

THE LIFE
OF
JOHN LOCKE,
WITH EXTRACTS FROM
HIS CORRESPONDENCE, JOURNALS,
AND
COMMON-PLACE BOOKS.
BY LORD KING.

LITERIS INNUTRITUS, EOUSQUE TANTUM PROFECI UT VERITATI UNICÈ LITAREM.

NEW EDITION.
WITH CONSIDERABLE ADDITIONS.
IN TWO VOLUMES.
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P R E F A C E.

AFTER the death of Locke, his papers, correspondence, and manuscripts, came into the possession of Sir Peter King, his near relation and sole executor. They consist of the originals of many of his printed works, and of some which were never published; of his very extensive correspondence with his friends, both in England and abroad; of a journal which he kept during his travels in France and Holland; of his common-place books; and of many miscellaneous papers; all of which have been preserved in the same scrutoir in which they had been deposited by their author, and which was probably removed to this place in 1710.

The works of Locke are universally known, but the individual himself is much less so; I

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have therefore thought that a more detailed account of his life would contribute to increase, if possible, the fame of that truly great and good man. The friends of freedom will excuse the attempt, from the veneration they feel for the man, and for the cause which he defended; they will be anxious to know more of one who so much promoted the general improvement of mankind; and they will learn with pleasure that his character was as pure and as exalted as his talents were great and useful.

There are, however, others who would fain keep mankind in a state of perpetual pupillage, who, carrying their favourite doctrine of passive obedience into all our spiritual as well as temporal concerns, would willingly deliver us over in absolute subjection, for the one to the rulers of the Church, and for the other to the rulers of the State. These men cannot be expected to entertain any admiration for the champion of reason and truth, nor from them can I hope for any approbation or favour in the present undertaking.

It is impossible, after the lapse of one hun-

dred and thirty years, to portray with accuracy those minute features of character which make biography often so interesting when sketched by the hand of contemporaries and friends. The most authentic account of Locke, which has hitherto been published, is to be found in the "Bibliothèque Choisie," of 1716, written by Le Clerc, about twelve years after the death of his friend. In the present attempt, the order of events, and in part also the narrative of Le Clerc, has been followed; and I have endeavoured, from the letters and memorials which still remain, to make Mr. Locke, as far as possible, his own biographer.

It is necessary to observe, respecting the arrangement of the materials, that in general the letters are inserted according to their dates, but keeping each correspondence separate; the journal is introduced at that period of the author's life when it was written; it exists in the form of small separate volumes for each year, from 1675 to 1688, and appears to have served the double purpose of a Journal and commonplace book, during his residence abroad; containing many dissertations evidently written

at the moment when the thoughts occurred. The reader will find the two first of these in their original place in the Journal, but as the article on Study was extended to a great length, broken into many parts, and not brought to a conclusion without several interruptions, I thought it better to collect the whole together, and to place that, as well as all the remaining dissertations and opinions, at the end of the Journal.

The extracts from the Common-place Books; the Miscellaneous Papers; a small part, as a specimen, of an unpublished work in defence of Nonconformity, and an epitome of his Essay on Human Understanding, drawn up by Locke himself, will be found at the end of the Life. Without presuming to express any opinion of the merits of these writings, I may be excused for saying, that the excellent and highly-finished article ERROR, in the Common-place Book, and that on STUDY in the Journal, are both worthy of Mr. Locke.

It appears from the character of the handwriting in Mr. Locke's original sketches, that after having well considered his subject, he was

able at once, without the least hesitation, to draw upon his own ample resources, and striking out his work, as it were, at a heat, to write down his thoughts, *currente calamo*, without difficulty, hesitation, or impediment. Perhaps this decision of the author, proceeding from his habit of previous reflection, and from his devotion to the cause of truth, gives to his writings that peculiar spirit which distinguishes them. His works, intended for publication, had of course the advantage of revision and correction; but as many of the following were extemporaneous thoughts committed hastily to paper and never afterwards corrected, the reader will make allowance for any inaccuracies that he may find in them.

Some persons may think that too many, and others that too few of the letters have been published; the great difficulty was to make a selection, and to show, without fatiguing the reader, the interest which was felt by Mr. Locke on so many different questions, the versatility of his genius, and the variety of his occupations. Of the letters from different correspondents found amongst Mr. Locke's papers, the

whole of those from Sir Isaac Newton, and the greater part of those from Lord Shaftesbury and Lord Peterborough are now printed. Of the remainder, nearly one hundred are from Limborch; perhaps double that number from Monsieur Toinard, containing the scientific news of Paris from 1679 for several years following; many from Le Clerc; from M. Guenelon, of Amsterdam; from Lord Ashley, afterwards the third Earl of Shaftesbury; from Mr. Tyrrel and Dr. Thomas, Mr. Clark of Chipstead, to whom the Thoughts on Education were addressed; and from A. Collins, &c. &c., amounting altogether to some thousands in number. The desire of keeping this publication within reasonable bounds, has prevented the publication of more than a very few of these letters.

Ockham, April 24th, 1829.

THE LIFE

OF

J O H N L O C K E.

JOHN LOCKE was born at Wrington, in Somersetshire, A. D. 1632; his father, Mr. J. Locke, who was descended from the Lockes of Charton Court, in Dorsetshire, possessed a moderate landed property at Pensfold and Bel-luton, where he lived. He was a Captain in the Parliamentary army during the Civil Wars, and his fortune suffered so considerably in those times, that he left a smaller estate to his son than he himself had inherited.

John Locke was the eldest of two sons, and was educated with great care by his father, of whom he always spoke with the greatest respect and affection. In the early part of his life, his father exacted the utmost respect from

his son, but gradually treated him with less and less reserve, and, when grown up, lived with him on terms of the most entire friendship; so much so, that Locke mentioned the fact of his father having expressed his regret for giving way to his anger, and striking him once in his childhood, when he did not deserve it. In a letter to a friend, written in the latter part of his life, Locke thus expresses himself on the conduct of a father towards his son: "That which I have often blamed as an indiscreet and dangerous practice in many fathers, viz. to be very indulgent to their children whilst they are little, and as they come to ripe years to lay great restraint upon them, and live with greater reserve towards them, which usually produces an ill understanding between father and son, which cannot but be of bad consequences; and I think fathers would generally do better, as their sons grow up, to take them into a nearer familiarity, and live with them with as much freedom and friendship as their age and temper will allow." The following letter from Locke to his father, which is without a date, but must have been written before 1660, shows the feeling of tenderness and affection which subsisted between them. It was probably found by Locke amongst his

father's papers, and thus came again into his possession.

Dec. 20.

" MOST DEAR AND EVER-LOVING FATHER,

" I did not doubt but that the noise of a very dangerous sickness here would reach you, but I am alarmed with a more dangerous disease from Pensford, and were I as secure of your health as (I thank God) I am of my own, I should not think myself in danger; but I cannot be safe so long as I hear of your weakness, and that increase of your malady upon you, which I beg that you would, by the timely application of remedies, endeavour to remove. Dr. Meary has more than once put a stop to its encroachment; the same skill, the same means, the same God to bless you, is left still. Do not, I beseech you, by that care you ought to have of yourself, by that tenderness I am sure you have of us, neglect your own, and our safety too; do not, by a too pressing care for your children, endanger the only comfort they have left. I cannot distrust that Providence which hath conducted us thus far, and if either your disappointments or necessities shall reduce us to narrower conditions than you could wish, content shall enlarge it; therefore, let not

these thoughts distress you. There is nothing that I have which can be so well employed as to his use, from whom I first received it; and if your convenience can leave me nothing else, I shall have a head, and hands, and industry still left me, which alone have been able to raise sufficient fortunes. Pray, Sir, therefore, make your life as comfortable and lasting as you can; let not any consideration of us cast you into the least despondency. If I have any reflections on, or desires of free and competent subsistence, it is more in reference to another (whom you may guess) to whom I am very much obliged, than for myself: but no thoughts, how important soever, shall make me forget my duty; and a father is more than all other relations; and the greatest satisfaction I can propose to myself in the world, is my hopes that you may yet live to receive the return of some comfort, for all that care and indulgence you have placed in,

“ Sir, your most obedient son,

J. L.”

It would have been more in the order of time, to have stated that Locke was sent to Westminster School, and from thence to Christ Church, Oxford, in 1651. His friend, Mr.

Tyrrell, the grandson of the celebrated Usher, Archbishop of Armagh, relates that Locke, in the earliest period of his residence at Oxford, was distinguished for his talents and learning, amongst his fellow-students. That he lost much time at Oxford is, however, certain, from his own confession; and if he derived little advantage from the place of his education, it cannot be ascribed to the inaptitude of his mind to make useful acquirements; the fault is to be found in his instructors, and in their system. It appears that he would have thought the method of Des Cartes preferable (though no admirer of his philosophy) to that of the established practice, either because the study of that writer gave him the first taste for philosophy, or because he admired the distinctness of his method; or, perhaps, he might consider any alteration to be an improvement, and any change a change for the better.

Although he acquired this early reputation at the University, yet he was often heard to express his regret that his father had ever sent him to Oxford; aware, from his own experience, that the method of instruction then pursued was ill calculated to open the understanding, or prepare the way for any useful knowledge.

What, indeed, could the false philosophy of the schools, and their vain disputation, profit the man who was afterwards to be distinguished above all other men, for his devoted love of truth, of unshackled inquiry, and of philosophy.

In the different systems of education, there may be that which is pernicious, that which is only useless, and that which is really useful. Perhaps the antient method may, without injustice, be classed under the first description; and the modern method, as a state of transition between the useless and the useful, far superior to what it once was, but still capable of great improvement.

That Locke regretted his education at Oxford, is stated upon the authority of his friend Le Clerc. Perhaps too much stress has been laid upon some accidental expressions, or rather, that the regrets expressed by Locke, ought to have been understood by Le Clerc to apply to the plan of education then generally pursued at English universities; for to Oxford, even as Oxford was in the days of Locke, he must have been considerably indebted. The course of study and the philosophy, bad as it was, fortunately did not attract much of his attention, and his mind escaped the trammels of the

schools, and their endless perplexities and sophistry. If the system of education did not offer assistance, or afford those directions so useful to the young student, the residence at Oxford did, no doubt, confer ease, and leisure, and the opportunity of other studies; it afforded also the means of intercourse with persons, from whose society and conversation, we know, that the idea of his great work first arose.

It may be said, without offence to that antient University, that Locke, though educated within her walls, was much more indebted to himself than to his instructors, and that he was in himself an instance of that self teaching, always the most efficient and valuable, which he afterwards so strongly recommends. In answer to a letter from the Earl of Peterborough, who had applied to him to recommend a tutor for his son, he says: "I must beg leave to own that I differ a little from your Lordship in what you propose; your Lordship would have a thorough scholar, and I think it not much matter whether he be any great scholar or no; if he but understand Latin well, and have a general scheme of the sciences, I think that enough: but I would have him well-bred, well-tem-

pered; a man that having been conversant with the world and amongst men, would have great application in observing the humour and genius of my Lord your son; and omit nothing that might help to form his mind, and dispose him to virtue, knowledge, and industry. This I look upon as the great business of a tutor; this is putting life into his pupil, which when he has got, masters of all kinds are easily to be had; for when a young gentleman has got a relish of knowledge, the love and credit of doing well spurs him on; he will, with or without teachers, make great advances in whatever he has a mind to. Mr. Newton learned his mathematics only of himself; and another friend of mine, Greek (wherein he is very well skilled) without a master; though both these studies seem more to require the help of a tutor than almost any other." In a letter to the same person on the same subject, 1697, he says: "When a man has got an entrance into any of the sciences, it will be time then to depend on himself, and rely upon his own understanding, and exercise his own faculties, which is the only way to improvement and mastery." After recommending the study of history, he farther says: "The great end of such histories

as Livy, is to give an account of the actions of man as embodied in society, and so of the true foundation of politics; but the flourishings and decays of commonwealths depending not barely on the present time for what is done within themselves, but most commonly on remote and precedent constitution and events, and a train of concurrent actions amongst their neighbours as well as themselves; the order of time is absolutely necessary to a due knowledge and improvement of history, as the order of sentences in an author is necessary to be kept, to make any sense of what he says. With the reading of history, I think the study of morality should be joined; I mean not the ethics of the schools fitted to dispute, but such as Tully in his *Offices*, Puffendorf *de Officio Hominis et Civis*, *de Jure Naturali et Gentium*, and above all, what the New Testament teaches, wherein a man may learn to live, which is the business of ethics, and not how to define and dispute about names of virtues and vices. True politics I look on as a part of moral philosophy, which is nothing but the art of conducting men right in society, and supporting a community amongst its neighbours."

To return to Locke's habits and life at

Oxford. Le Clerc mentions, that his very early friends and companions were selected from amongst the lively and agreeable, rather than the learned of his time; and that the correspondence with which he frequently amused himself with them, had a resemblance in style and expression to the French of Voiture, although perhaps not so finished and refined as that of the French author. His letters on Toleration, and his replies to the Bishop of Worcester, show his force of argument, and his powers of wit and irony, confined always within the bounds of the most perfect civility and decorum.

The earliest of Locke's printed works is the *Essay on Human Understanding*: the original copy, in his own handwriting, dated 1671, is still preserved, and I find the first sketch of that work in his *Common-place Book*, beginning thus:—

“ Sic cogitavit de intellectu humano Johannes Locke an. 1671.

“ Intellectus humanus cum cognitionis certitudine et assensus firmitate.

“ First, I imagine that all knowledge is founded on, and ultimately derives itself from sense, or something analogous to it, and may

be called sensation, which is done by our senses conversant about particular objects, which gives us the simple ideas or images of things, and thus we come to have ideas of heat and light, hard and soft, which are nothing but the reviving again in our minds these imaginations, which those objects, when they affected our senses, caused in us—whether by motion or otherwise, it matters not here to consider,—and thus we do, when we conceive heat or light, yellow or blue, sweet or bitter, and therefore I think that those things which we call sensible qualities, are the simplest ideas we have, and the first object of our understanding.”

The essay must therefore have remained in the author's possession above eighteen years before he gave it to the world, and in that space of time considerable corrections and alterations had been made. His earliest work, however, was of a political nature, and of a date much anterior, and, although evidently intended for publication, was never printed. It was written towards the end of 1660: the preface to the reader is curious, as the earliest specimen of his style and opinions, and strongly shows the desire of reasonable men of all parties to remove the difficulties which stood in the way of a final

and peaceable settlement of affairs in State and Church. One of the first and most necessary measures after the Restoration, and one of the most difficult, was the settlement of the Church. The King, by his Declaration, had promised that endeavours should be used to effect a comprehension, and that such alteration should be made in the Liturgy, as should make it totally unobjectionable. The tract which Locke wrote, was intended to reconcile the Low Church party to an obedience to the civil magistrate in all indifferent things in public worship, not otherwise commanded by the word of God. It is an answer to a writer who denied the right of the civil magistrate (or supreme power) to interfere in matters of religion; and in manner and style it resembles his later controversy with Sir Robert Filmer. It is an important fact in the history of toleration, that Dr. Owen, the Independent, was Dean of Christ Church in 1651, when Locke was admitted a member of that college "under a fanatical tutor," as A. Wood says in "*Athenæ Oxonienses*." The charge of fanaticism made against the tutor is either an unfounded assertion of the learned but prejudiced antiquary of Oxford; or, if true, the fanaticism of the tutor had not the slightest effect on the mind of the pupil, as the bias in

this treatise inclines, perhaps, too decidedly towards the side of authority. Great concessions are made in order to avoid the danger of civil discord, and for the sake of religious peace, which the author feared might be endangered by the zealots of the Millennium, and, as he expresses himself, "that the several bands of saints would not want, Venners to lead them on in the work of the Lord." The subject of the treatise was this:—

"Question:—Whether the civil magistrate may lawfully impose and determine the use of indifferent things in reference to Religious Worship?"

In the preface, the author thus expresses himself, "As for myself, there is no one can have a greater respect and veneration for authority than I. I no sooner perceived myself in the world, but I found myself in a storm, which has lasted almost hitherto, and therefore cannot but entertain the approaches of a calm with the greatest joy and satisfaction; and this, methinks, obliges me both in duty and gratitude to endeavour the continuance of such a blessing by disposing men's minds to obedience to that government, which has brought with it the quiet settlement which even our giddy folly had put beyond the reach not only of our

contrivance but hopes; and I would, men would be persuaded to be so kind to their religion, their country, and themselves, as not to hazard again, the substantial blessings of peace and settlement, in an over-zealous contention about things which they themselves confess to be little, and at most are but indifferent.

* * * * *

But since I find that a general freedom is but a general bondage, that the popular assertors of public liberty are the greatest ingrossers of it too, and not unfitly called its keepers, I know not whether experience would not give us some reason to think, that were the part of freedom contended for by our author generally indulged in England, it would prove only a liberty for contention, censure, and persecution.

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I have not therefore the same apprehension of liberty that some have, or can think the benefits of it to consist in a liberty for men, at pleasure, to adopt themselves children of God, and from thence assume a title to inheritances here, and proclaim themselves heirs of the world, nor a liberty for ambitious men to pull down well-framed constitutions, that out of the ruins they may build themselves fortunes; not a liberty

to be Christians so as not to be subjects. All the freedom I can wish my country or myself, is to enjoy the protection of those laws which the prudence and providence of our ancestors established, and the happy return of His Majesty has restored."

It may, perhaps, be thought, that the author in his desire to avoid the tyranny of the Saints, which he seems no less to have dreaded than that of the men of the sword, had overlooked those other and more lasting evils which have almost always attended the return of exiled monarchs.

The circumstances of the times, and the altered policy of the Government towards the Presbyterian party, prevented the publication of the tract to which the preface belonged, from which the above extracts are taken. The High Church party felt their strength in the new Parliament, and the attainment of religious peace by the means of comprehension and concession, was no longer the object of the dominant faction. The Church party now, in their turn, determined to exert their power with far greater rigour than had been shown towards them by the Presbyterians when in power, and now resolved, in the fulness of victory, to exclude all those who differed from them, whe-

ther in things essential, or in things indifferent, but at all events to exclude, to punish, and to appropriate.

Whether Locke had, at any time; serious thoughts of engaging in any profession, is uncertain; his inclinations led him strongly to the study of medicine, which seems very much to have occupied his thoughts to the end of his life, as appears from the frequent memoranda of curious cases that are to be found in his diary; and from the correspondence of his friends, who occasionally consulted him to a very late period, and from the number of medical books he collected. The praise which Sydenham, the greatest authority of his time, bestows on the medical skill of Locke, affords a brilliant proof of the high estimation which his acquirements in the science of medicine, his penetrating judgment, as well as his many private virtues, procured from all who knew him. In the dedication prefixed to Dr. Sydenham's *Observations on the History and Cure of Acute Diseases*, 1676, he boasts of the approbation bestowed on his method by Mr. J. Locke, who (to borrow Sydenham's own words) had examined it to the bottom; and who, if we consider his genius and penetration, and exact judgment, has scarce any superior, and few

equals now living. “*Nôstri præterea quàm huic meæ methodo suffragantem habeam, qui eam intimiùs per omnia perspexerat, utrique nostrùm conjunctissimum, dominum Joannem Locke; quo quidem viro, sive ingenio judicioque acri et subacto, sive etiam antiquis, hoc est, optimis moribus, vix superiorem quenquam, inter eos qui nunc sunt homines reperi tum iri confido, paucissimos certè pares.*” Mr. Dugald Stewart, in his admirable dissertation on the progress of Philosophy since the revival of letters in Europe, observes: “The merit of this method, therefore, which still continues to be regarded as a model, by the most competent judges, may be presumed to have belonged in part to Mr. Locke,—a circumstance which deserves to be noticed, as an additional confirmation of what Bacon has so sagaciously taught, concerning the dependence of all the sciences, relating to the phenomena either of matter or of mind, on principles and rules derived from the resources of a higher philosophy: on the other hand, no science could have been chosen more happily calculated than medicine to prepare such a mind as that of Locke for the prosecution of those speculations which have immortalized his name; the complicated and fugitive, and often equivocal phenomena of

