

**LIFE AND TIMES OF WILLIAM  
SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL.D.: FIRST  
SENATOR IN CONGRESS FROM  
CONNECTICUT, AND PRESIDENT OF  
COLUMBIA COLLEGE, NEW YORK**

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Life and Times of William Samuel Johnson, L.L.D.: First Senator in Congress from Connecticut, and President of Columbia College, New York by E. Edwards Beardsley

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OF

WILLIAM SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL. D.



W<sup>m</sup> Sam<sup>l</sup> Johnson

June 11<sup>th</sup> 1793.

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BY

E. EDWARDS BEARDSLEY, D. D., LL. D.,

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## PREFACE.

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No one will think that I have stepped beyond my province to write this volume. The life of a Christian layman is not an unsuitable theme for the pen of a clergyman; and the delineation of individual character, when it is made subservient to the cause of morals and religion, is an employment, the importance of which cannot fail to be generally recognized. Undoubtedly it would be better for the youth of our land, if in the multiplicity of books more fondness were shown for those which inculcate the great lessons of practical duty, and less fondness for works that furnish ideals of goodness and excite the imagination without teaching the due restraint of the appetites and passions. Biography, rightly prepared, is a species of literature which will impart both pleasure and instruction.

It has been said by a great English author that "they only who live with a man can write his life with any genuine exactness and discrimination." If this were true, biographies for the most part would



be valueless; for not many have been written with the advantages of personal knowledge. My own interest in the history and character of the subject of this volume is of comparatively recent date. It has grown mainly out of readings in the direction of the fortunes of the early Episcopal Church in this country, and especially in Connecticut; and it seems strange to me that a name so distinguished among the founders of our republic should have been left for more than half a century with no other record of its deservings than brief sketches in periodicals or meagre notices in biographical dictionaries.

Like his venerated father, Dr. Johnson was in the habit of preserving the original draughts of many of the letters and documents which he penned, and but for these no such picture of his life and times could have been given as that which is now offered to the public. His long residence abroad at a critical period of American affairs makes that part of his correspondence highly valuable; and if new light be not thereby thrown upon the events which led to the Revolution, they will yet be seen from the side of a judicious and careful observer, and present in a new aspect the blind and impolitic course pursued by the government of Great Britain towards the aggrieved Colonies.

I have not thought it necessary to introduce in full more than two of the letters which were printed in my "Life and Correspondence" of his father, but

passages have been taken from them to connect the narrative and support the statement of facts. The book might have been increased in size by publishing more of his correspondence while he was in England acting as the agent of the Colony of Connecticut; but the observations and views addressed to Governor Trumbull appear to have been communicated with entire confidence and freedom to his father, and it would have been very much of a repetition to have printed the semi-official papers along with the family epistles.

His Diary, begun after his appointment as a colonial agent and continued until his return to America, has guided me to some important materials, and enabled me to go in and out with him as he visited the King's Bench, the Houses of Parliament, and the great and good men of the realm, whose acquaintance served to cheer him in his weary sojourn. Though showing to a limited extent the manners and customs of the period, it is almost too fragmentary to publish; besides, as the better portions of it are given and enlarged upon in his letters, the publication seems to be uncalled for, particularly in a work of this kind.

Dr. Johnson lived nearly fifty years after his return from England, and the largest share of the more dignified and interesting events of his public life falls within that epoch, and blends with the sources of our national history. No special information has come into my hands in regard to his connection with Colum-

bia College. The archives of the institution are without printed or manuscript memorials of him, and I have been obliged to gather the facts I have used concerning his Presidency from the letters and papers of the Johnson family, which have been kindly left in my possession since the publication of my "History of the Episcopal Church in Connecticut."

The engraving was made expressly for this work from a portrait by Gilbert Stuart, now owned by Mr. Charles F. Johnson, of Owego, New York. My thanks are due to several gentlemen for supplying me with dates and letters which have enabled me to bring the volume to a more satisfactory conclusion.

NEW HAVEN, *November, 1876.*