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fruit. Men come week after week, and lead the same careless lives, and pay little or no attention to the words spoken.

But the work is God's, not ours. The Lord of the Harvest sends forth the sower, as well as the reaper; and we believe and are sure that in His own good time He will bless our efforts, and hear our prayers, and will gather into His garner the souls "for whom Christ died."

EMILY C. ORR.

ART. III.—"THE PRINCE OF ABISSINIA."

Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia. By SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL.D. Being a facsimile reproduction of the First Edition. Two vols. With an Introduction by Dr. JAMES MACAULAY, and a Bibliographical List of Editions of "Rasselas" published in England and elsewhere. Elliot Stock.

MR. DISRAELI'S characteristic phrase, "The Mountains of Rasselas," in his speech on the Abyssinian Expedition, has often been quoted during the last month, in which were held centenary commemorations of the author of "Rasselas," who died December 13, 1784. The centenary of Johnson's death has recalled some of his works from unmerited forgetfulness; but the tale of "Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia," has never ceased to be a favourite. Several English and American editions have appeared in recent years. A facsimile of the first edition, now brought out by Mr. Elliot Stock, will be welcomed by many admirers of Dr. Johnson; it is a literary curiosity of singular interest and merit.

The tale was published in the spring of 1759, and the title-page runs thus:

The Prince of Abissinia. A Tale. In two volumes. Vol. I. London: Printed for R. and J. DODSLEY, in Pall Mall, and W. JOHNSTON, in Ludgate Street. MDCCLIX.

The name of the author, it will be noticed, was not on the title-page, and, according to "The Bibliography of *Rasselas*," which accompanies the work before us, Dr. Johnson's name was not printed on the title-page of the sixth edition, published in 1783. Not, indeed, before a seventh edition was issued, in 1787, did the words "By S. Johnson, LL.D.," enrich the title-page. The fact is curious. Nor is it easy to understand why "Rasselas" was published anonymously. In 1759, Johnson was at the height of his fame. Four years had elapsed

since the completion of his wonderful "Dictionary of the English Language;" and the richness and versatility of his genius had been shown in his essays and his "Life of Savage,"[1] as well as in his poems "London" and "The Vanity of Human Wishes." Though poor and still a "struggler"[2] (he did not receive his pension until 1762) Johnson was famous.

"Rasselas," which may be called a lengthy "Rambler," was written, as is well known, to defray the expenses of the funeral of Johnson's mother. Boswell, who did not then know Johnson, was told this by Strahan, the printer; and it is one of the touching facts for which we are indebted to that "honest chronicler," the prince of biographers. Strahan, it seems (with Johnston and Dodsley), gave £100 for the tale; but, when a second edition came out, the author received £25 more.

In his interesting preface to Mr. Stock's edition, Dr. Macaulay remarks: "No point in Johnson's character is more beautiful than the warmth of his family affections. For his wife, who died in 1752, he cherished to the end of his days the warmest feelings of tenderness and regret. His mother, to whom he owed his earliest lessons of wisdom and piety, he loved with filial devotion. His reverential affection for her was not abated by absence or time. He could seldom see her, but he constantly corresponded, and helped to make her comfortable in her declining years."

The last letter he wrote to her was this:

DEAR HONOURED MOTHER.

I fear you are too ill for long letters, therefore I will only tell you, you have from me all the regard that can possibly subsist in the heart. I pray God to bless you for evermore, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Let Miss [Porter] write to me every post, however short.

I am, dear mother, your dutiful son,

SAM. JOHNSON.

This letter was dated Jan. 18, 1759; it reached Lichfield on the day his mother died, in her ninety-first year. To recall the circumstances in which Johnson girded[3] himself to write "Rasselas," gives fresh interest to the story. It was composed in the evenings of one week, each portion being sent to the

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[1] "A masterpiece," says Lord Macaulay; "no finer specimen of literary biography existed in any language, living or dead."

[2] Asking for alms, a beggar-woman called herself "an old struggler." Johnson, Boswell records, was affected. He too had had to struggle.

[3] In the "Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides" is quoted a remark of the great author: "A man may write at any time, if he will set himself doggedly to it." Notwithstanding his constitutional indolence and depression of spirits, Johnson was doing a vast amount of work.

printers as soon as it was finished. Several expressions point to its composition in the loneliness of bereavement. Such, for instance, as in ch. xliv., "I have neither mother to be delighted with the reputation of her son, nor wife to partake the honours of her husband."[1]

As soon as the tale appeared its merits were noticed; but the critics were not agreed. In the *Gentleman's Magazine* (April, 1759), a full account was given with a friendly critique. The *Monthly Review*—then a great power—was less favourable.[2] The author's style was censured as "inflated," "tumid, and pompous;" and the critic added: "With regard to the matter of these little volumes, we are concerned to say that we cannot discern much invention in the plan, or ability in the design."

In the present century, though the general verdict has been favourable, there has yet been variance among the critics. Hazlitt, *e.g.*, called "Rasselas" the "most melancholy and debilitating moral speculation that was ever put forth." According to Lord Brougham, again, the reader who attempts the Abyssinian *Candide* will find it a task rather than a pleasure. On the other hand, Sir Walter Scott, pointing out that the story—so void of incident—can scarcely be termed a narrative, remarks that the style is in Johnson's best manner. "Christopher North's" praise, again, is not stinted: the tale is "a noble performance."

The resemblance between "Rasselas" and Voltaire's *Candide* is curiously close;[3] but the aim and drift of Johnson's writing, here as elsewhere, is truly Christian.[4] Readers must remember, of course, the morbid melancholy which the good and great man inherited—the miserable dejection of spirits to which he was constitutionally subject; but Boswell—whose phrases we quote—heard it "ingeniously observed by a lady

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[1] An expression in the celebrated letter to Lord Chesterfield (1754) will be remembered: "The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early, had been kind; but it has been delayed till I am indifferent, and cannot enjoy it; *till I am solitary, and cannot impart it;* till I am known, and do not want it."

[2] *Book-Lore*, December, 1884.

[3] Johnson himself spoke of this; but they appeared so closely one after another that there could be no suspicion of plagiarism.

[4] The tone and temper of the great doctor's mind may be understood from a prayer which he composed in 1750, the period of *The Rambler:* "Almighty God, the giver of all good things, without whose help all labour is ineffectual, and without whose grace all wisdom is folly: grant, I beseech Thee, that in this undertaking thy Holy Spirit may not be withheld from me, but that I may promote Thy glory, and the salvation of myself and others: grant this, O Lord, for the sake of Thy Son, Jesus Christ. Amen."

of rank and elegance that his melancholy was at its meridian" before "Rasselas" was composed. Certainly this story and his "Vanity of Human Wishes" enforce the same truth; and the "deeply philosophical discourse in prose" may well be read together with the following lines of Johnson's verse:

> Where, then, shall hope and fear their objects find?
> Shall dull suspense corrupt the stagnant mind?
> Must helpless man, in ignorance sedate,
> Roll darkling down the torrent of his fate?
> Shall no dislike alarm, no wishes rise,
> No cries attempt the mercy of the skies?
> Inquirer, cease; petitions yet remain,
> Which Heaven may hear, nor deem Religion vain.
> Still raise for good the supplicating voice,
> But leave to Heaven the measure and the choice.

One may wish, indeed, that on the writings of so devout a man rested the glow of the Evangel; but everywhere one notices, with admiration and respect, sincerity, large-heartedness, courage, and reverence. The acute and able French critic, M. Taine, thus writes of him: "Amidst prejudices and follies he has a deep conviction, active faith, severe morality. He is a Christian from his heart and conscience, reason and practice."[1] Boswell's remarks on "Rasselas" have an interest of their own. "Notwithstanding my high admiration" of the book, he writes, "I will not maintain that the 'morbid melancholy' in Johnson's constitution may not, perhaps, have made life appear to him more insipid and unhappy than it generally is; for I am sure that he had less enjoyment from it than I have. Yet, whatever additional shade his own particular sensations may have thrown on his representation of life, attentive observation and close inquiry have convinced me that there is too much reality in the gloomy picture. The truth, however, is that we judge of the happiness and misery of life differently at different times, according to the state of our changeable frame."

That the tale was not a successful effort, Dr. Johnson may, for a time, have had some slight misgiving.[2] At all events, we

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[1] "History of English Literature." Translated by H. Van Laun. Vol. ii., p. 188.

[2] A hint by Lord Brougham; but there are no grounds for it. Four years after the tale was published Sir David Dalrymple [Lord Hailes] wrote to Boswell about it and its "venerated" author. "In Rasselas," he wrote, "you will see a tender-hearted operator, who probes the wound only to heal it. Swift, on the contrary, mangles human nature. He cuts and slashes, as if he took pleasure in the operation, like the tyrant who said, *Ita feri, ut se sentiat emori.*" "Johnson," says Boswell, "seemed to be much gratified by this just and well-turned compliment."

know that, from one reason or another, during twenty years he never read it. Here is Boswell's account of the matter:

> On Saturday, June 2nd [1781], I set out for Scotland, and had promised to pay a visit, in my way, as I sometimes did, at Southill, in Bedfordshire, at the hospitable mansion of Squire Dilly, the elder brother of my worthy friends, the booksellers, in the Poultry. Dr. Johnson agreed to be of the party this year, with Mr. Charles Dilly and me, and to go and see Lord Bute's seat at Luton Hoe. He talked little to us in the carriage, being chiefly occupied in reading Dr. Watson's second volume of "Chemical Essays," which he liked very well, and his own "Prince of Abyssinia," on which he seemed to be intensely fixed; having told us, that he had not looked at it since it was first published. I happened to take it out of my pocket this day, and he seized upon it with avidity. He pointed out to me the following remarkable passage: "By what means," said the prince, "are the Europeans thus powerful? or why, since they can so easily visit Asia and Africa for trade or conquest, cannot the Asiatics and Africans invade their coast, plant colonies in their ports, and give laws to their natural princes? The same wind that carries them back would bring us thither." "They are more powerful, Sir, than we," answered Imlac, "because they are wiser. Knowledge will always predominate over ignorance, as man governs the other animals. But why their knowledge is more than ours, I know not what reason can be given, but the unsearchable will of the supreme Being." He said, "This, Sir, no man can explain otherwise."

With the reception of his tale by the reading world, the "great Cham of literature" had ample reason to be satisfied. Nor did he share that unreal or unworthy modesty which lesser literary men have sometimes shown. On one occasion, in the year 1784, he remarked: "Oh! gentlemen, I must tell you a very great thing. The Empress of Russia has ordered the 'Rambler' to be translated into the Russian language; so I shall be read on the banks of the Wolga. Horace boasts that his fame would extend as far as the banks of the Rhone; now the Wolga is farther from me than the Rhone was from Horace." Boswell said: "You must certainly be pleased with this, Sir?" Johnson replied: "I am pleased, Sir, to be sure: a man is pleased to find he has succeeded in what he endeavoured to do." In the year 1773, writing to thank Dr. White, of the Episcopal Church of Pennsylvania, for an American edition of "Rasselas," Johnson alluded to Italian, French, German and Dutch translations. Evidently he was pleased at its wide popularity.

How it was that he came to write a tale about a country so distant and so little known is easily explained. In the library of Pembroke College, Oxford, he found the work of a Jesuit Missionary, who had spent several years in Abyssinia, and he was greatly pleased with it. While he was in Birmingham, in 1735, he lodged with Mr. Warren, the only bookseller in the town; and he mentioned Father Lobo's book, suggesting an

abridgment and translation.[1] For this piece of work, it seems, Johnson received five guineas. Lobo mentions that "the kingdom of Amhara is mountainous. The Abyssinians[2] call these steep rocks 'Amba.'" The title of Dr. Johnson's story is taken from *Rassela*, the name of the Abyssinian Sultan's general in Lobo's time.[3]

Mr. Stock's tasteful edition of the classic, as has been remarked, is very welcome. Like his other facsimiles, it shows much care and skill.

ART. IV.—SAINTS' DAYS IN THE CHURCH'S YEAR. II. FEBRUARY. THE CHOICE OF MATTHIAS.

A. THE QUALIFICATIONS OF AN APOSTLE.

"*And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two Thou hast chosen.*"—ACTS i. 24.

THE choice lay betwixt two. To this point the question had been narrowed by the disciples, who were themselves able to judge of certain requisite qualifications: and now the final decision was referred to the Lord Christ, Who knows, what none of His disciples can know, the true condition and disposition of the heart.

It was the first step taken in Church organization, the first fact recorded in Church history after those meetings for prayer in the Upper Chamber which took place on the return from Mount Olivet.[4] It was probably in the same solemn Upper Chamber that they met now.[5] The number of the disciples was "about a hundred and twenty."[6] This was then the whole visible Church of Christ. Of the "five hundred," who were together at an earlier moment subsequent to the Resurrection,[7] some were in Galilee; some were probably in various parts of Judæa; many, no doubt, were "secret"[8]

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[1] Lobo's *Historia de Ethiopa* appeared in 1659.

[2] On the title-page of "Rasselas" we find "Abissinia;" and throughout the volumes Abyssinia is spelt in the same way. Why it is so cannot be explained, as the Jesuit writer has "Abyssinia." Another mystery is that whereas the work was advertised in 1759 as "Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia," on the title-page "Rasselas" did not appear.

[3] Of his translation of Lobo, Boswell tells us, Johnson had but a poor opinion. In 1776, Boswell had borrowed a copy of the rarity, and, as was his wont, he talked of it; but the Doctor said, "Take no notice of it."

[4] Acts i. 12, 13. [5] *Ibid.*, i. 15. [6] *Ibid.*

[7] 1 Cor. xv. 6. [8] See John xix. 38.