



# The Thrales of Streatham Park, II. The "Family book": (iii) 1775-1776

## Citation

Hyde, Mary. 1976. The Thrales of Streatham Park, II. The "Family book": (iii) 1775-1776. Harvard Library Bulletin XXIV (4), October 1976: 414-474.

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# The Thrales of Streatham Park

Mary Hyde

## II. THE FAMILY BOOK

(iii) 1775–1776

20: Jan: 1775.

*was the 1:<sup>st</sup> day I could get Time to have my Girls home, and this is the 25:<sup>th</sup> I have examined Susan closely, & find all M:<sup>rs</sup> Cumyns said was true: Her Improvements more than equal my hopes, my Wishes, nay my very Fancies. She reads even elegantly & with an Emphasis. says her Catechism both in French & English: is got into Joyn hand<sup>1</sup> with her pen, & works at her Needle so neatly, that She has made her Sister a Shift<sup>2</sup> all herself. She knows the Map of Europe as well as I do, with the Capital Cities, Forms of Gov:<sup>t</sup> &c. the Lines Circles & general Geography of the Globe She is Mistress of; & has a Knowledge of the Parts of Speech that She cannot be ensnared by any Question. her Person too is so improved it is wonderful, People now reckon her rather pretty, & having learned early to dance, gives her a mighty graceful Carriage, which will carry off greater defects, than I hope She will ever have. When I have new Clothed her She shall return to School; the putting her there was the /most/ fortunate Fancy I Ever took in my head.*

*Sophy is tall, large-made, handsome & good humoured, knows little enough to be sure, but her Letters & some of Watts's Hymns: yet She is very amiable; I will keep her at home, Queeney & I can tutor her mighty well, & it will be an amusement.*

*A better or finer, a wiser or kinder Boy than Harry cannot be found: he goes to Jennings's free School<sup>3</sup> here in Southwark, & is half adored by Master and Scholars, by Parents & Servants — by all the Clerks —*

<sup>1</sup> Joyn hand: cursive writing.

<sup>2</sup> Shift: a chemise of linen or cotton.

<sup>3</sup> Jennings's free School: possibly the free grammar school for the parishioners of St. Saviour's, Southwark.

by all his Friends and Acquaintance. he has Charity, Piety, Benevolence; he has a desire of Knowledge far above his Years, and is perpetually passing by Boys of ten Years old at the same School: he always does his Exercise at a Night in my Dressing room, and we always part after that is over pleased with each other — he is so rational, so attentive, so good; nobody can help being pleased with him.

Queeney begun to learn to dance this Week of M<sup>r</sup> Abingdon who studied under my old Master M<sup>r</sup> Leviez: I used to say I would teach this Science to my own Family but these frequent Pregnancies disable me.

25: Jan: 1775.

Mr. Abingdon's efforts were not successful. He "used to come at vexatious hours" (*Thraliana*, p. 50), and it soon appeared the art of dancing was something Queeney did not choose to conquer, perhaps because it was the one thing she did badly.

Among the many things she did well was her Italian. And Baretto became so pleased with his method of teaching a language that he interested Robinson and Cadell, the publishers, in bringing out a full volume of his dialogues, so that other young ladies might learn Italian. With this large audience in view, he directed his talks with Queeney away from the Thrale nursery and barnyard to more intellectual subjects: personalities in the Streatham circle — Reynolds, Garrick, Sheridan — and particularly Johnson, whose "country will for ever be as proud of him as old Greece was of her Plato" (Baretto, p. 266).

When master and pupil discussed Johnson's *Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland* and his rough letter to James Macpherson, the impostor (translator of Ossian, an ancient poet who never existed), Queeney said, "Old Nurse has the story at her finger's end . . . and there is not a footman in the house that has not heard of it" (Baretto, p. 258). There are innumerable references to life at Streatham. In addition, the published volume has a preface by Johnson and a dedication to Queeney, an early honor but highly appropriate since she was the inspiration of the book itself. This ten-year-old was fast becoming "Miss Polyglot" for Baretto was employing his special method to teach her Spanish and French as well as Italian.

Mrs. Thrale had no such record of achievement. Her preoccupation with family and business constantly increased, as did her social obligations. There was no end to the friends who had to be seen.

Among these were the young Rices, Jack and Fanny, whose elopement two years before had caused so much excitement. They were now happily settled in London, and the Thrales saw a great deal of them.

28: Jan: 1775.

*Susan returned to Mr<sup>s</sup> Cumyngs Yesterday, I keep Sophy at home: Ralph fades away visibly, I knew he would never recover the Smallpox besides he cuts Teeth every day, & that helps keep him back.*

Throughout February Mrs. Thrale was concerned and unhappy about Ralph's condition, but one event occurred during this month which briefly made her forget her worries: Sir Joshua Reynolds invited the Thrales to dine at his house to meet his friend, Elizabeth Montagu, the celebrated bluestocking (sometimes called "the Duchess of Distinction"). At the time of the invitation, Mrs. Montagu's husband, a son of the first Earl of Sandwich, was very ill (he was to die in May); Mrs. Montagu did not often go out these days, but Reynolds assured her that the dinner would be a needed diversion and that only a small company would be present.

So, on Wednesday, 8 February, the two met, Mrs. Thrale thirty-four and Mrs. Montagu fifty-five, brilliant in diamonds and conversation. She was enchanted with the lively, pretty, well-informed younger woman and showed in no uncertain terms that she was eager for her friendship. Mrs. Thrale was highly complimented.

15: March: 1774 [sic, for 1775].

*Queeney is ill now; Good Lord have mercy on me; the Loss or Preservation of my Reason depends I doubt it not on that dear Girl's Life — What has this World left to make me amends for my Queeney?*

On the first of April, Johnson wrote a letter to Mrs. Thrale from Johnson's Court, giving two pieces of Oxford news, one good and one bad: the bad was that there were unfortunate complications in the riding-school project for Carter; the good, that "they have sent me a degree of Doctor of Laws, with such praises in the diploma, as, perhaps, ought to make me ashamed; they are very like your praises. I wonder whether I shall ever show them to you" (*Letters* 386).



Johnson was staying at this time in the city, rather than in the country with the Thrales, another “furlough,” for the arrival of Mrs. Thrale’s tenth baby was imminent. Her “well days” were over for a while.

*10: Ap<sup>t</sup> Hetty’s Ailments were all verminous; I ought not to [have] been frighted so: a little Tin and Wormseed with a bitter Purge or two carried ’em all off. this filthy Disorder takes a thousand forms: — sometimes a Fever, sometime[s] the Piles — sometimes a train of nervous Symptoms in quick Succession — and yet always Worms!*

Though Queeney was now cured of her present attack of worms, the eldest Carter boy (whom Mrs. Thrale was trying to get into school) was not so fortunate. He became very ill in March, and Johnson and Mrs. Thrale “supported the weight of his Expences jointly.” When the cause of illness was discovered to be worms, Mrs. Thrale took the boy to a Dr. Evans in Knightsbridge, famous for his treatment of worm cases, “but too late, the Creatures had eat into the Intestines and the Boy died” (*Thraliana*, p. 118).

*14: Ap<sup>t</sup> 1775. M<sup>r</sup> Thrale had something of a Polypus in his Nose & sent for Pott the great Surgeon to extract it: he would afterw.<sup>ds</sup> make me produce poor Ralph who is in a miserably declining State & shew him him [sic] to Pott. I was very unwilling, he was sick, he was asleep /I said/ or any thing to keep him out of Sight; but come down he must, so I fetched him: [“]What d’ye talk of Sickness & Teething[”] cries out the Man immediately! “This Boy is in a State of Fatuity, either by Accident, or more probably from his birth, you may see he labours under some nervous Complaint that has affected his Intellects; for his Eyes have not the Look of another Child sick or well.” Oh how this dreadful Sentence did fill me with Horror! & how dismal are now the thoughts of all future Connection with this unhappy Child! a Thing to hide & be ashamed of whilst we live: Johnson gives me what Comfort he can, and laments he can give no more. This is to be sure /one/ of the great Evils Life has in it, and one had no business to prepare for a Sorrow so uncommon — I shall therefore bear it the worse perhaps. Oh Lord give me patience to bear this heaviest of all my Afflictions!*

The dreadful sentence of Pott could not be questioned, for Percivall Pott<sup>4</sup> of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, Fellow of the Royal Society, had every reason to know. He was a man of authority and wide experience, a remarkable diagnostician and the outstanding surgeon of the day. He would have known if surgery offered any hope, but his reaction was immediate, emphatic, and negative. As Mrs. Thrale had many times suspected, Ralph had not been right from birth.

Pott was blunt with the Thrales, and as a man of common sense, one noted for sympathy and gentleness of heart, this could only mean that he thought the kindest thing was to make them face reality — make them hope the little boy would die.

Hester Thrale reacted to the cruel truth one way, Henry Thrale another.

16: *Ap*<sup>1</sup> 1775.

*M<sup>r</sup> Thrale is a happy man! he likes Ralph in his Sight as well as e'er a Child he has, and wonders /at/ me for fretting that he is to be an Ideot. The Truth is I never thought the Boy quite like other people, but I was so afraid of turning my Thoughts that way, that I am now as much shocked as if I had never suspected it. Bromfield told me to day he was always apprehensive about his Intellects, /&/ that he said so to Old Nurse while I was in Wales last Summer I proposed the Cold Bath; "any thing Dear Mad<sup>m</sup>[""] replied he [""]that may contribute to quiet y<sup>r</sup> Mind, but while you are trying every Means to preserve the Life of little Master I fear your truest Friends will scarce be able to wish You Success.[""]*

*Melancholy Conversation!*

21: *Ap*<sup>1</sup> 1775.

*Here I am, returned to Streatham with my little Flock, & here if it please God I shall in a fortnights Time add to them another Child. The Situa-*

<sup>4</sup> All medical men remember the name of Pott from the term "Pott's fracture."

In January 1757, while riding in Southwark, Pott had been thrown from his horse and suffered a compound fracture, the bone coming through the skin. He knew the danger he was in if anyone moved him without extreme care, so, as he lay in great pain on the freezing cobblestones, he purchased a door from a house and hired two chairmen to lift him on to it according to his directions, and to carry him gently across London Bridge to his house near St. Paul's, where he could send for a doctor he trusted. In this way Pott saved his leg from amputation.

During his convalescence Pott took up writing, and began his *Treatise on Ruptures*.

tion of the youngest Boy pierces my very Soul, & I could bear it better if the Nurses & Children were not perpetually raising hopes of his doing well, which tho' never confirmed — are yet never to be relinquish'd. Thus one cries Ralph takes notice of this — another Ralph admired that & ev'ry Detection brings me new Distress — The rest are well, & I ought to be thankful: I shall perhaps have only this one Misfortune. — may that expiate my criminal pride in my own & my eldest Daughter's Superiority of understanding!

*Thurs : 4: May — 75. Frances Anna Thrale born;*

This little girl was the second Thrale daughter to be called Frances. The first Frances, who had been born in September 1765 and named after Thrale's sister, Mrs. Plumbe, had lived only a few days. The present Fanny was named after Mrs. Plumbe's daughter, Frances Plumbe Rice (who was now a mother herself at seventeen),<sup>5</sup> and also after Frances Stapleton Cotton, a favorite of Mrs. Thrale since her visit to Llewenny the past summer.

Five days after the child's birth, Mrs. Thrale sent a note to her niece, "I write from my Pillow to claim Dear Mrs Rice's Promise of giving her Name to my little Girl who promises to be a *pretty* Fanny as well as herself" (Rice, 14).

The baby's godfather was Thrale's trusted friend and exact contemporary, John Cator,<sup>6</sup> M.P. for Wallingford. Cator was a rich timber merchant who had his lumberyard near the brewery in Southwark, and, like Thrale, he also owned a fine house in the country, Beckenham Place, in Kent. Cator and his wife had had an only child, Maria, born in the year the Thrales were married (1763), but the little girl had died at three.

The christening of Frances Anna Thrale took place at St. Leonard's in Streatham, James Tattersall, as usual, officiating.

While recording Fanny's birth and noting her sponsors, Mrs. Thrale was distracted by thoughts of Ralph, and made a muddle of the entry, giving his sponsors of two years before (see pp. 326–327) along with

<sup>5</sup> Fanny Rice was to have thirteen children, and in 1790, a few weeks after the birth of the last, was to die at the age of thirty-two.

<sup>6</sup> Though another birth date has often been ascribed, the Quaker Register from the Friends House, Euston, gives 21 January 1728 as Cator's birth date. He married Mary Collinson at Devonshire House on 30 August 1753.

Fanny's sponsors, and describing the new baby's appearance in the same entry with a mention that Ralph was to be sent to Brighton, where she hoped that cold sea bathing might benefit him.

*D<sup>r</sup> Bromfield who attends me has some hopes of the Sea for poor Ralph — he shall go down to Brighton when my Month is up. Ralph's Sponsors were L<sup>d</sup> Sandys and M<sup>r</sup> Littleton [sic] & Miss Burgoyne; those of Frances Anna are M<sup>rs</sup> Cotton of Llewenny, M<sup>rs</sup> Rice, and J<sup>n</sup> Cator Esq<sup>r</sup> of Beckenham. She is a small delicate Child, but bears no visible Marks of my many Troubles during Gestation.*

13: May 1775.

Johnson tried to be light and cheerful about Ralph's trip when he wrote from London to Streatham on 20 May, saying, "Ralph like other young Gentlemen will travel for improvement" (*Letters* 393). This was the phrase Mrs. Thrale had used in describing the young bloods, William Gilpin and John Parker, on their ramble in Derbyshire.

Mrs. Thrale wrote to Johnson on the same day, saying that she had a cold and was in a fretful mood, still confined to the house, for her month of lying-in was not up until the fourth of June. She complained that "my Master never [comes] near me but on those Days that he would come" anyway, "Saturday Sunday & Monday." And she took Johnson to task about the promised epitaph for her mother. Two years had gone by since Mrs. Salusbury's death, and still no epitaph "for that Dear Lady whose Remembrance gives me more delight than many a pretended Lover feels from that of his Mistress" (*Letters* 393A).

Johnson had not forgotten his promise to write the epitaph, but he had yet to get around to it, and now he was about to set out on the round of visits which had become an annual custom. This time he expected to be gone until September — Oxford, Lichfield, Ashbourne.

In Oxford he finally bestirred himself and on 1 June sent a letter to Mrs. Thrale, enclosing the epitaph,<sup>7</sup> which he said he had written

<sup>7</sup> In lapidary inscriptions, Johnson said, and possibly with this epitaph in mind, a man is not upon oath. A translation of the text is as follows:

Hard by is buried Hester Maria, daughter of Thomas Cotton of Combermere, Baronet of the County of Cheshire, wife of John Salusbury, Gentleman of the County of Flint.

In person charming, charming too in mind, agreeable to all at large, to her own circle very, very loving, so highly cultivated in language and the fine arts that her talk never lacked brilliancy of expression, ornateness of sentiment, sound wisdom

“last night.” The epitaph was of course in Latin, some sixteen lines, twice too long, he said, and she must tell him what to delete. Toward the end of the letter he asked that Harry be paid the penny owed for calling him the morning he set out from Streatham (*Letters* 399).

On 6 June, when Johnson wrote to Mrs. Thrale, he told her that he had dined with Dr. Bright, the Abingdon headmaster, “who enquired after Harry and Quency, to whom I likewise desire to be remembered.” He hoped that the latter would write him a long letter, and he asked Mrs. Thrale to assure the young Miss that “if I can find any thing for her cabinet, I shall be glad to bring it” (*Letters* 401).

From Lichfield he wrote on 10 June that he was pleased to hear Ralph had gone to Brighton, and “I hope little Miss [Fanny] promises well” (*Letters* 404). Everyone in Lichfield remembered the Thrales, he assured her, “You left a good impression behind you.” He then returned to the subject of the epitaph, which “must be shortened,” and she must tell him what part could best be spared (*Letters* 405).

Mrs. Thrale did not wish to spare anything in the inscription, any one of the 547 letters and 23 stops, and neither did her husband, “he will not have your Writing or my Mother’s Praises curtailed” (*Letters* 406A). But Johnson was not to worry; their friend, Joseph Wilton,<sup>8</sup> the distinguished sculptor, had promised to cut very small letters, and so the problem was solved. Mrs. Thrale was in good spirits when she wrote Johnson this, and on the same day she recorded in the *Family Book*:

16: June 1775.

*I fetched Susan home & once more examin’d & found her Improvements truly surprizing; her Knowledge of Geography is amazing, & Baretti praises her pronunciation of the French. M<sup>rs</sup> Cumyns’s Letter<sup>9</sup> which I keep in this Book does not exaggerate, but rather falls short —*

and graceful wit. So skilled at holding the happy mean that amid household cares she found diversion in literature, and among the delights of literature diligently attended to her house affairs. Though many prayed for length of days for her, she wasted away under a dread cancer-poison, and as the bands of life were gently loosed, passed away from this earth in full hope of a better land.

Born 1707. Married 1739. Died 1773.

<sup>8</sup> Joseph Wilton was one of the founders of the Royal Academy. His only daughter, Jane, was now the wife of Robert Chambers, the Bengal judge.

<sup>9</sup> The letter is no longer in the *Family Book*; its whereabouts is not known.

Susan was making a fine record at Mrs. Cumyns' school, but it was a different story with the eldest daughter of the riding master, Laura Carter, whom Mrs. Thrale had sent there also. Laura was impossible, saucy, sly, and unruly. "She was so insolent M<sup>rs</sup> Cumyns huffed her well & say'd She would tell M<sup>rs</sup> Thrale. what care I says Laura? — what care *you* when all the Clothes on your Back are of her bestowing! — why so are *yours* I have a Notion replied Miss Laura again — so there we are *even*. This could not be borne, & M<sup>rs</sup> Cumyns turned her going — & I would see her no more"<sup>10</sup> (*Thraliana*, p. 118).

When Mrs. Thrale told Johnson of Laura's rudeness to Mrs. Cumyns, he could not understand the girl's strange behavior (*Letters* 395). He was also sorry to have her report that Carter's payments at the Southwark stable were in arrears. The owner was now demanding possession of his two best horses, Prince and Lizard. Lizard was the old stallion, the celebrated war-horse that had carried the Duke of Cumberland over the plains of Culloden, where he crushed the hopes of Charles Edward, the Young Pretender. Lizard was "inestimable as a Pillar Horse, and the most useful Creature living for Learners"; he was old and not fit for common work. The stable owner would probably sell him at auction, and he would bring only "a Trifle." Mrs. Thrale was tempted to buy Lizard herself "if I knew any good Body that would give him his keep when I had done. This is what I have half a hope of from D<sup>r</sup> Taylor" (*Letters* 411A). On the first of July, Johnson responded that Dr. Taylor's only adequate stall had recently been given to Shakespeare, an old race horse he had bought for a stallion.<sup>11</sup>

In his letter Dr. Johnson said that he imagined Mrs. Thrale was now at Brighton, "where I hope you will find every thing either well [with Ralph], or mending. You never told me whether you took Queeney with you; nor ever so much as told me the name of the little one" (*Letters* 413).

This was Frances Anna, born two months ago. There had been no

<sup>10</sup> Twelve years after this (1787) "a fine Lady & very rich" was to accost Mrs. Thrale (by then Piozzi) and she could not guess who the person was. It was Laura (Lady Beaumaris Rush of Roydon), "the finest of the fine at every Publick Show" (*Thraliana*, p. 682).

<sup>11</sup> Gallant old Lizard lived to be forty, and then Carter was obliged to kill him for he could not afford having mashes made, and Lizard's chewing days were wholly over (*Commonplace Book*; under "Old Age").

time to think of this poor baby. Ralph was the child who filled her mind.

*Who knows at last what Ralph may come to? when She [Susan] was as young we had as little hope of her, but then she never was stupid, her Ailments were never in her Head. well I shall see him soon, he was sent to Brighthelmstone the 4:<sup>th</sup> of this Month [June], I will visit him when I think there can have been any Change wrought: — my Letters from Nurse are very encouraging upon the whole — but one is afraid even of hoping in such Cases, tho' all /y<sup>e</sup>/ D:<sup>rs</sup> think the Sea likely to be of Service, & even Johnson hopes something from Change of Air.*

As a wholly incidental note, the day after Mrs. Thrale made this entry in the *Family Book*, the battle of Bunker Hill took place, 17 June 1775. When the news reached Johnson about six weeks later, he wrote to Mrs. Thrale, “America now fills every mouth . . . ” (*Letters* 427).

4: July 1775.

*I went to see my little boy at Brighton, and found him rather worse than better: more heavy more lethargick & insensible than ever I had known him at home: Old Nurse talked of Teeth again, but I soon saw y<sup>t</sup>: Teeth had a small share in his Complaint & apply'd to Kipping the Apothecary of the Place, who immediately said his Brain was oppress'd, & beg'd me to consult D:<sup>r</sup> Pepys.*

Henry Kipping, a surgeon and apothecary, lived at 28 West Street, a short distance from the Thrales' house. He was a respected practitioner, good-humored and sympathetic. He recognized Ralph's symptoms at once for he had “lost one Child by this Disorder and [had] one alive who [was] an Idiot” (*Letters* 417A).

Lucas Pepys, whom Kipping called for consultation, was an able young physician who practiced in London during the winter and in Brighton during the summer. Pepys had been educated at Eton and Christ Church, Oxford, and trained for medicine at Edinburgh and Oxford. He had received his Oxford M.D. the year before this. Pepys's professional manner was authoritative and firm; his social manner gentle and ingratiating. In 1772 he had married the Countess

of Rothes (whose stepmother, the dowager Countess of Rothes, in 1770 had married Bennet Langton, a friend of Johnson and the Thrales).

Lucas Pepys was a rising doctor; in September of this year he was to be elected a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians, and in 1804 he would become President of this august body.

*From him [Pepys] I heard the same dreadful Sentence, & Blisters & Stimulatives of all kinds were applied. Some Matter one Day ooz'd from his [Ralph's] Ear like Lucy's, but soon Stopt, producing no Effect.*

She wrote to Johnson in anguish. Ralph was having:

. . . fits of Rage — proceeding from Pain I guess — just as Lucy & Miss Anna had — Kipping says the Brain is oppressed of which I have no doubt. What shall I do? What can I do? has the flattery of my Friends made me too proud of my own Brains? & must these poor Children suffer for my Crime? I can neither go on with this Subject nor quit it . . . I opened the Ball last Night — tonight I go to the Play: Oh that there was a Play or a Ball for every hour of the four & twenty. (*Letters* 415A)

*his [Ralph's] Muscular Flesh however seemed rather to increase than diminish, & as Reason appeared to be in greater Danger than Life I left him on the 8:<sup>th</sup> under the Care of Kipping[,] Pepys & old Nurse & returned to Streatham with my Master, Hetty, & Harry who had accompany'd me on this Disagreeable Errand.*

While Mrs. Thrale was in Brighton, Johnson had written anxiously from Ashbourne about Ralph, "I hope occasional bathing, and keeping him about two minutes with his body immersed, may promote the discharge from his head, and set his little brain at liberty." Dr. Taylor, Johnson said, would "be very glad to see you all here again" for a visit, but "I told him that he must not expect you this summer, and (he) wants to know — why?" (*Letters* 415).

Mrs. Thrale was back in Streatham when she received Johnson's next letter, written three days later, on 9 July. He was "sorry that my poor little friend Ralph goes on no better. We must see what time will do for him." He hoped that Harry was well, and that Queeney would be "kind to my Hen and her ten chickens, and mind her Book" (*Letters* 416). Earlier, he had said that Queeney seemed to be revenging her long tasks upon Mr. Baretti's hen, "who must sit on Duck eggs



a week longer than on her own" (*Letters* 408). His questions to Mrs. Thrale — would they all be together again in September? and would it be in Brighton? — she could not answer.

Johnson's thoughts turned to travel and in his letter of 11 July he played with the notion of spending money: Taylor would buy property and make a fine garden, but Johnson wondered:

If I had money enough, what would I do? Perhaps if you and master did not hold me, I might go to Cairo, and down the Red Sea to Bengal, and take a ramble in India. (*Letters* 417)

This meant a visit to the Chamberses no doubt; Mrs. Thrale answered with spirit:

Mr Thrale say'd when we read [your letter] together, that you should not travel alone if he could once see this dear little Boy quite well . . .

My great delight like yours would be to see how Life is carried on in other Countries . . . when *we* go to *Cairo* one shall take one Department, another shall take another, and so a pretty Book may be made out amongst us . . . Well! now all this is Nonsense and Fancy and Flight you know, for my Master has his great Casks to mind, and I have my little Children, but he has really half a mind to cross the Water for half a Year's Frisk to Italy or France . . . (*Letters* 419A)

Shortly after this letter was written, Mrs. Thrale recorded in the *Family Book*:

*I was however soon summoned back to Sussex, the Child had a Convulsion Fit or two, & a Seton<sup>12</sup> was tho't adviseable which however did no good & when I went down on the 13:<sup>th</sup> I found him dead. on Inspection the Brain was found almost dissolved in Water, & something amiss too in the original Conformation of the Head — so that Reason & Life both might, had we known all been despair'd of from the very first.*

*God preserve my other five! This poor Child is much better dead than alive*

*written the 20: July 1775.*

Mrs. Thrale makes no mention of any enlargement of Ralph's head, nor does she quote any observation of the post-mortem appearance of the brain and skull suggestive of it. Congenital hydrocephalus (an in-

<sup>12</sup> Seton: a thread or tape drawn through a fold of the skin to maintain an opening for discharge.

creased amount of fluid in the ventricles of the brain), even in a moderate degree, causes an enlargement of the skull which is apparent to a lay observer.

The description of the brain as “almost dissolved in Water” and of an abnormality in the “original Conformation of the Head” suggests the possibility of a different congenital disorder — hydrancephaly. This is a congenital abnormality in which the development of both the brain and the skull is distorted by a bag of clear fluid which forms between the mal-developed brain and the skull. Mrs. Thrale’s account is not sufficiently detailed for the diagnosis between hydrocephalus and hydrancephaly to be made with certainty.

Whichever the cause, there had been no hope for Ralph from the start.

When Johnson heard the news in Ashbourne he wrote with tenderness about the little boy:

Poor Ralph! he is gone; and nothing remains but that you comfort yourself with having done your best. The first wish was, that he might live long to be happy and useful; the next, that he might not suffer long pain. The second wish has been granted. Think now only on those which are left you. (*Letters* 422)

22: July 1775.

*While I was at Brighthelmston this last Time I had a long Talk with Scrase concerning the Settlement of my Welsh Estate, which M<sup>r</sup> Thrale has given me leave to dispose of my own Way: I have accordingly agreed on this Method — It is 1<sup>st</sup> to be entailed on my eldest Son of course, & on his Issue Male or Female; if he dies without Issue, then to any & every Son I may still have by M<sup>r</sup> Thrale; then to my eldest Daughter & her Sons: in default of such Sons to the Sons of my second Daughter, & if She has no Issue, or only Females — then to the Sons of my next Daughter — if none of them bring Sons, then to the Daughters of my eldest Daughter, & so on: If all dye without Children then to M<sup>r</sup> Thrale & to his Heirs for ever: the further & compleat History of this Transaction I have left in a separate Bundle, & marked accordingly. —*

When Mrs. Thrale made her lonely trip back to Brighton on 13 July, Kipping and Scrase gave what consolation they could, and the latter made the burial arrangements. In St. Nicholas’s Church, at the west end of the nave, is the gravestone for the infant Ralph Thrale.

Mrs. Thrale stayed on in Brighton. The sea bathing helped her nerves and Scrase's company was consoling, the very sight of him raised her spirits as he rode by "with his little Dogs about him . . . fresh and comfortable & active & kind" (*Letters* 585.1A). He was sympathetic and understanding and, as she recorded in her journal, he was extremely helpful in discussing the disposition of her Welsh estate, cautioning her to consider all future possibilities. For instance, Harry (or other sons yet unborn) might die without issue. All her daughters might die without issue. Thrale might marry again, and might have children by a second wife. This touched a sensitive nerve, and Mrs. Thrale hotly protested that in such a case, she would have her estate go to her cousin, Robert Cotton. But Scrase was able to argue her out of this position, as being unfair in view of the fact that it had been Thrale who "had delivered up [her] Welch Estate to [her] to settle & dispose of as [she] pleased" (*Thraliana*, p. 317). She finally agreed that in default of all her children and issue, the property should go to her husband and his issue "for ever" (*Thraliana*, p. 318).

Scrase then made Mrs. Thrale consider the opposite possibility: what if Thrale should die, and she should marry again? If such a situation occurred, would she not be sorry to see the daughters of her first marriage inherit her estate, to the prejudice of a son or sons by the second husband? Such an unthinkable supposition shocked Mrs. Thrale; she refused to consider it.

But Scrase, with her interest at heart, did not let the matter rest. On 30 July, after she had returned to Streatham, he wrote to Thrale, urging that no entail be set up, that the settlement be so arranged that during the Thrales' joint lives it might at any time be revoked or altered. Thrale thought this was a wise precaution, and a draft was drawn up for discussion with Johnson when he returned to London.

Mrs. Thrale had left Brighton on 17 July, and was grateful, when she returned to Streatham, to find the five children well. Baretti had "been very good, and taken care of my little ones like a Nurse while I was away, & has not failed writing me &c. & I am sorry I was so peevish with him" (*Letters* 421A). On her annoyance with Baretti, Johnson had said:

Poor B(aretti)! do not quarrel with him, to neglect him a little will be sufficient. He means only to be frank, and manly, and independent, and perhaps, as you say, a little wise. To be frank he thinks is to be cynical, and to be independent,

is to be rude. Forgive him, dearest Lady, the rather, because of his misbehaviour, I am afraid, he learned part of me. I hope to set him hereafter a better example. (*Letters* 420)

23: July 1775.

*Sophia is this Day four Years old: She is a fine healthy, sprightly sensible Child — remarkably stout-made, and handsome enough, though not eminent for Beauty. She can say a World of things by heart; & Baretta has taught her some Italian Words for his & her Diversion; She reads only four Psalms that She has studied, but her Repetition of the Pence Table, the two's 3<sup>s</sup> & 4<sup>s</sup> of the Multiplication Table, the Catechism & a heap of other Things — among the rest — Pope's Universal Prayer & Addison's Morning Hymn with two long ones of Dr Watt's, take a deal of Time to hear them over; She likewise works neatly at her Needle, has a good Disposition & very competent Capacity. —*

The day after this entry was written there was celebration at the brewery, for a baby was born to Amelia Perkins — a boy. He was named John, after his father, and Mrs. Thrale was asked to be the child's godmother. The Perkinses doubtless wished to show their sympathy for the loss of Ralph and hoped to give the Thrales a little compensating pleasure through their own boy. A gesture of this sort is kind, but at a point so close to sorrow, it is extremely painful to receive. However, Mrs. Thrale did not wince; she accepted the honor graciously, and possibly at this time presented to the new parents a blank journal like the Thrale *Family Book* (to become a Perkins' heirloom), "the Family Ocasional Book (the Green Book)."

At the end of July Sir Lynch Cotton died, and Mrs. Thrale's cousins at Llewenny became Sir Robert and Lady Cotton. Poor, eccentric Sir Lynch had not been much loved by his family. "I am sorry for him," Johnson wrote to Mrs. Thrale. "It is sad to give a family of children no pleasure but by dying" (*Letters* 427).

In Johnson's next letter to Mrs. Thrale he asked if she kept his letters. They might one day have the power to relieve sadness with the memory of more cheerful times. They would always be, he said, "the records of a pure and blameless friendship" (*Letters* 428). This day Mrs. Thrale wrote in her journal:

2 Aug: 1775.

*Sophy has terrified me into Agonies; She came down this Morning*

*drooping & dismal & complaining of her Head — I concluded Sentence was already past, & that She was about /to follow/ her Brother & Sisters, so I fairly sate me down to cry — but it ended in nothing, She eat a good Dinner, & when the Dancing Master came was as alert as usual: She said just now to me “I believe Ma’amey that Headach of mine was only a Mad Dream.” — it was a dreadful Dream to me I know.*

By 17 August Johnson was home with the Thrales again. He studied the Welsh property settlement, suggested a few minor changes, and agreed with Scrase and Thrale that it was wise not to set up an entail. Scrase’s draft was sent to Bateman Robson, Thrale’s London solicitor, with instructions to draw up the formal document. (Robson had worked under Scrase at Lincoln’s Inn, before the latter’s retirement.)

*27: of Aug: 1775.*

*We talk of going to France for a Couple of months & taking Queeney; I think She will pick up some French in the Country, & as Baretti is to be of the party will lose no Italian: A little Voyage too may be of Service in ridding her of these odious Worms — little Doves as She calls them — they are the very plague of her Life & I dare not use Mercury.<sup>13</sup> — I think the Mercury Ralph took in the Small-Pox injured his Intellects: Tin and Wormseed<sup>14</sup> are safer, if not so efficacious We shall carry plenty with us.*

*2: Sept<sup>r</sup> 1775.*

*I went today to survey the famous School for Boys at Loughboro’ house:<sup>15</sup> M<sup>r</sup> Thrale fancies Harry will be safer there than at D<sup>r</sup> Thomas’s, where he does to be sure take strange Liberties as to ranging about, climbing Trees &c. but I am afraid knowledge will not be im-*

<sup>13</sup> Mercury: very dangerous. In Ralph’s case, however, the brain was damaged before mercury was given.

<sup>14</sup> Wormseed: a name for various bitter plants such as swine fennel and sulphurwort, effective in destroying worms.

<sup>15</sup> Loughborough House School: an academy for young noblemen and gentlemen, located in Loughborough Lane (now Evandale Road in the SW 9 district of Brixton). The school was approximately two and a half miles from Streatham, and in the days when schoolboys used to walk, it would have taken Harry something over an hour for the journey. Loughborough house was pulled down in the 1850s.

*proved much at Loughborough House: there is more Attention paid to Convenience & Security there than to the Acquisition of Learning I believe, but when they see how forward my Son is, I think they will push him too: however Safety is doubtless the first Thing, & as Johnson says Robert Perreau<sup>16</sup> cannot be safer than he will be at this School. My Fanny must be safe in Old Nurse's Arms I think — & I took Sophy to her Sister at Kensington Yesterday: nothing in the World ails her — it was all a Mad Dream as She said. I have charged Mr's Cumyns & Perney's People & Nurse, to send for Bromfield Jebb or Pinkstan if anything happened to the Children in my Absence, I likewise begged Bromfield to call from Time [to time] & see them. he thinks the Journey a charming thing for Queeney so indeed does every body.*

Richard Jebb, a new name among Mrs. Thrale's doctors, was an eminent practitioner, a physician at St. George's Hospital, and a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians. Jebb had attended Oxford, but being a non-juror (not a member of the Church of England) he could not receive a degree, nor pursue his medical training there. Thus, he went to Aberdeen. Jebb was both skilful and charming, and was soon to be physician to various members of the royal family. Mrs. Thrale felt an immediate confidence in Jebb, and was assured that if anything went seriously wrong with the children, he would find a way to reach her.

As for her personal business, the important thing to do before departure was to sign her Welsh property settlement. Johnson and John Cator, little Fanny's godfather, were to be the trustees. Cator had been chosen because both her husband and Johnson esteemed him for his loyalty and shrewdness, and she agreed, though she was not fond of Cator socially — a pompous, purse-proud tradesman with a loud voice, vulgar speech, rough manners, and a curious fondness for gazing at himself in a mirror, the way Goldsmith used to do. From a business point of view, however, she respected Cator, for though poorly educated, he had intelligence and good judgment, was "skilful in Trade, and solid in Property" (*Thraliana*, p. 418). And he had a special attribute; as a timber merchant, he appreciated the value of the trees Mrs. Thrale

<sup>16</sup>Footnote in the manuscript: *Robt. Perreau was a condemn'd Prisoner in Newgate — no not condemned neither when this was wrote.* (Robert Perreau, charged and later convicted of forgery, was hanged at Tyburn on 17 January 1776.)

wanted to preserve, "fifteen Thousand Oak Trees" at Bach-y-Graig, all "number'd and marked" (*Thraliana*, p. 320, n. 6).

The Welsh property settlement was signed on 5 September, and technically, from that day on, Johnson and Cator were in control, though Mrs. Thrale retained discretionary power, the provision which Johnson and Scrase had pressed, and for which she would be extremely grateful in years to come.

With her business done, Mrs. Thrale turned her attention to the actual preparations for the journey. She was pleased by the prospect, ready for a "frisk," even if it were not to Cairo. New sights and fresh adventures would soothe the memory of the agonizing months she had spent watching over Ralph and having all her hopes for the boy come to nothing. And, fortunately, she felt well at the moment — she was not pregnant.

She directed her packing and Queeney's with care, remembering the mistakes she had made on her journey to Wales. And one of these she took pains to remedy: on this trip, not only would Mr. Thrale have Sam, but she would have Molly, to take care of her clothes and to help with Queeney.

Last year Baretto had been left in charge at Streatham, but now he was to be the courier for the party, a post which he much preferred and for which he was admirably qualified. This expedition to France was, in a way, considered a trial run for the more elaborate excursion, planned for next spring, to Italy.

By the night of 14 September, Mrs. Thrale was packed and ready — and in her luggage was a fresh leather-bound travel journal. Again she was going to keep a diary of the trip, and Johnson promised to keep one as well.

*14: Sept<sup>r</sup> 1775.*

*Tomorrow Morning we set out for France, & this may be my last writing in this Book! let me conclude with a Prayer for my pretty ones.*

*Oh thou most adorable Creator, Redeemer & Comforter of Man — most holy Trinity preserve my Children! grant them the valuable Gifts of Health, Virtue & sound Understanding! which are only in thy Power to bestow, & if it be thy gracious Will to hear the Supplications of thy humble Servant, grant them I beseech thee such a Measure of thy Grace, as will enable them at all Times & on all Occasions*

*to prefer the hope of future happiness thro' the merits of their dear Redeemer, to any Temptations however specious of temporal Felicity, too often purchas'd with Guilt,*

*Thou who takest account of even the Sparrow's Young ones — have mercy upon mine; thou who gavest Power to Elijah to restore the Son of the Shunamite have mercy upon mine. Thou who gavest the Syrophoenician Woman's Daughter to her Mother's prayers preferr'd in Faith — have Mercy upon mine; for thou only art the Lord, thou only, oh only adorable Trinity, art to be worship'd, and prayed unto; thro' his Name who purchas'd by his precious Blood our costly but complete Redemption — Amen blessed Jesus Amen.*

On Friday morning, 15 September 1775, the Thrales, Queeney, and Johnson, with Sam and Molly, set out in carriages for Canterbury. Baretti was to meet them at Dover.

On the way, the party visited the cathedral in Rochester, "the first thing new to me," Mrs. Thrale recorded in her travel journal. She was not greatly impressed; "it was below Worcester or Lichfield" (*Journals*, p. 69).

At Canterbury, however, she had never been "so struck with the sight of any Cathedral before — it is truly grand & majestick" (*Journals*, p. 69). The night was spent in Canterbury, and next morning the party loitered there so long that, when they arrived at Dover, they met a furious Baretti. The packet had just sailed on a fine tide; and they were forced to wait at Dover until the following morning.

This was 17 September, Queeney's birthday. She was eleven, and she celebrated the day by crossing to France:

The Weather was lovely — the Ship all our own, the Sea smooth & all our Society well but Queeney, whose Sickness oppressed her beyond Conception. Sam and Molly too were cruel sick, but Queeney worst of all . . . (*Journals*, p. 70)

The ship on which the party sailed was a neat sloop, commanded by Captain Baxter, who had once been a Southwark school-fellow of Thrale.

Once in France, Mrs. Thrale's enthusiastic cathedral viewing continued. She was much struck by the great church in Calais, and next day she was astonished by the cathedral of St. Omer, a stupendous and noble edifice: "let us never more talk of English Churches"



(*Journals*, p. 73). She thought the cathedral of Arras at "the first Coup D'Oeil exceeds them all" (*Journals*, p. 73). Few superlatives remained.

As for Johnson, he was more interested in libraries, and he inspected all those he could. In Calais a handsome Capuchin friar took the party to see his monastery chapel and refectory. He also tried to show the library, but this was locked. Mrs. Thrale commented in her travel diary that, "I was not sorry, for M<sup>r</sup> Johnson would never have come out of it" (*Journals*, p. 71).

On the Doctor's birthday, 18 September, the party visited the great church in Calais, then Baretto took Mrs. Thrale to a convent of Dominican nuns. In St. Omer the party inspected the Jesuits' college and schools. The theatre there was much finer, she thought, than that at Brighton and is "kept in order purely for the use of the Boys" (*Journals*, p. 72). In Arras, they looked at the Benedictine library, which resembled "All Souls exceedingly in Size and Disposition" (*Journals*, p. 73).

Baretto's plan for the travelers was to rise early in order to arrive in good time at their night's destination, which admitted running about the town in the afternoon to see everything of interest. Johnson struggled with the hardship of early rising.

As they made their way south to Paris, the weather was sunny and warm. The high road was a source of wonder; trees lined both sides, like an avenue on a nobleman's property. The great road was paved and continued so to Arras. There, they turned off on to poor roads, deeply rutted, where there was always the danger of overturning. The country they drove through was fertile, and all of it cultivated. The cattle, however, were miserable, poor and lean — but how could they be anything else without pasture? Mrs. Thrale commented on the fact that they saw more pigs than sheep. And the poultry were "extremely beautiful both at the Barn Door & the Table" (*Journals*, p. 77). She would endeavor to get some chickens for Streatham. The post horses supplied were wretched and their tack so bad it could be ridiculed in a farce, but the horses they saw along the road, which belonged to people of quality, were handsome.

There were no stately homes in the countryside, like those of the English *grands seigneurs*. Aristocratic gentlemen in France, it seemed, did not live in the country. They "flocked" to nearby towns, with

the exception of the richest and grandest, who had residences in Paris (*Journals*, p. 74). There was no evidence of fox-hunting, no sportsmen visible, nor sporting dogs "tho' the Country is more inviting to the pursuit of Game by Hunting, Coursing & Setting than any I ever saw in England, & for a far greater Extent of Ground" (*Journals*, p. 75). Game was "constantly moving on each Side" of the carriage, "Hares, Pheasants, Partridges . . . feeding fearlessly by the Roadside" (*Journals*, p. 129).

Mrs. Thrale remarked that the gardens they saw were in the style of those in England fifty years before, "High Walls, straight Lines, & Trees tortured into ugly and unmeaning Forms" (*Journals*, p. 87). The appearance of the people was curious: the women wore long, black, ugly cloaks, down to their heels, and the men were whiskered or mustachioed. One thing which Mrs. Thrale found charming was the national characteristic of politeness, ". . . if you meet a French Gentleman on the Road he always pulls off his Hat to you, & the very Custom House Officers behave with a respectful Civility" (*Journals*, p. 75).

On 22 September, as the travelers approached Rouen, Mrs. Thrale thought the countryside resembled Bath. They drove into the old town and established themselves at an inn, not so fine as the ones at Calais and St. Omer, but better than one would find at Shrewsbury, Lichfield, or Birmingham (*Journals*, p. 78). While they were dining, they were joined, as pre-arranged, by Mrs. Strickland. Cecilia Towneley Strickland was six months Mrs. Thrale's junior, an even earlier friend than Mrs. Cumyns. This intimacy went back to the days when Hester had stayed at the house of her uncle, Sir Robert Cotton, in Albemarle Street, and had played with the nearby Towneley and Halifax and Burgoyne children, also with young Master North (now Prime Minister). He had pinched her and pulled her hair till she squealed (*Thraliana*, p. 286).

Cecilia Towneley came from an aristocratic Roman Catholic family, her great-grandfather on her mother's side being Henry, 6th Duke of Norfolk. Cecilia had been educated at the convent of Notre Dame de Sion in Paris and, the year before Hester's wedding, had married Charles Strickland of Sizergh Castle, Westmorland. Within the next few years the couple had had three boys and a girl — a very happy marriage, abruptly ended by Charles Strickland's death in 1770. His

widow was now in Rouen, seeing the daughter, Mary Cecilia, a graceful little girl of nine, who was attending the convent school of the Poor Clares.

Mrs. Thrale was delighted to see her old friend, and the rest of the party liked Mrs. Strickland at first sight. She was a tall, elegant woman, full of spirit and drive. She had plans for the party and presented Mrs. Thrale the same evening to Mme. du Perron, widow of a Rouen official and sister of the celebrated author and anglophile, Mme. du Boccage, who had come to London in 1750. Mrs. Montagu and Lord Chesterfield had both made much of her, the latter wittily declaring that he preferred her translations of Milton to the original (*Life*, IV, 331, n. 1.). Mme. du Boccage was someone they hoped to meet in Paris, and an introduction was immediately promised by Mme. du Perron. Meanwhile, Mrs. Thrale was reading Mme. du Boccage's *Letters on the English Nation* and finding the book hard going.

Mrs. Strickland took general charge of the party in Rouen, and since she was a great lady (as well as an efficient one) Baretta was not offended by her action, in fact he was delighted. "Stricky," as Johnson called her, arranged for the sightseeing, attendance at plays and other entertainments, also introductions. She escorted the ladies to convents and introduced Johnson to various priests, including l'Abbé Roffette, with whom the Doctor was able to carry on a vehement conversation in Latin. This was a joy for Johnson — as well as a vindication, for though he read French and wrote it with considerable ease, he was too proud to blunder in speaking. He felt safer in Latin.

In the matter of language, Mrs. Thrale had no trouble. She conversed fluently, if not grammatically, and was her usual bright and lively self. Queeney was improving daily (one of the purposes of bringing her to France). If only she would not be so bashful! As for Thrale, his French was very limited, only what he remembered from his Grand Tour of long ago; but he was never at a loss, for Baretta, "with his extensive power over every modern language" (Hayward, I, 93) was always at hand.

On 26 September the party started for Paris. Mrs. Strickland came along, so there were now six in the group, plus Sam and Molly. On the morning of departure Baretta felt ill, and Mrs. Thrale tried to give him some medicine, but he refused. He had a fear of all medicines, and he was particularly suspicious of Mrs. Thrale's "doctoring."

The day's journey proved to be a pleasant one. It was the first time that they had seen French vineyards and though the white supporting sticks were ugly and the short, ragged vines were "not half so pretty to the Eye as a Hop Garden," they were still a fine sight. And it was delightful "to pluck ripe Grapes" as they drove along the high road (*Journals*, p. 87). For a while in the afternoon the party sat on a bridge over the Seine and enjoyed the beautiful view of the fertile fields. Cherries, apples, grapes, asparagus, lentils, and French beans were in large plantings all around. The valley, Mrs. Thrale thought, as they again rode along, was in "some Respects superior to that seen from Richmond Hill and Wood alone is wanting" (*Journals*, p. 87).

These reflections were interrupted by a frightening accident in the carriage which carried Thrale, Baretti, and Queeney — on the edge of a precipice between Vernon and St. Denis:

[the] Postillion fell off his Horse on a strong Descent, the Traces were broken, one of the Horses run over and the Chaise carried forwards with a most dangerous Rapidity, which M<sup>r</sup> Thrale not being able to endure till somebody came up — jumped out with intent to stop the Horses for Baretti & Queeney — however he only hurt himself & they went on till Sam came up, who had been miserably embarrassed with a vicious Horse which had retarded him so long, and afterwards flung him. (*Journals*, p. 88)

When Thrale leapt from the coach he landed in a chalk pit, and when he was lifted out, he was as white as a ghost. He was in a state of shock, but able to stand and, with help, could walk. The party proceeded slowly to St. Germain, and there a surgeon was procured. He declared that Thrale had broken no bones, and advised him to go at once to Paris, be bled and rest. It was decided that Baretti should accompany him, to give "Assistance, & get us some Habitation to receive us at Paris" (*Journals*, p. 88). The others stayed at St. Germain for the night.

As the carriage veered dangerously toward the precipice, Johnson had shown no concern at all. Perhaps his near-sighted eyes did not fully reveal the terrifying scene, or perhaps, as Baretti thought, fear was a sensation to which Johnson was an utter stranger. Baretti praised his calm and said it was "true Philosophy," but Mrs. Strickland "did not give it so kind a Name" and soon Mrs. Thrale saw Stricky's "Indignation towards him prevailing over her Friendship for me" (*Journals*, pp. 88–89).

Next day Dr. Johnson and the three ladies continued their short

journey to Paris. Queeney was slightly bruised from yesterday's accident but it was nothing serious. Mrs. Thrale fussed about her and was deeply concerned about her husband's condition, but despite her anxieties she enjoyed the approach to Paris. The cleanness of the air so near a great metropolis surprised her: "no Sea Coal being Burned, the Atmosphere of the narrowest part of Paris is more transparent & nitid than that of Hampstead hill" (*Journals*, p. 95).

Baretti had found a house in the rue Jacob, not only convenient but elegant. And when the party arrived, Mrs. Thrale discovered, to her relief, that her husband was greatly improved. The Paris surgeon said she should "thank the *Virgin Mary* for the miraculous Escape" (*Journals*, p. 90). Thrale would be well in short order. This good news, together with a reassuring health report on the children at home, put Mrs. Thrale in excellent spirits. And the next morning, Johnson explained his behavior of the day before to Mrs. Strickland. It was anger at Mrs. Thrale that made "him sullenly forbear Enquiry, when he found [her] unwilling (as he thought it) to give him a ready or rational Answer." They were friends again (*Journals*, p. 90).

Things began very well in Paris. Baretti was at his best, displaying all his useful powers, "he bustled for us, he catered for us, he took care of the child, he secured an apartment for the maid, he provided for our safety, our amusement, our repose . . ." (Hayward, I, 94). One thing Baretti could not control, and which Mrs. Thrale regretted greatly, was the change in the weather; the warm, sunny days were gone. On 6 October she wrote that the ". . . Weather is now Broken up & the rainy Season begun; but we must bear the Cold if we can" (*Journals*, p. 104). Another thing she did not like was the noise and clamor in the rue Jacob. The streets in Paris were noisier than those in London, "being narrower one hears every carriage on both sides the way, & there being no Terrace for Footpassengers, they come up close to one's door. The Houses too are so very high that they make an Echo, & every Sound is so reiterated that it stuns one" (*Journals*, p. 94). From her window looking on to the narrow rue Jacob, she saw continuous quarrels, over-turns, and confusion. Yet, when she made any inquiry, there was remarkable courtesy; as she had remarked before "you are sure to meet no Insults from the Populace of Paris, where every Man thinks himself the Protector of every Woman" (*Journals*, p. 95).

The important moment for meeting Mme. du Boccage was set for

Saturday, 30 September, and in the morning the party waited upon this distinguished bluestocking of sixty-five, a year younger than Johnson. She greeted her visitors with superfluous civility, so it seemed to Mrs. Thrale, praising wit, beauty and so on, and her manner of asking them to dine was curious: they were to come next Thursday if she had any "pudden" to give them. Mrs. Thrale's immediate reaction to Mme. du Boccage was disappointment. She determined, however, not to form an opinion until after they had met again.

On Thursday, 5 October, the little "society" returned to the fine house of Mme. du Boccage. On entering, they were led through a sort of hall, where the footmen were playing cards. For dinner, they were served hare, "not tainted but putrified," a leg of mutton "put on the Spit the moment the Sheep was killed & garnish'd with old Beans, there was one Dish with three Sausages only & one with nothing but Sugar plumbs" (*Journals*, p. 103). This and an English pudding. There was no withdrawing of the ladies from the gentlemen after the meal; all together the company went into the drawing room. Here:

. . . stood the Busts of Shakespear, Milton, Pope & Dryden; the Lady sate on a Sopha with a fine Red Velvet Cushion fringed with Gold under her feet, & just over her Head a Cobweb of uncommon Size, & I am sure great Antiquity. A pot to spit in, either of Pewter, or Silver, quite as black & ill coloured, was on her Table; and when the Servant carried Coffee about he put in Sugar with his Fingers. (*Journals*, p. 102)

The most agreeable thing which happened this day, so far as Mrs. Thrale was concerned, was meeting one of the dinner guests, an Italian nobleman, who hailed Baretti, and then gave his full attention to the Thrales — Count Manucci, a charming young Florentine. He soon became the Thrales' constant companion in Paris; as did his friend, the Hungarian, Count Bathiani, "an amiable Boy indeed," "Johnson is quite in Love with little Bathyan," and she wrote in her travel diary that she hoped her son Harry would be like him one day (*Journals*, p. 107).

It did not take the Thrales long to become the center of a small, congenial group. Besides the two Counts, there was the charming M. Le Roy, an architect; the gracious Abbé François; and the Benedictine Father Wilkes and his prior, the learned and helpful Father Cowley (all introduced by Mrs. Strickland). Also there were various young English travelers of rank who discovered the Thrales. Mrs. Strick-

land had plenty of beaux, which pleased her (*Journals*, p. 143). And despite the daunting start, pleasant relations were established with Mme. du Boccage. She and her nephew-in-law and pretty niece, Count and Countess Blanchetti, were included in the "grand dinner" the Thrales gave on 11 October to celebrate their twelfth wedding anniversary (*Journals*, p. 110).

The Thrales' days in Paris were filled with running about churches and libraries (the King's Library and the Library of the Sorbonne profoundly impressed Johnson), museums, palaces, great houses, theatres, operas, fairs, pleasure gardens, shopping, and visits to the Gobelin tapestry factory and the Sèvres porcelain works. There were excursions to Versailles to see the royal apartments, the Grand Trianon, the Petit Trianon, the theatre, and the menagerie: also the gardens, where Mrs. Strickland gathered a great many horse-chestnuts to bring home to Sizergh Castle<sup>17</sup> (*Journals*, p. 60), and Johnson ran a race in the rain with Baretti, and won (*Letters* 437). There were visits to Choisy, the hunting lodge, so elegant and serenely situated; to Belle Vue, once the house of Mme. de Pompadour; to Meudon and to St. Cloud. There, Mrs. Thrale found the pictures superb; but better still she liked those of the Duc d'Orléans in the Palais Royale. One "View of one Room in this House is worth crossing the Seas for" (*Journals*, p. 147). She half cried over some of the paintings and she recorded in her travel journal, 6 October, that this excursion, with a delightful British traveler, Domenick Mead, added to our "Society," "has been my happiest Day hitherto; I have spent it with English Men and among Italian Pictures" (*Journals*, p. 104).

One of the special events which the party attended was a horse-race, at which Marie Antoinette was present. Mrs. Thrale was struck by the beauty of this young woman, who had been Queen for a little over a

<sup>17</sup> Over twenty years later, Mrs. Thrale (by then Piozzi) recorded in *Thraliana* that Mrs. Strickland had been a great nuisance at Versailles, doing nothing but picking up horse-chestnuts fallen from the trees. "We were all very angry at her" but the guide said to let the lady alone, "it was Louis le Grand who planted these Trees . . ." Later, Mrs. Strickland "plagued us all again by guarding this Bag of Marons as She called 'em, with a ridiculous Attention . . . from our Custom house Officers at Dover.—Well! . . . my sweet Old Friend [has sent] me a *Hundred* Horse Chesnuts in a Bag . . ."

These were from the trees at Sizergh, now grown high. Mrs. Strickland's hundred horse-chestnuts were planted on the grounds of Brynbella and, by May 1796, "98 out of the Hundred young Princes of Bourbon are *come up*" (*Thraliana*, p. 959).

year. (She was not yet twenty — only nine years older than Queeney Thrale.)

As for the race, it was far less interesting than the sight of Marie Antoinette. It was, in fact, ridiculous: the heaviest weights were placed on the weakest horses, and all the jockeys wore green, and thus became indistinguishable and invisible (*Journals*, p. 99).

Count Manucci arranged for the Thrales to make a two-day visit to Fontainebleau. The countryside, as they approached, was lovely and reminded Mrs. Thrale of Tunbridge Wells, though more rocky. The royal apartments, she thought, “exceeded in Richness and Splendour all we had yet seen” (*Journals*, p. 127). The stables and kennels, however, they all agreed, were wretched — filthy.

The French court was for the moment residing at Fontainebleau, and the party watched the public dining of the King and Queen. Again Mrs. Thrale commented on Marie Antoinette’s beauty. She was by far the prettiest woman at her court. Of the near-sighted, twenty-one-year-old Louis XVI, she said, “. . . the King is well enough — like another Frenchman.” This public dining was a curious thing. On the table there was a damask cloth, but not fine. The plates were silver, but “not clean and bright like Silver in England.” The dinner consisted of “five Dishes at a Course.” The King and Queen sat like straw figures, “they did not speak at all to each other . . . but both sometimes turned & talked to the Lord in waiting . . .” The Queen was very inquisitive about Queeney. “She would have our Names written down, & was indeed very [condescending but] troublesome with her Enquiries” (*Journals*, p. 125).

Back in Paris, one day, while Mrs. Thrale and Queeney were visiting the Blue Nuns with Mrs. Strickland, Thrale and Johnson went to see Antoine Joseph Santerre, the brewer (who would command troops around the scaffold at the execution of Louis XVI). Santerre “brews with about as much malt as Mr. T., and sells his beer at the same price though he pays no duty for malt, and little more than half as much for beer,” Johnson wrote in his diary. “Beer is sold retail at 6p. a bottle. He brews 4000 barrels a year [Mrs. Thrale and Johnson were endeavoring to restrain Thrale’s brewing to 80,000 barrels]. There are seventeen brewers in Paris [of] whom none is supposed to brew more than [Santerre] — reckoning them at 3000 each they make 51000 a year” (*Journals*, p. 180). This meant that Thrale outbrewed all of Paris by 29,000 barrels.



The travelers, including Queeney, were kept busy. She was often given a run in the Luxembourg Gardens, and she was taking dancing lessons from a teacher recommended by M. Leviez, Mrs. Thrale's old instructor. Mrs. Thrale had called upon Leviez her first day in Paris, with the hope that he might teach Queeney, but she had found the old man sadly broken, no longer able to give dancing lessons.

As for Mrs. Thrale's diversions, besides sightseeing and shopping and attending public events and going to the opera and to plays (the French actors were excellent), she reserved time to keep up her travel journal and to write letters, also to enjoy reading over those she had received from England. These included a note from Harry on 14 October, sending his love and duty and Mr. and Mrs. Perney's respects. "Mr Perkins calld on me last Sunday and said he could send you a Letter from me," he wrote. "I hope you have all had an agreeable Journey and are all very well. I should be glad to know how you like Paris, and when you will return? I am very well." On 21 October Harry wrote that "Lady Lad [sic] was so kind as to call on me last Thursday: She would have me go to her House in the Holidays; but Mr Perny [sic] said I must not go without your consent . . . She said S<sup>r</sup> John Lad's [sic] Tutor might give me some Lessons."<sup>18</sup>

On 1 November, the Thrales left Paris, where, she recorded, they had spent a month of "extreme expense." Johnson had made some jottings in his diary: the rue Jacob house cost a guinea a day. "Coach 3 guineas a week" (and Thrale kept two). "Valet de place, 3L. a day . . . Ordinary diner 6L. a head. Our ordinary seems to be about five guineas a day. Our extraordinary expences, as diversions, gratuities, cloaths; I cannot reckon. Our travelling is ten guineas a day" (*Journals*, p. 184). Baretti, the treasurer-general, kept the official account and according to this the expedition of fifty-nine days cost Thrale eight hundred and twenty-two louis d'or<sup>19</sup> (a louis d'or being the equivalent of a guinea).<sup>20</sup>

Certainly Thrale had spared no expense, and Baretti no trouble, and Mrs. Thrale had had "a prodigious fine Journey of it" (*Journals*, p.

<sup>18</sup> Harry's letters are owned by Mr. Eric Sexton of Camden, Maine.

<sup>19</sup> Twenty-four livres made up a louis d'or. This continued to be true until the French Revolution. It was Napoleon who changed the currency to francs.

Among the itemized expenses were these: at St. Germain the physician for Mr. Thrale, 48 livres; his Paris surgeon, 144 livres; the dancing master, 90 livres; tailor's bill for Mr. Thrale, 2568 livres; couturière's bill for Mrs. Thrale, 679 livres.

<sup>20</sup> Baretti's account and Mrs. Thrale's bill for gowns are in the possession of Professor James L. Clifford.

143). With regret, she parted from Mrs. Strickland and Manucci; the former was returning to Rouen, and the latter to Florence, where he urged them to come and visit next spring. In turn they pressed him to come to England before they set out, and he promised that he would. Baretto had grown tired of Manucci, perhaps jealous. He granted that the Count was "a good and most pleasing man," but he told Mrs. Thrale that he was surprised she had such high regard for someone who "read very little in his language and next to nothing in any other" (*Journals*, p. 64). Mrs. Thrale paid no attention to Baretto's opinion. She was charmed by Manucci and longed to entertain him at Streatham.

As the Thrales made their way north to Calais, they varied their route, passing through Chantilly, Noyonne, Cambrai, Douai, and Lisle. Their stops in Cambrai and Douai were made pleasant by introductions from Father Cowley to a number of Benedictine priests. In the prior's letter, along with the introductions, was the assurance to Johnson that his overnight stay with the Benedictines in Paris would never be forgotten and that his cell would always be reserved for him. Father Cowley hoped to come to England, perhaps next year or the year after. In Dunkirk, their final stop in France, the travelers were entertained by Captain Andrew Fraser and his agreeable young wife (whose parents were neighbors of the Thrales in Streatham).

At Calais the party again boarded Captain Baxter's packet and so to Dover. On the crossing Queeney and Molly were as seasick as they had been before; Sam, Mrs. Thrale noted in the margin of her journal, "was too ill to be Seasick" (*Journals*, p. 165). On the subject of health, Queeney had maintained a better record than she had the year before in Wales: some worms, bruises from the accident, a sprained toe, a cold and a cough, caught from her mother, who had suffered a bad cold. Baretto had been ill once. Johnson and Thrale were the two made of iron.

Mrs. Thrale's final dread was the Custom House officers at Dover, but all went well: no fuss was made about the Sèvres, the presents, or the toys, nor about her three Paris gowns. Thrale had offered her "any Silk at any Price" (*Journals*, p. 139) and one of her gowns had been made of "plain White Silk . . . peculiarly elegant — trimmed with pale Purple & Silver by the fine Madame Beauvais & in the newest and highest Fashion" (*Letters* 519.1A). This beautiful dress caused no trouble; neither did Johnson's Paris wig.

The last record of Mrs. Thrale's journal of her French tour, Saturday, 11 November, at Dover, is typical of an English traveler returned safely home: "I see now that [England] is better than France" (*Journals*, p. 165).

Two days later, Mrs. Thrale resumed recording in the *Family Book*:

*on the 15: of Sept<sup>r</sup> 1775. We set out for France, & after a Month spent at Paris & another in travelling from place to place we return'd to Streatham this 13<sup>th</sup> of Nov<sup>r</sup> 1775. Queeny behaved sweetly all the way; learnt French faster than I hoped for, & made no Small Improvement in Dancing — She was vastly sick at Sea, & has not recovered her Looks yet, but the Serv:<sup>ts</sup> all say She is grown. — We picked up Harry on our Road home; he looks wonderfully well in health, but says he is not happy; the Boys are childish and despicable Companions, & the Confinement such as he has never been used to: he is the the [sic] eighth Boy from the Top, now he is 8 Years & a half old — construes Ovid very smartly — & does his Tasks with a degree of Intelligence that D<sup>r</sup> Johnson says is not common even at 12 Years old: all this about Harry was written on the 17:<sup>th</sup> after we had examined things a little, he was prodigiously happy to see us returned.*

20: Nov<sup>r</sup>

*I have seen my sweet little Girls — Susan will really be a lovely Lass after all: I never found fault with Sophy. Harry's Schoolmaster complains that he says naughty words — has called some young Lord or Duke an Impudent Dog perhaps, — no worse Crime I dare say. All the World praises his Parts & his Scholarship.*

*Harry says the Boys at this Loughboro' House are just like Babies, & treated as such by the Master; who daddles<sup>21</sup> after them with a Rod as he expresses it, all about the Room: — Harry it seems has been treated with more Severity for laughing at this curious Operation.*

25: Nov: 1775.

*I have heard of my Son's naughtiness: it consisted in telling his School-fellows a staring Story about what was done at a Bawdy house, for w:<sup>ch</sup> Conversation Old Perny very wisely flogg'd him well & I hope we shall hear no more of it. The Truth is Harry is but too forward*

<sup>21</sup> Daddle: to walk unsteadily.

*in some things; he told me Yesterday he wondered Baretti was not ashamed of belonging to a Country where they cut the Men, as we cut the Horses — & all to make them sing forsooth.<sup>22</sup> I bid him never talk to his Sisters on such Subjects, & got rid of it myself as I could, /but/ Harry makes reading so much his Amusement that he must know every thing that Books contain: The other Day Bob Cotton [a linen draper in Parliament Street] was saying how he had saved some Lady on Horseback from great Danger — Oh ho cries Harry I'll warrant you'll marry her at last as Tom Jones did Miss Sophy Western: Lord Child say'd I didst thou ever read Tom Jones? — Yes to be sure replies Harry one must read Tom Jones, & Joseph Andrews.*

29: Nov:

*Queeney is quite beautiful since her French Expedition, grows plump & blooming, & more more [sic] full of Tongue, tho' always too shy; and Harry has not a Complaint except of his Fellow Students that they are such Darlings as he calls them. he begs hard to go to Westm<sup>r</sup> & shall, when we return from Italy: it is for that Reason M<sup>r</sup> Thrale chuses to set out next Spring, because Harry will be safe at this place till our Return, & then he shall break his Chains poor Fellow.*

The expedition to France had clearly been a success, for the Thrales, barely home, were already making preparations for the more ambitious journey — to Italy. Baretti readily agreed to be courier again (though he had had much trouble in France as “the chief mover of too large a caravan, most members of which had a good proportion of wants and whims” (*European Magazine*, August 1788, p. 91).

For Italy, Baretti thought in terms of a year's absence, with a winter in Tuscany, and a return through Switzerland. Thrale and Johnson had no objection to this, but Mrs. Thrale wanted a trip of six months only, April to October, so that they might be home when Harry entered Westminster, that distinguished school re-founded by Queen Elizabeth I (it had been a Benedictine monastery school). At Westminster Harry would be following in the footsteps of his cousin, Sir Robert Cotton, past worthies such as Ben Jonson, John Locke, and John Dryden, and current celebrities such as Edward Gibbon, William Cowper, General Burgoyne, and Warren Hastings.

The headmaster, Samuel Smith, maintained the high academic stan-

<sup>22</sup> Castrati: male singers in Italy, castrated so they would retain soprano voices.

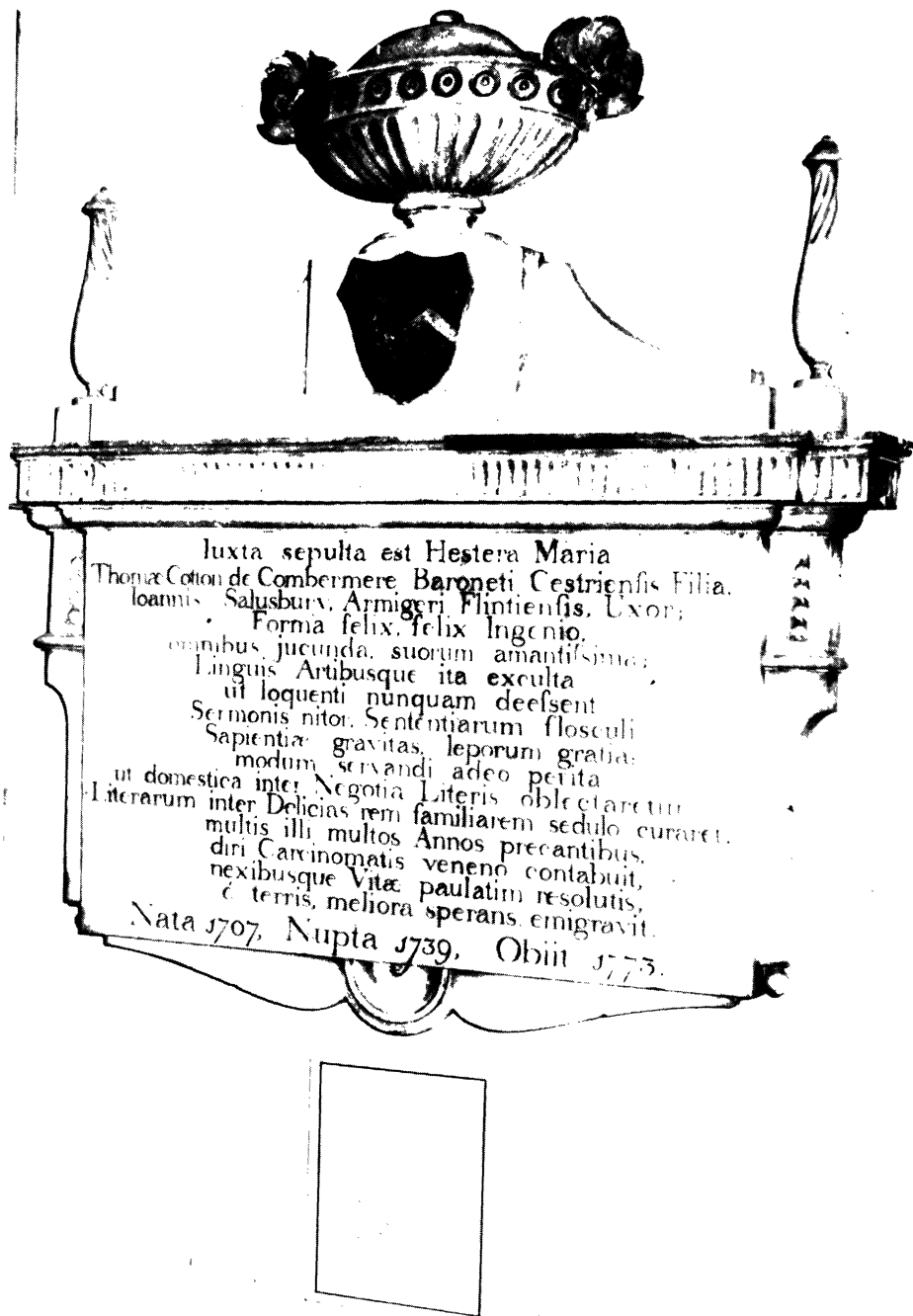


PLATE XVII  
STREATHAM PARK  
FROM AN ENGRAVING BY ELLIS



*Houghton Library*

PLATE XVIII  
THE STREATHAM ADDITION  
CEILING PAINTING BY FELIX KELLY

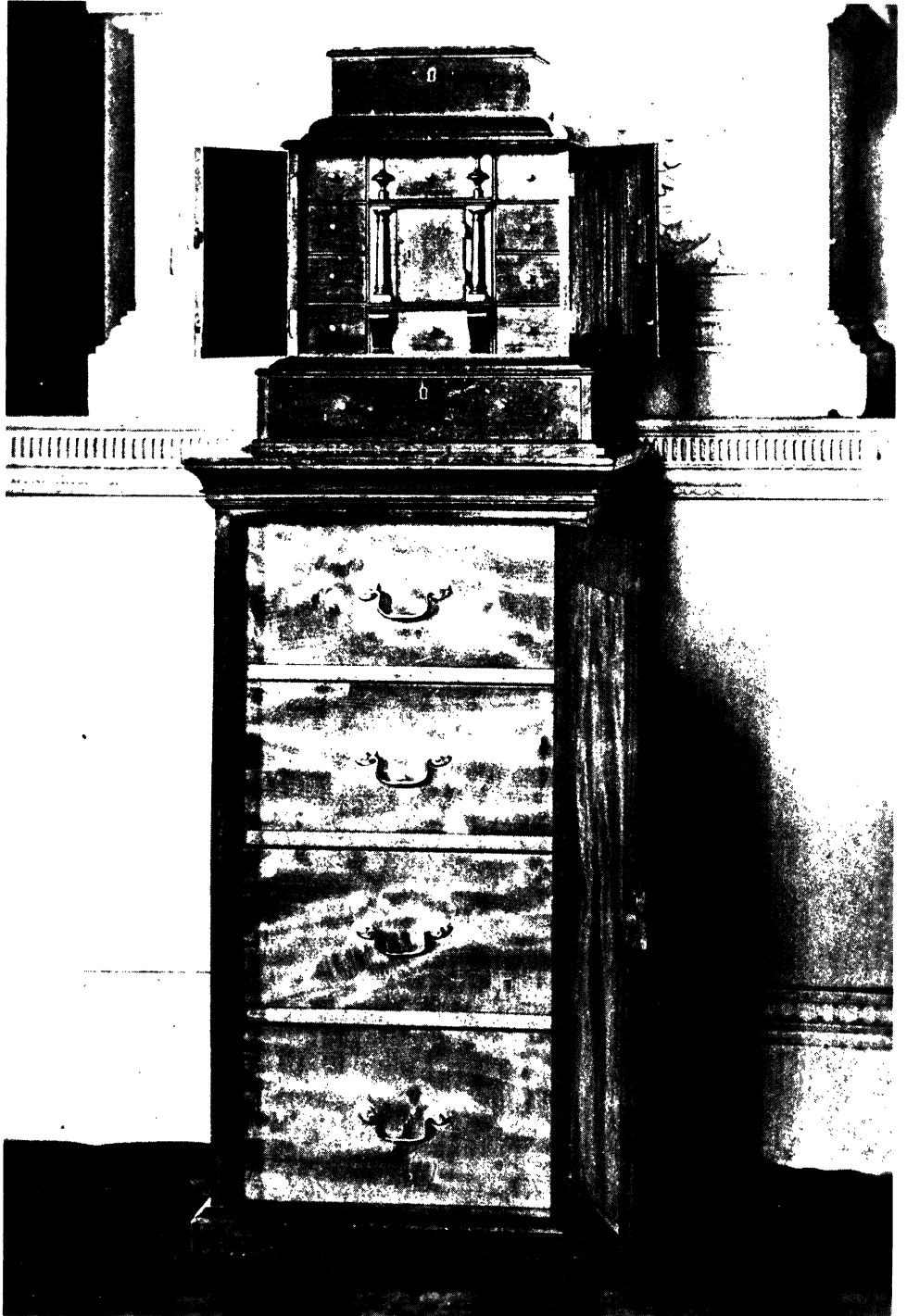


*Photograph and permission from  
 Arthur Llewellyn Smith*

PLATE XIX

MRS. SALUSBURY'S MOURNING TABLET

COMPOSED BY DR. JOHNSON, CUT BY WILTON



*Bowood Collection, Reproduced by  
permission of the Trustees of  
the Shelburne Settlement*

PLATE XX  
QUEENEY'S CABINET  
GIVEN HER BY DR. JOHNSON



# For such and so much Monies

In testimony wherof by virtue of the said Trusts hereby in these things set forth and that any one or more of them  
 shall not be answerable or accountable for the debts or debts of them or for the said debts or Debts or Defaults  
 or Defaults of the said Trusts or any of them but each and every of them only for the said debts or Debts or Defaults  
 or Defaults of the said Trusts or any of them which he or she shall be answerable or accountable for any misfeasance  
 or damage which may happen in the Execution of any of the aforesaid Trusts or in relation thereto unless the same  
 shall happen by or through their own wilful default or default of the said Trusts or any of them and may with out of such  
 sum of them and the said Trusts and Estates and Estates of them and each of them shall and may with out of such  
 sum of them as shall come to their respective Damages and Expenses to be contained in the Execution of any of the aforesaid Trusts and  
 Estates respectively all Costs Charges Damages and Expenses to be contained in the Execution of any of the aforesaid Trusts or in  
 relation thereto **And it is** hereby further enacted and agreed upon by and between the said Parties to the  
 present that it shall and may be lawful to and for the said Henry Estate and Robert Aylmer Estate and Wife at any time or times  
 hereafter during their lives by any Deed or Deeds Instrument or Instruments in writing to be sealed and witnessed by them  
 before the Presence of and Assent of his or her or their respective Executors Administrators and Assigns and with void All and  
 every of any of the said Trusts Powers provisions Limitations Restrictions and Agreements therein before limited expressed  
 contained and contained of and remaining All and singular the said Trusts and Estates fully certain and Released and intended  
 to be of any part thereof And by the same or any other Deed or Deeds Instrument or Instruments in writing to be sealed and witnessed  
 by them and Assent as aforesaid to limit Create Refuse or Appoint any new or other use or uses Estate or Estates Trust or Trusts  
 of or remaining the said Trusts and Estates whereof the uses shall be so Release as to them or their Executors Administrators and Assigns  
 and Subject unto the full Powers of Appointment and new Limitation of use or uses Estate or Estates Trust or Trusts  
 Powers are contained or any other or others or without such Powers of Appointment and new Limitation or otherwise as to them  
 the said Henry Estate and Robert Aylmer Estate and Wife shall seem meet with out of their use or uses Estate or Estates Trust  
 or Trusts shall have full power and operation and shall take Effect whither the present Power or Power shall in such  
 Deed or Deeds Instrument or Instruments be denied or deferred to or not any thing therewith before contained in his or her will or in any  
 will notwithstanding **Provided** always that if the said Henry Estate and Robert Aylmer Estate and Wife at any time or times  
 shall be appointed as Executors or Administrators of the said Henry Estate and Robert Aylmer Estate and Wife or the Wife of the said  
 or the Wife of the said Henry Estate or Robert Aylmer Estate shall be so appointed to be discharged from the aforesaid Trusts it shall and  
 may be lawful to and for the said Henry Estate or Robert Aylmer Estate or the Wife of the said Henry Estate or Robert Aylmer Estate  
 their or his respective Executors and Administrators and each of them and each of their Executors and Administrators to and as  
 often as by the Death or Resignation of the said Trusts or any or either of them it shall become necessary or requisite to nominate  
 and appoint by and with the Consent and Approbation of the said Henry Estate and Robert Aylmer Estate and Wife or the Executors  
 of them testified in writing some other Person or Persons to be a Trustee or Trustees for the purposes aforesaid in the aforesaid  
 or Part of the Trusts or Trusts so dying or dying to be discharged and with out of the Present of any further Trusts  
 or Trusts shall be so discharged from the aforesaid Trusts it shall and may be lawful to and for them and their  
 Executors Administrators Assigns Administrators and Assigns to give up the said Trusts and Interest in the Premises to the said Trusts or  
 Trusts and every new Trustee to become interested therein together with the former Trustee and Trustees Office from  
 such as shall have been so discharged and who shall have Relinquished Released or Conveyed the said Trusts  
 and Interest as aforesaid shall in like manner have full Power and Authority as often as it shall be requisite or necessary  
 with such Consent and Assent as aforesaid to nominate and Appoint any other Person or Persons to be Trustees in the  
 aforesaid Trusts in the stead and place of any former Trustee or Trustees dying or dying to be discharged from the aforesaid  
 Trusts **And it is** hereby declared that from and after every such nomination and Appointment as aforesaid All such other  
 Deeds Matters and Things shall be done executed and performed as shall be necessary or advisable for carrying into and carrying  
 the said Trusts and Premises hereby Released or intended to be as well in the remaining Trusts or Trusts as in such new Trusts or  
 Trusts upon the said Trusts and to and for the same uses intents and purposes as are hereinbefore recited expressed limited and  
 contained of and remaining the said Trusts or any of them as shall be then existing or to be made of taking Effect **In Witness** whereof the said  
 Parties to these presents have hereunto set their hands and seals the day and year first above written.

Henry Charles Robert Lynch Anne Samuel John James

Four Oaks Farm



*Reproduced by permission of  
Lady Teresa Agnew*

PLATE XXII  
GIUSEPPE BARETTI

THE STREATHAM PORTRAIT BY REYNOLDS



*Original at Sizergh Castle,  
Reproduced by permission  
of The National Trust*

PLATE XXIII  
CECILIA TOWNELEY STRICKLAND  
BY ROMNEY

15: Feb: Harry's Birthday  
He is happy healthy wise & good: has begged Money  
for the Men to make merry, & invited his own  
Company for the parlour. his Selection was  
Murphy, Perkins & Tom Cotton, to whom I  
added a friendly <sup>blt.</sup> here in the Borough, &  
Count Mannucci who we know at Paris  
came in by chance. he landed Yesterday.  
Old Pimey & little Blake from Longhorn  
House filled up our heterogeneous Mess  
of Company, & Johnson was here of course.  
He does love little Harry! — I measured  
My son Yesterday with his foster Bro.  
who is the same Age of House; but he  
was big enough to eat the Boy, & taller by  
a head — he neither looks nor talks like a  
child of 9 Years old only. —

Fanny's Nurse is dead of the Influenza.  
followed her poor little Mistress very soon.

Four Oaks Farm

PLATE XXIV  
HARRY THRALE'S NINTH BIRTHDAY  
FROM THE Family Book

dards for which the school was known, though he was not the strict disciplinarian that Richard Busby had been in the past. This was just as well, for Harry, though basically obedient, required a certain amount of freedom. He was already looking forward to frequent attendance at the theatre, an interest stimulated by his friend, Arthur Murphy, and he hoped this would be made easy by another family friend, the playwright, George Colman, a Westminster "old boy," who it was said extended a hearty welcome at Covent Garden to all present boys. George Colman, the younger, was now attending the school.

The future appeared to be well arranged for Harry; and Susan and Sophy were thriving. All the children seemed healthier than when Mrs. Thrale had left for France — except for the baby, whose condition was disturbing.

*Here is little Fanny very ill & of her head too — it will turn my Head at last; Old Nurse is gone to Town to consult D<sup>r</sup> Lawrence — Good News if it please God! never happy long together!*

At first Mrs. Thrale thought that Fanny had only a bad head cold; her wet-nurse<sup>23</sup> had one, and others in the household also had heavy colds. They had got over them, but Fanny did not improve, and Old Nurse wanted to consult Herbert Lawrence, for of all the children's doctors, he was the one in whom she put the most trust. Old Nurse carried Fanny to London, where Lawrence told her the child had influenza — there was an epidemic.

Lawrence attended Fanny, but her condition grew steadily worse.

*This 11.<sup>th</sup> of Dec: 1775.*

*I buried my poor little Fanny; She was 1.<sup>st</sup> seized with the Influenza w:<sup>ch</sup> affected every body, among the rest her [wet-]Nurse, & herself so violently we could not remove it D<sup>r</sup> [Thomas] Lawrence of Essex Street, says that killed her, not a Dropsy of the Brain as I first apprehended; & this ought to Comfort me a little: the other four are healthy active & vigorous as possible; I hope I may be permitted to keep them so — but be it as it may: I must endeavour not to provoke Gods Judgments on my Family — & then, like poor old Patriarch Jacob — if /I/ be bereaved of my Children I be bereaved.*

<sup>23</sup> Many years later the fact was recognized that wet-nurses (with their own outside domestic contacts) were frequently carriers of infection to the babies they suckled.

Mrs. Thrale's acceptance of little Fanny's death was philosophic — as it had been for others of her babies — the inevitable consequence of the terribly high mortality among infants. With birth — death was always half-expected.

*Fanny's [Wet] Nurse is dead of the Influenza, follow'd her poor little Mistress very soon.*<sup>24</sup>

*Sat: Jan: 20: [1776] Susan returned to School after the Holy days — She improves prodigiously in all respects, and is very much admired for a fine Girl Body & Mind, home & School. —*

During January and February Baretti was in feverish correspondence with his brothers and with friends in Italy, urging their cooperation in the proposed journey. The party would consist as before of the Thrales and Queeney, Johnson, and himself, "the leader of the march." Two four-wheeled chaises would be required for those mentioned, and a third chaise as well, to carry Molly, Sam, and the luggage. Another man with them would ride as postillion. Other servants would be hired when they stayed in a place for any length of time. They wished to travel in comfort.

Baretti planned to retrace some of the route of the past autumn, crossing the channel from Dover to Calais, and going on to Paris, after this south to Lyons, and across the Alps to Turin. From here, he was making arrangements to take the party to visit his family, near Valenza (between Turin and Milan); and for this stay he pressed his brothers to borrow or hire what was necessary — furniture, bedding, plate — whatever was needed to make the accommodations suitable. There should be a Bible for Mrs. Thrale. She is "gay and joyful if she is not shocked by any disregard of religion or morals, even the slightest, being a great biblist . . ." <sup>25</sup> There should be other books about, old rather than modern, in Italian, Latin, and Greek. An agreeable priest to speak Latin to Johnson should be provided if possible.

After this visit the party would go on to Genoa, Milan, Parma, Bologna, Rimini, San Marino — and finally Rome. The trip was to be an education for the Thrales and a triumph for Baretti.

<sup>24</sup> This sentence is written in the *Family Book* at the foot of the next page, following the entry headed "15: Feb."

<sup>25</sup> E. S. De Beer, "Johnson's Italian Tour" in *Johnson, Boswell, and Their Circle* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), p. 160.

15: Feb: Harry's Birthday

He is happy healthy wise & good: has begged Money for the Men to make merry, & invited his own Company for the parlour. his Selection was Murphy, Perkins & Tom Cotton, to whom I added a friendly Att: here in the Borough, & Count Mannucci [sic] who we knew at Paris came in by Chance. he landed Yesterday. Old Perney & little Blake from Loughboro' House filled up our heterogeneous Mass of Company, & Johnson was here of Course; he does love little Harry!. — I measured My Son Yesterday with his foster Bro: [son of Patsy Burnet] who is the same Age of Course; but he was big enough to eat the Boy, & taller by a head /indeed/ — he neither looks nor talks like a Child of 9 Years old only. —

Harry Thrale's ninth anniversary was a joyous occasion. He begged money, as was the birthday custom, for the clerks at the brewhouse to celebrate. He was a favorite with them and, to his father's pride and pleasure, wholly in his element at the brewery, much happier than at the Loughborough House School. His father hoped that someday Harry would outbrew Whitbread and Calvert.

Harry's own birthday party took place in the Thrales' parlor. The guests he asked, with the exception of young Blake, his schoolfellow, were all adults: Johnson; John Perkins; Harry's cousin, Tom Cotton, the fourth son of Sir Lynch, who worked in London as an auditor for North Wales; old Mr. Perney, Harry's master at school; and his idol, Arthur Murphy, the playwright.

Manucci's appearance was a surprise, and added excitement, for Harry had heard much of the Italian friend, whom his parents had met abroad. And the Thrales were delighted that the Count had been able to arrive before their departure for Italy — now scheduled for 9 April. Manucci had many travel suggestions to make, and he assured them that by the time they reached Florence he would be home again to receive them.

Early in the next month, Mrs. Thrale recorded in the *Family Book*:

6: March 1776.

I saw Susan at School, nothing can do better than She does; when Sir Rob<sup>t</sup> Cotton comes to Town I shall fetch her home to shew him that he ought to send his Girls [Frances and Sophia] to M<sup>rs</sup> Cumyns's, if he has a mind to see them accomplished.

*Sophy is very good & lives with me & Queeney who tutor her by turns; She reads prettily now, & says long Strings of Stuff by heart, which nobody but her Sister & I will give the hearing to. The Catechism of course.*

In early March there was suddenly good news about Johnson's and Mrs. Thrale's private charity — Mr. Carter. Johnson was advised that Oxford's Vice-Chancellor and the Proctors had given their consent for the erection of a riding house and for the appointment of Carter as riding master. This was wonderful, and Johnson wrote at once to his friend John Douglas, Bishop of Salisbury, who controlled the Clarendon account, requesting that the royalty money be forwarded to the proper authorities.

Within a few days the astonishing answer came: there were not sufficient funds to carry out any such ambitious scheme. It seems strange that Johnson had not ascertained the financial situation at the outset, but nonetheless this was a sad end to the two years' striving of Johnson and Mrs. Thrale. "Our Assiduity thus defeated, our Kindness slackened, and we left the poor Creature to sink at last after all our unavailing Efforts to support him" (*Thraliana*, p. 119).<sup>26</sup>

In contrast to their disappointment about the outcome of the Carter project was their excitement about the plans for the Grand Tour of Italy. Baretti was making constant changes in the itinerary, enlarging it to include Sicily and adding stops in small towns between Turin and Genoa in such number that Johnson became concerned. The party must not be cheated out of proper stays in the great cities — Rome, Florence, Naples, and Venice — even if Baretti could not accompany them to the last (he was still subject to arrest in Venice for his daring political writings). Johnson insisted that the itinerary be properly proportioned.

He was busily making himself ready, and he wrote to Boswell on 5 March that if his friend had any intention of seeing him before he set out for Italy, he must come quickly and accompany him to Oxford and Lichfield for his farewell visits. Boswell rose to the occasion and was in London by 16 March, where he found to his surprise that Johnson had given up residence at Johnson's Court, in prospect of the long trip abroad.

<sup>26</sup> The profits of the *Life of Clarendon*, such as they were, continued to accumulate, and with better management there was enough money available in 1868 to build the Clarendon Laboratory.



On 19 March the two friends set out from London to Oxford by coach, Johnson carrying with him a volume of romances, *Palmerin of England*, in Italian translation, to improve his knowledge of the language. The next day, while Johnson and Boswell were calling on their friends at various colleges, Mrs. Thrale recorded in the *Family Book*:

*on Wednesday the 20: of March 1776. I quarrelled slightly with Queeney in the Morning but we made it up & went out together in search of a Ticket for her to go at Night to Bach & Abel's Concert, but could not get one. I had fetched Harry home yesterday to shew him, /to/ Scrase, Golding & Gregory three old Intimates of his Father who were to dine with us today. They did so, & I left Niggey to make Tea for them in the Evening, & when I returned all were well & fast asleep, & Queeney had done me the Story of Atalanta from a French & Latin Ovid mighty well:*

Mrs. Thrale was sorry to miss an evening with Scrase — next to Johnson she loved him best as a family friend (*Thraliana*, p. 372). But the two other old cronies of her husband she was happy to quit, especially Gregory, who was a heavy drinker and a medical quack.

The concert to which she went was given by Karl Friedrich Abel and Johann Christian Bach, the son of Johann Sebastian. These two artists, Bach playing the harpsichord and Abel the viola da gamba, had been giving pleasure to audiences in London for several years.

Mrs. Thrale knew that "Niggey," as she sometimes called Queeney, could be trusted to be a good hostess and that everything would be well managed during her absence. So it seemed to be.

*on Thursday the 21:<sup>st</sup> they all [Queeney, Harry, and Sophy] rose well & lively; & Queeney went with me to fetch her Sister [Susan] from School for a Week — She [Queeney] seemed sullen all the way there & back but not sick, so I huffed her & we got home in good Time to dress for dinner, when we expected Sir Rob:<sup>st</sup> Cotton & the Davenants. Harry however had seen a play <sup>27</sup> of his Friend Murphy's advertised, & teized me so to let him see it that I could not resist his Importunity, and treated one of our principal Clerks to go with him: he came home at 12 o'Clock half mad with delight, and in such Spirits Health & Happiness that nothing ever exceeded: Queeney however drooped all Afternoon; complained of the Headach & M<sup>r</sup> Thrale was*

<sup>27</sup> Arthur Murphy's *The Way to Keep Him*, at Drury Lane.

so cross at my giving Harry leave to go to the play, instead of shewing him to Sir Robert; that I passed an uneasy Time of it, and could not enjoy the praises given to Susan, I was /so/ fretted about the two eldest. when Harry came home so happy however, all was forgotten, & he went to rest in perfect Tranquillity — Queeney however felt hot, & I was not at all pleased with her, but on Fryday Morning [22 March] the boy rose quite chearful & did our little Business with great Alacrity. Count Mannucci [sic] came to Breakfast by Appointment, we were all to go shew him the Tower [of London] forsooth, so Queeney made light of her Illness & pressed me to take her too. There was one of the Ships [on fire] bound for Boston now in the River with our Beer a'board — Harry ran to see the blaze in the Morning, & coming back to the Compting house — I see says he to our 1.<sup>st</sup> Clerk — I see Your Porter is good M<sup>r</sup> Perkins; for it burns special well. Well by this Time we set out for the Tower, Papa & Mannucci, & the Children & I: Queeney was not half well, but Harry continued in high Spirits both among the Lyons & the Arms: repeating Passages from the English History, examining the Artillery & getting into every Mortar till he was as black as the Ground.<sup>28</sup> Count Mannucci [sic] observ'd his Pranks, & said he must be a Soldier /with him;/ but Harry would not fight for the Grand Duke of Tuscany because he was a Papist, & look here said he shewing the Instruments of Torture to the Count, what those Spanish Papists intended for us. From this Place we drove to Moore's Carpet Manufactory,<sup>29</sup> where the Boy was still active, attentive & lively: but as Queeney's looks betray'd the Sickness She would fain have concealed, we drove homewards; taking in our way Brooke's Menagerie,<sup>30</sup> where I just stopped to speak about my Peafowl: Here Harry was happy again with a Lyon intended for a Show who was remarkably tame, & a monkey so beautiful & gentle, that I was as much pleased with him as the Children: here we met a M<sup>r</sup> Hervey who took notice of the Boy how well he look'd. Yes said /I/ if the dirt were scraped off him: It was now Time to get home, & Harry after saying

<sup>28</sup> The Tower of London was a favorite place to take visitors, for it offered a dramatic survey of English history—and one was proud to show it, for this was a fortress which had never been conquered.

The "Lyons" were live, part of the menagerie which was comprised of leopards, bears, wolves, hyenas, and many other animals—always lions, for they were a prime symbol of British royalty.

The "Arms" were cannon, captured from Armada ships.

<sup>29</sup> Moore's Carpet Manufactory was at 63 Chiswell Street.

<sup>30</sup> Brooke's Original Menagerie for Birds, Animals, &c was at 242 Picadilly.

how hungry he was — instantly pounced as [he] called it [on] a piece of Cold Mutton & spent the Afternoon among us all recounting the pleasures of the Day. he went to Bed that night as perfectly well as ever I saw Man Woman or Child in my Life. Queeney however took some Rhubarb, & went on drooping & felt feverish. I looked at her two or three Times in the Night too, & found her hot & feverish, but her dear Brother slept as cool & comfortable as possible, & on the Morning of the next fatal day Saturday 23.<sup>d</sup> of March 1776. he rose in perfect health, went to the Baker for his Roll and watched the drawing it out of the Oven, carried it to Batchelors' Hall as he called it where the young Clerks live down the Brewhouse Yard; there he got Butter, & cooked a merry Breakfast among them. After this he returned with two peny Cakes he had bought for the little Girls, & distributed them between them in his pleasant Manner for Minuets that he made them dance: I was all this while waiting on Queeney, who seem'd far from well; & /I/ was once very Impatient at the Noise the maids & Children made in the Nursery, by laughing excessively at his Antick Tricks. By this Time I came down to my Dressing Room to tutor Sophy till the Clock struck ten which is my regular Breakfast hour — I had scarce made the Tea when Moll came to tell me Queeney was better, & Harry making a Figure of 5:10<sup>31</sup> so we always called his manner of twisting about when a/n/ything ailed him: when I got to the Nursery, there was Harry crying as if he had /been/ whipt instead of ill, so I reproved /him/ for making such a bustle ab:<sup>d</sup> nothing, & said see how differently your Sister behaves, who tho' in earnest far from well, had beg'd to make breakfast for Papa & M<sup>r</sup> Baretti, while I was employed above. The next Thing I did was to send for (old Nurse) M<sup>r</sup> Lawrence of York Buildings, to whom Nurse was always partial: my Note expressed to him that both the eldest Children were ill, but Hetty worst: presently however finding the boy inclined to vomit, I administer'd a large Wine-Glass of Emetic Wine which however did nothing any way; tho' he drank small Liquids with avidity: and now seeing his Sick-ness increase, & his Countenance begin to alter, I sent out Sam: with orders not to come back without some Physician — Jebb, Bromfield, Pinkstan or Lawrence of Essex Street,<sup>32</sup> whichever he could find: in the mean time I plunged Harry into Water as hot as could easily be

<sup>31</sup> This is the knee-chest position, which one is apt to assume instinctively, to be able to vomit and still breathe, not strangle on one's own vomit.

<sup>32</sup> Thomas Lawrence of Essex Street, friend and physician to Dr. Johnson (as distinct from Herbert Lawrence of the York Buildings).

borne, up to his Middle, & had just taken him out of the Tub, & laid him in a warm bed, when Jebb came, & gave him 1:<sup>st</sup> hot Wine, then Usquebaugh, then Daffy's Elixir,<sup>33</sup> so fast that it alarmed me; tho' I had no Notion of Death having seen him so perfectly well at 9 o'clock. he then had Pultices made with Mustard put to his feet, & strong Broth & Wine Clysters injected,<sup>34</sup> but we could get no Evacuation any way: & the Inclination to vomit still continuing Jebb gave him 5 Grains of Ipecacuanha<sup>35</sup> & then drove away to call Heberden's<sup>36</sup> help. The Child all this while spoke well & brisk; sate upright to talk with the D:<sup>r</sup>; said he had no Pain now but his Breath was short: this I attributed to the hot things He had taken, & thought Jebb in my Heart far more officious than wise. I was however all confusion distress & perplexity, & M<sup>r</sup> Thrale bid me not cry so, for I should look like a Hag when I went to Court next Day — he often saw Harry in the Course of the Morn<sup>g</sup>: and apprehended no danger at all — no more did Baretti, who said he should be whipt for frightening his Mother for nothing. — Queeney had for some Time been laid down on her own Bed, & got up fancying herself better; but soon a universal Shriek called us all together to Harry's Bedside, where he struggled a Moment — thrusting his Finger down his Throat to excite Vomiting, & then — turning to Nurse said very distinctly — dont Scream so — I know I must die. This however I did not hear.

Manucci, who was with the Thrales, sent his servant to fetch Baretti, for he had returned to London. Baretti sped back to Southwark, and described the scene he witnessed:

Mr. Thrale, both his hands in his waistcoat pocket[s], sat on an arm-chair in a corner of the room with his body so stiffly erect, and with such a ghastly smile on his face, as was quite horrid to behold. Count Manucci and a female servant, both as pale as ashes, and as if panting for breath, were evidently spent with keeping Madam from going frantic (and well she might) every time she recovered from her fainting-fits, that followed each other in a very quick succession. (*European Magazine*, May 1788, p. 314)

<sup>33</sup> Daffy's Elixir: tincture of senna, a laxative.

<sup>34</sup> Wine Clysters: enemas of wine.

<sup>35</sup> Ipecacuanha or ipecac: an emetic made from the roots of a South American creeping plant.

<sup>36</sup> William Heberden was Cambridge-trained and a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians, an authority on many diseases, and at the time considered the most eminent physician in London. (It was Heberden who had freed medicine from the belief that "humors" were the basis of all disease.)

Mrs. Thrale's journal continues the account of the day, though the entire entry was written more than two weeks later:

*Lady Lade who I believe had been here half the Morn<sup>g</sup>: watching the Event asked me kindly what She should do for me — I replied Oh take me these two little Girls away — they distract me: She accordingly then carried them [Susan and Sophy] off & set 'em safe at Kensington, where they are still. This most dreadful of all our Misfortunes, w:<sup>ch</sup> they say happened about 3 o'Clock, or 4, on the 23:<sup>d</sup> day of March 1776. had such an Effect on poor Queeney that I expected her to follow him: Jebb however did something for her, & advising speedy Change of Scene; I rose in the Morning of the 30:<sup>th</sup> after a sleepless Night, & in a Sort of Desperation drove away with her to Bath, which little Journey did her infinite Service: Baretti kindly offered to go with me, so he conducted the Troop, & diverted Queeney's Melancholy with all the Tricks he could think on: She is now tho' not recovered, yet I hope out of Danger (as the Phrase is:) I saw the little Girls at Kensington Yesterday as I came home. this is the 9:<sup>th</sup> of April 1776.*

Henry Salusbury Thrale, aged nine years and one month, was buried at St. Leonard's in Streatham on Thursday, 28 March.

The cause of his sudden death was mystifying to all concerned, and it is hard for a present-day medical authority, with only Mrs. Thrale's journal for testimony, to give a diagnosis. Death from a ruptured appendix, which has previously been suggested, seems unlikely, for it would take two or three days for peritonitis (inflammation of the membrane which lines the abdominal cavity) to cause death, and the duration of Harry's illness was only six or seven hours. Death from a fulminating septicaemia (a sudden and virulent infection) seems the most probable cause of his sudden and tragic death. Such a diagnosis is strongly supported by the account of Queeney's feverishness before Harry's seizure, and her continued illness after his death. It is not unreasonable to suppose that she suffered from the same infection that killed Harry, but in a milder form. Before the days of antibiotics, a child often died within a few hours of an overwhelmingly acute infection.

Mrs. Thrale's treatment of Harry, as she awaited the arrival of a doctor (giving a large glass of emetic wine, putting him into hot water and then a warm bed) was reasonable, according to the practice of the

time, and when Dr. Jebb came he continued the treatment of heat, together with emetics and purges. He came quickly, and though he failed, he did all that any eighteenth-century doctor could have been expected to do. Today's antibiotics would probably have saved Harry's life.

Herbert Lawrence, the old family doctor and friend, did not respond to Mrs. Thrale's urgent call for help, and she vowed she would never have anything further to do with him (*Thraliana*, p. 130). The doctor she turned to now was Jebb.

And following his advice, she and Queeney, accompanied by Baretto, set out for Bath on Saturday, 30 March. As they were about to step into the coach, Johnson appeared.

News of the tragedy had reached him at Lichfield on Monday, 25 March, as he and Boswell were having breakfast at Lucy Porter's house. A letter from Perkins described the terrible event and concluded, "I need not say how much they wish to see you in London" (*Letters* 465, n. 1).

Johnson immediately wrote to Mrs. Thrale:

. . . in a distress which can be so little relieved, nothing remains for a friend but to come and partake it.

Poor dear sweet little Boy . . . When you have obtained by Prayer such tranquillity as nature will admit, force your attention, as you can, upon your accustomed duties, and accustomed entertainments. You can do no more for our dear Boy, but you must not therefore think less on those whom your attention may make fitter for the place to which he is gone. (*Letters* 465)

Stopping only briefly in Ashbourne, Johnson and Boswell returned to London and Johnson at once hurried to Southwark, arriving at the moment Mrs. Thrale and Queeney were departing for Bath, Mrs. Thrale nervous, grief-stricken, and Queeney still unwell. "I expected at that moment," Baretto said, "that he would spare me the jaunt, and go himself to Bath with her; but he made no motion to that effect; therefore, after the sad exchange of a few mournful periods . . . we got into the coach and were soon out of sight" (*European Magazine*, May 1788, p. 315).

Johnson lingered at the house, trying to give comfort to Thrale, but was sent away. He returned the next day and was told by a servant that when he was wanted he would be sent for (*Letters* 467). Boswell was offended that his friend's presence was so unappreciated, but the

old man held no resentment. In bereavement, he said, one accepted the actions of those one loved, no matter what they might be.

Mrs. Thrale wrote to Johnson from Bath. She assured him that his friendship

has long been the best Cordial to my Heart, it is now almost the only one. I cold bathe here, & endeavour all I can to excite Appetite, & force Attention; I owe every Thing to Mr Thrale's indulgent Tenderness, and will bring him home the best Wife I can: how has it happened that every body has been so kind? (*Letters* 467A)

Johnson replied, urging her to stay in Bath so long as "the novelty of the place does any good either to you or Queeney . . . What gratification can be extracted from so sad an event, I derive from observing that Mr Thrale's behaviour has united you to him by additional endearments . . . May your love of each other always encrease" (*Letters* 468). This was 4 April, and Thrale had still not asked for Johnson to come to him.

In Bath, the day after arrival, according to Baretti, a letter came from Dr. Jebb, earnestly entreating Mrs. Thrale not to give Queeney any more tin pills, for though it might be true that she had worms, the remedy might well be worse than the disease; it could tear the child's bowels to pieces.

Baretti said that Mrs. Thrale showed him the letter and at the same time determined to give Queeney a dose of tin pills. Baretti was enraged, and told her in no uncertain terms that

she would soon send the daughter to keep company with the son, if she gave her any more of her damn'd pills: and not satisfied with this, I informed the daughter of the horrid quality of the physic that her good mamma administered her against the positive order of Dr. Jebb . . . assuring her that [the pills] would soon destroy her. (*European Magazine*, May 1788, p. 315)

Mrs. Thrale turned on Baretti with fury, and he met her with equal fury, a battle of violent accusation ensued (the only dignity shown was on the part of Queeney who remained aloof from the conflict).<sup>37</sup> In the end, a truce of sorts was agreed upon by Mrs. Thrale and Baretti for the rest of the stay in Bath, but neither one of them ever forgot or forgave. They were enemies for the rest of their lives.

Meanwhile in London, Thrale had gained control of his grief, and

<sup>37</sup> According to present medical opinion the tin pills would have been dangerous only if given in excess.

on 5 April (Good Friday) he came himself to Johnson's house, and spent most of the day there. At seven he went to evening prayers at St. Clement Danes with Johnson. Boswell was with them and thought Thrale manly and composed.

Queeney's health had improved at Bath and she and her mother and Baretti returned to London in time for Easter. The Thrales attended the service at St. Paul's that day, and Boswell, who was also there, observed that Mrs. Thrale was "in tender grief."

On Tuesday, 9 April, she recorded the long entry on Harry's death in the *Family Book*, and the same day she wrote to Johnson (at 8 Bolt Court, where he was establishing a new residence) to say that she had shown Thrale his letter from Lichfield and her husband had ". . . shed Tears over the reading it — they are the first he has shed. — I can say no more" (*Letters* 470A).

*So ends my Pride, my hopes; my possession of present, & expectation of future Delight. M<sup>r</sup> Thrale & I have agreed to let Italy alone; we had no other Reason for going this Year, but because Harry could have spared us worse when he was at Westminster and now what should we go hazarding poor Queeney's Life for? have we /not/ had Sorrow sufficient?*

*Baretti is very angry we do not go.*

On this same day (9 April), when Mrs. Thrale drove out to Streatam for a few hours, she left her husband and Baretti arguing about the trip to Italy; the latter insisting that it would be the best possible distraction for the Thrales, that Johnson's disappointment would be great, and that in the eyes of the world they would look ridiculous not to go. His waiting friends and relations in Italy would be much put out — and some of the luggage was already in Calais — the trip must not be abandoned. Thrale said the trip was not abandoned, simply postponed. For how long, Baretti asked heatedly. He was almost sixty and he would not be fit to manage strenuous travel many years more. They must go now. Thrale held firm. The trip at present was out of the question (soon he was to give Baretti £100 for the trouble he had taken; poor amends, in the Italian's opinion).

Johnson had been told of the cancellation of the trip on Easter Day, and his reaction was very different. "Mr Thrale's alteration of pur-



pose," he wrote to Mrs. Thrale, "is not weakness of resolution; it is a wise man's compliance with the change of things":

Whenever I can contribute to tranquillity, I shall readily attend, and hope never to add to the evils that may oppress you. I will go with you to Bath, or stay with you at home.

I am very little disappointed. I was glad to go, to places of so much celebrity, but had promised to myself no raptures, nor much improvement. Nor is there anything to be expected worth such a sacrifice as you might make. (*Letters* 470)

Baretti was enraged at Johnson's philosophic acceptance.

On 15 April Johnson wrote to Frances Reynolds, to stop a rumor:

Pray tell Sir Joshua, that I have examined Mr Thrale's Man, and find no foundation for the Story of the Alehouse and mulled Beer. [Harry] was at the Play two nights before, with one of the chief men in the Brewhouse, and came home at the regular time. (*Letters* 474)

Two days after writing this letter, on 17 April, Johnson joined Mrs. Thrale and Queeney on a return trip to Bath; Thrale was with them this time. The plan was to take lodgings and to stay for several weeks. The Thrales tried to keep busy and entertained, and Johnson tried to be cheerful. It was hard for them all, even though friends were exceedingly kind. Mrs. Montagu did everything in her power to raise the Thrales' spirits, and her sympathy was deeply felt, for years ago she too had lost her son, an only child. Another bluestocking, Mrs. Macaulay, the historian, a widow of forty-five, was also attentive. (Johnson admired Catharine Macaulay's writing and detested her democratic principles.)

The person who gave Mrs. Thrale the most comfort was Miss Owen, whom she had not seen in many years, but now met again in Bath. Margaret Owen from Wales (Montgomeryshire) had been a childhood playmate, and was a distant cousin, two years younger than Mrs. Thrale. Though Johnson found Peggy tiresome, she was attractive looking, good humored, and warm hearted, easy company for Mrs. Thrale. She was deficient in knowledge, either useful or ornamental, Johnson claimed, and even Thrale joked at her lack of powers to converse. She was the butt of many family jests. And when Boswell came to Bath and was with the family for a few days, Johnson would not let him praise Peggy Owen, saying that she "does not gain upon me, Sir; I think her empty-headed" (*Life*, III, 48).

Early in May Johnson went to London; his friend Dr. Taylor needed his advice on a legal matter, a dispute with a neighbor over some land. He promised to return to Bath as soon as possible.

Mrs. Thrale hoped that Johnson would bring Count Manucci with him when he returned. The Count would be a "Goose Cap" not to wait for Johnson to accompany him. She went on to say in this letter of 8 May that she had received word from Mrs. Cumyns that Susan and Sophy had chicken-pox, "a trifling Thing in any other Family" but "for ought I know [it might] prove fatal in my ill fated House" (*Letters* 476A).

As soon as Johnson received this letter, he went to Kensington to visit "the two Babies." He found them a little spotted, but "brisk and gay." He had brought them a "paper of sweetmeats":

They took great delight to show their governess the various animals that were made of sugar, and when they had eaten as much as was fit the rest was laid up for tomorrow.

Johnson said that he was accompanied on the visit by Dr. Taylor, who liked the children very much. Mr. Evans, the Southwark rector, joined them after a while, and all listened to Susy saying her Creed in French. Both little girls sent love and duty to their parents and to Queeney. As for returning to Bath, Taylor's business still detained him, but he hoped that it would not be long before he could bring Manucci back with him (*Letters* 477). The settlement of Taylor's legal business was delayed and on 14 May Johnson wrote to Mrs. Thrale that Manucci would have to make his way to Bath alone after all (*Letters* 478).

On 18 May Johnson wrote that he had seen Seward upon his return from Bath, and that he gave a good account of the Thrales. Johnson reported that he had been to call on John Perkins in the counting house; he "crows, and triumphs; as We go on, we shall double our business . . . Dr Taylor's business stagnates . . ." (*Letters* 482).

On 22 May he told Mrs. Thrale that, as he was writing his letter to her, Father Wilkes, the Benedictine, had called upon him, bringing good news of Father Cowley, the prior, and of Mrs. Strickland, who was at present in Paris.

Taylor failed in his lawsuits, but by this time the Thrales were ready to return to Streatham. It was a return without pleasure for they knew there would be painful memories of Harry at every turn; also the house needed to be put in running order, and a new staff was re-

quired, for when the Thrales had planned to go to Italy most of the servants had been dismissed. Mrs. Thrale wrote from Southampton on 30 May, begging Johnson not to come to Streatham too soon:

If you have any pity for me do not come home till I have got my house a little to rights, & if you can hear of a *Butler* or a *Footman* or a *Maid*, or almost anything do send them to me. (*Letters* 484A)

There was little chance of Johnson's coming home at the moment. He was confined to his own house, suffering from a bad attack of gout, "I creep about and hang by both hands" (*Letters* 485).

26: *June Streatham.*

*Here am I once more settled for the Summer, with three Children instead of six.*

*On the 17:<sup>th</sup> of last April as the Italian Journey was given up we resolved to go all of us to Bath, which had done so much good to our Queeny: we went therefore, & staid till last week; when we came home by Stonehenge Southampton & Portsmouth: seeing all we could find to amuse our Sorrows & heal our half broken hearts: Hetty is quite recovered, looks once more plump & blooming; & when I fix my Eyes on her, I am still foolish enough to hope for some Felicity. when She was at worst, do not said She grieve for my Illness of all things; it's the luckiest Circumstance that could have happened to you, by forcing your Mind from the great Misfortune of all. Susan & Sophy had the Chickenpox while I was away it seems; Jebb attended them by M<sup>r</sup>s Cumyns's Directions, & said they wanted a Cook more than a Doctor: every body agreed not to plague me with Acc<sup>ts</sup>: which would once more have put my Spirits in Agitation so they prudently suffered me to mend at my Leisure. — it is the only Method. Susan's birthday falling out while I was at Bath, my Aunt <sup>38</sup> — who has been mighty kind to me, would have me keep it at her House, & treated me with Cake & Wine &c. in honour of it.*

Re-establishing Streatham was a difficult chore, the more so because Mrs. Thrale was again experiencing the difficulties of early pregnancy. (The baby was expected at the end of January or beginning of February.) Johnson wrote to her on 4 June, very glad to hear "that in your present state of mind you are going to be immediately a mother" (*Letters* 486). And Mrs. Thrale replied that the "Birth of another

<sup>38</sup> Miss Sidney Arabella Cotton. See p. 154.

Son" was the "only Event that [could] give present Consolation, or future hope of Happiness in *this Life*" (*Letters* 488A). As for Johnson's wish to come to Streatham, Thrale was away taking up his "restes" (making the annual round of alehouse keepers, to see what stock was left), and she had been ill and was "weak as a Cat," so he must not come unless he was "pretty well: what should we do together if both should want nursing?" (*Letters* 488B).

1: *July Streatham.*

*I have been dangerously ill since I came home — of a Cholera Morbus* <sup>39</sup> *the Physicians call it. Oh Lord who hast restored me to Life, give me I beseech thee something to live for! — preserve my Daughters! particularly the eldest! & let me not, Oh let me not I most earnestly beseech thee follow any more of my Offspring to the Grave.*

1 July 1776:

*My three little Girls are all with me, the thin remains of my ruined Family; I find myself with Child again however, & perhaps if God Almighty spares me any very great Troubles during Gestation, I may see another Son to live: I shall not remain here long enough to rear him — but no matter, may I but stay till I have seen my Husband without one Debt in the World; my Daughter grown up to Woman's fix'd Estate, a fortune in the Funds ready to portion her — & a Son of my own to inherit my own Estate; I shall contentedly leave him, her, and this troublesome World, & go to my dear Mother since whose Death all Evil has befallen me, /&/ enjoy her Company, and that of my heart's dear Harry to all Eternity. I will write down a Saying or two of his before I resolve to mention him no more. One day last Summer Baretti had given my eldest Daughter a long Task out of Don Quixote in the Spanish: She was fretting over it — So Miss cries Harry are you got in a Quickset Hedge? & cannot get out.*

<sup>39</sup> Cholera Morbus was the name given to an acute and severe gastroenteritis, the symptoms of which were diarrhea, vomiting, and muscular cramps. Epidemics were frequent and carried a high mortality.

The London physician, John Snow (1813–1858), in a famous experiment, was to prove that the disease was due to a water-borne cause. During a severe epidemic in the City of London he persuaded the authorities to remove the handle of the Broad Street communal pump, and the spread of the disease was promptly controlled.

Ironically, Mrs. Thrale had just returned from taking the waters at Bath, but she records nothing in her journal to suggest that she contracted the disease there.

Another day when somebody among the Serv.<sup>45</sup> was sick, I bid Harry fetch me Buchan's<sup>40</sup> domestick Med'cine to consult, or rather says I — calling him back — fetch me Tissot<sup>41</sup> 'tis the better Book — Tis so replied Harry archly.

I hate D:<sup>r</sup> Goldsmith says Harry one Day to his Sister, because he does not love M:<sup>r</sup> Murphy — I hate him too says She he is so disagreeable; let us however, while we talk of hating so freely, have a Care of D:<sup>r</sup> Beat'ye [Beattie]

One day last Winter at the Boro house Harry asked me to buy him the Devil upon two Sticks,<sup>42</sup> & asked me if it was as he had heard — full of good things: really Love replied I, I remember but one Thing in it that struck me, but I'll tell you that. The Devil seeing how gayly the the [sic] Grand Inquisitor lived, how delicately he fed, what favour he was in with the Ladies &c. — said — now if I were not the Devil, I should wish to be the grand Inquisitor. Dear me cries Harry and how like that is to the Speech Alexander made the Philosopher in the Tub! that if he was not Alexander, he would wish to be Diogenes.

On a more serious occasion — we had been reading; it was the 22:<sup>d</sup> Chapter of Saint Luke; & were speaking of Peter's denying Christ with so much Confidence. — Harry condemning him without mercy — Yet says I you must remember that this very Peter suffer'd Death for our

<sup>40</sup> *Domestic Medicine; or the Family Physician*, by William Buchan, was a doctoring aid for the reader. The book appeared in 1769, the first such English treatise. Its success was immediate—nineteen editions were issued during the author's lifetime.

<sup>41</sup> Tissot was professor of medicine at Lausanne, and author of *Avis au Peuple sur sa Santé*, Lausanne, 1761. This popular book, also a doctoring aid, was translated into seven languages.

<sup>42</sup> The 1774 edition of *The Devil upon Two Sticks* (though there were several earlier editions) was probably what Harry requested—*The Devil upon Two Sticks. Translated from the Diable Boiteux of M. Le Sage. To which are prefixed, Asmodeus's Crutches, A Critical Letter upon the Work, and Dialogues between Two Chimnies of Madrid*. London: John Bell, 1774.

The passage recalled by Mrs. Thrale is in chapter VI; on page 107 of the 1774 edition it reads: "Bless me! cried Don Cleofas, what happy mortals are these inquisitors! Indeed they are, replied Asmodeus; I myself almost envy their happiness; and, as Alexander once said, That, were he not Alexander, he could wish to be Diogenes; so I might well say, That, were I not a devil, I would be an inquisitor."

*Saviour's Doctrine, & that most willingly — I know he did replies Harry, but that was after he had receiv'd the Holy Ghost.*

Another clever saying was recorded by Baretti. One day Harry was asked by his father, what his mother and Johnson were arguing about; Thrale had entered the room and found the two in excited conversation. "They are disputing, replied Harry; but Mamma has just such a chance against Dr Johnson, as Presto [a little dog] would have, if he were to fight Dash" (*European Magazine*, June 1788, p. 397).

*Now is not this a Child to grieve after? is not this a Loss irreparable? Virtue, Health, Genius, Knowledge & perfect Bodily Proportions. — & now — all carried to the Vault all cold in the Grave & I left to begin the World anew —*

*Childless with all her Children — wants an heir?*<sup>43</sup>

At the end of June, Thrale avoided the problems at home and went fishing with James Evans. The rector of St. Leonard's was a great favorite with the Thrales.

Streatham was still not properly staffed — no butler — and guests were expected, Lady Cotton (Fanny) and "a whole Troop" from Wickham. Thrale would be back for the weekend; meanwhile his wife was inspired to write a verse about the domestic tumult — rather than to do much about it. She and Queeney had gone to the Nesbitts in Wickham:

M<sup>rs</sup> Nesbitt was just driven out at the Door  
But had left Master Arney, the Dogs & Miss Moor<sup>44</sup> . . .  
They offer'd us Cherries, Tea, Coffee and Cake . . .

Upon inquiring about their butler, she learned that they would "discard him with Pleasure," but she saw no reason "why we should receive" "a Man half a Miss, a perfum'd Macaroni . . ."

<sup>43</sup> Alexander Pope, *Moral Essays*, Epistle ii, line 148.

<sup>44</sup> "Little Arney" was Arnold Nesbitt's natural son. He had another natural son, Colebrook, a full brother to little Arnold; and Elizabeth Moore was his natural daughter. Nesbitt never had any issue by Susanna Thrale, and at his death (1779) he was to make bequests to Arnold, Colebrook, and Elizabeth.

Nesbitt was ailing at the time of this visit—he had not been a well man for three years.

Back at Streatham there was no time for rest —

Our Pea Chickens droop, and our Pheasants don't lay,  
And the Weather's uncertain for cutting the hay;  
. . . Oh my sweet Love! — what a sad World is this . . .

(*Thraliana*, pp. 265–267)

Streatham was indeed in a topsy-turvy state, and no creature there was more unhappy than Baretti. Miserable and humiliated since the trip to Italy had been abandoned, he was becoming more and more sullen. Queeney kept telling her mother that he had “grown very odd and very Cross [and] would not look at her Exercises,” complaining that the house “was no better than Pandæmonium,” what with few servants and an onslaught of guests (*Thraliana*, p. 45).

On 6 July, Baretti later wrote:

. . . Madam took it into her head to give herself airs, and treat me with some coldness and superciliousness, [and] I did not hesitate to set down at breakfast my dish of tea not half drank, go for my hat and stick that lay in the corner of the room, turn my back to the house *insalutato hospite*, and walk away to London without uttering a syllable, fully resolved never to see her again . . . (*European Magazine*, June 1788, p. 398)

23: July 1776.

*Sophia Thrale is five Years old today; She Has read three Epistles & three Gospels: I do not make her get much by heart: The Thing is — I have really listened to Babies Learning till I am half stupefied — & all my pains have answered so poorly — I have no heart to battle with Sophy: She would probably learn very well, if I had the Spirit of teaching I once had, as She is docile & stout; able to bear buffeting & Confinement, & has withal reasonable good parts & a great Desire to please. but I will not make her Life miserable as I suppose it will be short — not for want of Health indeed, for no Girl can have better, but Harry & Lucy are dead, & why Should Sophy live? The Instructions I labor'd to give them — what did they end in? The Grave — & every recollection brings only new Regret. Sophy shall read well, & learn her Prayers; & take her Chance for more, when I can get it for her. at Present I can not begin battling with Babies — I have already spent my whole Youth at it & lost my Reward at last. ———*

Sophy was not like Queeney, cold, retiring, and stand-offish; Sophy was sociable, and warm and pleasure-loving. When asked this year

what she would do if she had fifty thousand pounds, she immediately replied that she “would have a vast many Friends, and entertain them with Feasts *as grand*” (*Thraliana*, p. 147).

Queeney was more selective. She enjoyed only high society and, even in this milieu, a person had to be an intellectual as well as an aristocrat to please her.

*Somebody at Bath asked my eldest Daughter one Evening what She thought of The Rooms the Company &c. & if She had ever seen such; it was this Spring May 1776. and Hetty was but eleven Years old & a half — Yes Sir said She — I think the Room very like the South Seahouse;<sup>45</sup> & the Company — very like the Clerks.*

*Another After-noon at a Ball I shewed her M<sup>s</sup> Macaulay; and now said She I have seen the two great Literary Ladies — M<sup>s</sup> Montagu & M<sup>s</sup> Macaulay; and I have seen — that one wears Black Wool in Her Ears; and that the other — wears White.<sup>46</sup> this was at Bath last April or May 1776.*

*We lodged at Bath upon the North parade this Spring — the Corner House. M<sup>r</sup> Thrale slept on the 1.<sup>st</sup> Floor next the Dining room, Johnson slept on the 2.<sup>d</sup> Floor, so did Queeney, so of course did I: and there were some dirty Irish people lodged (at) in the Parlours. I think says Hetty our House is like the Tree in Sophy's Fable Book. The Eagles inhabit the top, the Fox possesses the Middle, & the pigs wallow at the bottom.<sup>47</sup>*

*April or May 1776.*

*These three Bons Mots of Queeney's were written down on the 1.<sup>st</sup> of September 1776.<sup>48</sup> if God should spare her Life till the 17.<sup>th</sup> of this Month, She will be 12 Years old. She is very handsome, and has a stouter look than I ever expected her to have, for She was for many*

<sup>45</sup> The South Sea Trading Company. This remark is a good example of what Baretti called Queeney's “laconism.”

<sup>46</sup> Padding the ears was thought to prevent deafness. Whether the wool was black or white was simply a matter of preference, perhaps in time becoming a personal distinction. The Ladies of Llangollen placed wads of brown paper lightly in the orifices of their ears, to protect their hearing.

<sup>47</sup> Hetty probably had Fable LXXX in mind, which deals with an eagle, cat, and fox; a later edition perhaps of *Fables of Æsop and Others. Newly done into English* (London: J. Tonson and J. Watts, 1722), pp. 140–141.

<sup>48</sup> They were also written down in *Thraliana* in May 1777.



*Years rather slight and delicate & inclined to leanness: She begins now to spread however, & her Breast grows apace; She is neither eminently tall nor short of her Age but vastly well; & near my own Height* <sup>49</sup> *when we change Shoes as we did to day for sport. She has a very competent Knowledge of the three great modern Languages, French, Spanish & Italian: writes a moderately good Hand, but will I fear never make a capital Dancer. She has a Love for Needle work of all kinds, but is capricious, & desirous to range from one Thing to another without ever finishing any: We have never tried her at Musick or Drawing; but in Pictures She is at least half a Conoscente, and is seldom mistaken when She guesses at a Painter's hand, or describes his Power — The Truth is, She has a general Knowledge of every thing which is perfectly astonishing, & I overheard her last Winter telling her poor dear Brother who is since dead, & was wondering how Cleopatra could like to drink Vinegar tho' She had dissolved a Pearl in it — The Vinegar says Queeney was not sower after the Dissolution of the Pearl: — the Acid of the Liquor imbibed the Alkaline Qualities of the Pearl, & made her a neutral Draught.* <sup>50</sup> *It is /in/ this general Knowledge more than in particular Performances that this Girl's Superiority of Understanding appears: She has indeed a Mind very uncommonly stored, I have never yet seen her Fellow at five & twenty; and I am not partial to her, Why Should I? She loves me not. and in Truth now her Brother is gone She has I think no great Kindness for any body. Baretti endeavoured by flattery, Caresses, & even by inciting her on all occasions to Oppose my Will, & shake off my Authority, to obtain her Friendship: — but in vain! When he was gone She could not suppress her Joy, & I believe She did endeavour to undermine him while he staid, but I had not observed it. She has a heart however quite empty of Tenderness or Gratitude.*

*No peace saith my God for the wicked! no quiet Gestation for me! on Sunday Night the 3.<sup>d</sup> of Sept. M<sup>r</sup> Thrale told me he had an Ailment, & shewed me a Testicle swelled to an immense Size: I had no Notion*

<sup>49</sup> Mrs. Thrale's height was four feet eleven inches.

<sup>50</sup> Queeney's chemical analysis is precocious nonsense. No vinegar exists which would dissolve a pearl. (See the story on p. 162.) As Pliny's editor says, "Cleopatra no doubt swallowed the pearl in vinegar knowing that it could be recovered later on." Pliny, *Natural History*, Translated and edited by H. Rackham (Harvard University Press and William Heinemann, 1940), III, 244, footnote.

but of a Cancer — Poor Fool! & press'd him to have the best help that could be got — no he would have only Gregory<sup>51</sup> — a drunken crazy Fellow that his Father had known: however when I pressed him with an /honest/ earnestness and kind Voice to have Hawkins,<sup>52</sup> Potts<sup>53</sup> or some eminent hand — he said it was nothing dangerous with a Smile; but that since I had an Aversion to M: Gregory he would send for one Osborne; a sort of half Quack, whose Name I have sometimes read in the papers as possessing the Receipts of a M: Daran<sup>54</sup> a famous Practitioner in the Venereal Way: I now began to understand where I was, and to perceive that my poor Father's Prophecy was verified who said If you marry that Scoundrel he will catch the Pox, /&/ for your Amusement set you to make his Pultices. This is now literally made out; & I am preparing Pultices as he said, and Fomenting this elegant Ailment every Night & Morning for an Hour together on my Knees, & receiving for my Reward such Impatient Expressions as disagreeable Confinement happens to dictate. however tis well tis no worse — he has I am pretty sure not given it me, and I am now pregnant & may bring a healthy Boy who knows? All my Concern is lest it should after all prove a Schirrus<sup>55</sup> — my Master denies it's being the other Thing very resolutely, & says he has felt it ever since he jumped from the Chaise between Rouen & Paris exactly this Time Twelvemonth:<sup>56</sup> if this should be true we are all undone, undone indeed! for it can end in nothing but a Cancer, & I know but too well the Dreadful Consequence of that most fatal Disease — Yet I will hope it may be only a Venereal Complaint, if so there is no Danger to be sure & this Osborne may manage it rightly.

*My poor Heart which is ever beating for some Family Cause, is now*

<sup>51</sup> Gregory had dined with the Thrales three days before Harry's death. See p. 449.

<sup>52</sup> Caesar Hawkins was a doctor long connected with St. George's Hospital, now a surgeon to the King. Hawkins was to be knighted in 1778.

<sup>53</sup> The distinguished surgeon, Percivall Pott, had extracted Thrale's nose polyp and diagnosed little Ralph's condition in April 1775; see pp. 417-418.

<sup>54</sup> Jacques Daran, after wide travel and practice abroad, in Germany, Austria, and Italy, had settled in Paris, a specialist in venereal diseases. His *Disorders of the Urethra* and *Treatise on Gonorrhoea* were well-known books, and he had emissaries in England, Spain, Portugal, the West Indies, and other places, ready, for a shared fee, to provide his secret remedies, both internal and external, for the treatment of venereal complaints.

<sup>55</sup> Schirrus [*i.e.*, *scirrhus*]: a hardened swelling or tumor, a cancer.

<sup>56</sup> 27 September 1775. See p. 436.

*more than ever oppressed: if he dies — the Band is burst, and we are all turned a Drift — but I will hope better things, & I saw the Surgeon smile yesterday, & charge him to live remarkably low — abstaining from Wine Spice &c. denials in such Cases are never to be regarded — I do think it is only a Consequence of Folly & Vice, no real & dangerous Disease.*

7: Sep<sup>r</sup> 76.

*I suppose now we shall hardly go to Brighthelmstone! M<sup>r</sup> Thrale's having been infected about seven Years ago when he put himself under Daran's [agent's] Care to whom he gave fifty Guineas for curing him of a Venereal Complaint in the Urethra, makes me so unwilling to believe him now when he talks of a hurt: — the more so as he never mentioned any such hurt till now: be this as it will M<sup>r</sup> Thrale's Confidence & Kindness are absolutely unattainable by me — as well as his eldest daughter's: I thought I had so behaved on that last Occasion, setting him down myself at Daran's <sup>57</sup> door, and keeping his Secret inviolable even from my Mother, as that he needed not have neglected any Ailment he might contract for fear of my Suspicions or Resentment; and now this Osborne tells me he did consult him two Months ago about this tumefied Testicle, that he advised him Vomits which he never took, & that he has been neglecting himself all this while lest I /sh.<sup>d</sup>/ think he might be tainted forsooth: as if I cared for any thing in Competition with a Life so precious to his whole Family.*

Thrale's complaint kept the family at Streatham for most of September, but they still hoped to go to Brighton later, and Johnson promised to join them when his attack of gout abated.

On 15 September the convalescent Thrale showed that, though he had been petulant, disagreeable, and complaining, he did appreciate his wife's care and understanding, for he gave her a delightful present, an ingenious one, showing special thought and recognition of her talents — six calf-bound blank books, each with a label on the cover, "Thraliana," stamped in gold.

<sup>57</sup> Not "Daran's door"; Daran did not leave Paris, his treatments were provided elsewhere by his agents. Since the man who treated Thrale about 1769 was not Osborne, it may have been the surgeon, Thomas Tomkyns, who studied under Daran in France, and became his assistant for a while. Tomkyns translated the *Observations on the Disorders of the Urethra* (London: A. Millar, 1750), and proclaimed that he was the only person in the city who could supply Daran's secret remedies.

When they were in Paris the year before, Mrs. Thrale had been captivated by French “anas” (compilations of clever sayings, anecdotes, and observations), and she was forming a collection of as many of these little books as she could find — ones which were printed. William Seward was helping her, for he shared the same enthusiasm for anecdote and “ana.” She had talked about keeping an “ana” book of her own.

And for years Johnson had been urging her “to get a little Book” to record anecdotes and observations and verse, “ev’ry thing which struck [her] at the Time” (*Thraliana*, p. 1).

It took Thrale to set the project in motion, and he did it handsomely. Showing his confidence in his wife’s persistence to fill every page, he gave her not “a little Book,” as Johnson had advised, but *six* little books. The present was an inspiration on his part — far more than anyone then realized.

The family was still at Streatham for Queeney’s birthday three days later, and for Johnson’s the day following.

17: Sept 1776.

*On this day is my dearly beloved Queeney twelve Years old — I wished poor old Nurse Joy this Moment, & gave her a Guinea & we both cried. We are going to London to put this sweet Girl’s Life into a Lease,<sup>58</sup> may She hold it as her Great Grandmother Lucy Salusbury did for 76 Years. I ought to be thankful that I have seen her arrived within Sight of Woman’s Estate; and so perfect a Creature too in Mind and Person! May God bless her! & continue her on earth many happy Years as an Example of Virtue & Wisdom adorn’d by Learning & Beauty! and may I never see Death or distress befall her*

*most fervently prays ——— H:L:T.*

Toward the end of September the Thrales, Queeney, and Johnson went to Sussex. Their trips this year, to Bath and to Brighton, were poor substitutes for the pleasures Baretti had planned in Italy — no widening of horizons, increasing of knowledge, no excitement of new sights, new friends, and new adventures — only the same restricted life, in the familiar little towns, the same old friends, and the same routine. At Brighton, one sea-bathed in the morning and went to an assembly in the evening.

<sup>58</sup> For Mrs. Thrale’s Welsh property; Queeney was to replace Harry as her heir.

Johnson, as usual, found Brighton a sad place, devoid of any intellectual stimulation; and Queeney agreed. Thrale, however, whose health was the most important concern, seemed perfectly happy to be with his old cronies. He saw a good deal of Scrase and of Sir John Shelley of Michelgrove, retired Keeper of the Tower of London Records, Privy Counsellor, and Treasurer of the King's household. The "silly and civil" Shelleys is how Mrs. Thrale thought of them, but she found Lady Shelley's company agreeable, and Queeney had a playmate in the eldest daughter (*Letters* 554A).

One pleasant event was celebrated during the stay, the Thrales' thirteenth wedding anniversary on 11 October. A charming poem in their honor was delivered this day by William Weller Pepys, a brother of Lucas, the physician. Though both Pepyses lived in London, they were much at home in Brighton, for their mother had been a daughter of a well-known doctor there. The elder brother, William Weller Pepys, had the honor of being one of the eleven Masters of Chancery. He was a distinguished, upright man, with a show of learning and elegance — very socially correct. He was a favorite of Mrs. Montagu (one wit called him her "Prime Minister"). Mrs. Thrale found Pepys delightful. Johnson did not — said he was artificial — to which Mrs. Thrale retorted that to be sure he talked "pompously of some Things that you despise, as Gardening for example" (*Thraliana*, p. 174).

On the Thrales' anniversary, however, Johnson felt well disposed toward William Weller, for his complimentary verse was splendid, a compliment to Thrale upon his choice, and a compliment to his lady, beautiful and brilliant — possessing all perfections of head and heart. Might the Thrales have many more years of happy marriage (*Thraliana*, pp. 53–54).

October passed, and soon the season was over. "The place was very dull," Johnson wrote Boswell, "and I was not well" (*Letters* 502).

30: Oct.?

*We are returned from Brighthelmstone where we have spent five Weeks: for the first fortnight I continued the fomentation to My Master's Ailment night & Morning, but no Alteration appear'd: I then wrote to Osborne asking Leave for him to bathe in /the/ Sea as he seemed to be so inclined, & received permission: he accordingly took fourteen Dips & I cannot help fancying the Tumour abated in this*

last fortnight; however I long earnestly that the Man may see it and say so too. Be this as it may, I have wronged my poor husband grossly with my wicked Suspicions: it was undoubtedly the leaping from the Chaise in France so long ago that produced the Tumor at first — for he often feels pain I find in the great Muscle of the Thigh which he strain'd at that same fatal Time, & this Disorder in the Scrotum has been coming ever since tho' he never would speak on't. perhaps he was afraid of my being frighted, perhaps of my suspecting his being tainted with the bad Distemper — he says he felt it very plain when his heart was griev'd at the death of his Son, and I dare say if it is a Schirrus — that Grief increased the Obstruction, but Osborne rather supposes it a Hydrocele,<sup>59</sup> & wished before we left Stretham [sic] that Hawkins might be shew'd it, — I will make my Master shew it now. —

30: Oct. 1776.

My sweet Queeney is come home from Brighthelmstone healthy plump & blooming & grows apace: She was half the Head taller than Shelley's eldest Daughter who is older, & looked so elegant among the Dowdies I have seen, that I restrain my Vanity with the utmost Difficulty. at every Ball however She exposed herself; it is amazing that She should dance so vilely with such a Figure & so good Instructions; but whether it is /from/ bashfulness or naughtiness I know not, or a Mixture of both — but She does dance most incomparably ill to be sure.

Somebody was speaking at Brighthelmstone of a Woman who went about for a Show — writing with her Toes; what does She write says another? at least interrupts Queeney — She does not write Manuscripts.

Johnson was repeating Sir Harry's [sic] Wotton's<sup>60</sup> Sonnet beginning *Ye meaner Beauties of the Night I knew Queeney had never heard it — whose Verses are those d'ye think said I to her, Cowley's*<sup>61</sup> *quoth She I doubt not, though I can't remember them. Bravo my Dearest cries Johnson, now that was well guessed: — they are not Cowley's, but they are exactly in his Style.*

<sup>59</sup> Hydrocele: a soft, watery benign tumor, as opposed to the hard cancerous tumor or scirrhous.

<sup>60</sup> Sir Henry Wotton (1568–1639), diplomat and poet.

<sup>61</sup> Abraham Cowley (1618–1667), poet.

*We had a strong Iron Chest brought hither before we went last away, as there has been so much Housebreaking of late — I was saying to Queeney I think this Chest will keep the Plate very safe — as it was putting up: Yes replies the Girl but it will do still more — it will keep the Thieves away for these Fellows here (meaning the Workmen) will tell their Companions how they set up a strong Box at Squire Thrale's this Morning & so the Housebreakers who probably drink at the same Alehouses — will hear of it, and not think it worth their while to come hither. —*

*Another day we were reading the News Paper & I was struck with a Story of a Murder which I read aloud; — Queeney however listening laid hold of some minute Circumstances from which She gathered that the Person suspected could not be guilty; Well done Queeney says M<sup>r</sup> Johnson thou shouldst be on the Grand Jury. This happened some Time ago, & I fancy I have written it down before.<sup>62</sup>*

30: Oct.<sup>r</sup> 1776.

*I have not seen my two little Girls yet since I came home but M<sup>s</sup> Cumyns says they are well. —<sup>63</sup>*

13: Dec.<sup>r</sup> 1776: Streatham.

*We have been to London for a Week and are returned. M<sup>r</sup> Thrale has consulted Hawkins about his Ailment, which turns out a mere Hydrocele, occasioned by the Accident of jumping from the Chaise between Vernon & Paris: Hawkins has let off the Water once, but it is filling again: and he must have it radically cured by the Seton & Caustic<sup>64</sup> after the next Tapping the Surgeons tell him. upon the whole 'tis a bad Thing, but better than I thought for every way. While he went to Town on this Errand, Miss Owen & Queeney & I took a Lodging at Bob Cotton the Linen-draper's in Parl.<sup>t</sup> Street, & diverted our selves with going to Plays, Operas, & other Amusements. Queeney grows*

<sup>62</sup> Yes, see p. 308 (21 March 1773).

<sup>63</sup> On 4 December 1776 John and Amelia Perkins had a second son, and again with insensitive kindness, they touched an open wound: they named their boy Henry, after the Thrales' lost heir.

<sup>64</sup> Caustic: a substance which burns and destroys living tissue, such as nitrate of silver. For Seton see p. 425.

handsomer & taller & fatter, and is much admired: She stood her Week's Raking<sup>65</sup> very well & Yesterday — the first Day since we came home to settle — She begun studying Musick under D<sup>r</sup> Burney, who is justly supposed at present the first Man in Europe, & whose Instructions I have long been endeavoring to obtain for her. Says Miss Owen this Burney's Name is MacBurney by rights His Family is Irish & they were all MacBurneys till of late — Hibernias perhaps then quoth Queeney.<sup>66</sup> —

Have I not reason to rejoyce in this dear Girl? & likewise to be happy about my Master & his Ailment! — I shall fetch the Girls home on Monday; — I have seen them two or three Times & they are as blythe as Birds: we shall e/n/quire into their Improvements when we have got them at home: I long to see poor Popy [Sophy], but thought it was invidious to take her away & leave her Sister, but after Xmas Susan shall return by herself & leave little Sophy for me to play with, I shall expect her to read quite readily.      Streatham the American Fast-day<sup>67</sup> — 13 Dec: 1776. —

Mrs. Thrale's purpose in coming to London was to have a little diversion and "bustle" before the birth of a new baby. She prayed for a boy. The child was expected in late January or early February.

During the long last weeks of waiting she found Peggy Owen's company agreeable, "a vast Comfort to have a Lady about one — and I have had none so long" (*Letters* 505.3A). Miss Owen was delighted to be needed and promised to stay through the lying-in, indeed through the whole winter if her friend desired it.

While they were in London the Thrales and Peggy Owen saw a good deal of William Seward and of the celebrated Dr. Charles Burney, musician and author, to whom he had introduced them earlier this year. Thrale and Johnson liked Burney, and Mrs. Thrale thought he

<sup>65</sup> Raking: the dissipation of society.

<sup>66</sup> A version of this story is told in *Thraliana*, p. 50.

<sup>67</sup> American Fastday: George III proclaimed 13 December a day of general fast and prayer for the safety of the military forces in America, for the protection of the loyalists, and the reformation of the rebels. The Archbishops and Bishops of England were directed to compose a suitable prayer for the Fastday. Beilby Porteus, Bishop of Chester, preached before Their Majesties.



was an enchanting person, so talented, knowledgeable, and high-principled, and his manners, she said, were as sweet as his music.

For his part, Dr. Burney was charmed by the Thrales, and it took very little persuading to make him agree to give music lessons to the remarkable Miss Queeney. It was arranged that Dr. Burney would come to Streatham once a week, give the lesson, and then stay to dinner, allowing all present to enjoy his company and conversation. Mrs. Thrale noted the occasion of Queeney's first lesson in the *Family Book*.

On the same day that she wrote this entry Johnson sent a letter to Boswell, in which he said:

Mrs. Thrale is big, and fancies that she carries a boy; if it were very reasonable to wish much about it, I should wish her not to be disappointed. The desire of male heirs is not appendant only to feudal tenures. A son is almost necessary to the continuance of Thrale's fortune; for what can misses do with a brew-house? Lands are fitter for daughters than trades. (*Letters* 505)

*Sat: 21: Dec: 76.*

*I have got my Girls at home, Susan has a Black Eye & Sophy a Cough: it will not however prove the hooping Cough so I am content. Susan's Temper is not good, She denies her Knowledge to avoid exhibiting; M<sup>r</sup> Johnson says She is therein the wiser — I do not suspect her Wisdom, I suspect her for having no natural Compliance in her Disposition, & I fear I am but too right. There is something strangely perverse in Queeney's Temper, full of Bitterness and Aversion to all who instruct her — I expect She will like Burney however, his Manner is so elegantly soft & gentle, I fancy if She hates that Man, She will be the first to hate him. Susan has somewhat of the same sullen moroseness in her Composition; M<sup>r</sup> Cumyns complains that She is not to be moved to Compliance when She resolves to be perverse. Sophy is more like other people's Children, of a soft gay Disposition — thanks one for a Cake & cries if She gets a Cuff; the others put me in Mind of what my Father said of a Wench that lived with us in old Times — 'Tis all one to this Girl if She is kiss'd or <cuff'd> /kick't/She can but hate one and She does that naturally.*

*Sophy has learn'd to read very prettily, and Susan writes with tolerable facility they can both work, & are I think quite well done by on the whole. —*

*M: Thrale's Complaint was venereal at last --- What need of so many Lyes about it!*<sup>68</sup> --- *I'm sure I care not, so he recovers to hold us all together.*

(To be continued)

<sup>68</sup>The journal gives no conclusive evidence to support Mrs. Thrale's certitude, and none has been found elsewhere. The hydrocele could have resulted from the injury in the accident or from a venereal infection, or from a number of other causes.

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