

**JOHNSONIAN
GLEANINGS, PART III: THE
DOCTOR'S BOYHOOD**

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Johnsonian gleanings, Part III: The doctor's boyhood by Aleyn Lyell Reade

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GLEANINGS, PART III: THE
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JOHNSONIAN GLEANINGS

BY ALEYN LYELL READE

PART III

THE DOCTOR'S BOYHOOD

*"The boy is the man in
miniature."*

ROSWELL.

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TO MY GODDAUGHTER
JILL FLETCHER BINGHAM
IN AFFECTION
I DEDICATE
THIS BIOGRAPHICAL EXERCISE

PREFACE

WHEN I issued Part II of these *Johnsonian Gleanings*, in 1912, it was never contemplated that so many years would elapse before Part III, the subject of which I announced in my Preface, could win material form. But much has happened since then to excuse the long delay, and there were times when (especially to a private soldier in the trenches) the prospect of ever being able to continue the series seemed a little remote.

The present volume needs but a short introduction. In my *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, and in Part I of this series, I printed a great mass of original information which bore, directly or indirectly, upon Johnson's boyhood. But it was given in what was, necessarily, a rather indigestible form, and its thorough application to a narrative of his early years would have been a labour almost hopeless to anyone except its collector.

The first task I set myself, therefore, was to analyse and collate the various printed accounts of Johnson's boyhood, including that portion of his own invaluable "Annals" saved from the flames; to add thereto every illustrative reference that could be found elsewhere in the biographies; and to incorporate my own published information with the result. The second task was, as far as possible, to fill in all the gaps and bridge all the chasms revealed in the narrative thus constructed. This has involved much fresh research, the results of which are, to a large extent, given in the form of footnotes. But the bulkier evidences have had to be relegated to a series of Appendices, lettered in advance for reference, which will be printed as Part IV.

I hope that the story of Johnson's boyhood, thus analysed and amplified, with a wealth of illustration drawn from all manner of sources, will be of interest not only for the actual light it throws upon his early life, its formative circumstances and surroundings, but also as an example of how much can be

achieved by the introduction of determined and orderly method into the province of biographical research. The art of biography is the gift of the few, but the science of biography can be advanced by anyone schooled to the pursuit of truth.

In future parts I hope to carry the tale forward on the lines now laid down, and to add much to our knowledge of those dark years of Johnson's life before he won recognition and fame. Part V will deal with his early manhood, from his entering Pembroke College in 1728 until about 1740, a most obscure period of his life, which no conscientious biographer can approach without a grave sense of the inadequacy of his material.

My thanks are due to all those kind friends and correspondents who have helped me in various ways to gain information, among whom I specially must mention Councillor W. A. Wood, of Lichfield, that most stalwart of local Johnsonians, and the Rev. F. A. Homer, of Handsworth, who has made a great many searches for me in the Midlands.

ALEYN LYELL READE.

*Treleaven House, Blundellsands,
Nr. Liverpool.*

14 January, 1922.

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