-five:
He that ever hopes to thrive
Must begin by thirty-five:
And all who wisely wish to wive
Must look on Thrale at thirty-five.

Samuel Johnson

To Myrtilis - The New Year's Offering

Madam,
Long have I look'd my tablets o'er,
And find I've much to thank you for;
Outstanding debts beyond account,
And new - who knows to what amount?
Though small my wealth, not small my soul:
Come, then, at once I'll pay the whole.
Ye powers! I'm rich and will command
The host of slaves that round me stand;
Come, Indian, quick disclose thy store,
And hither bring Peruvian ore:
Let yonder Negro pierce the main,
The choicest, largest pearl to gain:
Let all my slaves their art combine
To make the blushing ruby mine,
From eastern thrones the diamonds bear
To sparkle at her breast and ear.
Swift Scythian, point the unerring dart,
That strikes the ermine's little heart,
And search for choicest furs the globe,
To make my Myrtilis a robe.
Ah, no! yon Indian will not go,
No Scythian designs to bed his bow,
No sullen Negro shoots the flood:
All, all my empty power disown,
I turn and find myself alone;
'Tis Fancy's vain illusion all,
No Moor nor Scythian waits my call.
Can I command, can I consign?
Alas! what earthly thing is mine?
Come, then, my Muse, companion dear,
Of poverty, and soul sincere;
Come, dictate to my grateful mind
A gift that may acceptance find;
Come, gentle Muse, and with thee bear
An offering worthy thee and her;
And though thy presents be but poor,
My Myrtilis will ask no more.
A Heart that scorns a shameful thing,

With love and verse is all I bring;
Of love and verse the gift receive,
'Tis all thy servant has to give.
If all whate'er my verse has told,
Golconda's gems, and Afric's gold;
If all were mine from pole to pole,
How large her share who shares my soul!
But more than these may Heaven impart;
Be thine the treasures of the heart;
Be calm and glad thy future days
With virtue's peace and virtue's praise;
Let jealous pride, and sleepless care,
And wasting grief, and black despair,
And languor chill, and anguish fell,
For ever shun thy grove and cell;
There only may the happy train
Of love, and joy, and peace remain:
May plenty, with exhaustless store,
Employ thy hand to feed the poor,
And ever on thy honour'd head
The prayer of gratitude be shed!
A happy mother, may'st thou see
Thy smiling, virtuous progeny,
Whose sportful tricks, and airy play,
Fraternal love, and prattle gay,
Or wondrous tale, or joyful song,
May lure the lingering hours along;
Till death arrive, unfelt, unseen,
With gentle pace and placid mien,
And waft thee to that happy shore
Where wishes can have place no more.

Samuel Johnson

Translation Of A Speech Of Aquileio In The Adriano Of Metastasio

Grown old in courts, thou art not surely one
Who keeps the rigid rules of ancient honour;
Well skill'd to soothe a foe with looks of kindness,
To sink the fatal precipice before him,
And then lament his fall with seeming friendship!
Open to all, true only to thyself,
Thou know'st the arts which blast with envious praise,
Which aggravate a fault with feign'd excuses,
And drive discountenanced virtue from the throne;
That leave the blame of rigour to the prince,
And of his every gift usurp the merit,
That hide in seeming zeal a wicked purpose,
And only build upon another's ruin.

Samuel Johnson

Winter

No more the morn with tepid rays
Unfolds the flower of various hue;
Noon spreads no more the genial blaze,
Nor gentle eve distills the dew.

The lingering hours prolong the night,
Usurping darkness shares the day;
Her mists restrain the force of light,
And Phoebus holds a doubtful sway.

By gloomy twilight half revealed,
With sighs we view the hoary hill,
The leafless wood, the naked field,
The snow-topp'd cot, the frozen rill.

No music warbles through the grove,
No vivid colours paint the plain;
No more with devious steps I rove
Through verdant paths, now sought in vain.

Aloud the driving tempest roars;
Congeal'd impetuous showers descend;
Haste, close the window, bar the doors,
Fate leaves me Stella, and a friend.

In nature's aid let art supply
With light and heat my little sphere;
Rouse, rouse the fire, and pile it high;
Light up a constellation here.

Let music sound the voice of joy!
Or mirth repeat the jocund tale;
Let love his wanton wiles employ,
And o'er the season wine prevail.

Yet time life's dreary winter brings,
When mirth's gay tale shall please no more;
Nor music charm, though Stella sings;
Nor love, nor wine the spring restore.

Catch the, O! catch the transient hour,
Improve each moment as it flies;
Life's a short Summer - man a flower,
He dies - alas! how soon he dies!

Samuel Johnson

Written At The Request Of A Gentleman To Whom A Lady Had Given A Sprig Of Myrtle

What hopes - what terrors does this gift create?

Ambiguous emblem of uncertain fate.

The myrtle (ensign of supreme command

Consign'd to Venus by Melissa's hand),

Not less capricious than a reigning fair,

Oft favours, oft rejects a lover's prayer.

In myrtle shades despairing ghosts complain:

The myrtle crowns the happy lover's heads,

The unhappy lovers' graves the myrtle spreads.

Oh! then the meaning of thy gift impart,

And ease the throbbings of an anxious heart:

Soon must this sprig, as you shall fix its doom,

Adorn Philander's head, or grace his tomb.

Samuel Johnson