

**JOHNSONIAN
GLEANINGS. PART IX. A
FURTHER MISCELLANY**

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Johnsonian gleanings. Part IX. A further miscellany by Aleyn Lyell Reade

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ALEYN LYELL READE

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JOHNSONIAN GLEANINGS

BY ALEYN LYELL READE

HON. M.A. OXON.

PART IX

A FURTHER MISCELLANY

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PREFACE

TO write the Preface to this Part is to a certain extent to go into the confessional box, after a long attempt to evade its humbling discipline. For, while I have been bravely issuing the previous Parts, I have kept lurking in the background a number of problems in connexion with Johnson's kinsfolk that would not yield their solution, and which I have held back in the hope that evidence would turn up to save me from the admission of defeat. But this is the last Part of the series in which any substantial body of evidence can be presented, and I am compelled now to come out into the open with my record of failures, and plead for mercy on the perhaps inadequate ground that I have done my best.

What the connexion was between Johnson and John Hollyer, of Coventry, who was asked to inquire into the affairs of his fellow-townsmen, their "Cousin Tom"; or between Johnson and the Miss Colliers, of Ashburne, whose cause he took up so generously, I must now regretfully leave it to others to discover, in the hope that the evidence I marshal relative to each of these problems will help someone towards an ultimate solution. Whether Katherine, the wife of Dr. Gerard Skrymsher, was really the sister of Michael Johnson (which involves the question of Johnson's connexion with Thomas Boothby, the great foxhunter), I am no nearer proving directly than I was over thirty years ago, though the inferential evidence points just as conclusively to it now as then. A number of failures in connexion with smaller problems concerning Johnson's family are also recorded here, but they are more irritating to the genealogist anxious to leave no "loose ends" than of any real importance.

While preparing this Part for the press I made an appeal, which was printed in a good many newspapers and periodicals, between May and August 1938, for additions and corrections to all the preceding Parts, so that they could be incorporated

with those here printed. But it brought practically no useful response, and I had no better luck with a detailed appeal in *Notes and Queries*, in which I enumerated many of the principal points still requiring elucidation. I am afraid I cannot regard this as evidence that errors do not exist still in plenty, for I know the impossibility of avoiding them, when information is gleaned from so many sources, when so many hands have a share in its collection, and when its final arrangement, collation and presentation in printed form is the work of one very fallible individual. Nor does it weaken my belief that there are many persons who could add to my store, an they had the will.

Part X., as already explained in the Preface to Part VIII., is to be a straightforward account of Johnson's life down to 1740, in the light of all my researches, and it will also contain completely revised pedigrees, in narrative form, of the Johnson and Ford families. Part XI. will be the consolidated index.

ALEYN LYELL READE.

*Treleaven House, Blundellsands,
near Liverpool.*

March 20th, 1939.

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A FURTHER MISCELLANY

A CONTEMPORARY ACCOUNT OF "PARSON" FORD

To *The Times Literary Supplement* for 16 April, 1938, p. 262, Mr. James M. Osborn contributed a very interesting article entitled "Lord Hailes and Dr. Johnson." In it he described a manuscript in the possession of an American collector, consisting of remarks by Sir David Dalrymple, Lord Hailes, on the third volume of Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, written after that work was in print. A number of these illustrative and critical remarks he quotes, including what he rightly calls "one of the most interesting anecdotes," as giving us a fresh sidelight on Johnson's gifted cousin, the Rev. Cornelius Ford, who helped to influence the lexicographer's early intellectual development. This anecdote was prompted by Johnson's own reference to Ford in his life of Elijah Fenton, and runs as follows:—

I have been informed by a person who knew *Parson Ford*, for so he was called, that no liquor could fluster him; & that he would not allow any irreligious conversation in his company. When anything of that nature was uttered, he said, "so you are resolved, I see, to send y^e poor Parson to bed." this Anecdote ought not be forgotten. I mention it without meaning to be the general Apologist of Ford. Dr. J. will know whether I *white-wash*.

It is a curious coincidence that only a day or two before this appeared I had despatched to the same periodical a letter giving in brief an account of a most unexpected discovery I had just made myself regarding the "Parson," which, however, was not inserted until the issue for 6 August (pp. 519-20). This discovery I can now deal with in much more detail, beginning by explaining how it came to be made.

It was while turning over the pages of *The Gentleman's Magazine* for 1731 that in the September number, p. 379, I happened upon the following "poem," as an item under the heading of "Grub-street Journal, Sept. 16. No. 89":—

Dr J. M—re to Dr J. H—ly greeting.

Dr 'tis strange, that you pretend to cure
 A *sad* disease, which you are forc'd t'endure.
 Were I not free from *worms* that plague the belly,
 I'd ne'er pretend for those a cure to tell ye.
 With all my skill, I ne'er was yet so vain,
 To *advertise* 'gainst *worms* that haunt the brain :
 Those *worms*, which crawling round your *Dura mater*,
 A POET form'd, HYP DOCTOR, and ORATOR,
 In all these three respects, that proverb's true,
Physician heal thyself, 's, apply'd to you.—
 For all the Town, which thou hast play'd thy farce on,
 Declare thou'st been a very scurvy Parson.
 I leave the World to make a just assizement
 Of either's parts by either's *Advertisement*.
 And all the Town will own, I'll lay a teaster,
 That this Epistle's better than *Queen Esther*.
 They heavy sense like snail, to rhyme a slave,
 Creeps slow and slimy o'er thy Brother's grave.
 FORD is not dead, but *sleepeth* : spare his fame, I charge ye,
One ounce of Mother-Wit is worth a pound of Clergy,
 Did not the joke at last the *Clergy* hit,
 In both these lines there's not one *dram of wit*.
 Just so the jointed *worm*, that from my *powder* flies,
 Crawls from its Mother-filth, comes forth and stinks and dies.—
 My *Powder*, which gives rest to worn out Bodies,
 Revives the Spirits of conceited Noddies.
 The natural innate heat extinguish'd rouses,
 Restores the Husband's empire over Spouses ;
 A Purge at proper times I give, and Clyster.
 I'll send the Ingredients wrapp'd in a *Register*.

Then follows this note :—

N.B. *This Poem contains above 80 lines more, With Notes to shew that most of the Expressions are taken from the Advertisements of the above Gentlemen, in the Daily Post and Daily Journal.*

And there are two footnotes, the first to "Queen Esther" :—

A Poem, written by Mr Henly, and Printed.

while the second is attached to the two italicised lines on Ford :—

This Distich is an Epitaph on the Rev. Mr Ford in the Hyp-Doctor 38. which Mr Mævius in the Grubstreet Journal No. 89. banter'd with the following distich on a Disputation at the Oratory.

Brother H—, thy Fiss Pot ?—Answer quick, never falter.
 There 'tis Brother F—, It stands under the altar.