

SAMUEL JOHNSON.

cal learning, was the reading of five or six of Cicero's orations, as many books of Virgil, and a part of the Hebrew Psalter. In mathematics, only common arithmetic, and a little surveying were taught; in logic, metaphysics and ethics, the doctrines of the schoolmen still held sway, and Descartes, Boyle, Locke, Newton, and Bacon, were regarded as innovators, from whom no good could be expected or hoped. In theology, Ames' "*Medulla*," and "*Cases of Conscience*," and "*Wollebius*," were the standards.

With, perhaps a pardonable vanity, Mr. Johnson, who had stood very high as a scholar in his class, regarded himself as possessing superior attainments; but his good opinion of his own abilities was very suddenly lowered, when, a year or two later, chance threw in his way, a copy of Lord Bacon's "*Advancement of Learning*," then a very rare book in this country. Humbled by the sense of his own ignorance, which that book gave him, he was still much enlightened by it, and, to use his own language, "seemed to himself like a person suddenly emerging out of the glimmer of twilight, into the full sunshine of open day." His mind being thus prepared for further culture, he soon had an opportunity for its subsequent development. A collection of books made in England by Mr. Dummer, the agent of the colony, amounting to about eight hundred volumes, was sent over to the college. Among them were the works of Sir Isaac Newton, Blackman, Steele, Burnet, Woodward, Halley, Bentley, Kennet, Barrow, Patrick, South, Tillotson, Sharp, Scott, and Whitby. To a mind, as earnest as was his to acquire knowledge, these books furnished indeed "a feast of fat things." In company with Messrs. Cutler, Eliot, Hart, Whittelsey, and his classmates, Wetmore and Brown, he devoted all his leisure to their perusal.

Meantime, the college was in great danger of extinction. The students, complaining of the unfitness of their tutors, scattered themselves in different parts of the colony, studying under such teachers as they chose; a part, including those living in the vicinity of Connecticut River, placed themselves under the direction of Messrs. Woodbridge and Buckingham, the ministers at Hartford, who were trustees of the college, and at their instigation, Messrs. Williams and Smith, two young ministers, were persuaded to set up a collegiate school at Wethersfield, in the hope of obtaining a removal of the college thither; and to this school, the students of the river towns resorted. Those belonging to the towns on the sea-shore, put themselves under the tuition of Mr. Johnson, at Guilford.

Under these circumstances, a meeting of the trustees was held, in the spring of 1716; a majority of the trustees present, as well as

the governor, Mr. Saltonstall, of New London, were in favor of establishing the college at New Haven; but the minority were very bitter in their opposition, and a vote was passed, referring the matter to the general court, which was to be held at New Haven, in October of that year. This meeting of the trustees was not attended by Messrs. Woodbridge and Buckingham, the Hartford ministers, and they protested against its legality and its action.

At the meeting of the general court, (or colonial legislature,) a majority of the members of both houses were found to be in favor of establishing the college at New Haven, and an act of assembly was passed for that purpose. The majority of the trustees then met, and appointed Mr. Johnson, who was then but twenty years of age, one of the tutors, and, with a view of reconciling the minority, selected Mr. Smith, one of the Wethersfield teachers, as the other. They also commenced a subscription to obtain the means of erecting a college building, and procured an architect from Boston, to oversee the building.

The minority, however, were inexorable; Mr. Smith and all his party refusing to consider any overtures for a union, and the Wethersfield school was maintained. The students along the sea-coast, about twenty in number, came together at New Haven, and Mr. Johnson began his course of instruction there, assisted by Mr. Noyes, the minister of the town. On the 12th September, 1717, a commencement was held at New Haven, and the same day at Wethersfield, and degrees were conferred in both places. The trustees at New Haven, chose Mr. Brown, a classmate of Mr. Johnson, as a second tutor. Harmonizing fully in their views, these two young men exerted themselves to the utmost, for the improvement of the students under their charge, extending the course of mathematical study, introducing the works of Locke and Sir Isaac Newton, into the college course, and substituting the Copernican for the Ptolemaic system, which had hitherto been taught. It was a fortunate circumstance for them, that the troubles without, withdrew public attention from these innovations within. The succeeding year, (1718,) the trouble which had existed between the two parties at New Haven and Wethersfield, was settled by a compromise. The degrees given at Wethersfield were confirmed; a tract of land belonging to the colony was sold, and of the avails £200 currency, was given to the college at New Haven, and £800 currency to Hartford, toward the erection of a state house, as an offset for the loss of the college. As a result of this settlement, the Wethersfield students came to New Haven, and though somewhat turbulent, there was but little subsequent trouble with them.

The same year, Rev. Timothy Cutler, at that time pastor of the congregational church in Stratford, and an intimate friend of Mr. Johnson, was chosen rector of the college, and having received a very liberal donation from Elihu Yale, of London, the trustees gave to their new building, the name of Yale College. In a little more than a year after the appointment of Mr. Cutler to the rectorship, Mr. Johnson resigned his tutorship, to enter upon the duties of the pastorate, and was ordained and settled at West Haven in March, 1720, rejecting several more eligible offers, in order that he might be near the college, and have the advantage of its library, and the society of its teachers.

Of the change which soon after took place in his religious views, and which led him, and several of his friends, to seek ordination in the Anglican church, it is not our province here to speak at length; it was unquestionably the result of an honest, conscientious, and sincere belief in the error of his previous creed, and when we consider that its result was to cut him off from the sympathy and regard of all his previous friends, and to deprive him of the fairest opportunities of preferment and reputation, which were ever perhaps offered to a young man in his position, we can not avoid doing honor to the moral courage which led to the step, however we may regard the creed he adopted. Suffice it to say, that in November, 1722, rector Cutler and Mr. Brown, having resigned their offices, set sail in company with Mr. Johnson, for England, to receive ordination from an English bishop. Mr. Wetmore, another classmate of Mr. Johnson, followed, a few months later. In March, 1723, they were ordained by the Bishop of Norwich, and the week after Mr. Brown died of the small pox.

In May, Mr. Cutler received the degree of Doctor of Divinity, and Mr. Johnson, of Master of Arts, from the University of Oxford, and soon after, the same degrees were conferred on them by the University of Cambridge. Dr. Cutler and Mr. Johnson returned to this country, in the summer of 1723, and Mr. Johnson, having received an appointment as missionary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, settled over the Episcopal church, at Stratford, Conn. The change in his views subjected him to considerable opposition, but his equable temper, his cheerful and benevolent disposition, and the marked purity and dignity of his character, disarmed the enmity of those who opposed him, and caused the people to esteem him highly. In 1725, he married Mrs. Charity Nicoll, the daughter of Col. Richard Floyd, and widow of Benjamin Nicoll, Esq., of Long Island, by whom she had had two sons and a daughter.

It was the fortune of Mr. Johnson to be on terms of intimacy and correspondence, with many of the most eminent scholars of his day, both in England and this country. Among the most intimate of his friends, at this period of his life, was Governor Burnett of New York, a son of the celebrated Bishop of that name, and a man of great learning and genius, but eccentric both in his views and his mode of reasoning. The Governor having embraced the opinions of Clarke, Whiston, and others, on the subject of the Trinity, and of Bishop Hoadley, Jackson and Sykes, on the subject of ecclesiastical authority, sought to win his friend Johnson to his views. Mr. Johnson's mental habits were such, that he would neither receive or reject any theory or doctrine, until he had carefully and patiently examined it on all sides; and he accordingly bent all his fine powers to the investigation of the questions discussed by the authors already named; the result was to confirm him in his previous views, though with a large charity for those who differed from him in opinion. In 1729, soon after the conclusion of this investigation, Bishop Berkeley, then dean of Derry, Ireland, came to this country, and resided for two and a half years near Newport, R. I. During his residence here, Mr. Johnson often visited him and was on terms of close intimacy with him, and often in his after life referred to these interviews, as having been of great advantage to him, in the improvement of his mind, by free intercourse with so eminent a scholar, and philosopher. When the Dean was about leaving America, Mr. Johnson paid him a final visit, and in the course of conversation, took occasion to commend to his notice Yale College as a deserving institution, and to express the hope that he might send the college some books. The commendation was remembered; two years after, the Dean and some of his friends sent to the college a present of nearly a thousand volumes of choice books, two hundred and sixty of them folios. The value of this gift was not less than two thousand five hundred dollars. About the same time he forwarded to Mr. Johnson, a deed conveying to the trustees, his farm of ninety-six acres on Rhode Island, the annual income of which was to be divided between three bachelors of arts, who, upon examination by the rector of the college, and a minister of the church of England, should appear to be the best classical scholars; provided they would reside at the college, the three years between their bachelor's and master's degrees, in the prosecution of their studies; and the forfeiture, in cases of non-residence, were to be given in premiums of books, to those that performed the best exercises. For many years after the return of Bishop Berkeley, to England, Mr. Johnson's life passed smoothly, in the performance of his parochial duties, and

the prosecution of his studies ; occasionally, the calm and even tenor of his life, was slightly ruffled by pamphlet controversies, with those who attacked the creed or practice of the Anglican church—controversies in which he rarely or never acted the part of the aggressor, but usually of the respondent. Of this character was his controversy with Mr. Dickinson, Mr. Foxcroft, Mr. Graham, his "*Letter from Aristocles to Anthades*," and his rejoinder to Mr. Dickinson's reply to that letter. In controversy, as every where else, it may be remarked, that Mr. Johnson exhibited the character of the Christian gentleman, never suffering himself to be betrayed into the use of the bitter and acrimonious language, which have made the *odium theologicum*, proverbial, as the most venomous of all hatreds. In 1746, Mr. Johnson published "*A System of Morality*, containing the first principles of moral philosophy or ethics, in a chain of necessary consequences from certain facts." This work had a high reputation at the time of its publication, and met with an extensive sale. In 1743, the degree of Doctor in Divinity, was unanimously conferred upon him by the University of Oxford. The degree was conferred, it is said, at the special instance of Archbishop Secker, then Bishop of Oxford, Dr. Hodgea, then Vice-Chancellor of the University and Provost of Oriel College, Dr. Astry, and others.

The honor thus conferred on him, had only the effect to make him more zealous in his studies, especially in Hebrew and the other oriental languages, in which he was more proficient than most of the scholars of the eighteenth century, in this country.

Dr. Johnson had two sons ; William Samuel, and William, both whom he fitted for college himself, and entered them at Yale when they were about thirteen years of age. The elder became eminent as a lawyer, received the degree of LL. D. from the University of Oxford, in 1766, and was, for several years, the agent of the Colony in England ; the younger studied divinity, and was subsequently a tutor in King's College, under his father.

Dr. Johnson prepared a compendium of logic and metaphysics, and another of ethics, for the use of his sons, and these were published together in 1752, by Benjamin Franklin, for the use of the University of Pennsylvania, then just established at Philadelphia. Dr. Johnson and Dr. Franklin were constant correspondents for many years, and the views of the latter on electricity were laid before Dr. Johnson, before their publication. The plan of education in the University in which Dr. Franklin was deeply interested, was also modified at his suggestion, and he was offered the presidency of it, which, however, he declined.

In 1753, the principal gentlemen of New York, with Lieutenant-Governor Delancey at their head, undertook to found a college in New York City. In all their plans, Dr. Johnson was consulted, and when the charter was obtained, and they were ready to organize the college, he was elected president. He at first declined, but finding that, unless he accepted, they would relinquish the enterprise, he very reluctantly consented, and in 1754 took leave of his congregation at Stratford, with deep regret on both sides. A singular condition was attached to his acceptance, which shows how great an amount of terror the ravages of small-pox had produced in the minds of all classes, at that time; "he was to be at liberty to retire to some place of safety in the country, whenever the small-pox should render it dangerous for him to reside in the city."* To those who have only known its dangers, when modified by vaccination, this extraordinary dread seems almost incredible.

On the 17th July, 1754, the first class, consisting of ten students, assembled in the vestry-room of Trinity Church, and the regular course of study was commenced, the doctor himself hearing the recitations. In addition to the labor of instruction, he also drew up the form of prayers for the college, composed a suitable collect, compiled a body of laws for their use, devised a seal for the corporation, assisted in the planning of the college edifice, and wrote to his friends in England, Bishop Sherlock, Archbishop Secker, and the Society for the propagation of the gospel, for assistance. On the admission of the second class, his younger son, William Johnson, was appointed tutor, which office he filled, to universal acceptance, for more than a year, when he sailed for England, in November, 1755, with a view to take orders, and settle, as the missionary of the Society for the propagation of the gospel, at Westchester. He received holy orders, in March, and the degree of A. M. was conferred on him by both Oxford and Cambridge, in May, 1756; but, soon after his return from Cambridge, he was seized with the small-pox, of which he died, June 20th, 1756. A Mr. Cutting, educated at Eton and Cambridge, succeeded Mr. Johnson as tutor; the college edifice was making good progress, but, soon after the president received the painful intelligence of the death of his son, he was compelled to leave New York, by the prevalence of the small-pox there, and could not return under a year.

* The small-pox seems to have been, through life, "the skeleton on the hearth" to the good doctor; and this is hardly matter of surprise; for, at the commencement of his ministry, his friend, Dr. Cutler, hardly escaped with his life from it in England; his friend, Mr. Brown, died with it there, as did also, subsequent to his removal to New York, his younger son; he himself more than once left his post in New York, in consequence of its prevalence; and, in 1763, his second wife fell a victim to it. D

He left about thirty students in the three classes, and, as Mr. Cutting was unable to teach them all, Mr. Treadwell, a graduate of Harvard College, was appointed second tutor. During the year 1757, the college received from England a library, consisting of about fifteen hundred volumes, the bequest of Rev. Dr. Bristowa, through the Society for the propagation of the gospel. Dr. Johnson returned to New York, in March, 1758, and in June following was called to bury his wife, with whom he had lived very happily for thirty-two years. On the 21st June, 1758, he held his first commencement, at which the students received their first degree, and several other persons the second. During the succeeding year, the college curriculum was more thoroughly systematized, the president giving instructions in Greek, logic, metaphysics, and ethics, while the tutors, or professors as they were now called, divided between them the other studies. In 1759, soon after the second commencement, he was again obliged to leave the city in consequence of the prevalence of the small-pox, and spent the winter at Stratford, though not without much anxiety of mind relative to the college, as the mathematical professor was very ill with consumption, and died the ensuing spring. In April, Benjamin Nicoll, one of Dr. Johnson's step-sons, an eminent lawyer in New York, and one of the governors or trustees of the college, died very suddenly. The loss was a very severe one to the college, and to the community, but Dr. Johnson was almost overwhelmed by it, and desired to resign his office and return to Stratford, to spend the remainder of his days, with his only surviving son; and accordingly he wrote to England, desiring that two gentlemen might be sent out, one to act as mathematical professor, and the other to take his place. The college edifice was at this time completed, and he removed into it, and here held, in May, 1760, his third commencement, and, in connection with Mr. Cutting, performed the whole duty of teaching the four classes that year. In 1761, soon after the fourth commencement, he published an essay, entitled "*A Demonstration of the Reasonableness, Usefulness, and great Duty of Prayer,*" and, not long after, a sermon "*On the Beauty of Holiness in the Worship of the Church of England.*" In June of the same year, he married a second wife, Mrs. Beach, the widow of an old friend and former parishioner. At the commencement of the next term, a mathematical professor, Mr. Robert Harper, was appointed, and the cares of the president somewhat diminished. The college had been partially endowed by moneys raised by subscription, and by a lottery, at the time of its charter, and had subsequently received a donation of £500 from the Society for the propagation of the gospel, and a Mr. Murray had be-

queathed to it an estate of about £10,000 currency ; but, after erecting the necessary buildings, and incurring other expenses, its funds were reduced so low, that the interest was not sufficient, with the other income of the college, for the support of the officers, and it was therefore necessary that it should be further endowed. The president was desirous that an effort should be made to procure some assistance from England, and a suitable opportunity offering, in the visit of James Jay, M. D., to England, the governors were persuaded by the president to accept Dr. Jay's offer, to endeavor to raise funds for them. The president of the University of Pennsylvania had sailed for England a few weeks before, as was subsequently ascertained, on a like errand in behalf of his own college, and, by the advice of the friends of both, the collection for the two colleges was made a joint one. The king, however, gave £400 to the college at New York, which thenceforward received the name of King's College. The half of the avails of the collection, received by King's College, amounted to about £8,000, above the expenses. In the autumn of 1762, Rev. Myles Cooper, a graduate of Queen's College, Oxford, came to New York, recommended by Archbishop Secker as a suitable person for a professor in the college, and to succeed Dr. Johnson when he should resign. He was immediately appointed professor of moral philosophy, and soon won the regard of all the friends of the college. Dr. Johnson had not intended to resign until after the commencement, in May, 1763, but the sudden death of Mrs. Johnson, of small-pox, in February, of that year, determined him to relinquish his situation at an earlier period, and he accordingly threw in his resignation about the first of March, and retired to Stratford. Mr. Cooper was chosen president before the commencement in May, and Dr. Clossy, a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin, appointed professor of natural philosophy.

In 1764, Dr. Johnson again became rector of the church at Stratford, and continued in that office until his death. But though it would have seemed that, at the age of nearly seventy, after a life of so great intellectual activity, he would have sought the repose and quiet he had so fairly earned, yet we find the instinct of the teacher was so strong, that he devoted himself to new labors in behalf of his grand-children, preparing first an English grammar for their use, then revising his catechism, his works on logic and ethics, and finally preparing a Hebrew and English grammar, published in London, in 1767, and subsequently revised and enlarged in 1771. At the same time, he reviewed, with great care, his theological and philosophical opinions, and the ground on which they were based ; spent some hours each

day in the study of the Hebrew scriptures, and, though laboring under a partial paralysis of the hand, kept up, with great punctuality, an extensive correspondence with eminent men, both in England and America. After his death, portions of his correspondence with Bishops Berkeley, Sherlock, and Lowth, and Archbishop Secker, were published, and fully justified the high reputation in which he had been held while in life. His death, which occurred on the 6th of January, 1772, was very peaceful, and, though sudden, entirely unattended with pain. He expired while sitting in his chair, and conversing on his approaching departure, with his family.

The following inscription, composed by his friend and successor in the presidency of King's College, Rev. Dr. Cooper, was placed upon his monument, in Christ Church, Stratford :—

M. S.

SAMUELIS JOHNSON, D. D.,
Colligii Regalis, Novi Eboraci
Præsidis primi,
 et hujus Ecclesiæ nupe Rectoris
 Natus die 14to Octob. 1696
 Obiit 6to Jan. 1772.

“ If decent dignity, and modest mien,
 The cheerful heart, and countenance serene ;
 If pure *religion*, and unsullied *truth*,
 His age's solace, and his search in youth ;
 If piety, in all the paths he trod,
 Still rising vig'rous to his *Lord* and *God* ;
 If *charity*, through all the race he ran
 Still wishing well, and doing good to *man* ;
 If *learning*, free from pedantry and pride,—
 If *faith* and *virtue*, walking side by side ;
 If well to mark his being's aim and end,—
 To shine through life, a *husband*, *father*, friend ;
 If these ambitions in thy soul can raise,
 Excite thy reverence, or demand thy praise ;
 Reader—ere yet thou quit this earthly scene,
 Reverse his name, and be what *he* has been.”

MYLES COOPER.