

**LOVE LETTERS OF MRS.
PIOZZI: WRITTEN WHEN SHE
WAS EIGHTY TO WILLIAM
AUGUSTUS CONWAY**

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Love letters of Mrs. Piozzi: written when she was eighty to William Augustus Conway by
Hester Lynch Piozzi

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HESTER LYNCH PIOZZI

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LOVE LETTERS OF MRS. PIOZZI.

D. ADLARD, PRINTER, BARTHOLOMEW' CLINE.

LOVE LETTERS

OF

MRS. PIOZZI,

WRITTEN WHEN SHE WAS EIGHTY,

TO

WILLIAM AUGUSTUS CONWAY.

“ — Written at three, four, and five o'clock [in the morning] by an Octogenary pen; a Heart (as Mrs. Leo says) twenty-six years old, and, as H. L. P. feels it to be, ALL YOUR OWN.”

Letter VI. 3d Feb. 1820.

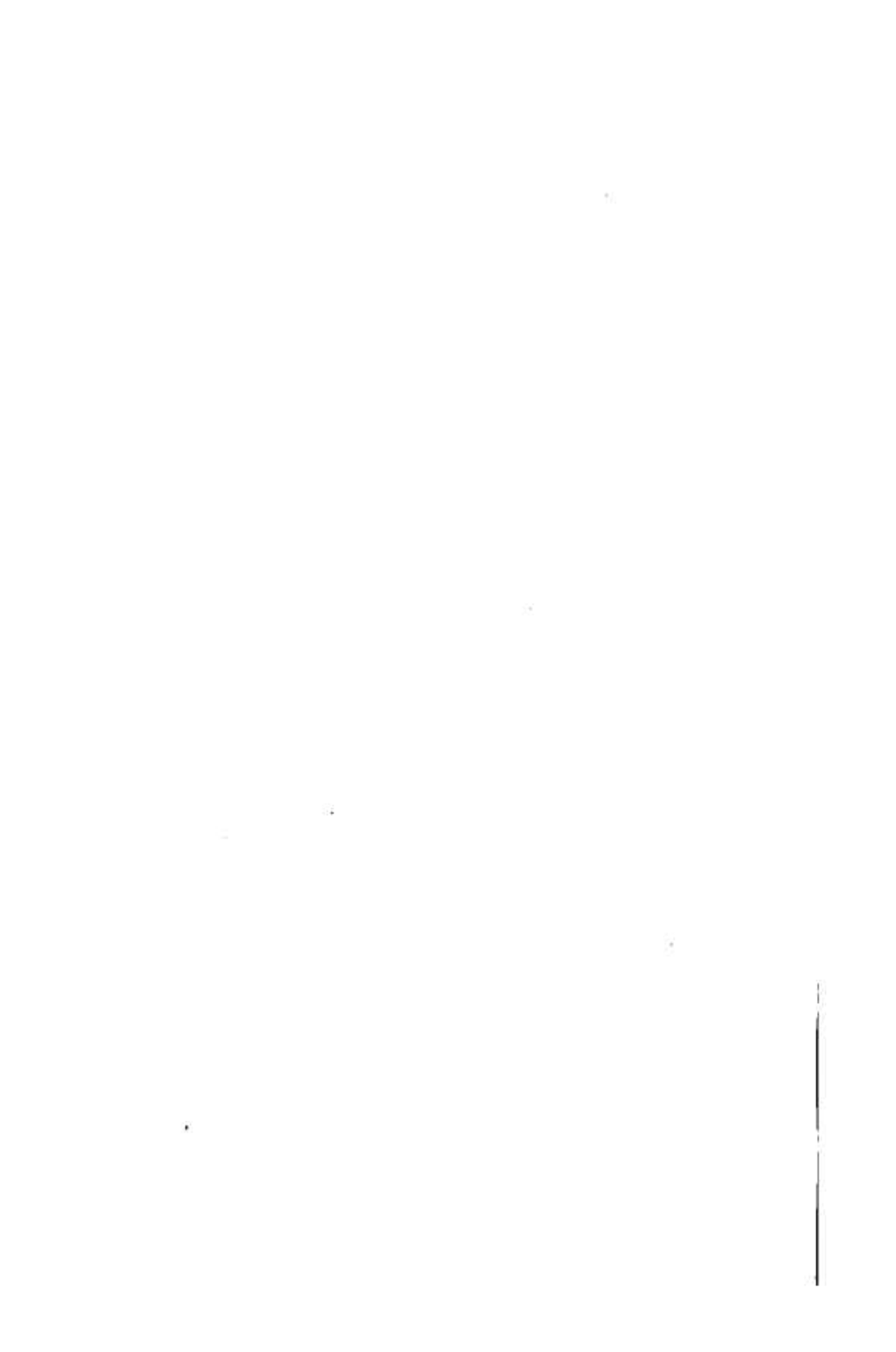
“ Too old, by Heaven ! ” — *Twelfth Night.*

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JOHN RUSSELL SMITH,

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MDCCLXIII.



PREFACE.

BEFORE producing the evidence of the genuineness of the following Letters, it seems proper first to remind the reader of some of the principal incidents in the life of Mrs. Piozzi, and to give a few particulars respecting Conway.

Mrs. Piozzi's maiden name was Hester Lynch Salusbury. She was the daughter of John Salusbury, Esq. of Bodvel, in Carnarvonshire, where she was born, in 1740. She received a "classical" education, that is, she was taught Greek and Latin, of which, it seems, she had a *gentleman's* knowledge, a phrase, which, though of higher pretence, is yet understood to imply something less than a *scholar's* acquaintance. In 1763 she married Henry Thrale, Esq. an eminent brewer, of Southwark; and, in 1765, she appears to have first become acquainted with Dr. Johnson, who was introduced to Mr. Thrale by Arthur Murphy;—an introduction which, in all probability, was at least as much desired by Mrs. Thrale as by her husband; for being

both witty, and, what is called, a "blue-stocking" lady,* she was partial to the society of men of wit and learning, and Dr. Johnson was then in the meridian of his fame. Mr. and Mrs. Thrale were greatly pleased with the conversation of Dr. Johnson; and he, being no less flattered by their kindly attentions, became a frequent visitor; and at length, in 1779, took up his residence with them, apartments being fitted up for him, both in their house in Southwark and their villa at Streatham.

By the death of her husband, on the 4th May, 1781, Mrs. Thrale was left a widow, with four daughters; and from this period, from whatever cause, her friendship with Dr. Johnson began to decline: perhaps the sprightly widow might not relish the Doctor's conversation so much as she did when a wife; and perhaps the great moralist, in giving her advice, not only as *her* friend, but as one of the executors of her late husband's will, might speak too freely to be agreeable. In an opinion which he expressed of her, after Mr. Thrale's decease, he said that, "if she was not the wisest woman in the world, she was undoubtedly one of the wittiest;" and it is not unlikely that the fact became more strikingly apparent to him after she had become a widow: the wit of a lady in her weeds always arrests attention more forcibly than her wisdom.

Though the friendship between Dr. Johnson and Mrs. Thrale began to decline on the death of her husband, the

* The first printed specimen of Mrs. Thrale's talents,—“The Three Warnings,” imitated from Fontaine, appeared in 1766, in the “Miscellanies,” published by Miss Williams, a blind lady, whom Dr. Johnson had kindly received into his house.

Doctor still continued to visit Streatham. He, however, felt that he was no longer the welcome guest of former years; and, writing in 1782, observes in a tone of regret, that he had "passed the summer at Streatham, but there was no Thrale."

Mrs. Thrale's last interview with Dr. Johnson was in the spring of 1783, previous to her departure for Bath, where she intended to fix her future residence. They continued to correspond for upwards of a twelvemonth after; but Dr. Johnson having written to her on the 8th July, 1784, a letter of friendly though earnest expostulation, deprecating her marriage with Piozzi,—in answer to one which he had received from her, informing him that it was irrevocably settled,—she took offence; and thus their friendship terminated. This marriage gave rise, at the time, to many facetious remarks and epigrams, the staple of which was chiefly an allusion to "Thrale's Entire." Dr. Johnson, on hearing that it had actually taken place, remarked, from Virgil, "*varium et mutabile semper femina*,"—a character which, being understood as applied to the lady individually, and not to the Sex, may mean that "*She* was always a flighty and fickle woman." It is generally considered that some of Mrs. Piozzi's anecdotes of Dr. Johnson, published in 1786, the year after his decease, received a little heightening in the *bearish* parts, in consequence of his disapprobation of her marriage with Piozzi; and her subsequent publication of the Doctor's letters to her, in 1788, appears to have been intended rather to show how highly he *once* thought of her, than to increase his reputation.

Except in connexion with Dr. Johnson, what is known