
THE
L I F E
OF
Mrs. CATHARINE COCKBURN.

By THOMAS BIRCH, M. A. F. R. S.

THERE is observable in mankind a natural and almost universal curiosity, concerning the persons of those, from whose writings they have received entertainment or instruction. And the gratification of this desire is attended with a very considerable use, as the history and characters of the writers generally tend to cast a light upon their works, and heighten our relish for them. It is therefore a justice due to the public, as well as to the memory of our author, to premise some account of so extraordinary a person. Posterity at least will be solicitous to know, to whom they will owe the most demonstrative and perspicuous reasonings, upon subjects of eternal importance; and her own sex is intitled to the fullest information about one, who has done such honour to them, and raised our ideas

of their intellectual powers, by an example of the greatest extent of understanding and correctness of judgment, united to all the vivacity of imagination. Antiquity indeed boasted of its *female philosophers*, whose merits have been drawn forth in an elaborate treatise of *Menage*^a. But our own age and country may, without injustice or vanity, oppose to those illustrious ladies the defender of *Locke* and *Clarke*; who, with a genius equal to the most eminent of them, had the superior advantage of cultivating it in the only effectual method of improvement, the study of a real philosophy, and a theology truly worthy of human nature, and its all-perfect author.

SHE was the daughter of Captain *David Trotter*, a Scots gentleman, and commander in the royal navy, in the reign of *Charles II.*, and of *Mrs. Sarah Ballenden*, who had the honour of being nearly related to the noble Lord of that name, and to the illustrious families of *Maitland*, Duke of *Lauderdale*, and *Drummond*, earl of *Perth*.

Her father was highly in favour with king *Charles II.* and his brother the duke of *York*; and his known probity and integrity gained him an universal esteem, being generally distinguished by the epithet of *honest David*; and *James* earl of *Perth*, Lord High Chancellor of *Scotland* in the latter end of that king's reign and the following one, in a very pathetic let-

^a *Historia Mulierum philosopharum*; printed at *Lyons* in 1690. in 8vo.

ter,

ter, which he wrote to his widow upon his death, styles him an *ornament to his country*. He served the crown from his youth, with great gallantry and fidelity, both by land and sea; and during the *Dutch* war took, besides other prizes, one, which was sold by the government for thirty thousand pounds. He attended lord *Dartmouth* as commodore in the demolition of *Tangier*, in the latter end of the year 1683, and soon after was sent by his majesty, with a view of making his fortune, to convoy the fleet of the *Turky* company; but being seized by the Plague, then raging at *Scanderoon*, died there^b. His death was an irreparable loss to his family, who were defrauded of all his effects on board his ship, which were very considerable, and of all the money, which he had advanced to the seamen, during a long voyage, by the dishonesty of the purser and others; the chief officers of the ship being likewise dead of the same distemper, which had proved so fatal to the captain. And, to add to the misfortune of his widow, the goldsmith, in whose hands the greatest part of his money was lodged, became soon after a bankrupt. These accumulated circumstances of distress excited the compassion of king *Charles II.*, which concurring with his regard for the memory of an old and faithful servant, induced his majesty to give a favourable reference to the Admiralty for a pension to the widow, which ended with that king's life; nor had she any consideration

^b The probate of his will in the register of the prerogative court of *Canterbury*, is dated the 9th of *February* 1683-4.

for her losses in the two succeeding reigns. But *Queen Anne*, upon her accession to the throne, granted her an annual pension of twenty pounds, which was constantly paid by the duchess of *Marlborough* into the hands of Dr. *Burnet*, bishop of *Salisbury*, till the removal of her grace from court; when, upon the widow's renewing her application, her majesty continued it as before.

Captain *Trotter*, at his death, left only two daughters, the elder of whom being afterwards married to Dr. *Inglis*, late physician general to the army, had by him two sons, one of whom died vicar of *Lewisham* in *Kent*, and the other was chaplain to Mr. *Trelawney*, governor of *Jamaica*, in which island he had a considerable benefice, where he died a few years ago.

The younger daughter, *Catharine*, author of the excellent works in this collection, was born at *London*, on the 16th of *August* 1679. She gave very early marks of her genius, and was not passed her childhood, when she surprized a company of her relations and friends with *extemporary* verses on an incident, which had fallen under her observation in the street; her uncle, a commander in the navy, who was present, taking notice of this forwardness of her wit, and what satisfaction it would have given her father, if he had been living, as he had a peculiar taste and love for poetry. She both learned to write, and made herself mistress of the *French* language, by her own application and diligence, without any instructor. But she had some

some assistance in the study of the *Latin* grammar and *Logic*, of which latter she drew up an abstract for her own use. The most serious and important subjects, and especially those of religion, soon engaged her attention. But, notwithstanding her education in the protestant religion, her intimacy with several families of distinction of the *Romish* persuasion exposed her, while very young, to impressions in favour of that church, which not being removed by her conferences with some eminent and learned members of the church of *England*, she followed the dictates of a misguided conscience, and embraced the *Romish* communion, in which she continued till the year 1707.

She was but fourteen years of age, when she wrote, in 1693, a copy of verses upon Mr. *Bevil Higgons's* sickness and recovery from the small-pox, and sent them to that gentleman, greatly esteemed at that time for his wit and poetical talents, though his tragedy, intitled *The generous Conqueror*, is at present much less known, than his historical writings of a later date, written with spirit and vivacity, but more strongly tinged with the political prejudices of the writer, than is consistent with the impartiality of an historian.

Her next production was a tragedy, called, *Agnes de Castro*, which was acted at the theatre royal in 1695, when she was only in her seventeenth year, and printed in 1696 in 4to without her name, but with a dedication to the earl of *Dorset* and *Middlesex*, in which she observed, that "this little offspring of her early

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" Muse had been first submitted to his lordship's judgment, whether it should be stifled in the birth, or preserved to try its fortune in the world." It is formed upon a *French* novel of the same title, printed at *Paris* in 1688, of which *Mrs. Behn* has given an *English* translation.

The reputation of this performance, and the verses, which she addressed to *Mr. Congreve* upon his *Mourning Bride* in 1697, were probably the foundation of her acquaintance with that admirable writer, who, upon the receipt of these verses, returned her the following letter.

" I can never enough acknowledge the honour you have done me, nor enough regret the negligence of those, to whom you delivered your valuable Letter. It is the first thing, that ever happened to me, upon which I should make it my choice to be vain. And yet such is the mortification, that attends even the most allowable vanity, that at the same instant I am robb'd of the means, when I am possessed with the inclination. It is but this moment, that I received your verses; and had scarce been transported with the reading them, when they brought me the play from the press printed off. I hope you will do me the justice to believe, that I was not so insensible, as not to be heartily vexed; and all the satisfaction, that

^c *Bibliothèque des Romans, par M. le C. Gordon de Percey, Vol. II. p. 108. edit. Amsterdam, 1734.*

" I can

" I can take, and all the sacrifice that I make to you, is only to stifle some verses on the same barren subject, which were printed with it, and now, I assure you, shall never appear, whatever apology I am forced to make to the authors. And since I am deprived of the recommendation you designed me, I will be obliged to no other, till I have some future opportunity of preferring yours to every body's else. In the mean time, give me leave to value myself upon the favour you have done me; and to assure you, it was not wanting to make me more ready, than I have been, in my inclinations of waiting on all your commands: and if *Mr. Betterton's* business does not very speedily disengage him, I will not wait for his being a witness of my professing myself, your

" admirer,

" and obliged humble servant,

" W. CONGREVE.

" I know not what time the princess will give me leave to present her with the play, it being dedicated to her; but as soon as that form is over, I will make bold to send you one."

Her first tragedy was attended with such success upon the stage, that she was induced to write another, intitled *Fatal Friendship*,

a 4

which

which was acted in 1698, at the new theatre in *Lincoln's-Inn-Fields*, and printed the same year in 4to. with a dedication to the princess *Anne of Denmark*. This tragedy met with great applause, and is still thought the most perfect of all her dramatic performances. Among other copies of verses sent to her upon occasion of it, and prefixed to it, was one from an unknown hand, which afterwards appeared to be from the elegant pen of *John Hughes*, Esq; author of the *Siege of Damascus*. Mr. *Higgon*s likewise sent another, which came too late to be inserted among the rest, but is printed in the present edition. And Mr. *George Farquhar* was so highly pleased with this tragedy, that he soon after took the opportunity of sending to her his first comedy, called *Love and a Bottle*, acted the same year 1698, with a letter, in which, after complaining, that his play "had been scandalously aspersed for affronting the ladies," he observed, that "as an argument of its innocence, he sent it to stand its trial before one of the fairest of the sex, and the best judge. Besides, Madam, added he, it is an offering due to the favour and honour shewed me, in your appearance on my third night; and a stranger cannot be denied the privilege of shewing his gratitude. But humbly to confess the greatest motive, my passions were wrought so high by representation of *Fatal Friendship*, and since raised so high by a sight of the beautiful author, that I gladly caught this opportunity

" of

" of owning myself, your most faithful and humble servant."

The death of Mr. *Dryden*, on the 1st of May 1700, engaged her to join with several other ladies, in paying a just tribute to the memory of that great improver of the strength, fulness, and harmony of *English* verse; and their performances were published together in September that year, under the title of, *The nine Muses; or, Poems written by so many ladies, upon the death of the late famous John Dryden, Esq;*

Her dramatic talents not being confined to tragedy, she brought upon the stage in 1701, at the theatre royal, a comedy called, *Love at a Loss; or most Votes carry it*, published in May that year in 4to. But her absence from London, during the impression, occasioned many errors in the edition, some things marked in her copy to be left out, being inserted, and others absolutely necessary to the sense, omitted; the whole being by this means so altered and disguised, that she would gladly, if possible, have called in and suppressed the edition.

This induced her many years after, to revise that comedy, in which she made great alterations, and had some thoughts of bringing it again on the stage, under the title of *The Honourable Deceivers; or All right at the last*.

In a correct copy of her dedication to lady *Piers*, in her own hand writing (for the printed one is so extremely faulty, as to be unintelligible in some places) she says, "that she had never thought of making any pretence to a talent

" talent

“ talent for comedy, but wrote that, when the
 “ town had been so much used to a mixture
 “ of comedy, interwoven with the deepest tra-
 “ gedies, that it was the declared opinion of
 “ some, that an intire tragedy, without such
 “ mixture, would never succeed upon an *En-*
 “ *glish* stage. But that since this odd taste
 “ was mended, the tragedy appeared alone,
 “ with which part of that comedy was at first
 “ designed to be mingled, and it lay by her for
 “ a considerable time, till some leisure hours
 “ inclined her to amuse herself in piecing it
 “ up, with little care or concern for the suc-
 “ cess, not intending to establish her fame up-
 “ on a work of this kind.”

Lady *Piers*, to whom this comedy was dedi-
 cated, was wife of Sir *George Piers*, a gentle-
 man of *Kent*, and an officer of considerable
 rank under the duke of *Marlborough*. She had
 contracted a very early esteem for, and most
 intimate and unreserved friendship with our
 author, who had an equal regard for the ami-
 able qualities of that lady, and chose her for
 her patroness, on account of her *taste in Poetry*,
and delight in the muses, as well as her can-
 dour and indulgence to every well-meant at-
 tempt. “ This, madam, *says she*, is a quality
 “ peculiarly yours. Such an universal com-
 “ plaisance of temper I never met with in a
 “ person of so distinguishing a genius as your
 “ ladyship; and have often observed with won-
 “ der, that a lady, who knows how to relish
 “ the noblest things, and has the finest enter-
 “ tainment in herself, can appear delighted
 “ with

“ with the most trivial amusement, in conde-
 “ scension to the capacity or inclination of
 “ others. It is this has made you the darling
 “ of all your acquaintance, even those, who
 “ cannot taste your agreeable wit in your
 “ lightest conversation, and the solid judg-
 “ ment of your serious reflections. It is this
 “ has secured you from that malice and envy,
 “ which usually pursue those of a distinguish-
 “ ed merit.”

In the same year 1701, she gave the public
 her third tragedy, intitled, *The Unhappy Peni-*
tent, acted at the theatre royal in *Drury-Lane*,
 and published in *August* that year in 4to. In
 the dedication to *Charles* lord *Hallifax*, she
 draws the characters of several of the most emi-
 nent of her predecessors in tragic poetry with
 great judgment and precision. She observes,
 that *Shakespeare* had all the images of nature
 present to him, studied her thoroughly, and
 boldly copied all her various features: And that
 tho' he chiefly exerted himself on the more
 masculine passions, it was the choice of his
 judgment, not the restraint of his genius; and
 that he seems to have designed those few tender
 moving scenes, which he has given us, as a
 proof, that he could be every way equally ad-
 mirable. She allows *Dryden* to have been the
 most universal genius, which this nation ever
 bred, but thinks, that he did not excell in every
 part; for tho' he is distinguished in most of his
 writings, by greatness and elevation of thought,
 and sublime, yet at the same time that he com-
 mands our admiration of himself, he little
 moves

moves our concern for those, whom he represents, not being formed for touching the softer passions. On the other hand, *Otway*, besides his judicious choice of the fable, had a peculiar art to move compassion, which, as it is one of the chief ends of tragedy, he found most adapted to his genius; and never venturing where that did not lead him, excelled in the pathetic. And had *Lee*, as she remarks, consulted his strength as well, he might have given us more perfect pieces; but aiming at the sublime, instead of being *great*, he is *extravagant*; his style too swelling; and if we pursue him in his flight, he often carries us out of nature. Had he restrained that vain ambition, and intirely applied himself to describe the softest of the passions (for love, of all the rest, he seems best to have understood, if that be allowed a proper subject for tragedy) he had certainly had fewer defects. She then proceeds to speak with great modesty of her own tragedy, as defective in the plot, the distress not being great enough, since the subject of it is only the misfortune of lovers; which she partly designed, in compliance with the effeminate taste of the age. Notwithstanding which, and the right of possession, which it has long held on the modern stage, she ventures to propose a doubt, whether love be a proper subject for tragedy? as it seemed to her not noble nor sublime enough for that species of writing. But she had a much greater objection to it, at least as it is generally represented, which the best of the

the *French* Poets had made before her, and gives as a rule, that

—*l'Amour souvent de Remors combatu
Paroisse une foiblesse, & non une vertu*^d.

The most, that can, in her opinion, be allowed that passion is to be the noblest frailty of the mind; but it is a frailty, and becomes a vice, when cherished as an exalted virtue: A passion, which contracts the mind, by fixing it intirely on one object, and sets all our happiness at stake on so great a hazard, as the caprice or the fidelity of another; which, if there were no greater, is surely sufficient reason, not to arm it with more power than its own insinuating nature; yet this is made the shining virtue of our heroes. We are to rejoice in their success, or pity their disappointments; as noble lovers, patterns for our imitation, not as instances of human frailty. “And I fear, “*adds she*, that this has not been so constantly done without ill consequence. Not but “love will maintain his dominion in the world, “how much soever opposed. But if we re- “sign him the heart, let us not give him up “the judgment too.” On these reflections she composed this tragedy, in which the principal characters are indeed doting lovers, but hurried by their passions into a fault, of which their immediate punishment makes them conscious, and at once deserve their sufferings and our pity. And “this, *concludes she*, tho’ given by

^d *Boileau, Art poetique, Chant iii. v. 101, 102.*

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^d *Boilcau, Art poetique, Chant iii. § 101, 102.*

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" our great master, as an invariable law in this
 " sort of poem, is yet observed by few; with-
 " out which, tho' they may give delight, they
 " can rarely attain that end, to which the
 " other should only be subservient, of forming
 " an instructive moral." To this tragedy her
 friend lady *Piers* prefixed a poem, inscribed
To the excellent Mrs. Catharine Trotter; which
 concludes with the following lines:

" Myrtle and Bays about thy temples twine,
 " Plac'd by *Apollo* and the sacred nine;
 " And ev'ry grace and every virtue's thine. }
 " By thy judicious rules the hero learns
 " To vanquish fate, and wield his conqu'ring
 " arms;
 " The bashfull virgin to defend her heart;
 " The prudent wife to scorn dishonest art;
 " The friend sincerity; temp'rance the youth;
 " The lover chastity, and statesman truth.
 " Within thy bosom all these treasures dwell,
 " Nor can we judge, in which you most excel:
 " So perfect, even envy you controul;
 " *Minerva* and *Diana* guard your soul."

But poetry and dramatic writing did not so
 far engross the thoughts of our author, but that
 she sometimes turned them to subjects of a
 very different nature; and at an age, when few
 of the other sex were capable of understand-
 ing the *Essay of Human Understanding*, and most
 of them prejudiced against the novelty of its
 principles; and tho' she was at that time en-
 gaged in the profession of a religion, not very
 favourable to so rational a philosophy as that

of

The Life of Mrs. COCKBURN. xv
 of Mr. *Locke*; yet she had read that incom-
 parable book, with so clear a comprehension,
 and so unbiassed a judgment, that her own con-
 viction of the truth and importance of the no-
 tions contained in it led her to endeavour that
 of others, by removing some of the objections
 urged against them. She drew up therefore a
Defence of the *Essay* against some *Remarks*,
 which had been published against it in 1697 in
 4to. The author of these *Remarks* was never
 known to Mr. *Locke*, who animadverted upon
 them, with some marks of chagrin, at the end
 of his *Reply* to bishop *Stillingfleet* in 1697. But
 after the death of the ingenious Dr. *Thomas*
Burnet, Master of the *Charter-house*, it ap-
 peared from his papers, that the *Remarks* were
 the production of his pen. They were soon
 followed by *second Remarks*, printed the same
 year in 4to. in vindication of the *first* against
 Mr. *Locke's* answer to them, and in 1699 by
third Remarks, addressed likewise to Mr. *Locke*.
 Mrs. *Trotter's Defence* of the *Essay of human*
Understanding against all these *Remarks*, was
 finished as early as the beginning of *December*
 1701; when she was but twenty two years
 old. But being more apprehensive of appear-
 ing before the great writer, whom she de-
 fended, than of the public censure, and con-
 scious, that the name of a woman would be
 a prejudice against a work of that nature, she
 resolved to conceal herself with the utmost

* See her letter to G. Burnet, of Kemnay, Esq; dated from
 Salisbury, December 9, 1701, Vol. II. p. 153; and another let-
 ter of February 2, 1703-4, p. 166, 167.

care.

care. Having therefore taken all possible precautions for that purpose, she got the piece conveyed to the press; and it was accordingly published in *May 1702*. But her title to the reputation of this piece did not continue long a secret to the world. For *Mrs. Burnet*, the last wife of *Dr. Burnet*, bishop of *Salisbury*, a lady of uncommon degrees of knowledge^f, and whose *Method of Devotion*, which passed thro' several editions, is a proof of her exemplary piety, and who, as well as that prelate, honoured our author with a particular friendship, notwithstanding the difference of her religion; being informed, that she was engaged in writing, and that it was not poetry, was desirous to know the subject. This *Mrs. Trotter* could not deny to a lady of her merit, in whom she might safely confide, and who, upon being acquainted with it, shewed an equal solicitude, that the author might not be known. But afterwards finding the performance highly approved of by the bishop her husband, *Mr. Norris* of *Bemerton*, and *Mr. Locke* himself; she thought the reasons of secrecy ceased, and discovered the writer; and on the 19th of *June 1702*, returned her thanks to

^f This excellent person, who was as amiable, on account of her virtues, and especially her unbounded charity, as admired for her intellectual abilities, was daughter of *Sir Richard Blake* of *Hampshire*, knight. She was born *November 8, 1661*, and when she was but a little more than seventeen years of age, married to *Robert Berkley* of *Speckley*, in the county of *Worcester*, Esq; Grandson to *Sir Robert Berkley*, one of the Judges in the reign of king *Charles I.* After the death of her husband in *1693*, she continued a widow seven years, and then married bishop *Burnet*, by whom she had two children, and died *Feb. 3, 1708-9*.

Mrs.

Mrs. Trotter, then in *London*, for her present of the book, in the following letter; which does as much honour to her own understanding, principles, and temper, as to her friend, to whom she addressed it.

Madam,

“ IF I have not more hastily returned
 “ my thanks for the valuable present
 “ you sent me, it has been, in part, out of a
 “ desire to send you better judgments than my
 “ own for its approbation and praise. The
 “ Bishop, *Mr. Norris*, and some others, no
 “ ill judges of such a performance, have, with
 “ great readiness, professed themselves ex-
 “ tremely pleased: and it is not without dif-
 “ ficulty some can believe, that any one, not
 “ bred to science, and logic in particular, could
 “ be capable of so close and clear reasoning.
 “ I am no fit judge of this, nor of the cer-
 “ tainty of all the proofs, which are things so
 “ nice, as to make me suspect my capacity to
 “ determine about them; so can only say, I
 “ am satisfied and pleased. But that can be
 “ no confirmation, were you doubtful; but
 “ what I cannot but observe and commend,
 “ is, that the whole is written short and clear,
 “ without affectation of wit or eloquence,
 “ needless reflections on your adversary, or
 “ making him more in the wrong than he is;
 “ rather bringing him nearer, than driving
 “ him farther from truth; taking his words
 “ in as good a sense, as they would bear,
 “ in which I heartily wish the searchers after
 “ truth would imitate you. If they did, I
 “ am persuaded, there would be both more
 “ VOL. I. b “ light

"light, as well as more charity in the world,
 "than at present, while such destructive me-
 "thods to both are taken, can be expected.
 "I confess I cannot but repeat what I ever
 "think, and have generally found, so sure a
 "mark of a good judgment, modesty, and free-
 "dom from affectation, which is alone a beauty,
 "but when accompanied with other excellen-
 "cies, makes them much more valuable, and
 "the want of them makes wit and knowledge
 "itself disagreeable. I heartily wish you may
 "improve to the best uses such excellent ta-
 "lents, that nothing may obscure their lustre,
 "but that you may be delivered from every
 "error. I should be glad to be in any ways
 "serviceable to these good ends, or in any
 "other respect express my readiness to be

Your faithful humble servant,

E. BURNET.

June 19, 1702.

"To shew I will find fault, I think a few
 "lines in the *dedication* below the rest of the
 "book."

Mr. Locke likewise was so highly satisfied
 with the *Defence* (which was perhaps the only
 piece, that had appeared in favour of his *Essay*,
 except one by Mr. Samuel Bold, Rector of
Steeple in Dorsetshire, in 1699^g;) that being in
 London, he desired his cousin Mr. King, after-

^g Intituled, *Some Considerations on the principal Objections and Arguments, which have been published against Mr. Locke's Essay of Human Understanding.*

wards

The Life of Mrs. COCKBURN. xix
 wards Lord High Chancellor, to make Mrs.
Trotter a visit, and a present of books; and when
 she had owned herself, he wrote to her the
 following letter.

Oates, 30 Dec. 1702.

Madam,

There was nothing more public, than the
 obligation I received from you, nor any
 thing more concealed, than the person I was
 obliged to. This is a generosity above the strain
 of this groveling age, and like that of superior
 spirits, who assist without shewing themselves.
 I used my best endeavours to draw from you,
 by your Bookseller, the confession of your
 name, the want whereof made me, that I
 could, whilst you kept yourself under that
 reserve, no more address myself directly to
 you with good manners, than I could without
 rudeness have pulled off your mask by force,
 in a place where you were resolved to conceal
 yourself. Had not this been so, the bearer here-
 of had not the first time have come to you,
 without a letter from me, to acknowledge the
 favour you had done me. You not affording
 me an opportunity for that, I designed to make
 you some small acknowledgement, in a way,
 that chance had opened to me, without your
 consent. But this gentleman transgressed my
 order in two main points of it. The one was,
 in delaying it so long: The other was, in nam-
 ing me to you, and talking of matters, which
 he had no commission from me to mention.
 What he deserves from you for it, must be left

b 2

to

to your mercy. For I cannot in earnest be angry with him for procuring me, without any guilt of mine, an opportunity to own you for my protectress, which is the greatest honour my Essay could have procured me. Give me leave therefore to assure you, that as the rest of the world take notice of the strength and clearness of your reasoning, so I cannot but be extremely sensible, that it was employed in my defence. You have herein not only vanquished my adversary, but reduced me also absolutely under your power, and left no desires more strong in me, than those of meeting with some opportunity, to assure you, with what respect and submission I am,

Madam,

Your most humble,

and most obedient servant,

J. LOCKE.

But while our author shewed the world so deep a penetration into subjects of the most difficult and abstract kind, she was still incapable of extricating herself from those subtilties, and perplexities of argument, which retained her in the church of *Rome*^b. And the sincerity of her attachment to it, in all its outward severities, obliged her to so strict an observance of its fasts, as proved extremely injurious to her

^b See her Letter to Mr. Burnet, of December 19, 1701. Vol. II. p. 153.

health

health. Upon which account Dr. *Denton Nicholas*, a very ingenious and learned physician of her acquaintance, advised her by a letter on the 19th of *October* 1703, to abate of those rigours of abstinence, as insupportable to a constitution naturally infirm; and desired her to shew his letter to her friends and confessor for their satisfaction. To this gentleman she wrote, in the beginning of the year following, a letter upon the Truth of the *Christian* religion, which, it is to be regretted, is not recoverable, since in his answerⁱ he observes, that she had proved *unanswerably* what she had undertaken, and had done it *more clearly and effectually in half a sheet, than Grotius in a whole volume*; tho' he differed with her in one point, where, from her prejudices in favour of popery, she lessened the authority, of the scriptures, which, he remarked, would necessarily make way for oral tradition, and too great an authority in the church.

She returned to the exercise of her dramatic genius in 1703, and having fixed upon the *Revolution of Sweden under Gustavus Erickson* (which has been related in prose with so much force and beauty, by the *Abbé Vertot*) for the subject of a tragedy, sent the first draught of it from *Salisbury* (where she had resided with her brother-in-law Mr. *Inglis*, since *May* that year) to Mr. *Congreve*, who returned her an answer, which, on account of the just remarks upon the conduct of the drama, deserves a place here.

ⁱ Dated 17 January 1703-4. See Vol. II. p. 208.

b 3

Madam,

Madam,

I Had sooner acknowledged the favour of your letter, together with the agreeable entertainment of the scheme you were pleased to send with it, if I had not been unavoidably engaged in business. But at this time I can hardly complain of a great cold, which has confined me, and given me an opportunity to obey your commands. I think the design in general very great and noble; the conduct of it very artful, if not too full of business, which may either run into length or obscurity; but both those, as you write, you have skill enough to avoid. You are the best judge, whether those of your own sex will approve as much of the heroic virtue of *Constantia* and *Christina*, as if they had been engaged in some *belle passion*: for my part, I like them better as they are. In the second act, I would have that noise, which generally attends so much fighting on the stage, provided against; for those frequent alarms and excursions do too much disturb an audience. The difficulty in the third act is as well solved by you as possible; and certainly you can never be too careful not to offend probability, in supposing a man not to discover his own wife.

In the fourth act, it does not seem to me to be clear enough, how *Constantia* comes to be made free, and to return to *Gustavus*; the third act intimating so strongly, why we might expect to have her continued in the viceroy's power. This act is full of business; and intricacy

tricity, in the fourth act, must by all means be avoided.

The last act will have many harangues in it, which are dangerous in a catastrophe, if long, and not of the last importance. To conclude, I approve extremely of your killing *Fredage* and *Beron*. Poetical justice requires him; and for her you may easily drop a word, to intimate her delivering of *Gustavus* to have proceeded from some spark of love, which afterwards she may repent of, and her character remain as perfect as nature need require. One thing would have a very beautiful effect in the catastrophe, if it were possible to manage it thro' the play; and that is to have the audience kept in ignorance, as long as the husband (which sure they may as well be) who *Fredage* really is, till her death.

You see, Madam, I am as free as you command me to be; and yet my objections are none but such, as you may provide against, even while you are writing the dialogue.

I wish you the success, which you can wish, and that, I think, will hardly be so much as you deserve, in whatever you undertake. I am, with all acknowledgments for your too favourable opinion of me,

Madam,

Your most obedient

bumble servant,

London, Nov. 2, 1703.

W. CONGREVE.

This tragedy employed her thoughts during the winter of that year, and till the beginning of *February 1703-4*, as she informs her friend *George Burnet* of *Kemnay* near *Aberdeen* in *Scotland*, esq. then at *Geneva*, and her letter to him of the second of that month ^k shews, that she began now to entertain more moderate notions of religion, and to abate of her zeal for the church of *Rome*. She owns, that “ she had of late almost forgot all distinction
“ of churches; for having had, *says she*, some
“ occasion of observing, more than before, the
“ great growth of infidelity; that there are
“ many, who disbelieve, and more, who doubt,
“ that there ever was any divine revelation; I
“ I have employed myself much in consider-
“ ing the proofs, and defending the truth of
“ the *Christian* religion; which has so intirely
“ engaged my concern, that when I am with
“ those, who sincerely submit to the authority
“ of *Jesus Christ*, what sense soever they un-
“ derstand him in, I am satisfied, and really
“ think myself with one of my own commu-
“ nion.” And she hopes, that “ the sincere
“ love, which she had for truth, and charity
“ for those, who differed from her, would at-
“ tune for the errors of her understanding.”

Mr. Burnet, who kept a correspondence with her during his travels, upon his arrival at the court of *Berlin*, where he was received with great marks of respect by *Sophia Charlotta*, queen of *Prussia*, daughter to the princess *Sophia*, took an opportunity of writing to that

^k Vol. II. p. 167, 168.

princess,

princess in such advantageous terms of *Mrs. Trotter*, that her royal highness, in her answer to him from *Hanover*, on the 29th of *July 1704*, declared herself “ charmed with
“ the agreeable picture, which he had drawn
“ of the new *Scots Sappho*, who seemed to
“ deserve all the great things, which he had
“ said of her,” *Je suis charmée du portrait
avantageux, que vous me faites de la nouvelle
Sappho Ecoissoise, qui semble meriter les eloges,
que vous luy donnéz.* That gentleman having
likewise expressed his desire of making her
known to *Monsieur Liebnitz*, with whom *Mr. Burnet* had held a correspondence several years
before ^l, and who was highly esteemed for his
genius and extensive learning at the court of
Hanover, where he resided, she returned her
thanks to *Mr. Burnet* for that favour, in a let-
ter of the 8th of *August 1704* from *London*,
where she continued the rest of the summer,
and the following winter, for the sake of pro-
secuting her studies at more leisure, than she
enjoyed among her relations and friends at
Salisbury, and in particular for the complet-
ing of her tragedy. In this letter she speaks up-
on the subject of religion, with a spirit of mo-
deration unusual in the communion, of which
she still professed herself; and this charitableness and latitude of sentiments seems to have
increased from the farther examination, which
she was then probably making into the state

^l See *Mr. Locke's* letter to *Mr. Molyneux*, from *Oates*, 10 April, 1697. Familiar letters between *Mr. Locke* and his friends, p. 193, Edit. 1708.

of

of the controversy, between the church of *Rome* and the Protestants, "I wish, *says she* ^m,
 "there was no distinction of Churches; and
 "then, I doubt not, there would be much more
 "real religion, the name and notion of which
 "I am sorry to observe confined to the be-
 "ing of some particular community; and the
 "whole of it, I am afraid, placed by most
 "in a zeal for those points, which make the
 "differences between them; from which mis-
 "taken zeal, no doubt, have proceeded all the
 "massacres, persecutions, and hatred of their
 "fellow *Christians*, which all churches have
 "been inclined to, when in power. And I
 "believe it is generally true, that those, who
 "are most bigotted to a sect, or most rigid and
 "precise in their forms and outward discipline,
 "are most negligent of the moral duties, which
 "certainly are the main end of religion. I
 "have observed this so often, both in private
 "persons and public societies, that I am apt
 "to suspect it every where."

The victory at *Blenheim*, which exercised the pens of Mr. *Addison* and Mr. *John Philips*, whose poems on that occasion divided the admiration of the public, according to the different parties of the writersⁿ, tempted Mrs. *Trotter* to write a copy of verses to the duke of *Marlborough*, upon his return from his glorious campaign in *Germany*, in *December 1704*.

^m Vol. II. p. 176, 177.

ⁿ See Mrs. *Trotter's* letter to Mr. *Burnet* of 19 February 1704-5. Vol. II. p. 190.

But

But being doubtful with respect to the publication of them, she sent them in manuscript to his grace; and received for answer, that the duke, and duchess, and the lord treasurer *Godolphin*, with several others, to whom they were shewn, were greatly pleased with them; and that good judges of poetry had declared, that there were some lines in them superior to any, which had been written on the subject. Upon this encouragement she sent the poem to press; but it was not published till a month after it was written^o.

The high degree of favour, with which she was honoured by these illustrious persons, gave her, about this time, hopes of some establishment of her fortune, which had hitherto been extremely narrow and precarious. But tho' she failed of such an establishment, she succeeded in 1705, in another point, which was a temporary relief to her^p.

Reflexion and inquiry into the nature of true religion were attended with their natural and usual effects, in opening and enlarging her notions beyond the contracted pale of her own church. For in her letter of the 7th of *July 1705* from *London*^q, to Mr. *Burnet* at *Hannover*, she professes, that she "cannot think
 "herself at a great distance from the commu-
 "nion of any *Christian*, esteeming an agree-
 "ment in the duties of practice, in the wor-
 "ship of one God, and faith in *Christ*, the on-

^o *Ibid.*

Vol. II. p. 186.

^p *Ibid.* and letter of the 7th of *July 1705*.

^q Vol. II. p. 187.

"ly

“ ly essentials sufficient to establish an union in
 “ friendship, tho’ our worship is not perform-
 “ ed in the same place, or in the same man-
 “ ner; which, as the world is divided, must
 “ be confined to some one. Indeed the only
 “ point I am zealous to have you agree with
 “ me in, is this one article, that all good
 “ *Christians* are of the same religion; a senti-
 “ ment, which I sincerely confess, how little
 “ soever it is countenanced by the generality of
 “ the church of *Rome*.”

The year following, 1706, her tragedy call-
 ed, *The Revolution of Sweden*, was acted at
 the Queen’s Theatre in the *Hay-Market*, and
 printed at *London* in 4^{to}. In the dedication of
 it, to the lady *Harriot Godolphin*, eldest daugh-
 ter to the duke of *Marlborough*, she observes,
 that “ there are so great difficulties, and such
 “ general discouragements to those of her sex,
 “ who would improve their minds, and em-
 “ ploy their time in any science or useful art,
 “ that there cannot be a more distinguishing
 “ mark of a free and beneficent spirit, than
 “ openly to condemn that ill-grounded custom,
 “ by giving countenance and protection to
 “ those, who have attempted against it. Which,
 “ *adds she*, as it can most effectually be done
 “ by persons of the highest rank and most emi-
 “ nent virtue, I am happy in being an occa-
 “ sion of giving the world so rare an example
 “ of, at first in the honour publicly done me
 “ by the duchess of *Marlborough* and all her
 “ beauteous family; and now by your lady-
 “ ship’s permitting this address from one, whose
 “ greatest

“ greatest merit is her good intention, and her
 “ only pretence to this honour the favours al-
 “ ready received.” She then remarks, that
 poetry is not unworthy the protection of the
 wise and good, but had been cherished as an
 instrument of virtue in the politest and best
 governed commonwealths, and as such called
 a *divine art*; “ a character, *continues she*, it
 “ might still pretend to, if rescued from the
 “ trifling, or ill ends, to which it has been
 “ debased. At least, it must be owned very
 “ advantageous in a nation, where public di-
 “ versions are allowed and frequented, to con-
 “ trive, that our pleasures should be useful to
 “ our morals, serve to correct our vices, and
 “ animate the mind to virtue; a design, which
 “ is the only merit, that can recommend this
 “ play, and the particular virtue it tends to
 “ incite, a disinterested and resolute care of the
 “ public good.”

Nor was this dedication the only acknow-
 ledgment, which she made that year, to the
 family of *Churchill*, for the honour of their
 patronage; for after the battle of *Ramellies*,
 in *May* 1706; she wrote a second poem to the
 duke of *Marlborough*, upon that important
 event.

In the latter end of that year, or the be-
 ginning of the following, her doubts about
 the *Romish* religion, which she had so many
 years professed, having led her to a thorough
 examination of the grounds of it, by consult-
 ing the best books on both sides of the questi-
 on, and advising with men of the best judg-
 ment,

ment, the result of it was a conviction of the falſeneſs of the pretenſions of that church, and a return to that of *England*, to which ſhe adhered during the reſt of her life. In the courſe of this inquiry, the great and leading queſtion concerning a *Guide in Controverſy* was particularly diſcuſſed by her; and the two letters, which ſhe wrote upon it, the firſt to Mr. *Bennet*, a *Romiſh* prieſt, and the ſecond to Mr. *H——* who had procured an answer to that letter from a ſtranger, Mr. *Bennet's* indiſpoſition preventing him from returning one, were thought ſo valuable, on account of the ſtrength and perſpicuity of reaſoning, as well as their conciſeneſs, that ſhe conſented to the impoſtunity of her friends, for their publication in *June 1707*, under the following title, *A diſcourſe concerning a guide in Controverſies; in two Letters: Written to one of the church of Rome, by a perſon lately converted from that communion*; a later edition of them being ſince printed at *Edinburgh* in 1728 in 8^{vo}. Biſhop *Burnet* wrote the preface to them, tho' without his name to it; and he obſerves, that they might be of uſe to ſuch of the *Roman* catholics, as are perſuaded, that thoſe, who deny the infallibility of their church, take away all certainty of the *Chriſtian* religion, or of the authority of the ſcriptures. This is the main topic of thoſe two letters, and the point was conſidered by our author, as of ſuch importance, that ſhe procured her friend Mrs. *Burnet*, to conſult Mr. (afterwards Dr.) *Clarke* upon it, and to ſhew him a paper, which had been put in-
to

to her hands, urging the difficulties on that article on the ſide of the papists. The ſentiments of that great man upon ſuch a ſubject are too conſiderable to be loſt, and perhaps have not been much injured by the representation of Mrs. *Burnet*, tho' the following letter of hers was written in great haſte.

I could not call on you laſt night. I ſhewed the paper to Mr. *Clarke*. He ſaid, there was nothing material in it. That ſuppoſing he could prove, that the tradition, that conveyed to us the books of ſcripture, and aſſured us what were canonical, was as hard to be proved, and liable to the ſame objections, as that of infallibility is; all, that would follow from it, was, then our belief of them would be as uncertain, but would not make his proofs of the church's infallibility a jot more convincing. But he ſays, the fact is falſe; for, beſides that tradition can much more aſſuredly convey down a book, than any unwritten doctrine, how concerning ſoever, as is plain by the early corruption of that great and fundamental article of the belief of one God, which while men lived to ſee the third and fourth generation, was yet corrupted and loſt in the idolatry of the greateſt part of the world: beſides this probability, it is certain in fact, there never was ſo clear, ſo uninterrupted a tradition for any thing, as that, which conveys to us the ſcriptures. On the other ſide, there is not any tradition at all, that will ſupport the infallibility, as now taught in the *Romiſh* church. The reaſon he ſaid, as now taught, was, becauſe they falſely wreſt ſome
antient

antient passages of fathers to the point disputed; for that was only meant, that *Christ* should always have a church on earth, men professing *Christian* doctrines; and that all those powers, that then set themselves to persecute and destroy it, should not be able to do it.

Pray, if you find any blunders or obscurity, take it for mine. I am sure it was not his. But I can very seldom carry away or express well another's words.

He has at present some business; so can appoint no time.

Whoever keeps close to what is plain in scripture, cannot err greatly. And that general declaration of all protestants to submit all to scripture, may, I think, remove all nice scruples, as to any particular expressions, since no communicant in prayers, &c. is supposed to join with her [the church] in any particular, where in she departs from that rule. This is only my own thought. Pray read this letter to no body, for I write it in great haste, and will not answer for its being right, especially the last paragraph.

Just before the publication of those letters, she went into *Surrey*, with a lady of her acquaintance, and spent the rest of the summer at *Ockham-Mills* near *Ripley* in that county. During her retirement there, Mr. *Fenn*, a young clergyman of an excellent character, who was accidentally in the neighbourhood in a visit to his relations, received such impressions from her conversation, as inspired him with a passion for her, which he soon after discovered to her

by a letter ^r. But she had before this engaged in a friendship and correspondence by letters with Mr. *Cockburn*; and their friendship terminated in a marriage in the beginning of the year 1708. Several advantageous offers of that kind had indeed been made to her before; but being exempt from ambition, and finding too general a libertinism amongst the men, she thought the best security of her happiness in the conjugal state would be the choice of a clergyman ^s. And as piety was the ground of their mutual affection, so their chief view in their union was the improvement of themselves in that great principle of all religious and moral excellence, and the assistance of each other in the duties flowing from it ^t.

The father of Mr. *Cockburn* was Dr. *Cockburn*, an eminent and learned divine of *Scotland*, at first attached to the court of *St. Germain's*, but obliged to quit it, on account of his inflexible adherence to the protestant religion ^v; then for some time minister of the episcopal church at *Amsterdam*, and at last collated to the rectory of *Northaw* in *Middlesex*, by Dr. *Robinson* bishop of *London*, at the recommendation of queen *Anne*, who intended him for one of the bishops of our *American* plantations, if the scheme of establishing them had been executed. Mr. *Cockburn*, his son, soon after his marriage with our author, had the donative of *Nayland* in *Suffolk*, where he settled

^r Vol. II. p. 235.
p. 249.

^s Letter to Mr. *Fenn*, Vol. II.
^t Letter of Mrs. *Cockburn* to Mr. *Burnet*, of the 10th of September, 1708, Vol. II. p. 206.
^v *View of the Court of St. Germain's*, edit. 1694, and *Memoirs of the Secret Services of John Macky*, Esq. p. 42, 43, edit. London, 1733.

in the same year, 1708: But returned afterwards from thence to *London*, to be curate of *St. Dunstan's* in *Fleetstreet*, where he continued till the accession of his late majesty to the throne, when falling into a scruple about the oath of abjuration, tho' he always prayed for the king and royal family by name, he was obliged to quit that station, and for ten or twelve years following, was reduced to great difficulties in the support of his family; during which time, he instructed the youth of the academy in *Chancery-lane*, in the *Latin* tongue. At last, in 1726, by consulting the lord chancellor *King* and his own father, upon the sense and intent of that oath, and by reading some papers put into his hands, with relation to it, he was reconciled to the taking of it. In consequence of this, being the year following invited to be minister of the episcopal congregation at *Aberdeen*, in *Scotland*, he qualified himself conformably to the law, and on the day of his present majesty's accession, preached there a sermon on the duty and benefit of praying for the government. This sermon being printed and animadverted upon, he published a reply to the remarks on it, with some papers relating to the oath of abjuration, which have been much esteemed. Soon after his settlement at *Aberdeen*, the lord chancellor *King* presented him to the living of *Long-Horseley*, near *Morpeth*, in *Northumberland*, as a means of enabling him to support and educate his family; for which purpose, he was allowed to continue his function at *Aberdeen*, till the negligence and ill behaviour of the curates, whom

he

he employed at *Long-Horseley*, occasioned Dr. *Chandler*, the late bishop of *Durham*, to call him to residence on that living in 1737; by which means he was forced to quit his station at *Aberdeen*, to the no small diminution of his income. He was a man of considerable learning; and besides his sermon abovementioned, and the vindication of it, he published, in the *Weekly Miscellany*, a defence of prime ministers, in the character of *Joseph*; and a treatise on the *Mosaic deluge*, published since his death.

Mrs. *Cockburn*, after her marriage, was intirely diverted from her studies for many years, by attending upon the duties of a wife and a mother, and by the ordinary cares of an increasing family, and the additional ones arising from the reduced circumstances of her husband. However, her zeal for Mr. *Locke's* character and writings drew her again into the public light in 1726, upon this occasion.

Dr. *Winch Holdsworth*, fellow of *St. John's* college in *Oxford*, had preached on *Easter Monday*, 1719-20, before that University, a sermon, on *John* v. 28, 29. which he published in 1720, in 8vo. professing in his title page to examine and answer the *cavils, false reasonings, and false interpretations of scripture*, of Mr. *Locke* and others, against the *resurrection of the same body*. This sermon did not reach Mrs. *Cockburn's* hands, till some years after; when the perusal of it forced from her some animadversions, which she threw together in the form of a *Letter* to the doctor, and sent to him in *May*, 1724, with a design of suppressing it intirely, if it should have the desired effect

fect upon him. After nine months the doctor informed her, that he had drawn up a large and particular answer to it, but was unwilling to trust her with his manuscript, till she should publish her own. However, after a long time, and much difficulty, she at last obtained the perusal of his answer; but not meeting with that conviction from it, which would have made her give up her cause, she was prevailed on to let the world judge between them, and accordingly published her *Letter to Dr. Holdsworth*, in January, 1726-7, without her name, but said in the title page to be by the author of *A Defence of Mr. Locke's Essay of human Understanding*. The doctor, whose answer to it was already finished, was very expeditious in the publication of it, in June 1727, in an 8vo. volume, under the title of, *A Defence of the Doctrine of the Resurrection of the same Body, in two parts. In the first of which, the character, writings, and religious principles of Mr. Locke, are distinctly considered; and in the second, the Doctrine of the Resurrection of the same Body is at large explained and defended, against the notions and principles of that gentleman.*

Mrs. Cockburn wrote a very particular reply to this, and intitled it, *A Vindication of Mr. Locke's Christian Principles, from the injurious imputations of Dr. Holdsworth*. But tho' it is an admirable performance, and she was extremely desirous of doing justice to Mr. Locke and herself, yet not meeting with any bookseller willing to undertake, nor herself being able to support, the expence of the impression, it

it continued in manuscript, and was reserved to enrich the present collection.

While she resided at *Aberdeen*, she had a design of revising the four tragedies, which she had written, as she actually did her comedy, with a view, not only of correcting them, but likewise of improving the versification, and raising the diction; being sensible, that from a just distaste of the bombast and false sublime of many of the writers of tragedy in the last age, she had sunk too much into the contrary extreme of too great a simplicity of style, unequal to the dignity of that species of poetry. Nor had the decline of age, and the growing infirmities attending it, disqualified her for such a task; since we find her muse in full vigour in August, 1732, when she wrote the *Verses occasioned by the busts in the queen's hermitage*. This poem was intended to have been presented, with her *Defence of Mr. Locke's Essay*, to her late majesty; but the lord chancellor *King* declining that office, and the duchess of *Hamilton*, who then undertook it, being prevented by sickness, and the death of lady *Orkney* her sister-in-law, it probably never came to the sight of the queen. It was afterwards printed in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, for May 1737*, though with some alterations, which she thought to its disadvantage; but it is now restored, in this collection, to the exactness of the original, except in a few of the alterations, which she admitted.

Soon after her removal from *Aberdeen* to her

* Mrs. Cockburn's letter to her niece of June 8, 1733. Vol. II. p. 271. * P. 308.

husband's living at *Long-Horsley*, in 1737; she wrote an answer to a question proposed in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, for May 7, concerning the jurisdiction of the magistrate over the life of the subject; and an inforcement of that answer.

Her *Remarks upon some Writers in the Controversy concerning the Foundation of moral Duty and moral Obligation* were begun during the winter of the year 1739, and finished in the following one; for the weakness of her eyes, which had been a complaint of many years standing, not permitting her to use, by candle-light, her needle, which so fully employed her in the summer season, that she read little, and wrote less; she amused herself, during the long winter evenings, in digesting her thoughts upon the most abstruse subjects in morality and metaphysics². They continued in manuscript till 1743, for want of a bookseller inclined to accept the publication of them, and were introduced to the world in August that year, in *The History of the Works of the Learned*. Her name was not prefixed or subjoined to them, but they were inscribed with the utmost deference to *Alexander Pope Esq;* by an admirer of his moral character; for which she shews a remarkable zeal in her letters, whenever she has occasion to mention him. And her high opinion of him in that respect, founded chiefly on his writings, and especially his letters, as well as her admiration

¹ P. 260.

Vol. II. p. 301.

² Letter to her niece of Sept. 19, 1740.

of his genius, inspired her with a strong desire of being known to him; for which purpose she drew up the following letter to him, about the year 1738; but it was never sent.

SIR,

YOU should no more be surprized to receive a letter from a stranger at this distance, than a prince to receive addresses from people he never heard of, at the remotest corner of his dominions. The public are interested in you, and all, who have a just sense of what their country owes to one, who, is an honour to it, with an indignation of the vile faction set up against you, have a right to offer you, instead of lives and fortunes, the zeal of their friendship and best wishes, and to expect some share of your favour and good will in return.

I might lay some claim to you as a brother poet; but it would be a very empty one, since I can plead no affinity with your excellent talents that way; and an indifferent poet is a very scurvy character. However, I happen to be strangely pleased (though without much vanity) at my situation in my poetical capacity, with respect to you. 'Twas my good fortune, that most of my performances were as well received, as I thought they deserved. They gained me some friends among the great and the good; and, what is perhaps a better proof of their merit, they even raised me some enemies. This places me above envying the universal applause you have met with; and I am too far below you to repine at it, or hate you as a rival. So I find, that, happily for me, by being in the middle class

class of writers, I can rejoice in your triumphs, and be fond of your virtues: In short there is nothing left for me, but to admire and love you. You need not be alarmed at the expression, though from a woman, when I tell you, I am about the borders of threescore. I cannot indeed but regret, that you did not come sooner into the world, or I later; for I flatter myself, I should then have had the pleasure of your acquaintance by the means of one or other, who have had a share in your friendship, to whom I was not unknown, Mr. Wycherly, Congreve, &c. But they are all gone before me, though I was in a manner dead long before them. You had but just begun to dawn upon the world, when I retired from it. Being married in 1708, I bid adieu to the muses, and so wholly gave myself up to the cares of a family, and the education of my children, that I scarce knew, whether there was any such thing as books, plays, or poems stirring in *Great Britain*. However after some years, your *Essay on Criticism*, and *Rape of the Lock*, broke in upon me. I rejoiced, that so bright a genius was rising on our isle; but thought no more about you, till my young family was grown up to have less need of my assistance; and beginning to have some taste of polite literature, my inclination revived with my leisure, to enquire after what had been most celebrated in that kind. I then read your *Homer*, and I was charmed with the humanity of your remarks on some instances of shocking cruelty and revenge. This made the first impression upon me of the goodness of your nature, and you have

have ever since been growing by degrees in my esteem. Your *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, and *Essay on Man*, gave me some idea of your morals. But when I read your private letters, where, as you express it, you *throw yourself out upon paper*, I thought I saw your heart open and undisguised. I was charmed with the sincere ingenuous unsuspecting friend, the unwilling enemy, the benevolent mind, extending to all parties, all religions, all mankind; the filial piety, the tender concern for a mother's approaching death, at an age, when most men would have considered theirs only as a useless burden. In short, I saw so many amiable qualities opening on every different occasion, that I began as much to admire the valuable man, as the great genius, and to wish for some share in so desirable a friendship and correspondence. You will perhaps think, that at this rate, the greatest part of the world may have the same pretensions. But give me leave to assure you, Sir, that though all persons of taste, who are not blinded by envy, agree in admiring the productions of your wit, there are few, unless such as have the happiness of your personal acquaintance, who delight in those of your heart. At least I have met with none, who consider you in the light I do; nay, many are more inclined to take your picture from the coarse daubings of your enemies, than the fine colouring of your friends, or the natural strokes of your own hand, which so much affect me; and I am often obliged to engage in a warm defence of your character. This persuades me, that there must be something corresponding

responding in my own heart, that disposes me to see the probity of yours; and if it serves to give you the same persuasion, you will then find an excuse for my talking so much of you to yourself. 'Tis natural, as a candidate for your esteem and good will, to insinuate my own commendation as modestly as I can; and I know nothing I can say better of myself, or with a better grace, than that I have sense and honesty enough to perceive the reality of your merit, and goodness enough to set a just value on it. If you allow this to give me any title to some returns from you, though a stranger, and at so great a distance, it will the more confirm my opinion of your candour and good nature, and give me inexpressible satisfaction. Whilst I am thus ardently soliciting a friendship so abstracted from sense, which must be chiefly exercised on my part in the pleasing contemplation of having some share in the favour and esteem of a person, beloved and valued for the most exalted worth; I fancy I am qualifying myself for the happiness of a future state, which, I imagine, must consist in something of that kind, raised in proportion to the enlargement of our faculties, and the excellence of the objects; for I cannot agree with a notion you express in a letter to Mr. Blount, that *the happiness of minds can be nothing but knowledge*. The delight we take in discovering truth seems rather to be in the pursuit, than the acquisition; like that of sports-men, when the game is caught, the pleasure is over; whereas in the union of minds, the consciousness of mutual love and esteem between persons of true worth gives

gives the highest gratification we are capable of: the soul acquiesces in it, as the utmost of its desires here: So that, if we may guess at the nature of souls in another life, by what we find of them here, I should imagine the pleasures, which, as you say, may not unlikely proceed from the discoveries each shall communicate to another of God and of nature, to be, as if it were, the recreation of beatified spirits. And perhaps that may serve to heighten those sentiments of love, of admiration, and delight in the supreme goodness, which I suppose to be the perfection of felicity; and in order to which, I am indulging myself in lower degrees of it here.

Now I have dipped into your letters, Sir, I cannot forbear taking notice of some reflections I find in them, which much alarm me, as what I apprehend may tend both to your own and to the public loss, if such a train of thinking be pursued. You frequently talk of the finest performances of wit and genius, as mere trifles, of no service at all to a man's real happiness here or hereafter, and what one would be ashamed to be employed about to the last. And this indeed must be allowed to be true, when works of genius are considered merely as such, without regard to the ends, for which they may be employed. But I can by no means think, that when you was writing the *Essay on Man*, or even translating *Homer*, you was trifling all the while, and doing nothing towards your own future happiness. I am rather persuaded, that God, in giving you a genius, so peculiarly fitted to set the noblest things

in the most beautiful light, has pointed out to you the way, in which he would be served by you; and I wish you would consider it as the ten talents committed to your trust, which you are not at liberty to keep idly by you. And whilst you are employing them in the cause of virtue, and to the honour of the giver; whilst you go on to *moralize your song*; if you should be found, even in your latest moments, *measuring syllables, and coupling rhymes*, for such excellent purposes, I believe you need not doubt to meet with a *Well done, thou good and faithful servant, &c.*"

The strength, clearness, and vivacity shewn in her *Remarks* upon the most abstract and perplexed questions, immediately raised the curiosity of all good judges about the concealed writer; and their admiration was greatly increased, when her sex and advanced age were known. And the worthy and learned Dr. *Sharp* archdeacon of *Northumberland*, who had read these *Remarks* in manuscript, and encouraged the publication of them, being convinced by them, that no person was better qualified for a thorough examination of the grounds of morality, entered into a correspondence with her upon that subject. But her ill state of health at last interrupted her prosecution of it; a circumstance to be regretted, since a discussion carried on with so much sagacity and candor on both sides would, in all probability, have left little difficulty remaining on the question.

Dr. Rutherford's Essay, on the Nature and Obligations of Virtue, published in May, 1744, soon engaged her thoughts; and notwithstanding

ing the asthmatic disorder, which had seized her many years before, and now left her small intervals of ease, she applied herself to the confutation of that elaborate discourse; and having finished it with a spirit, elegance, and perspicuity equal, if not superior, to all her former writings, transmitted her manuscript to Mr. *Warburton*, who published it in 8vo. with a preface of his own, in April 1747, under the title of, *Remarks upon the Principles and Reasonings of Dr. Rutherford's Essay on the Nature and Obligations of Virtue, in Vindication of the contrary Principles and Reasonings, enforced in the Writings of the late Dr. Smmuel Clarke.*

The extensive reputation, which this and her former writings had gained her, induced her friends to propose to her the collecting and publishing them in a body. And upon her consenting to the scheme, which was to be executed by subscription, in order to secure to her the full benefit of the edition, it met with a ready encouragement from all persons of true taste; at the head of whom appeared a lady*, no less distinguished by her accomplishments of mind, than her birth and quality, who set an example of equal zeal for the interests of the excellent writer, as for the spreading and perpetuating her works. But Mrs. *Cockburn* did not live to discharge herself the office of editor, now devolved to an hand less equal in many respects to the task; though the public will receive one acquisition by her death, of a valuable series of her letters, which her own modesty would have restrained her from per-

* The right honourable the lady *Isabella Finch*.

mitting to see the light. And it were to be wished, that these two volumes, conditioned for by the terms of subscription, could have contained all her dramatic writings, of which only one is here published. But as that was found impossible, the preference was, upon the maturest deliberation, given to those in prose, as superior in their kind to the most perfect of her poetical, and of more general and lasting use to the world.

The loss of her husband, on the 4th of *January*, 1748, in the 71st year of his age, was a severe shock to her; and she did not long survive him, dying on the 11th of *May*, 1749, in her 71st year; after having long supported a painful disorder, with a resignation to the divine will, which had been the governing principle of her whole life, and her support under the various trials of it. Her memory and understanding continued unimpaired, till within a few days of her death. She was interred near her husband and youngest daughter, at *Long-Horseley*, with this short sentence on their tomb: *Let their works praise them in the gates.* Prov. xxxi. 31. They left one son, who is Clerk of the Cheque at *Chatham*, and two daughters.

Mrs. Cockburn was no less celebrated for her beauty in her younger days, than for her genius and accomplishments. She was indeed small of stature, but had a remarkable liveliness in her eye, and delicacy of complexion, which continued to her death. Her private character rendered her extremely amiable to those, who intimately knew her. Her conversation was always innocent, useful, and agreeable, without
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the least affectation of being thought a wit, and attended with a remarkable modesty and diffidence of herself, and a constant endeavour to adapt her discourse to her company. She was happy in an uncommon evenness and cheerfulness of temper. Her disposition was generous and benevolent; and ready upon all occasions to forgive injuries, and bear them, as well as misfortunes, without interrupting her own ease, or that of others, with complaints or reproaches. The pressures of a very contracted fortune were supported by her with calmness and in silence; nor did she ever attempt to improve it among those great personages, to whom she was known, by importunities, to which the best minds are most averse, and which her approved merit and established reputation should have rendered unnecessary.

Yet unexceptionable as her character was in all respects, from a conduct throughout life strictly conformable to those principles of morality and religion, of which she had the fullest and most rational conviction; it could not secure her from the malignity of a writer of her own sex, in that comprehensive body of scandalous history, intitled *The Atalantis*, and in *The Adventures of Rivella, or the History of the Author of the Atalantis*^b, who in this latter piece represents her own character with almost as much freedom, as she had in the former treated those of others. But such a pen as Mrs. Manley's can injure no reputation but her own; and the occasion of her resentment does honour to Mrs. Cockburn, as the only provocation to it was

^b Printed in 1714

the withdrawing herself from the slight acquaintance, which she once had with Mrs. Manley, on account of the licentiousness both of her writings and conduct. And indeed the libeller herself was so conscious of the injustice and enormity of her calumnies, that, upon a remonstrance to her upon that account, she promised to make the proper acknowledgments in person to Mrs. Cockburn for her offence; but failed of her engagement in that respect, from an excusable reluctance to see one, whom she had so highly injured.

The collection now exhibited to the world is so incontestable a proof of the superiority of our author's genius, as in a manner supersedes every thing, that can be said upon that head. But her abilities as a writer, and the merit of her works, will not have full justice done them, without a due attention to the peculiar circumstances, in which they were produced; her early youth, when she wrote some; her very advanced age, and ill state of health, when she drew up others; the uneasy situation of her fortune, during the whole course of her life; and an interval of near twenty years, in the vigor of it, spent in the cares of a family, without the least leisure for reading or contemplation: After which, with a mind so long diverted and encumbered, resuming her studies, she instantly recovered its intire powers, and in the hours of relaxation from her domestic employments pursued, to their utmost limits, some of the deepest inquiries, of which the human mind is capable.

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DISCOURSE

Concerning a

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Written to

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VOL. I.

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