

PREFACE

Mr. Whatley told me the other day of a method he had taken for some time of keeping a diary. And I now intend to begin the same method and mark down every day whatever occurs to me in the day worth observing. I intend particularly to observe my own temper and state of mind as to my fitness and disposition for study or the easiness or satisfaction it finds within itself and the particular cause of that or of the contrary uneasiness that often disturbs my mind. I will also take notice especially of what I read every day. This will be a means of helping my memory in what I read. I intend also to observe my own acts as to their goodness or badness. I think there will be many advantages from this way of setting down whatever occurs to me. I shall be able then to review any parts of my life, have the pleasure of it if it be well spent, if otherwise know how to mend it. It will help me to know myself better and give a better judgement of my own ability and what I am best qualified for. I shall know what best suits my own temper, what is most likely to make me easy and contented and what the contrary. I shall know how the better to spend my time for the future. It will help me to recollect what I have read.

Monday, June 6. Rose between 6 and 7 in the morning. Employed till breakfast in reading Locke upon the lowering interest. My thoughts pretty much taken up with my journey I was to take in the afternoon especially upon the account of the dancing. Did little from breakfast to dinner but play upon my viol.

At 3 o'clock went with Skinner and Swain to Hampstead.¹ Both of them good humoured and very civil and obliging.

¹ Matthew Skinner (b. 1689) of Welton, Northants, entered Lincoln's Inn 1709; Chief Justice of Chester, 1734. His cousin was probably Thomas Swaine, son of Bennett Swaine of Hackney, whose sister married into the Skinner family.

The diary ↑
Dudley Rydes
1715-1716.
ed. William Mathews.

Swain is a man of very little conversation. Skinner very pleasant, tells abundance of stories and does it pretty well. Apt to make a jest of his cousin Swain and seems to despise him mightily. In my journey was thrown down by a hog but without any hurt. Came to the Wells, drank a pint of wine together and went into the dancing-room. Tolerable diversion, much company but little genteel. Most that danced were either dancing masters or their prentices, I suppose because a holy day. Walked upon the walks. Looked at the gamesters. The place very full. Met Mrs. Lee with her father and sister. Returned home about 10 o'clock and soon went to bed. At Hackney.

Tuesday, June 7. Rose at 8. Read Boileau's reflections upon Longinus,¹ wherein he particularly exposes Perrault for his unjust treatment of Homer, Virgil and all the best authors of antiquity. They are admirably well made and worth a second reading. Played upon my viol. Aunt Billio² and cousin's wife and daughter dined with us. Cousin Billio treats her daughter harshly and severely.

Mr. Cumming³ came to see me. Told me of the very strict examination he passed through in Edinburgh in order to be admitted as advocate. I am much concerned about the studying the law. I don't seem to gain that knowledge and insight into it that might be expected from my time at it. Went to bed at 12.

Wednesday, June 8. Rose at 7 though called at 6. Dined at my brother's. Bought 5 yards of cloth to make a suit of clothes at 18s. per yard. Met with Cousin Watkins. Saw his house and shop he is fitting up. Will cost him a great deal of money to finish it. I wish it may turn to account. Bespoke a wig of Colebuck.

Read in Madame Dacier's discourse upon the corruption of the taste wherein she defends Homer against the censures and

¹ In the 1694 edition of his works.

² Aunt Billio was Sarah, sister of the diarist's father. She married the Rev. Robert Billio (1645-1710), who was minister at the Presbyterian meeting in Mare Street, Hackney, from 1699 to 1710. Her sons, both of whom appear frequently in the diary, were Robert (m. to Mrs. Jeffries) and Joseph. Both of them were Nonconformist parsons.

³ Sir Alexander Cuming (d. 1775), called to Scottish Bar 1714. Became Chief of the Cherokee Indians in 1730 [cf. *D.N.B.*].

criticism of Mr. de la Motte.¹ She does not manage this adversary with that spirit and wit that Boileau did the same against Mr. Perrault but however sufficiently exposes her adversary.

After 7 o'clock brother called me to go to park with sister. Saw great deal of company at least there but little good. Never was walking there before with a lady. A little perplexed how to behave with respect to the giving her the right or left hand when we turned back. At first changed sides with her to keep her of my right hand but at last observing that ceremony not much regarded by others, I kept my own side in going backwards or forwards.

Thursday, June 9. Mr. Samson² breakfasted with me. We talked French together some time. He told me of the method of bringing a case to trial and of the process from the taking out of the original writ to the trial of the issue. Has an esteem for me I believe.

Went to dancing. My master told me I don't dance firmly and strongly enough. It tires me very much to dance.

Read Sir Richard Steele's dedication of his account of the state of the Roman Catholic religion to the Pope. A generous disinterested charitable spirit runs through the whole. Extremely pleased to see the book writ with so much wit, railleury and art. Immediately after read over some of my last letters. Extremely pleased with them. It is the most agreeable state of mind a man can be in to be pleased with his own performances.

Friday, June 10. Rode out in the evening with brother, Gregg and West.³ Run my sister's horse against one that Gregg rode upon. Won a treat of him. It made him mighty dull and out of

¹ *Causes de la Corruption du Gout*, 1714, by Madame Dacier, wife of the Secretary of the Academy. Antoine de la Motte, who knew no Greek, had used her translation in making his French version of the *Iliad*, 1699. This quarrel formed the second stage in the Battle of the Books, which raged for some thirty years in France. The first controversialists were chiefly Perrault, La Bruyère and Boileau. The battle was taken up in England by Temple, Swift, Wotton and Bentley, among others.

² Attorney of Bartley's Buildings.

³ Possibly Richard West (d. 1726); admitted to Inner Temple 1708, M.P. for Bodmin 1722-6. His play *Hecuba* was performed at Drury Lane on 2 February 1726.

humour all the time after. Came to town again and heard the agreeable news that the House of Parliament was upon the impeachment of Oxford and Bolingbroke. And several of the House of Commons impatient to hear whom they will impeach besides of high treason.¹

Saturday, June 11. Went after dinner to John's Coffee House.² Met with Mr. Witnoom³ and Jackson and Smith⁴ and two or three more. Discoursed about the impeachments. Jackson the same as usual sees everything in a ridiculous light, laughs at everything he says. Smith, also still like himself, corrected Mr. Witnoom for a small error in his words. Smith has a very ill custom of observing upon everything that is said and jogging me with his feet or hands to make me take notice of any that he thinks is ill said in the company. It puts me in pain for fear the company should observe it and think that I am in conspiracy with him to make remarks upon them. Returned to brother's. He and I went to hire horses to go to Epsom on Monday. Met with Mrs. Lee there. She was extremely good humoured, mighty obliging to me, loves my company, I believe. Told me she had vindicated me in the company of ladies at Hampstead from the charge of being full of the vapours. Found a secret pleasure in hearing I was talked of. It's indeed a pleasant thing to hear one's own name mentioned, and this makes it that it is a much more taking and agreeable way of address to call a man by his name when you speak to him than by his common appellation of 'Sir', and sometimes to mention his name in the third person when you are addressing yourself to himself as 'How does Mr. Such an one do' when you are speaking to the man himself whose health you inquire after.

Came to Hackney with Mr. Tickell's new translation of the first book of Homer's *Iliad* in my hand. Read part of it. Seems to be done well in the general. Should be glad to see Mr. Pope's.

¹ The report of the committee appointed on 22 March 1715, to examine the conduct of the late ministers, was issued on 9 June. It resulted in resolutions for the impeachment of Bolingbroke, Harley, Ormonde, and Strafford.

² In Bow Lane near the Exchange.

³ A Cornelius Witnoom, vinegar merchant, died on 5 November 1756 (Musgrave).

⁴ George Smith, M.A. (d. 1746), first minister of the Old Gravel Pit meeting in Mare Street, Hackney.

Emulation will I hope be a spur to their geniuses that something extraordinary may be produced.¹ Went to bed at 11.

Sunday, June 12. Walked in the garden a little before breakfast. Went to prayers in the family. Went to church, heard Mr. Barker. Was mightily pleased with the passage that was read before sermon in the 1 Isaiah where God is angry with his people for their disobedience and very emphatically expresses his anger to them: 'Bring me no more vain oblations, your new moons and your feasts are all abominations to me &c.' I thought it extremely sublime. Went to London in the afternoon with Cousin Joseph Billio. We talked together about the great advantage of a proper pronunciation and of that natural way of delivering a discourse which is scarce ever to be met with when men talk in the pulpit in the same tone of voice as they do in common conversation. Heard Mr. Trapp² the poet. He is a man of a very mean aspect and behaves very strangely in the pulpit, full of uncouth gestures and postures. His sermon was not very extraordinary, not what one would have expected from a good poet.

Monday, June 13. Was extremely sick in the night and vomited. The cause of it was some meat pie I eat for supper which always makes me sick in the night. Slept very little all night.

Rose at four to get ready to go to Epsom. Went to brother's and got out with them about half an hour after 6. Came to Epsom between 9 and 10, set our horses up at an inn, eat some breakfast, and brother and sister went to my Lady Harrison's while I looked about the town and went to the bowling green and the long room. The gentlemen here divert themselves in the morning very much at bowls. There was a great many gentlemen there. Some of them employed themselves all day long at the dice table. One would be apt to think that they valued

¹ Pope's translation was published later in the same year. The merits of the rival translations were hotly debated. Addison's opinion, which led to a bitter quarrel with Pope, was that they were both well done, but that Tickell's had more of Homer in it.

² Joseph Trapp (1679-1747), first professor of Poetry at Oxford and author of *Abra-Mile*. One of the nine Oxford poets impaled in the distich 'Bubb, Subb, Grubb, Crabb, Trapp, Young, Carey, Tickell, Evans.' He was a noisy supporter of Sacheverell.