Part 4: Neoclassicism and the Eighteenth Century (1603-1688)

# 4.12 SAMUEL JOHNSON

(1709-1784)

Samuel Johnson was born in Lichfield, England to Michael Johnson, a bookseller, and Sarah Ford. Scrofula, a tubercular ailment he caught while still in his infancy, cost Johnson his sight in one eye and hearing in one ear. During his childhood, he took full advantage of his father’s stock of books and read voraciously before going on to Lichfield and Stourbridge Grammar Schools. He entered Pembrock College, Oxford but could not afford to take his degree there.

He taught at Market Bosworth School as undermaster, a position that did not suit his temperament. In 1735, he married an older widow, Elizabeth Porter. The money she brought to their marriage allowed Johnson to open his own school, Edial School. Upon its failure, he journeyed to London along with one of his pupils, David Garrick (1717-1779), a man who would become one of the greatest actors of the English stage.



Image 4.19 | Samuel Johnson

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Johnson began his writing career with translations of Father Jerome Lobo’s *A Voyage to Abyssinia* (1735). Although Johnson attempted to support himself by writing while in London, he suffered penury and the threat of depression. He wrote reports on parliamentary debates, imagining the exchanges he never witnessed firsthand; what has been called the first critical biography in English on his friend, the poet Richard Savage, in *An Account of the Life of Mr. Richard Savage* (1744); and poetry on the ethical and physical catastrophes to be endured in “London” (1738) and on the futility of desire in this transient world in *The Vanity of Human Wishes* (1749). In 1747, Johnson hit upon the important and ultimately monumental project of single-handedly writing an English dictionary.

His method of preparing this document was to rely on precedent, context, and illustration provided through quotations amounting in number to around 114,000. After eight years of hard work and conditions of sickness and sorrow—his wife having died in 1752—Johnson produced the *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755), a historic dictionary, remarkable for its meticulousness, scholarship, and, at times, its biased and humorous comments. And it demonstrated the importance and literary significance of the English language, an ongoing goal since Chaucer. It made his reputation—including earning him an honorary doctorate from the University of Dublin and the subsequent honorific of Dr. Johnson—and provided him a steady income, including an annual pension given to him by George III.

Johnson continued to write, blending sweetness and light in his moral (not moralizing) observations on such universal themes as time, vanity, faith, mercy, human encounters, and human happiness in his periodical essays for *The Rambler* (1750-1752), *The Adventurer* (1753-1754), and *The Idler* (1761); his novelistic “moral romance,” *Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia* (1759); and his critical edition of the *Works of William Shakespeare*. In his life, he endeavored to model his morality in his actions, charitably inviting into his home poor friends, supporting women’s rights, opposing slavery, founding a literary Club, and maintaining Christian cheer in the face of his own often debilitating depression. The depth and dimension of his character, his wit and acumen, were recorded for posterity in *The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D.* (1791) by James Boswell (1740-1759), an ambitious Scottish writer who, like many such, sought out Johnson and joined his Club, and whom Johnson welcomed to his circle almost as a son. Johnson continued to write throughout his life, despite increasing physical debility. After his death, he was buried in Westminster Abbey.

Johnson’s writing is characterized by its balanced, classical style. His use of the periodic sentence (a sentence with the main clause or predicate at its end) characterizes this style in his prose; his use of the heroic couplet, his poetry; and his precise diction, in both. His keen, magisterial eye glanced on events both historical and every day; on concrete, particularized details of his physical surroundings and their transcendence through such higher faculties as reason and imagination, both unclouded but sustained by faith and reliance on authority and rules. He adjures the reader to the same reliance in the closing lines of “The Vanity of Human Wishes:”

Inquirer, cease, petitions yet remain,

Which Heav’n may hear, nor deem religion vain.

Still raise for good the supplicating voice,

But leave to Heav’n the measure and the choice,

Safe in his power, whose eyes discern afar

The secret ambush of a specious prayer.

Implore his aid, in his decisions rest,

Secure whate’er he gives, he gives the best.

(349-56)

## 4.12.1 “London”

### A Poem In Imitation of the Third Satire of Juvenal

*———Quis ineptæ*

*Tam patiens Urbis, tam ferreus ut teneat se?*

Juv.

Tho’ Grief and Fondness in my Breast rebel,

When injur’d Thales bids the Town farewell,

Yet still my calmer Thoughts his Choice commend,

I praise the Hermit, but regret the Friend,

Resolved at length, from Vice and London far,

To breathe in distant Fields a purer Air,

And, fix’d on Cambria’s solitary shore,

Give to St. David one *true Briton* more.

For who would leave, unbrib’d, *Hibernia*’s Land,

Or change the Rocks of *Scotland* for the *Strand*?

There none are swept by sudden Fate away,

But all whom Hunger spares, with Age decay:

Here Malice, Rapine, Accident, conspire,

And now a Rabble Rages, now a Fire;

Their Ambush here relentless Ruffians lay,

And here the fell Attorney prowls for Prey;

Here falling Houses thunder on your Head,

And here a female Atheist talks you dead.

While Thales waits the Wherry that contains

Of dissipated Wealth the small Remains,

On *Thames*’s Banks, in silent Thought we stood,

Where Greenwich smiles upon the silver Flood:

Struck with the Seat that gave Eliza Birth,

We kneel, and kiss the consecrated Earth;

In pleasing Dreams the blissful Age renew,

And call Britannia*’s* Glories back to view;

Behold her Cross triumphant on the Main,

The Guard of Commerce, and the Dread of *Spain*,

Ere Masquerades debauch’d, Excise oppress’d,

Or *English* Honour grew a standing Jest.

A transient Calm the happy Scenes bestow,

And for a Moment lull the Sense of Woe.

At length awaking, with contemptuous Frown,

Indignant Thales eyes the neighb’ring Town.

Since Worth, he cries, in these degen’rate Days,

Wants ev’n the cheap Reward of empty Praise;

In those curst Walls, devote to Vice and Gain,

Since unrewarded Science toils in vain;

Since Hope but sooths to double my Distress,

And ev’ry Moment leaves my Little less;

While yet my steady Steps no Staff sustains,

And Life still vig’rous revels in my Veins;

Grant me, kind Heaven, to find some happier Place,

Where Honesty and Sense are no Disgrace;

Some pleasing Bank where verdant Osiers play,

Some peaceful Vale with Nature’s Paintings gay;

Where once the harass’d Briton found Repose,

And safe in Poverty defy’d his Foes;

Some secret Cell, ye Pow’rs, indulgent give.

Let —— live here, for —— has learn’d to live.

Here let those reign, whom Pensions can incite

To vote a Patriot black, a Courtier white;

Explain their Country’s dear-bought Rights away,

And plead for Pirates in the Face of Day;

With slavish Tenets taint our poison’d Youth,

And lend a Lye the confidence of Truth.

Let such raise Palaces, and Manors buy,

Collect a Tax, or farm a Lottery,

With warbling Eunuchs fill a licens’d Stage,

And lull to Servitude a thoughtless Age.

Heroes, proceed! What Bounds your Pride shall hold?

What Check restrain your Thirst of Pow’r and Gold?

Behold rebellious Virtue quite o’erthrown,

Behold our Fame, our Wealth, our Lives your own.

To such, a groaning Nation’s Spoils are giv’n,

When publick Crimes inflame the Wrath of Heav’n:

But what, my Friend, what Hope remains for me,

Who start at Theft, and blush at Perjury?

Who scarce forbear, tho’ Britain’s Court he sing,

To pluck a titled Poet’s borrow’d Wing;

A Statesman’s Logic, unconvinc’d can hear,

And dare to slumber o’er the *Gazetteer*;

Despise a Fool in half his Pension drest,

And strive in vain to laugh at *H—y’s* jest.

Others with softer Smiles, and subtler Art,

Can sap the Principles, or taint the Heart;

With more Address a Lover’s Note convey,

Or bribe a Virgin’s Innocence away.

Well may they rise, while I, whose Rustic Tongue

Ne’er knew to puzzle Right, or varnish Wrong,

Spurn’d as a Beggar, dreaded as a Spy,

Live unregarded, unlamented die.

For what but social Guilt the Friend endears?

Who shares *Orgilio*’s Crimes, his Fortune shares.

But thou, should tempting Villainy present

All *Marlb’rough* hoarded, or all *Villiers* spent;

Turn from the glitt’ring Bribe thy scornful Eye,

Nor sell for Gold, what Gold could never buy,

The peaceful Slumber, self-approving Day,

Unsullied Fame, and Conscience ever gay.

The cheated Nation’s happy Fav’rites, see!

Mark whom the Great caress, who frown on me!

London! the needy Villain’s gen’ral Home,

The Common Shore of *Paris* and of *Rome*;

With eager Thirst, by Folly or by Fate,

Sucks in the Dregs of each corrupted State.

Forgive my Transports on a Theme like this,

I cannot bear a *French* metropolis.

Illustrious Edward! from the Realms of Day,

The Land of Heroes and of Saints survey;

Nor hope the *British* Lineaments to trace,

The rustic Grandeur, or the surly Grace;

But lost in thoughtless Ease, and empty Show,

Behold the Warriour dwindled to a Beau;

Sense, Freedom, Piety, refin’d away,

Of France the Mimic, and of Spain the Prey.

All that at home no more can beg or steal,

Or like a Gibbet better than a Wheel;

Hiss’d from the Stage, or hooted from the Court,

Their Air, their Dress, their Politicks import;

Obsequious, artful, voluble and gay,

On *Britain*’s fond Credulity they prey.

No gainful Trade their Industry can ‘scape,

They sing, they dance, clean Shoes, or cure a Clap;

All Sciences a fasting Monsieur knows,

And bid him go to Hell, to Hell he goes.

Ah! what avails it, that, from Slav’ry far,

I drew the Breath of Life in *English* Air;

Was early taught a *Briton*’s Right to prize,

And lisp the Tale of Henry*’s* Victories;

If the gull’d Conqueror receives the Chain,

And what their Armies lost, their Cringes gain?

Studious to please, and ready to submit,

The supple *Gaul* was born a Parasite:

Still to his Int’rest true, where’er he goes,

Wit, Brav’ry, Worth, his lavish Tongue bestows;

In ev’ry Face a Thousand Graces shine,

From ev’ry Tongue flows Harmony divine.

These Arts in vain our rugged Natives try,

Strain out with fault’ring Diffidence a Lye,

And get a Kick for awkward Flattery.

Besides, with Justice, this discerning Age

Admires their wond’rous Talents for the Stage:

Well may they venture on the Mimic’s art,

Who play from Morn to Night a borrow’d Part;

Practis’d their Master’s Notions to embrace,

Repeat his Maxims, and reflect his Face;

With ev’ry wild Absurdity comply,

And view each Object with another’s Eye;

To shake with Laughter ere the Jest they hear,

To pour at Will the counterfeited Tear;

And as their Patron hints the Cold or Heat,

To shake in Dog-days, in *December* sweat.

How, when Competitors like these contend,

Can surly Virtue hope to fix a Friend?

Slaves that with serious Impudence beguile,

And lye without a Blush, without a Smile;

Exalt each Trifle, ev’ry Vice adore,

Your Taste in Snuff, your Judgment in a Whore;

Can *Balbo*’s Eloquence applaud, and swear

He gropes his Breeches with a Monarch’s Air.

For Arts like these preferr’d, admir’d, carest,

They first invade your Table, then your Breast;

Explore your Secrets with insidious Art,

Watch the weak Hour, and ransack all the Heart;

Then soon your ill-plac’d Confidence repay,

Commence your Lords, and govern or betray.

By Numbers here from Shame or Censure free,

All Crimes are safe, but hated Poverty.

This, only this, the rigid Law persues,

This, only this, provokes the snarling Muse;

The sober Trader at a tatter’d Cloak,

Wakes from his Dream, and labours for a Joke;

With brisker Air the silken Courtiers gaze,

And turn the varied Taunt a thousand Ways.

Of all the Griefs that harrass the Distrest,

Sure the most bitter is a scornful Jest;

Fate never wounds more deep the gen’rous Heart,

Than when a Blockhead’s Insult points the Dart.

Has Heaven reserv’d, in Pity to the Poor,

No pathless Waste, or undiscover’d Shore?

No secret Island in the boundless Main?

No peaceful Desart yet unclaim’d by SPAIN?

Quick let us rise, the happy Seats explore,

And bear Oppression’s Insolence no more.

This mournful Truth is ev’ry where confest,

Slow rises worth, by poverty deprest:

But here more slow, where all are Slaves to Gold,

Where Looks are Merchandise, and Smiles are sold,

Where won by Bribes, by Flatteries implor’d,

The Groom retails the Favours of his Lord.

But hark! th’ affrighted Crowd’s tumultuous Cries

Roll thro’ the Streets, and thunder to the Skies;

Rais’d from some pleasing Dream of Wealth and Pow’r,

Some pompous Palace, or some blissful Bow’r,

Aghast you start, and scarce with aking Sight,

Sustain th’ approaching Fire’s tremendous Light;

Swift from pursuing Horrors take your Way,

And Leave your little All to Flames a Prey;

Then thro’ the World a wretched Vagrant roam,

For where can starving Merit find a Home?

In vain your mournful Narrative disclose,

While all neglect, and most insult your Woes.

Should Heaven’s just Bolts *Orgilio*’s Wealth confound,

And spread his flaming Palace on the Ground,

Swift o’er the Land the dismal Rumour flies,

And publick Mournings pacify the Skies;

The Laureat Tribe in servile Verse relate,

How Virtue wars with persecuting Fate;

With well-feign’d Gratitude the pension’s Band

Refund the Plunder of the begger’d Land.

See! while he builds, the gaudy Vassals come,

And crowd with sudden Wealth the rising Dome;

The Price of Boroughs and of Souls restore,

And raise his Treasures higher than before.

Now bless’d with all the Baubles of the Great,

The polish’d Marble, and the shining Plate,

*Orgilio* sees the golden Pile aspire,

And hopes from angry Heav’n another Fire.

Couid’st thou resign the Park and Play content,

For the fair Banks of *Severn* or of *Trent*;

There might’st thou find some elegant Retreat,

Some hireling Senator’s deserted Seat;

And stretch thy Prospects o’er the smiling Land,

For less than rent the Dungeons of the *Strand*;

There prune thy Walks, support thy drooping Flow’rs,

Direct thy Rivulets, and twine thy Bow’rs;

And, while thy Beds a cheap Repast afford,

Despise the Dainties of a venal Lord:

There ev’ry Bush with Nature’s Music rings,

There ev’ry Breeze bears Health upon its Wings;

On all thy Hours Security shall smile,

And bless thine Evening Walk and Morning Toil.

Prepare for Death, if here at Night you roam,

And sign your Will before you sup from Home.

Some fiery Fop, with new Commission vain,

Who sleeps on Brambles till he kills his Man;

Some frolick Drunkard, reeling from a Feast,

Provokes a Broil, and stabs you for a Jest.

Yet ev’n these Heroes, mischievously gay,

Lords of the Street, and Terrors of the Way;

Flush’d as they are with Folly, Youth and Wine,

Their prudent Insults to the Poor confine;

Afar they mark the Flambeau’s bright Approach,

And shun the shining Train, and golden Coach.

In vain, these Dangers past, your Doors you close,

And hope the balmy Blessings of Repose:

Cruel with Guilt, and daring with Despair,

The midnight Murd’rer bursts the faithless Bar;

Invades the sacred Hour of silent Rest,

And plants, unseen, a Dagger in your Breast.

Scarce can our Fields, such Crowds at *Tyburn* die,

With Hemp the Gallows and the Fleet supply.

Propose your Schemes, ye Senatorian Band,

Whose *Ways and Means* support the sinking Land;

Lest Ropes be wanting in the tempting Spring,

To rig another Convoy for the K—g.

A single Jail, in Alfred*’s* golden Reign,

Could half the Nation’s Criminals contain;

Fair Justice then, without Constraint ador’d,

Sustain’d the Ballance, but resign’d the Sword;

No Spies were paid, no *Special Juries* known,

Blest Age! But ah! how diff’rent from our own!

Much could I add, —— but see the Boat at hand,

The Tide retiring, calls me from the Land:

Farewel! —— When Youth, and Health, and Fortune spent,

Thou fly’st for Refuge to the Wilds of *Kent*;

And tir’d like me with Follies and with Crimes,

In angry Numbers warn’st succeeding Times;

Then shall thy Friend, nor thou refuse his Aid,

Still Foe to Vice forsake his *Cambrian* Shade;

In Virtue’s Cause once more exert his Rage,

Thy Satire point, and animate thy Page.

## 4.12.2 The Vanity of Human Wishes

(1749)

Let Observation with extensive View,

Survey Mankind, from China to Peru;

Remark each anxious Toil, each eager Strife,

And watch the busy Scenes of crouded Life;

Then say how Hope and Fear, Desire and Hate,

O’er spread with Snares the clouded Maze of Fate,

Where wav’ring Man, betray’d by vent’rous Pride,

To tread the dreary Paths without a Guide;

As treach’rous Phantoms in the Mist delude,

Shuns fancied Ills, or chases airy Good.

How rarely Reason guides the stubborn Choice,

Rules the bold Hand, or prompts the suppliant Voice,

How Nations sink, by darling Schemes oppres’d,

When Vengeance listens to the Fool’s Request.

Fate wings with ev’ry Wish th’ afflictive Dart,

Each Gift of Nature, and each Grace of Art,

With fatal Heat impetuous Courage glows,

With fatal Sweetness Elocution flows,

Impeachment stops the Speaker’s pow’rful Breath,

And restless Fire precipitates on Death.

But scarce observ’d the Knowing and the Bold,

Fall in the gen’ral Massacre of Gold;

Wide-wasting Pest! that rages unconfin’d,

And crouds with Crimes the Records of Mankind,

For Gold his Sword the Hireling Ruffian draws,

For Gold the hireling Judge distorts the Laws;

Wealth heap’d on Wealth, nor Truth nor Safety buys,

The Dangers gather as the Treasures rise.

Let Hist’ry tell where rival Kings command,

And dubious Title shakes the madded Land,

When Statutes glean the Refuse of the Sword,

How much more safe the Vassal than the Lord,

Low sculks the Hind beneath the Rage of Pow’r,

And leaves the bonny Traytor in the Tow’r,

Untouch’d his Cottage, and his Slumbers sound,

Tho’ Confiscation’s Vulturs clang around.

The needy Traveller, serene and gay,

Walks the wild Heath, and sings his Toil away.

Does Envy seize thee? crush th’ upbraiding Joy,

Encrease his Riches and his Peace destroy,

New Fears in dire Vicissitude invade,

The rustling Brake alarms, and quiv’ring Shade,

Nor Light nor Darkness bring his Pain Relief,

One shews the Plunder, and one hides the Thief.

Yet still the gen’ral Cry the Skies assails

And Gain and Grandeur load the tainted Gales;

Few know the toiling Statesman’s Fear or Care,

Th’ insidious Rival and the gaping Heir.

Once more, Democritus, arise on Earth,

With chearful Wisdom and instructive Mirth,

See motley Life in modern Trappings dress’d,

And feed with varied Fools th’ eternal Jest:

Thou who couldst laugh where Want enchain’d Caprice,

Toil crush’d Conceit, and Man was of a Piece;

Where Wealth unlov’d without a Mourner dy’d;

And scarce a Sycophant was fed by Pride;

Where ne’er was known the Form of mock Debate,

Or seen a new-made Mayor’s unwieldy State;

Where change of Fav’rites made no Change of Laws,

And Senates heard before they judg’d a Cause;

How wouldst thou shake at Britain’s modish Tribe,

Dart the quick Taunt, and edge the piercing Gibe?

Attentive Truth and Nature to descry,

And pierce each Scene with Philosophic Eye.

To thee were solemn Toys or empty Shew,

The Robes of Pleasure and the Veils of Woe:

All aid the Farce, and all thy Mirth maintain,

Whose Joys are causeless, or whose Griefs are vain.

Such was the Scorn that fill’d the Sage’s Mind,

Renew’d at ev’ry Glance on Humankind;

How just that Scorn ere yet thy Voice declare,

Search every State, and canvass ev’ry Pray’r.

Unnumber’d Suppliants croud Preferment’s Gate,

Athirst for Wealth, and burning to be great;

Delusive Fortune hears th’ incessant Call,

They mount, they shine, evaporate, and fall.

On ev’ry Stage the Foes of Peace attend,

Hate dogs their Flight, and Insult mocks their End.

Love ends with Hope, the sinking Statesman’s Door

Pours in the Morning Worshiper no more;

For growing Names the weekly Scribbler lies,

To growing Wealth the Dedicator flies,

From every Room descends the painted Face,

That hung the bright Palladium of the Place,

And smoak’d in Kitchens, or in Auctions sold,

To better Features yields the Frame of Gold;

For now no more we trace in ev’ry Line

Heroic Worth, Benevolence Divine:

The Form distorted justifies the Fall,

And Detestation rids th’ indignant Wall.

But will not Britain hear the last Appeal,

Sign her Foes Doom, or guard her Fav’rites Zeal;

Through Freedom’s Sons no more Remonstrance rings,

Degrading Nobles and controuling Kings;

Our supple Tribes repress their Patriot Throats,

And ask no Questions but the Price of Votes;

With Weekly Libels and Septennial Ale,

Their Wish is full to riot and to rail.

In full-blown Dignity, see Wolsey stand,

Law in his Voice, and Fortune in his Hand:

To him the Church, the Realm, their Pow’rs consign,

Thro’ him the Rays of regal Bounty shine,

Turn’d by his Nod the Stream of Honour flows,

His Smile alone Security bestows:

Still to new Heights his restless Wishes tow’r,

Claim leads to Claim, and Pow’r advances Pow’r;

Till Conquest unresisted ceas’d to please,

And Rights submitted, left him none to seize.

At length his Sov’reign frowns -- the Train of State

Mark the keen Glance, and watch the Sign to hate.

Where-e’er he turns he meets a Stranger’s Eye,

His Suppliants scorn him, and his Followers fly;

Now drops at once the Pride of aweful State,

The golden Canopy, the glitt’ring Plate,

The regal Palace, the luxurious Board,

The liv’ried Army, and the menial Lord.

With Age, with Cares, with Maladies oppress’d,

He seeks the Refuge of Monastic Rest.

Grief aids Disease, remember’d Folly stings,

And his last Sighs reproach the Faith of Kings.

Speak thou, whose Thoughts at humble Peace repine,

Shall Wolsey’s Wealth, with Wolsey’s End be thine?

Or liv’st thou now, with safer Pride content,

The richest Landlord on the Banks of Trent?

For why did Wolsey by the Steps of Fate,

On weak Foundations raise th’ enormous Weight

Why but to sink beneath Misfortune’s Blow,

With louder Ruin to the Gulphs below?

What gave great Villiers to th’ Assassin’s Knife,

And fixed Disease on Harley’s closing life?

What murder’d Wentworth, and what exil’d Hyde,

By Kings protected and to Kings ally’d?

What but their Wish indulg’d in Courts to shine,

And Pow’r too great to keep or to resign?

When first the College Rolls receive his Name,

The young Enthusiast quits his Ease for Fame;

Resistless burns the fever of Renown,

Caught from the strong Contagion of the Gown;

O’er Bodley’s Dome his future Labours spread,

And Bacon’s Mansion trembles o’er his Head;

Are these thy Views? proceed, illustrious Youth,

And Virtue guard thee to the Throne of Truth,

Yet should thy Soul indulge the gen’rous Heat,

Till captive Science yields her last Retreat;

Should Reason guide thee with her brightest Ray,

And pour on misty Doubt resistless Day;

Should no false Kindness lure to loose Delight,

Nor Praise relax, nor Difficulty fright;

Should tempting Novelty thy Cell refrain,

And Sloth’s bland Opiates shed their Fumes in vain;

Should Beauty blunt on Fops her fatal Dart,

Nor claim the triumph of a letter’d Heart;

Should no Disease thy torpid Veins invade,

Nor Melancholy’s Phantoms haunt thy Shade;

Yet hope not Life from Grief or Danger free,

Nor think the Doom of Man revers’d for thee:

Deign on the passing World to turn thine Eyes,

And pause awhile from Learning to be wise;

There mark what Ills the Scholar’s Life assail,

Toil, Envy, Want, the Garret, and the Jail.

See Nations slowly wise, and meanly just,

To buried Merit raise the tardy Bust.

If Dreams yet flatter, once again attend,

Hear Lydiat’s Life, and Galileo’s End.

Nor deem, when Learning her lost Prize bestows

The glitt’ring Eminence exempt from Foes;

See when the Vulgar ‘scap’d despis’d or aw’d,

Rebellion’s vengeful Talons seize on Laud.

From meaner Minds, tho’ smaller Fines content

The plunder’d Palace or sequester’d Rent;

Mark’d out by dangerous Parts he meets the Shock,

And fatal Learning leads him to the Block:

Around his Tomb let Art and Genius weep,

But hear his Death, ye Blockheads, hear and sleep.

The festal Blazes, the triumphal Show,

The ravish’d Standard, and the captive Foe,

The Senate’s Thanks, the Gazette’s pompous Tale,

With Force resistless o’er the Brave prevail.

Such Bribes the rapid Greek o’er Asia whirl’d,

For such the steady Romans shook the World;

For such in distant Lands the Britons shine,

And stain with Blood the Danube or the Rhine;

This Pow’r has Praise, that Virtue scarce can warm,

Till Fame supplies the universal Charm.

Yet Reason frowns on War’s unequal Game,

Where wasted Nations raise a single Name,

And mortgag’d States their Grandsires Wreaths regret

From Age to Age in everlasting Debt;

Wreaths which at last the dear-bought Right convey

To rust on Medals, or on Stones decay.

On what Foundation stands the Warrior’s Pride?

How just his Hopes let Swedish Charles decide;

A Frame of Adamant, a Soul of Fire,

No Dangers fright him, and no Labours tire;

O’er Love, o’er Force, extends his wide Domain,

Unconquer’d Lord of Pleasure and of Pain;

No Joys to him pacific Scepters yield,

War sounds the Trump, he rushes to the Field;

Behold surrounding Kings their Pow’r combine,

And One capitulate, and One resign;

Peace courts his Hand, but spread her Charms in vain;

“Think Nothing gain’d, he cries, till nought remain,

“On Moscow’s Walls till Gothic Standards fly,

“And all is Mine beneath the Polar Sky.”

The March begins in Military State,

And Nations on his Eye suspended wait;

Stern Famine guards the solitary Coast,

And Winter barricades the Realms of Frost;

He comes, nor Want nor Cold his Course delay;---

Hide, blushing Glory, hide Pultowa’s Day:

The vanquish’d Hero leaves his broken Bands,

And shews his Miseries in distant Lands;

Condemn’d a needy Supplicant to wait,

While Ladies interpose, and Slaves debate.

But did not Chance at length her Error mend?

Did no subverted Empire mark his End?

Did rival Monarchs give the fatal Wound?

Or hostile Millions press him to the Ground?

His Fall was destin’d to a barren Strand,

A petty Fortress, and a dubious Hand;

He left the Name, at which the World grew pale,

To point a Moral, or adorn a Tale.

All Times their Scenes of pompous Woes afford,

From Persia’s Tyrant to Bavaria’s Lord.

In gay Hostility, and barb’rous Pride,

With half Mankind embattled at his Side,

Great Xerxes comes to seize the certain Prey,

And starves exhausted Regions in his Way;

Attendant Flatt’ry counts his Myriads o’er,

Till counted Myriads sooth his Pride no more;

Fresh Praise is try’d till Madness fires his Mind,

The Waves he lashes, and enchains the Wind;

New Pow’rs are claim’d, new Pow’rs are still bestowed,

Till rude Resistance lops the spreading God;

The daring Greeks deride the Martial Shew,

And heap their Vallies with the gaudy Foe;

Th’ insulted Sea with humbler Thoughts he gains,

A single Skiff to speed his Flight remains;

Th’ incumber’d Oar scarce leaves the dreaded Coast

Through purple Billows and a floating Host.

The bold Bavarian, in a luckless Hour,

Tries the dread Summits of Cesarean Pow’r,

With unexpected Legions bursts away,

And sees defenceless Realms receive his Sway;

Short Sway! fair Austria spreads her mournful Charms,

The Queen, the Beauty, sets the World in Arms;

From Hill to Hill the Beacons rousing Blaze

Spreads wide the Hope of Plunder and of Praise;

The fierce Croatian, and the wild Hussar,

And all the Sons of Ravage croud the War;

The baffled Prince in Honour’s flatt’ring Bloom

Of hasty Greatness finds the fatal Doom,

His foes Derision, and his Subjects Blame,

And steals to Death from Anguish and from Shame.

Enlarge my Life with Multitude of Days,

In Health, in Sickness, thus the Suppliant prays;

Hides from himself his State, and shuns to know,

That Life protracted is protracted Woe.

Time hovers o’er, impatient to destroy,

And shuts up all the Passages of Joy:

In vain their Gifts the bounteous Seasons pour,

The Fruit autumnal, and the Vernal Flow’r,

With listless Eyes the Dotard views the Store,

He views, and wonders that they please no more;

Now pall the tastless Meats, and joyless Wines,

And Luxury with Sighs her Slave resigns.

Approach, ye Minstrels, try the soothing Strain,

And yield the tuneful Lenitives of Pain:

No Sounds alas would touch th’ impervious Ear,

Though dancing Mountains witness’d Orpheus near;

Nor Lute nor Lyre his feeble Pow’rs attend,

Nor sweeter Musick of a virtuous Friend,

But everlasting Dictates croud his Tongue,

Perversely grave, or positively wrong.

The still returning Tale, and ling’ring Jest,

Perplex the fawning Niece and pamper’d Guest,

While growing Hopes scarce awe the gath’ring Sneer,

And scarce a Legacy can bribe to hear;

The watchful Guests still hint the last Offence,

The Daughter’s Petulance, the Son’s Expence,

Improve his heady Rage with treach’rous Skill,

And mould his Passions till they make his Will.

Unnumber’d Maladies each Joint invade,

Lay Siege to Life and press the dire Blockade;

But unextinguish’d Av’rice still remains,

And dreaded Losses aggravate his Pains;

He turns, with anxious Heart and cripled Hands,

His Bonds of Debt, and Mortgages of Lands;

Or views his Coffers with suspicious Eyes,

Unlocks his Gold, and counts it till he dies.

But grant, the Virtues of a temp’rate Prime

Bless with an Age exempt from Scorn or Crime;

An Age that melts in unperceiv’d Decay,

And glides in modest Innocence away;

Whose peaceful Day Benevolence endears,

Whose Night congratulating Conscience cheers;

The gen’ral Fav’rite as the gen’ral Friend:

Such Age there is, and who could wish its end?

Yet ev’n on this her Load Misfortune flings,

To press the weary Minutes flagging Wings:

New Sorrow rises as the Day returns,

A Sister sickens, or a Daughter mourns.

Now Kindred Merit fills the sable Bier,

Now lacerated Friendship claims a Tear.

Year chases Year, Decay pursues Decay,

Still drops some Joy from with’ring Life away;

New Forms arise, and diff’rent Views engage,

Superfluous lags the Vet’ran on the Stage,

Till pitying Nature signs the last Release,

And bids afflicted Worth retire to Peace.

But few there are whom Hours like these await,

Who set unclouded in the Gulphs of fate.

From Lydia’s monarch should the Search descend,

By Solon caution’d to regard his End,

In Life’s last Scene what Prodigies surprise,

Fears of the Brave, and Follies of the Wise?

From Marlb’rough’s Eyes the Streams of Dotage flow,

And Swift expires a Driv’ler and a Show.

The teeming Mother, anxious for her Race,

Begs for each Birth the Fortune of a Face:

Yet Vane could tell what Ills from Beauty spring;

And Sedley curs’d the Form that pleas’d a King.

Ye Nymphs of rosy Lips and radiant Eyes,

Whom Pleasure keeps too busy to be wise,

Whom Joys with soft Varieties invite

By Day the Frolick, and the Dance by Night,

Who frown with Vanity, who smile with Art,

And ask the latest Fashion of the Heart,

What Care, what Rules your heedless Charms shall save,

Each Nymph your Rival, and each Youth your Slave?

An envious Breast with certain Mischief glows,

And Slaves, the Maxim tells, are always Foes.

Against your Fame with Fondness Hate combines,

The Rival batters, and the Lover mines.

With distant Voice neglected Virtue calls,

Less heard, and less the faint Remonstrance falls;

Tir’d with Contempt, she quits the slipp’ry Reign,

And Pride and Prudence take her Seat in vain.

In croud at once, where none the Pass defend,

The harmless Freedom, and the private Friend.

The Guardians yield, by Force superior ply’d;

By Int’rest, Prudence; and by Flatt’ry, Pride.

Here Beauty falls betray’d, despis’d, distress’d,

And hissing Infamy proclaims the rest.

Where then shall Hope and Fear their Objects find?

Must dull Suspence corrupt the stagnant Mind?

Must helpless Man, in Ignorance sedate,

Swim darkling down the Current of his Fate?

Must no Dislike alarm, no Wishes rise,

No Cries attempt the Mercies of the Skies?

Enquirer, cease, Petitions yet remain,

Which Heav’n may hear, nor deem Religion vain.

Still raise for Good the supplicating Voice,

But leave to Heav’n the Measure and the Choice.

Safe in his Pow’r, whose Eyes discern afar

The secret Ambush of a specious Pray’r.

Implore his Aid, in his Decisions rest,

Secure whate’er he gives, he gives the best.

Yet with the Sense of sacred Presence prest,

When strong Devotion fills thy glowing Breast,

Pour forth thy Fervours for a healthful Mind,

Obedient Passions, and a Will resign’d;

For Love, which scarce collective Man can fill;

For Patience sov’reign o’er transmuted Ill;

For Faith, that panting for a happier Seat,

Thinks Death kind Nature’s Signal of Retreat:

These Goods for Man the Laws of Heav’n ordain,

These Goods he grants, who grants the Pow’r to gain;

With these celestial Wisdom calms the Mind,

And makes the Happiness she does not find.

## 4.12.3 From Dictionary of the English Language

(1755)

**art** n.s. [*arte*, Fr. *ars*, Lat.]

1. The power of doing something not taught by nature and instinct; as, to *walk* is natural, to *dance* is an *art*.

*Art is properly an habitual knowledge of certain rules and maxims, by which a man is governed and directed in his actions*. South.

*Blest with each grace of nature and of art*. Pope.

*Ev’n copious Dryden wanted, or forgot,*

*The last and greatest art, the art to blot*. Pope.

1. A science; as, the liberal *arts*.

*Arts that respect the mind were ever reputed nobler than those that serve the body.* Ben. Johnson’s Discovery.

1. A trade.

*This observation is afforded us by the art of making sugar.* Boyle.

1. Artfulness; skill; dexterity.

*The art of our necessities is strange,*

*That can make vile things precious*. Shak. King Lear.

1. Cunning.
2. Speculation.

*I have as much of this in art as you;*

*But yet my nature could not bear it so*. Shakesp. J. Cæsar.

**díctionary** n.s. [*dictionarium*, Latin.] A book containing the words of any language in alphabetical order, with explanations of their meaning; a lexicon; a vocabulary; a word-book.

*Some have delivered the polity of spirits, and left an account that they stand in awe of charms, spells, and conjurations; that they are afraid of letters and characters, notes and dashes, which, set together, do signify nothing; and not only in the dictionary of man, but in the subtler vocabulary of satan*. Brown’s Vulgar Errours, b. i. c. 10.

*Is it such a horrible fault to translate simulacra images? I see what a good thing it is to have a good catholick dictionary*. Still.

*An army, or a parliament, is a collection of men; a dictionary, or nomenclature, is a collection of words*. Watts

**etch** n.s. A country word, of which I know not the meaning.

*When they sow their etch crops, they sprinkle a pound or two of clover on an acre.* Mortimer’s Husbandry.

*Where you find dunging of land makes it rank, lay dung upon the etch, and sow it with barley*. Mortimer’s Husbandry.

**excíse** n.s. [*accijs*, Dutch; *excisum*, Latin.] A hateful tax levied upon commodities, and adjudged not by the common judges of property, but wretches hired by those to whom excise is paid.

*The people should pay a ratable tax for their sheep, and an excise for every thing which they should eat*. Hayward.

*Ambitious now to take excise*

*Of a more fragrant paradise*. Cleaveland.

*Excise,*

*With hundred rows of teeth, the shark* exceeds*, And on all trades like Cassawar she feeds*. Marvel.

*Can hire large houses, and oppress the poor, By farm’d excise*. Dryden’s Juvenal, Sat. 3.

**pátron** n.s. [*patron*, Fr. *patronus*, Latin.]

1. One who countenances, supports or protects. Commonly a wretch who supports with insolence, and is paid with flattery.

*I’ll plead for you, as for my patro*. Shakesp.

*Ne’er let me pass in silence Dorset’s name; Ne’er cease to mention the continu’d debt,*

*Which the great patron only would forget*. Prior.

1. A guardian saint.

*Thou amongst those saints, whom thou do’st see, Shall be a saint, and thine own nation’s friend And patron*. Fairy Queen, b. i.

*St. Michael is mentioned as the patron of the Jews, and is now taken by the Christians, as the protector general of our religion*. Dryden.

1. Advocate; defender; vindicator.

*We are no patrons of those things; the best defence whereof is speedy redress and amendment.* Hooker, b. ii. s. 1.

*Whether the minds of men have naturally imprinted on them the ideas of extension and number, I leave to those who are the patrons of innate principles.* Locke.

1. One who has donation of ecclesiastical preferment.

**pénsion** n.s. [*pension*, Fr.] An allowance made to any one without an equivalent. In England it is generally understood to mean pay given to a state hireling for treason to his country.

*A charity bestowed on the education of her young subjects has more merit than a thousand pensions to those of a higher fortune*. Addison’s Guardian, No 105.

*He has liv’d with the great without flattery, and been a friend to men in power without pensions*. Pope.

## 4.12.4 From The History of Rasselas

(1759)

### Chapter I: Description of a Palace in a Valley

Ye who listen with credulity to the whispers of fancy, and pursue with eagerness the phantoms of hope; who expect that age will perform the promises of youth, and that the deficiencies of the present day will be supplied by the morrow, attend to the history of Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia.

Rasselas was the fourth son of the mighty Emperor in whose dominions the father of waters begins his course—whose bounty pours down the streams of plenty, and scatters over the world the harvests of Egypt.

According to the custom which has descended from age to age among the monarchs of the torrid zone, Rasselas was confined in a private palace, with the other sons and daughters of Abyssinian royalty, till the order of succession should call him to the throne.

The place which the wisdom or policy of antiquity had destined for the residence of the Abyssinian princes was a spacious valley in the kingdom of Amhara, surrounded on every side by mountains, of which the summits overhang the middle part. The only passage by which it could be entered was a cavern that passed under a rock, of which it had long been disputed whether it was the work of nature or of human industry. The outlet of the cavern was concealed by a thick wood, and the mouth which opened into the valley was closed with gates of iron, forged by the artificers of ancient days, so massive that no man, without the help of engines, could open or shut them.

From the mountains on every side rivulets descended that filled all the valley with verdure and fertility, and formed a lake in the middle, inhabited by fish of every species, and frequented by every fowl whom nature has taught to dip the wing in water. This lake discharged its superfluities by a stream, which entered a dark cleft of the mountain on the northern side, and fell with dreadful noise from precipice to precipice till it was heard no more.

The sides of the mountains were covered with trees, the banks of the brooks were diversified with flowers; every blast shook spices from the rocks, and every month dropped fruits upon the ground. All animals that bite the grass or browse the shrubs, whether wild or tame, wandered in this extensive circuit, secured from beasts of prey by the mountains which confined them. On one part were flocks and herds feeding in the pastures, on another all the beasts of chase frisking in the lawns, the sprightly kid was bounding on the rocks, the subtle monkey frolicking in the trees, and the solemn elephant reposing in the shade. All the diversities of the world were brought together, the blessings of nature were collected, and its evils extracted and excluded.

The valley, wide and fruitful, supplied its inhabitants with all the necessaries of life, and all delights and superfluities were added at the annual visit which the Emperor paid his children, when the iron gate was opened to the sound of music, and during eight days every one that resided in the valley was required to propose whatever might contribute to make seclusion pleasant, to fill up the vacancies of attention, and lessen the tediousness of time. Every desire was immediately granted. All the artificers of pleasure were called to gladden the festivity; the musicians exerted the power of harmony, and the dancers showed their activity before the princes, in hopes that they should pass their lives in blissful captivity, to which those only were admitted whose performance was thought able to add novelty to luxury. Such was the appearance of security and delight which this retirement afforded, that they to whom it was new always desired that it might be perpetual; and as those on whom the iron gate had once closed were never suffered to return, the effect of longer experience could not be known. Thus every year produced new scenes of delight, and new competitors for imprisonment.

The palace stood on an eminence, raised about thirty paces above the surface of the lake. It was divided into many squares or courts, built with greater or less magnificence according to the rank of those for whom they were designed. The roofs were turned into arches of massive stone, joined by a cement that grew harder by time, and the building stood from century to century, deriding the solstitial rains and equinoctial hurricanes, without need of reparation.

This house, which was so large as to be fully known to none but some ancient officers, who successively inherited the secrets of the place, was built as if Suspicion herself had dictated the plan. To every room there was an open and secret passage; every square had a communication with the rest, either from the upper storeys by private galleries, or by subterraneous passages from the lower apartments. Many of the columns had unsuspected cavities, in which a long race of monarchs had deposited their treasures. They then closed up the opening with marble, which was never to be removed but in the utmost exigences of the kingdom, and recorded their accumulations in a book, which was itself concealed in a tower, not entered but by the Emperor, attended by the prince who stood next in succession.

### Chapter II: The Discontent of Rasselas in the Happy Valley

Here the sons and daughters of Abyssinia lived only to know the soft vicissitudes of pleasure and repose, attended by all that were skilful to delight, and gratified with whatever the senses can enjoy. They wandered in gardens of fragrance, and slept in the fortresses of security. Every art was practised to make them pleased with their own condition. The sages who instructed them told them of nothing but the miseries of public life, and described all beyond the mountains as regions of calamity, where discord was always racing, and where man preyed upon man. To heighten their opinion of their own felicity, they were daily entertained with songs, the subject of which was the Happy Valley. Their appetites were excited by frequent enumerations of different enjoyments, and revelry and merriment were the business of every hour, from the dawn of morning to the close of the evening.

These methods were generally successful; few of the princes had ever wished to enlarge their bounds, but passed their lives in full conviction that they had all within their reach that art or nature could bestow, and pitied those whom nature had excluded from this seat of tranquillity as the sport of chance and the slaves of misery.

Thus they rose in the morning and lay down at night, pleased with each other and with themselves, all but Rasselas, who, in the twenty-sixth year of his age, began to withdraw himself from the pastimes and assemblies, and to delight in solitary walks and silent meditation. He often sat before tables covered with luxury, and forgot to taste the dainties that were placed before him; he rose abruptly in the midst of the song, and hastily retired beyond the sound of music. His attendants observed the change, and endeavoured to renew his love of pleasure. He neglected their officiousness, repulsed their invitations, and spent day after day on the banks of rivulets sheltered with trees, where he sometimes listened to the birds in the branches, sometimes observed the fish playing in the streams, and anon cast his eyes upon the pastures and mountains filled with animals, of which some were biting the herbage, and some sleeping among the bushes. The singularity of his humour made him much observed. One of the sages, in whose conversation he had formerly delighted, followed him secretly, in hope of discovering the cause of his disquiet. Rasselas, who knew not that any one was near him, having for some time fixed his eyes upon the goats that were browsing among the rocks, began to compare their condition with his own.

“What,” said he, “makes the difference between man and all the rest of the animal creation? Every beast that strays beside me has the same corporal necessities with myself: he is hungry, and crops the grass; he is thirsty, and drinks the stream; his thirst and hunger are appeased; he is satisfied, and sleeps; he rises again, and is hungry; he is again fed, and is at rest. I am hungry and thirsty, like him, but when thirst and hunger cease, I am not at rest. I am, like him, pained with want, but am not, like him, satisfied with fulness. The intermediate hours are tedious and gloomy; I long again to be hungry that I may again quicken the attention. The birds peck the berries or the corn, and fly away to the groves, where they sit in seeming happiness on the branches, and waste their lives in tuning one unvaried series of sounds. I likewise can call the lutist and the singer; but the sounds that pleased me yesterday weary me to-day, and will grow yet more wearisome to-morrow. I can discover in me no power of perception which is not glutted with its proper pleasure, yet I do not feel myself delighted. Man surely has some latent sense for which this place affords no gratification; or he has some desire distinct from sense, which must be satisfied before he can be happy.”

After this he lifted up his head, and seeing the moon rising, walked towards the palace. As he passed through the fields, and saw the animals around him, “Ye,” said he, “are happy, and need not envy me that walk thus among you, burdened with myself; nor do I, ye gentle beings, envy your felicity; for it is not the felicity of man. I have many distresses from which you are free; I fear pain when I do not feel it; I sometimes shrink at evils recollected, and sometimes start at evils anticipated: surely the equity of Providence has balanced peculiar sufferings with peculiar enjoyments.”

With observations like these the Prince amused himself as he returned, uttering them with a plaintive voice, yet with a look that discovered him to feel some complacence in his own perspicacity, and to receive some solace of the miseries of life from consciousness of the delicacy with which he felt and the eloquence with which he bewailed them. He mingled cheerfully in the diversions of the evening, and all rejoiced to find that his heart was lightened.

### Chapter III: The Wants of Him that Wants Nothing

On the next day, his old instructor, imagining that he had now made himself acquainted with his disease of mind, was in hope of curing it by counsel, and officiously sought an opportunity of conference, which the Prince, having long considered him as one whose intellects were exhausted, was not very willing to afford. “Why,” said he, “does this man thus intrude upon me? Shall I never be suffered to forget these lectures, which pleased only while they were new, and to become new again must be forgotten?” He then walked into the wood, and composed himself to his usual meditations; when, before his thoughts had taken any settled form, he perceived his pursuer at his side, and was at first prompted by his impatience to go hastily away; but being unwilling to offend a man whom he had once reverenced and still loved, he invited him to sit down with him on the bank.

The old man, thus encouraged, began to lament the change which had been lately observed in the Prince, and to inquire why he so often retired from the pleasures of the palace to loneliness and silence. “I fly from pleasure,” said the Prince, “because pleasure has ceased to please: I am lonely because I am miserable, and am unwilling to cloud with my presence the happiness of others.” “You, sir,” said the sage, “are the first who has complained of misery in the Happy Valley. I hope to convince you that your complaints have no real cause. You are here in full possession of all the Emperor of Abyssinia can bestow; here is neither labour to be endured nor danger to be dreaded, yet here is all that labour or danger can procure or purchase. Look round and tell me which of your wants is without supply: if you want nothing, how are you unhappy?”

“That I want nothing,” said the Prince, “or that I know not what I want, is the cause of my complaint: if I had any known want, I should have a certain wish; that wish would excite endeavour, and I should not then repine to see the sun move so slowly towards the western mountains, or to lament when the day breaks, and sleep will no longer hide me from myself. When I see the kids and the lambs chasing one another, I fancy that I should be happy if I had something to pursue. But, possessing all that I can want, I find one day and one hour exactly like another, except that the latter is still more tedious than the former. Let your experience inform me how the day may now seem as short as in my childhood, while nature was yet fresh, and every moment showed me what I never had observed before. I have already enjoyed too much: give me something to desire.” The old man was surprised at this new species of affliction, and knew not what to reply, yet was unwilling to be silent. “Sir,” said he, “if you had seen the miseries of the world, you would know how to value your present state.” “Now,” said the Prince, “you have given me something to desire. I shall long to see the miseries of the world, since the sight of them is necessary to happiness.”

### Chapter IV: The Prince Continues to Grieve and Muse

At this time the sound of music proclaimed the hour of repast, and the conversation was concluded. The old man went away sufficiently discontented to find that his reasonings had produced the only conclusion which they were intended to prevent. But in the decline of life, shame and grief are of short duration: whether it be that we bear easily what we have borne long; or that, finding ourselves in age less regarded, we less regard others; or that we look with slight regard upon afflictions to which we know that the hand of death is about to put an end.

The Prince, whose views were extended to a wider space, could not speedily quiet his emotions. He had been before terrified at the length of life which nature promised him, because he considered that in a long time much must be endured: he now rejoiced in his youth, because in many years much might be done. The first beam of hope that had been ever darted into his mind rekindled youth in his cheeks, and doubled the lustre of his eyes. He was fired with the desire of doing something, though he knew not yet, with distinctness, either end or means. He was now no longer gloomy and unsocial; but considering himself as master of a secret stock of happiness, which he could only enjoy by concealing it, he affected to be busy in all the schemes of diversion, and endeavoured to make others pleased with the state of which he himself was weary. But pleasures can never be so multiplied or continued as not to leave much of life unemployed; there were many hours, both of the night and day, which he could spend without suspicion in solitary thought. The load of life was much lightened; he went eagerly into the assemblies, because he supposed the frequency of his presence necessary to the success of his purposes; he retired gladly to privacy, because he had now a subject of thought. His chief amusement was to picture to himself that world which he had never seen, to place himself in various conditions, to be entangled in imaginary difficulties, and to be engaged in wild adventures; but, his benevolence always terminated his projects in the relief of distress, the detection of fraud, the defeat of oppression, and the diffusion of happiness.

Thus passed twenty months of the life of Rasselas. He busied himself so intensely in visionary bustle that he forgot his real solitude; and amidst hourly preparations for the various incidents of human affairs, neglected to consider by what means he should mingle with mankind.

One day, as he was sitting on a bank, he feigned to himself an orphan virgin robbed of her little portion by a treacherous lover, and crying after him for restitution. So strongly was the image impressed upon his mind that he started up in the maid’s defence, and ran forward to seize the plunderer with all the eagerness of real pursuit. Fear naturally quickens the flight of guilt. Rasselas could not catch the fugitive with his utmost efforts; but, resolving to weary by perseverance him whom he could not surpass in speed, he pressed on till the foot of the mountain stopped his course.

Here he recollected himself, and smiled at his own useless impetuosity. Then raising his eyes to the mountain, “This,” said he, “is the fatal obstacle that hinders at once the enjoyment of pleasure and the exercise of virtue. How long is it that my hopes and wishes have flown beyond this boundary of my life, which yet I never have attempted to surmount?”

Struck with this reflection, he sat down to muse, and remembered that since he first resolved to escape from his confinement, the sun had passed twice over him in his annual course. He now felt a degree of regret with which he had never been before acquainted. He considered how much might have been done in the time which had passed, and left nothing real behind it. He compared twenty months with the life of man. “In life,” said he, “is not to be counted the ignorance of infancy or imbecility of age. We are long before we are able to think, and we soon cease from the power of acting. The true period of human existence may be reasonably estimated at forty years, of which I have mused away the four-and-twentieth part. What I have lost was certain, for I have certainly possessed it; but of twenty months to come, who can assure me?”

The consciousness of his own folly pierced him deeply, and he was long before he could be reconciled to himself. “The rest of my time,” said he, “has been lost by the crime or folly of my ancestors, and the absurd institutions of my country; I remember it with disgust, yet without remorse: but the months that have passed since new light darted into my soul, since I formed a scheme of reasonable felicity, have been squandered by my own fault. I have lost that which can never be restored; I have seen the sun rise and set for twenty months, an idle gazer on the light of heaven; in this time the birds have left the nest of their mother, and committed themselves to the woods and to the skies; the kid has forsaken the teat, and learned by degrees to climb the rocks in quest of independent sustenance. I only have made no advances, but am still helpless and ignorant. The moon, by more than twenty changes, admonished me of the flux of life; the stream that rolled before my feet upbraided my inactivity. I sat feasting on intellectual luxury, regardless alike of the examples of the earth and the instructions of the planets. Twenty months are passed: who shall restore them?”

These sorrowful meditations fastened upon his mind; he passed four months in resolving to lose no more time in idle resolves, and was awakened to more vigorous exertion by hearing a maid, who had broken a porcelain cup, remark that what cannot be repaired is not to be regretted.

This was obvious; and Rasselas reproached himself that he had not discovered it—having not known, or not considered, how many useful hints are obtained by chance, and how often the mind, hurried by her own ardour to distant views, neglects the truths that lie open before her. He for a few hours regretted his regret, and from that time bent his whole mind upon the means of escaping from the Valley of Happiness.

### Chapter V: The Prince Meditates his Escape

He now found that it would be very difficult to effect that which it was very easy to suppose effected. When he looked round about him, he saw himself confined by the bars of nature, which had never yet been broken, and by the gate through which none that had once passed it were ever able to return. He was now impatient as an eagle in a grate. He passed week after week in clambering the mountains to see if there was any aperture which the bushes might conceal, but found all the summits inaccessible by their prominence. The iron gate he despaired to open for it was not only secured with all the power of art, but was always watched by successive sentinels, and was, by its position, exposed to the perpetual observation of all the inhabitants.

He then examined the cavern through which the waters of the lake were discharged; and, looking down at a time when the sun shone strongly upon its mouth, he discovered it to be full of broken rocks, which, though they permitted the stream to flow through many narrow passages, would stop any body of solid bulk. He returned discouraged and dejected; but having now known the blessing of hope, resolved never to despair.

In these fruitless researches he spent ten months. The time, however, passed cheerfully away—in the morning he rose with new hope; in the evening applauded his own diligence; and in the night slept soundly after his fatigue. He met a thousand amusements, which beguiled his labour and diversified his thoughts. He discerned the various instincts of animals and properties of plants, and found the place replete with wonders, of which he proposed to solace himself with the contemplation if he should never be able to accomplish his flight—rejoicing that his endeavours, though yet unsuccessful, had supplied him with a source of inexhaustible inquiry. But his original curiosity was not yet abated; he resolved to obtain some knowledge of the ways of men. His wish still continued, but his hope grew less. He ceased to survey any longer the walls of his prison, and spared to search by new toils for interstices which he knew could not be found, yet determined to keep his design always in view, and lay hold on any expedient that time should offer. [Rasselas tries to escape through the assistance of an inventor then turns to a man of learning, Imlac, whose biography is recounted. Imlac shares his views on the highest form of learning, Poetry, and on acts of piety, such as pilgrimage. Rasselas and Imlac consider the means and sources of happiness.]

### Chapter XIII: The Prince Discovers the Means of Escape

The Prince now dismissed his favourite to rest; but the narrative of wonders and novelties filled his mind with perturbation. He revolved all that he had heard, and prepared innumerable questions for the morning.

Much of his uneasiness was now removed. He had a friend to whom he could impart his thoughts, and whose experience could assist him in his designs. His heart was no longer condemned to swell with silent vexation. He thought that even the Happy Valley might be endured with such a companion, and that if they could range the world together he should have nothing further to desire.

In a few days the water was discharged, and the ground dried. The Prince and Imlac then walked out together, to converse without the notice of the rest. The Prince, whose thoughts were always on the wing, as he passed by the gate said, with a countenance of sorrow, “Why art thou so strong, and why is man so weak?”

“Man is not weak,” answered his companion; “knowledge is more than equivalent to force. The master of mechanics laughs at strength. I can burst the gate, but cannot do it secretly. Some other expedient must be tried.”

As they were walking on the side of the mountain they observed that the coneys, which the rain had driven from their burrows, had taken shelter among the bushes, and formed holes behind them tending upwards in an oblique line. “It has been the opinion of antiquity,” said Imlac, “that human reason borrowed many arts from the instinct of animals; let us, therefore, not think ourselves degraded by learning from the coney. We may escape by piercing the mountain in the same direction. We will begin where the summit hangs over the middle part, and labour upward till we shall issue out beyond the prominence.”

The eyes of the Prince, when he heard this proposal, sparkled with joy. The execution was easy and the success certain.

No time was now lost. They hastened early in the morning to choose a place proper for their mine. They clambered with great fatigue among crags and brambles, and returned without having discovered any part that favoured their design. The second and the third day were spent in the same manner, and with the same frustration; but on the fourth day they found a small cavern concealed by a thicket, where they resolved to make their experiment.

Imlac procured instruments proper to hew stone and remove earth, and they fell to their work on the next day with more eagerness than vigour. They were presently exhausted by their efforts, and sat down to pant upon the grass. The Prince for a moment appeared to be discouraged. “Sir,” said his companion, “practice will enable us to continue our labour for a longer time. Mark, however, how far we have advanced, and ye will find that our toil will some time have an end. Great works are performed not by strength, but perseverance; yonder palace was raised by single stones, yet you see its height and spaciousness. He that shall walk with vigour three hours a day, will pass in seven years a space equal to the circumference of the globe.”

They returned to their work day after day, and in a short time found a fissure in the rock, which enabled them to pass far with very little obstruction. This Rasselas considered as a good omen. “Do not disturb your mind,” said Imlac, “with other hopes or fears than reason may suggest; if you are pleased with the prognostics of good, you will be terrified likewise with tokens of evil, and your whole life will be a prey to superstition. Whatever facilitates our work is more than an omen; it is a cause of success. This is one of those pleasing surprises which often happen to active resolution. Many things difficult to design prove easy to performance.” . . . [Imlac and Rasselas are joined in their escape by Rasselas’s sister Nekayah and her attendant Lady Pekuah.]

### Chapter XV: The Prince and Princess Leave the Valley, and See Many Wonders

The Prince and Princess had jewels sufficient to make them rich whenever they came into a place of commerce, which, by Imlac’s direction, they hid in their clothes, and on the night of the next full moon all left the valley. The Princess was followed only by a single favourite, who did not know whither she was going.

They clambered through the cavity, and began to go down on the other side. The Princess and her maid turned their eyes toward every part, and seeing nothing to bound their prospect, considered themselves in danger of being lost in a dreary vacuity. They stopped and trembled. “I am almost afraid,” said the Princess, “to begin a journey of which I cannot perceive an end, and to venture into this immense plain where I may be approached on every side by men whom I never saw.” The Prince felt nearly the same emotions, though he thought it more manly to conceal them.

Imlac smiled at their terrors, and encouraged them to proceed. But the Princess continued irresolute till she had been imperceptibly drawn forward too far to return.

In the morning they found some shepherds in the field, who set some milk and fruits before them. The Princess wondered that she did not see a palace ready for her reception and a table spread with delicacies; but being faint and hungry, she drank the milk and ate the fruits, and thought them of a higher flavour than the products of the valley.

They travelled forward by easy journeys, being all unaccustomed to toil and difficulty, and knowing that, though they might be missed, they could not be pursued. In a few days they came into a more populous region, where Imlac was diverted with the admiration which his companions expressed at the diversity of manners, stations, and employments. Their dress was such as might not bring upon them the suspicion of having anything to conceal; yet the Prince, wherever he came, expected to be obeyed, and the Princess was frighted because those who came into her presence did not prostrate themselves. Imlac was forced to observe them with great vigilance, lest they should betray their rank by their unusual behaviour, and detained them several weeks in the first village to accustom them to the sight of common mortals.

By degrees the royal wanderers were taught to understand that they had for a time laid aside their dignity, and were to expect only such regard as liberality and courtesy could procure. And Imlac having by many admonitions prepared them to endure the tumults of a port and the ruggedness of the commercial race, brought them down to the sea-coast.

The Prince and his sister, to whom everything was new, were gratified equally at all places, and therefore remained for some months at the port without any inclination to pass further. Imlac was content with their stay, because he did not think it safe to expose them, unpractised in the world, to the hazards of a foreign country.

At last he began to fear lest they should be discovered, and proposed to fix a day for their departure. They had no pretensions to judge for themselves, and referred the whole scheme to his direction. He therefore took passage in a ship to Suez, and, when the time came, with great difficulty prevailed on the Princess to enter the vessel.

They had a quick and prosperous voyage, and from Suez travelled by land to Cairo.

### Chapter XVI: They Enter Cairo and Find Every Man Happy

As they approached the city, which filled the strangers with astonishment, “This,” said Imlac to the Prince, “is the place where travellers and merchants assemble from all corners of the earth. You will here find men of every character and every occupation. Commerce is here honourable. I will act as a merchant, and you shall live as strangers who have no other end of travel than curiosity; it will soon be observed that we are rich. Our reputation will procure us access to all whom we shall desire to know; you shall see all the conditions of humanity, and enable yourselves at leisure to make your CHOICE OF LIFE.”

They now entered the town, stunned by the noise and offended by the crowds. Instruction had not yet so prevailed over habit but that they wondered to see themselves pass undistinguished along the streets, and met by the lowest of the people without reverence or notice. The Princess could not at first bear the thought of being levelled with the vulgar, and for some time continued in her chamber, where she was served by her favourite Pekuah, as in the palace of the valley.

Imlac, who understood traffic, sold part of the jewels the next day, and hired a house, which he adorned with such magnificence that he was immediately considered as a merchant of great wealth. His politeness attracted many acquaintances, and his generosity made him courted by many dependants. His companions, not being able to mix in the conversation, could make no discovery of their ignorance or surprise, and were gradually initiated in the world as they gained knowledge of the language.

The Prince had by frequent lectures been taught the use and nature of money; but the ladies could not for a long time comprehend what the merchants did with small pieces of gold and silver, or why things of so little use should be received as an equivalent to the necessaries of life.

They studied the language two years, while Imlac was preparing to set before them the various ranks and conditions of mankind. He grew acquainted with all who had anything uncommon in their fortune or conduct. He frequented the voluptuous and the frugal, the idle and the busy, the merchants and the men of learning.

The Prince now being able to converse with fluency, and having learned the caution necessary to be observed in his intercourse with strangers, began to accompany Imlac to places of resort, and to enter into all assemblies, that he might make his CHOICE OF LIFE.

For some time he thought choice needless, because all appeared to him really happy. Wherever he went he met gaiety and kindness, and heard the song of joy or the laugh of carelessness. He began to believe that the world overflowed with universal plenty, and that nothing was withheld either from want or merit; that every hand showered liberality and every heart melted with benevolence: “And who then,” says he, “will be suffered to be wretched?”

Imlac permitted the pleasing delusion, and was unwilling to crush the hope of inexperience: till one day, having sat awhile silent, “I know not,” said the Prince, “what can be the reason that I am more unhappy than any of our friends. I see them perpetually and unalterably cheerful, but feel my own mind restless and uneasy. I am unsatisfied with those pleasures which I seem most to court. I live in the crowds of jollity, not so much to enjoy company as to shun myself, and am only loud and merry to conceal my sadness.”

“Every man,” said Imlac, “may by examining his own mind guess what passes in the minds of others. When you feel that your own gaiety is counterfeit, it may justly lead you to suspect that of your companions not to be sincere. Envy is commonly reciprocal. We are long before we are convinced that happiness is never to be found, and each believes it possessed by others, to keep alive the hope of obtaining it for himself. In the assembly where you passed the last night there appeared such sprightliness of air and volatility of fancy as might have suited beings of a higher order, formed to inhabit serener regions, inaccessible to care or sorrow; yet, believe me, Prince, was there not one who did not dread the moment when solitude should deliver him to the tyranny of reflection.”

“This,” said the Prince, “may be true of others since it is true of me; yet, whatever be the general infelicity of man, one condition is more happy than another, and wisdom surely directs us to take the least evil in the CHOICE OF LIFE.”

“The causes of good and evil,” answered Imlac, “are so various and uncertain, so often entangled with each other, so diversified by various relations, and so much subject to accidents which cannot be foreseen, that he who would fix his condition upon incontestable reasons of preference must live and die inquiring and deliberating.”

“But, surely,” said Rasselas, “the wise men, to whom we listen with reverence and wonder, chose that mode of life for themselves which they thought most likely to make them happy.”

“Very few,” said the poet, “live by choice. Every man is placed in the present condition by causes which acted without his foresight, and with which he did not always willingly co-operate, and therefore you will rarely meet one who does not think the lot of his neighbour better than his own.”

“I am pleased to think,” said the Prince, “that my birth has given me at least one advantage over others by enabling me to determine for myself. I have here the world before me. I will review it at leisure: surely happiness is somewhere to be found.” . . . [Rasselas rejects the heedlessness of youth, and empty rhetoric and hypocrisy of the self-proclaimed learned man; the ignorance of the rustic; the delusions of wealth.]

### Chapter XXI: The Happiness of Solitude—The Hermit’s History

They came on the third day, by the direction of the peasants, to the hermit’s cell. It was a cavern in the side of a mountain, overshadowed with palm trees, at such a distance from the cataract that nothing more was heard than a gentle uniform murmur, such as composes the mind to pensive meditation, especially when it was assisted by the wind whistling among the branches. The first rude essay of Nature had been so much improved by human labour that the cave contained several apartments appropriated to different uses, and often afforded lodging to travellers whom darkness or tempests happened to overtake.

The hermit sat on a bench at the door, to enjoy the coolness of the evening. On one side lay a book with pens and paper; on the other mechanical instruments of various kinds. As they approached him unregarded, the Princess observed that he had not the countenance of a man that had found or could teach the way to happiness.

They saluted him with great respect, which he repaid like a man not unaccustomed to the forms of Courts. “My children,” said he, “if you have lost your way, you shall be willingly supplied with such conveniences for the night as this cavern will afford. I have all that Nature requires, and you will not expect delicacies in a hermit’s cell.”

They thanked him; and, entering, were pleased with the neatness and regularity of the place. The hermit set flesh and wine before them, though he fed only upon fruits and water. His discourse was cheerful without levity, and pious without enthusiasm. He soon gained the esteem of his guests, and the Princess repented her hasty censure.

At last Imlac began thus: “I do not now wonder that your reputation is so far extended: we have heard at Cairo of your wisdom, and came hither to implore your direction for this young man and maiden in the CHOICE OF LIFE.”

“To him that lives well,” answered the hermit, “every form of life is good; nor can I give any other rule for choice than to remove all apparent evil.”

“He will most certainly remove from evil,” said the Prince, “who shall devote himself to that solitude which you have recommended by your example.”

“I have indeed lived fifteen years in solitude,” said the hermit, “but have no desire that my example should gain any imitators. In my youth I professed arms, and was raised by degrees to the highest military rank. I have traversed wide countries at the head of my troops, and seen many battles and sieges. At last, being disgusted by the preferments of a younger officer, and feeling that my vigour was beginning to decay, I resolved to close my life in peace, having found the world full of snares, discord, and misery. I had once escaped from the pursuit of the enemy by the shelter of this cavern, and therefore chose it for my final residence. I employed artificers to form it into chambers, and stored it with all that I was likely to want.

“For some time after my retreat I rejoiced like a tempest-beaten sailor at his entrance into the harbour, being delighted with the sudden change of the noise and hurry of war to stillness and repose. When the pleasure of novelty went away, I employed my hours in examining the plants which grow in the valley, and the minerals which I collected from the rocks. But that inquiry is now grown tasteless and irksome. I have been for some time unsettled and distracted: my mind is disturbed with a thousand perplexities of doubt and vanities of imagination, which hourly prevail upon me, because I have no opportunities of relaxation or diversion. I am sometimes ashamed to think that I could not secure myself from vice but by retiring from the exercise of virtue, and begin to suspect that I was rather impelled by resentment than led by devotion into solitude. My fancy riots in scenes of folly, and I lament that I have lost so much, and have gained so little. In solitude, if I escape the example of bad men, I want likewise the counsel and conversation of the good. I have been long comparing the evils with the advantages of society, and resolve to return into the world to-morrow. The life of a solitary man will be certainly miserable, but not certainly devout.”

They heard his resolution with surprise, but after a short pause offered to conduct him to Cairo. He dug up a considerable treasure which he had hid among the rocks, and accompanied them to the city, on which, as he approached it, he gazed with rapture. [Rasselas rejects Nature as the only source of happiness. He

and his sister explore a greater variety of lifestyles, including the high (monarchic) and the low (domestic).]

### Chapter XXVI: The Princess Continues Her Remarks Upon Private Life

Nekayah, perceiving her brother’s attention fixed, proceeded in her narrative.

“In families where there is or is not poverty there is commonly discord. If a kingdom be, as Imlac tells us, a great family, a family likewise is a little kingdom, torn with factions and exposed to revolutions. An unpractised observer expects the love of parents and children to be constant and equal. But this kindness seldom continues beyond the years of infancy; in a short time the children become rivals to their parents. Benefits are allowed by reproaches, and gratitude debased by envy.

“Parents and children seldom act in concert; each child endeavours to appropriate the esteem or the fondness of the parents; and the parents, with yet less temptation, betray each other to their children. Thus, some place their confidence in the father and some in the mother, and by degrees the house is filled with artifices and feuds.

“The opinions of children and parents, of the young and the old, are naturally opposite, by the contrary effects of hope and despondency, of expectation and experience, without crime or folly on either side. The colours of life in youth and age appear different, as the face of Nature in spring and winter. And how can children credit the assertions of parents which their own eyes show them to be false?

“Few parents act in such a manner as much to enforce their maxims by the credit of their lives. The old man trusts wholly to slow contrivance and gradual progression; the youth expects to force his way by genius, vigour, and precipitance. The old man pays regard to riches, and the youth reverences virtue. The old man deifies prudence; the youth commits himself to magnanimity and chance. The young man, who intends no ill, believes that none is intended, and therefore acts with openness and candour; but his father; having suffered the injuries of fraud, is impelled to suspect and too often allured to practise it. Age looks with anger on the temerity of youth, and youth with contempt on the scrupulosity of age. Thus parents and children for the greatest part live on to love less and less; and if those whom Nature has thus closely united are the torments of each other, where shall we look for tenderness and consolations?”

“Surely,” said the Prince, “you must have been unfortunate in your choice of acquaintance. I am unwilling to believe that the most tender of all relations is thus impeded in its effects by natural necessity.”

“Domestic discord,” answered she, “is not inevitably and fatally necessary, but yet it is not easily avoided. We seldom see that a whole family is virtuous; the good and the evil cannot well agree, and the evil can yet less agree with one another. Even the virtuous fall sometimes to variance, when their virtues are of different kinds and tending to extremes. In general, those parents have most reverence who most deserve it, for he that lives well cannot be despised.

“Many other evils infest private life. Some are the slaves of servants whom they have trusted with their affairs. Some are kept in continual anxiety by the caprice of rich relations, whom they cannot please and dare not offend. Some husbands are imperious and some wives perverse, and, as it is always more easy to do evil than good, though the wisdom or virtue of one can very rarely make many happy, the folly or vice of one makes many miserable.”

“If such be the general effect of marriage,” said the Prince, “I shall for the future think it dangerous to connect my interest with that of another, lest I should be unhappy by my partner’s fault.”

“I have met,” said the Princess, “with many who live single for that reason, but I never found that their prudence ought to raise envy. They dream away their time without friendship, without fondness, and are driven to rid themselves of the day, for which they have no use, by childish amusements or vicious delights. They act as beings under the constant sense of some known inferiority that fills their minds with rancour and their tongues with censure. They are peevish at home and malevolent abroad, and, as the outlaws of human nature, make it their business and their pleasure to disturb that society which debars them from its privileges. To live without feeling or exciting sympathy, to be fortunate without adding to the felicity of others, or afflicted without tasting the balm of pity, is a state more gloomy than solitude; it is not retreat but exclusion from mankind. Marriage has many pains, but celibacy has no pleasures.”

“What then is to be done?” said Rasselas. “The more we inquire the less we can resolve. Surely he is most likely to please himself that has no other inclination to regard.” . . . [Even greatness is not exempt from accident and loss.]

### Chapter XXVIII: Rasselas and Nekayah Continue Their Conversation

“Dear Princess,” said Rasselas, “you fall into the common errors of exaggeratory declamation, by producing in a familiar disquisition examples of national calamities and scenes of extensive misery which are found in books rather than in the world, and which, as they are horrid, are ordained to be rare. Let us not imagine evils which we do not feel, nor injure life by misrepresentations. I cannot bear that querulous eloquence which threatens every city with a siege like that of Jerusalem, that makes famine attend on every flight of locust, and suspends pestilence on the wing of every blast that issues from the south.

“On necessary and inevitable evils which overwhelm kingdoms at once all disputation is vain; when they happen they must be endured. But it is evident that these bursts of universal distress are more dreaded than felt; thousands and tens of thousands flourish in youth and wither in age, without the knowledge of any other than domestic evils, and share the same pleasures and vexations, whether their kings are mild or cruel, whether the armies of their country pursue their enemies or retreat before them. While Courts are disturbed with intestine competitions and ambassadors are negotiating in foreign countries, the smith still plies his anvil and the husbandman drives his plough forward; the necessaries of life are required and obtained, and the successive business of the season continues to make its wonted revolutions.

“Let us cease to consider what perhaps may never happen, and what, when it shall happen, will laugh at human speculation. We will not endeavour to modify the motions of the elements or to fix the destiny of kingdoms. It is our business to consider what beings like us may perform, each labouring for his own happiness by promoting within his circle, however narrow, the happiness of others.

“Marriage is evidently the dictate of Nature; men and women were made to be the companions of each other, and therefore I cannot be persuaded but that marriage is one of the means of happiness.”

“I know not,” said the Princess, “whether marriage be more than one of the innumerable modes of human misery. When I see and reckon the various forms of connubial infelicity, the unexpected causes of lasting discord, the diversities of temper, the oppositions of opinion, the rude collisions of contrary desire where both are urged by violent impulses, the obstinate contest of disagreeing virtues where both are supported by consciousness of good intention, I am sometimes disposed to think, with the severer casuists of most nations, that marriage is rather permitted than approved, and that none, but by the instigation of a passion too much indulged, entangle themselves with indissoluble compact.”

“You seem to forget,” replied Rasselas, “that you have, even now represented celibacy as less happy than marriage. Both conditions may be bad, but they cannot both be worse. Thus it happens, when wrong opinions are entertained, that they mutually destroy each other and leave the mind open to truth.”

“I did not expect,” answered, the Princess, “to hear that imputed to falsehood which is the consequence only of frailty. To the mind, as to the eye, it is difficult to compare with exactness objects vast in their extent and various in their parts. When we see or conceive the whole at once, we readily note the discriminations and decide the preference, but of two systems, of which neither can be surveyed by any human being in its full compass of magnitude and multiplicity of complication, where is the wonder that, judging of the whole by parts, I am alternately affected by one and the other as either presses on my memory or fancy? We differ from ourselves just as we differ from each other when we see only part of the question, as in the multifarious relations of politics and morality, but when we perceive the whole at once, as in numerical computations, all agree in one judgment, and none ever varies in his opinion.”

“Let us not add,” said the Prince, “to the other evils of life the bitterness of controversy, nor endeavour to vie with each other in subtilties of argument. We are employed in a search of which both are equally to enjoy the success or suffer by the miscarriage; it is therefore fit that we assist each other. You surely conclude too hastily from the infelicity of marriage against its institution; will not the misery of life prove equally that life cannot be the gift of Heaven? The world must be peopled by marriage or peopled without it.”

“How the world is to be peopled,” returned Nekayah, “is not my care and need not be yours. I see no danger that the present generation should omit to leave successors behind them; we are not now inquiring for the world, but for ourselves.”

### Chapter XXIX: The Debate on Marriage

“The good of the whole,” says Rasselas, “is the same with the good of all its parts. If marriage be best for mankind, it must be evidently best for individuals; or a permanent and necessary duty must be the cause of evil, and some must be inevitably sacrificed to the convenience of others. In the estimate which you have made of the two states, it appears that the incommodities of a single life are in a great measure necessary and certain, but those of the conjugal state accidental and avoidable. I cannot forbear to flatter myself that prudence and benevolence will make marriage happy. The general folly of mankind is the cause of general complaint. What can be expected but disappointment and repentance from a choice made in the immaturity of youth, in the ardour of desire, without judgment, without foresight, without inquiry after conformity of opinions, similarity of manners, rectitude of judgment, or purity of sentiment?

“Such is the common process of marriage. A youth and maiden, meeting by chance or brought together by artifice, exchange glances, reciprocate civilities, go home and dream of one another. Having little to divert attention or diversify thought, they find themselves uneasy when they are apart, and therefore conclude that they shall be happy together. They marry, and discover what nothing but voluntary blindness before had concealed; they wear out life in altercations, and charge Nature with cruelty.

“From those early marriages proceeds likewise the rivalry of parents and children: the son is eager to enjoy the world before the father is willing to forsake it, and there is hardly room at once for two generations. The daughter begins to bloom before the mother can be content to fade, and neither can forbear to wish for the absence of the other.

“Surely all these evils may be avoided by that deliberation and delay which prudence prescribes to irrevocable choice. In the variety and jollity of youthful pleasures, life may be well enough supported without the help of a partner. Longer time will increase experience, and wider views will allow better opportunities of inquiry and selection; one advantage at least will be certain, the parents will be visibly older than their children.”

“What reason cannot collect,” and Nekayah, “and what experiment has not yet taught, can be known only from the report of others. I have been told that late marriages are not eminently happy. This is a question too important to be neglected; and I have often proposed it to those whose accuracy of remark and comprehensiveness of knowledge made their suffrages worthy of regard. They have generally determined that it is dangerous for a man and woman to suspend their fate upon each other at a time when opinions are fixed and habits are established, when friendships have been contracted on both sides, when life has been planned into method, and the mind has long enjoyed the contemplation of its own prospects.

“It is scarcely possible that two travelling through the world under the conduct of chance should have been both directed to the same path, and it will not often happen that either will quit the track which custom has made pleasing. When the desultory levity of youth has settled into regularity, it is soon succeeded by pride ashamed to yield, or obstinacy delighting to contend. And even though mutual esteem produces mutual desire to please, time itself, as it modifies unchangeably the external mien, determines likewise the direction of the passions, and gives an inflexible rigidity to the manners. Long customs are not easily broken; he that attempts to change the course of his own life very often labours in vain, and how shall we do that for others which we are seldom able to do for ourselves?”

“But surely,” interposed the Prince, “you suppose the chief motive of choice forgotten or neglected. Whenever I shall seek a wife, it shall be my first question whether she be willing to be led by reason.”

“Thus it is,” said Nekayah, “that philosophers are deceived. There are a thousand familiar disputes which reason never can decide; questions that elude investigation, and make logic ridiculous; cases where something must be done, and where little can be said. Consider the state of mankind, and inquire how few can be supposed to act upon any occasions, whether small or great, with all the reasons of action present to their minds. Wretched would be the pair, above all names of wretchedness, who should be doomed to adjust by reason every morning all the minute details of a domestic day.

“Those who marry at an advanced age will probably escape the encroachments of their children, but in the diminution of this advantage they will be likely to leave them, ignorant and helpless, to a guardian’s mercy; or if that should not happen, they must at least go out of the world before they see those whom they love best either wise or great.

“From their children, if they have less to fear, they have less also to hope; and they lose without equivalent the joys of early love, and the convenience of uniting with manners pliant and minds susceptible of new impressions, which might wear away their dissimilitudes by long cohabitation, as soft bodies by continual attrition conform their surfaces to each other.

“I believe it will be found that those who marry late are best pleased with their children, and those who marry early with their partners.”

“The union of these two affections,” said Rasselas, “would produce all that could be wished. Perhaps there is a time when marriage might unite them—a time neither too early for the father nor too late for the husband.”

“Every hour,” answered the Princess, “confirms my prejudice in favour of the position so often uttered by the mouth of Imlac, that ‘Nature sets her gifts on the right hand and on the left.’ Those conditions which flatter hope and attract desire are so constituted that as we approach one we recede from another. There are goods so opposed that we cannot seize both, but by too much prudence may pass between them at too great a distance to reach either. This is often the fate of long consideration; he does nothing who endeavours to do more than is allowed to humanity. Flatter not yourself with contrarieties of pleasure. Of the blessings set before you make your choice, and be content. No man can taste the fruits of autumn while he is delighting his scent with the flowers of the spring; no man can at the same time fill his cup from the source and from the mouth of the Nile.” . . . [They consider monuments to human ingenuity and art, like the pyramids.]

### Chapter XXXII: They Enter the Pyramid

Pekuah descended to the tents, and the rest entered the Pyramid. They passed through the galleries, surveyed the vaults of marble, and examined the chest in which the body of the founder is supposed to have been deposited. They then sat down in one of the most spacious chambers to rest awhile before they attempted to return.

“We have now,” said Imlac, “gratified our minds with an exact view of the greatest work of man, except the wall of China.

“Of the wall it is very easy to assign the motive. It secured a wealthy and timorous nation from the incursions of barbarians, whose unskilfulness in the arts made it easier for them to supply their wants by rapine than by industry, and who from time to time poured in upon the inhabitants of peaceful commerce as vultures descend upon domestic fowl. Their celerity and fierceness made the wall necessary, and their ignorance made it efficacious.

“But for the Pyramids, no reason has ever been given adequate to the cost and labour of the work. The narrowness of the chambers proves that it could afford no retreat from enemies, and treasures might have been reposited at far less expense with equal security. It seems to have been erected only in compliance with that hunger of imagination which preys incessantly upon life, and must be always appeased by some employment. Those who have already all that they can enjoy must enlarge their desires. He that has built for use till use is supplied must begin to build for vanity, and extend his plan to the utmost power of human performance that he may not be soon reduced to form another wish.

“I consider this mighty structure as a monument of the insufficiency of human enjoyments. A king whose power is unlimited, and whose treasures surmount all real and imaginary wants, is compelled to solace, by the erection of a pyramid, the satiety of dominion and tastelessness of pleasures, and to amuse the tediousness of declining life by seeing thousands labouring without end, and one stone, for no purpose, laid upon another. Whoever thou art that, not content with a moderate condition, imaginest happiness in royal magnificence, and dreamest that command or riches can feed the appetite of novelty with perpetual gratifications, survey the Pyramids, and confess thy folly!” [Lady Pekuah is kidnapped by Arabs. They try to find her but have no recourse through law or other means. Nekayah almost falls into despair, but time blunts her grief. They find and ransom Pekuah.]

### Chapter XXXVIII: The Adventures of Lady Pekuah

“At what time and in what manner I was forced away,” said Pekuah, “your servants have told you. The suddenness of the event struck me with surprise, and I was at first rather stupefied than agitated with any passion of either fear or sorrow. My confusion was increased by the speed and tumult of our flight, while we were followed by the Turks, who, as it seemed, soon despaired to overtake us, or were afraid of those whom they made a show of menacing.

“When the Arabs saw themselves out of danger, they slackened their course; and as I was less harassed by external violence, I began to feel more uneasiness in my mind. After some time we stopped near a spring shaded with trees, in a pleasant meadow, where we were set upon the ground, and offered such refreshments as our masters were partaking. I was suffered to sit with my maids apart from the rest, and none attempted to comfort or insult us. Here I first began to feel the full weight of my misery. The girls sat weeping in silence, and from time to time looked on me for succour. I knew not to what condition we were doomed, nor could conjecture where would be the place of our captivity, or whence to draw any hope of deliverance. I was in the hands of robbers and savages, and had no reason to suppose that their pity was more than their justice, or that they would forbear the gratification of any ardour of desire or caprice of cruelty. I, however, kissed my maids, and endeavoured to pacify them by remarking that we were yet treated with decency, and that since we were now carried beyond pursuit, there was no danger of violence to our lives.

“When we were to be set again on horseback, my maids clung round me, and refused to be parted; but I commanded them not to irritate those who had us in their power. We travelled the remaining part of the day through an unfrequented and pathless country, and came by moonlight to the side of a hill, where the rest of the troop was stationed. Their tents were pitched and their fires kindled, and our chief was welcomed as a man much beloved by his dependents.

“We were received into a large tent, where we found women who had attended their husbands in the expedition. They set before us the supper which they had provided, and I ate it rather to encourage my maids than to comply with any appetite of my own. When the meat was taken away, they spread the carpets for repose. I was weary, and hoped to find in sleep that remission of distress which nature seldom denies. Ordering myself, therefore, to be undressed, I observed that the women looked very earnestly upon me, not expecting, I suppose, to see me so submissively attended. When my upper vest was taken off, they were apparently struck with the splendour of my clothes, and one of them timorously laid her hand upon the embroidery. She then went out, and in a short time came back with another woman, who seemed to be of higher rank and greater authority. She did, at her entrance, the usual act of reverence, and, taking me by the hand placed me in a smaller tent, spread with finer carpets, where I spent the night quietly with my maids.

“In the morning, as I was sitting on the grass, the chief of the troop came towards me. I rose up to receive him, and he bowed with great respect. ‘Illustrious lady,’ said he, ‘my fortune is better than I had presumed to hope: I am told by my women that I have a princess in my camp.’ ‘Sir,’ answered I, ‘your women have deceived themselves and you; I am not a princess, but an unhappy stranger who intended soon to have left this country, in which I am now to be imprisoned for ever.’ ‘Whoever or whencesoever you are,’ returned the Arab, ‘your dress and that of your servants show your rank to be high and your wealth to be great. Why should you, who can so easily procure your ransom, think yourself in danger of perpetual captivity? The purpose of my incursions is to increase my riches, or, more property, to gather tribute. The sons of Ishmael are the natural and hereditary lords of this part of the continent, which is usurped by late invaders and low-born tyrants, from whom we are compelled to take by the sword what is denied to justice. The violence of war admits no distinction: the lance that is lifted at guilt and power will sometimes fall on innocence and gentleness.’

“’How little,’ said I, ‘did I expect that yesterday it should have fallen upon me!’

“’Misfortunes,’ answered the Arab, ‘should always be expected. If the eye of hostility could learn reverence or pity, excellence like yours had been exempt from injury. But the angels of affliction spread their toils alike for the virtuous and the wicked, for the mighty and the mean. Do not be disconsolate; I am not one of the lawless and cruel rovers of the desert; I know the rules of civil life; I will fix your ransom, give a passport to your messenger, and perform my stipulation with nice punctuality.’

“You will easily believe that I was pleased with his courtesy, and finding that his predominant passion was desire for money, I began now to think my danger less, for I knew that no sum would be thought too great for the release of Pekuah. I told him that he should have no reason to charge me with ingratitude if I was used with kindness, and that any ransom which could be expected for a maid of common rank would be paid, but that he must not persist to rate me as a princess. He said he would consider what he should demand, and then, smiling, bowed and retired.

“Soon after the women came about me, each contending to be more officious than the other, and my maids themselves were served with reverence. We travelled onward by short journeys. On the fourth day the chief told me that my ransom must be two hundred ounces of gold, which I not only promised him, but told him that I would add fifty more if I and my maids were honourably treated.

“I never knew the power of gold before. From that time I was the leader of the troop. The march of every day was longer or shorter as I commanded, and the tents were pitched where I chose to rest. We now had camels and other conveniences for travel; my own women were always at my side, and I amused myself with observing the manners of the vagrant nations, and with viewing remains of ancient edifices, with which these deserted countries appear to have been in some distant age lavishly embellished.

“The chief of the band was a man far from illiterate: he was able to travel by the stars or the compass, and had marked in his erratic expeditions such places as are most worthy the notice of a passenger. He observed to me that buildings are always best preserved in places little frequented and difficult of access; for when once a country declines from its primitive splendour, the more inhabitants are left, the quicker ruin will be made. Walls supply stones more easily than quarries; and palaces and temples will be demolished to make stables of granite and cottages of porphyry.’”

### Chapter XXXIX: The Adventures of Lady Pekuah (continued)

“We wandered about in this manner for some weeks, either, as our chief pretended, for my gratification, or, as I rather suspected, for some convenience of his own. I endeavoured to appear contented where sullenness and resentment would have been of no use, and that endeavour conduced much to the calmness of my mind; but my heart was always with Nekayah, and the troubles of the night much overbalanced the amusements of the day. My women, who threw all their cares upon their mistress, set their minds at ease from the time when they saw me treated with respect, and gave themselves up to the incidental alleviations of our fatigue without solicitude or sorrow. I was pleased with their pleasure, and animated with their confidence. My condition had lost much of its terror, since I found that the Arab ranged the country merely to get riches. Avarice is a uniform and tractable vice: other intellectual distempers are different in different constitutions of mind; that which soothes the pride of one will offend the pride of another; but to the favour of the covetous there is a ready way—bring money, and nothing is denied.

“At last we came to the dwelling of our chief; a strong and spacious house, built with stone in an island of the Nile, which lies, as I was told, under the tropic. ‘Lady,’ said the Arab, ‘you shall rest after your journey a few weeks in this place, where you are to consider yourself as Sovereign. My occupation is war: I have therefore chosen this obscure residence, from which I can issue unexpected, and to which I can retire unpursued. You may now repose in security: here are few pleasures, but here is no danger.’ He then led me into the inner apartments, and seating me on the richest couch, bowed to the ground.

“His women, who considered me as a rival, looked on me with malignity; but being soon informed that I was a great lady detained only for my ransom, they began to vie with each other in obsequiousness and reverence.

“Being again comforted with new assurances of speedy liberty, I was for some days diverted from impatience by the novelty of the place. The turrets overlooked the country to a great distance, and afforded a view of many windings of the stream. In the day I wandered from one place to another, as the course of the sun varied the splendour of the prospect, and saw many things which I had never seen before. The crocodiles and river-horses are common in this unpeopled region; and I often looked upon them with terror, though I knew they could not hurt me. For some time I expected to see mermaids and tritons, which, as Imlac has told me, the European travellers have stationed in the Nile; but no such beings ever appeared, and the Arab, when I inquired after them, laughed at my credulity.

“At night the Arab always attended me to a tower set apart for celestial observations, where he endeavoured to teach me the names and courses of the stars. I had no great inclination to this study; but an appearance of attention was necessary to please my instructor, who valued himself for his skill, and in a little while I found some employment requisite to beguile the tediousness of time, which was to be passed always amidst the same objects. I was weary of looking in the morning on things from which I had turned away weary in the evening: I therefore was at last willing to observe the stars rather than do nothing, but could not always compose my thoughts, and was very often thinking on Nekayah when others imagined me contemplating the sky. Soon after, the Arab went upon another expedition, and then my only pleasure was to talk with my maids about the accident by which we were carried away, and the happiness we should all enjoy at the end of our captivity.”

“There were women in your Arab’s fortress,” said the Princess; “why did you not make them your companions, enjoy their conversation, and partake their diversions? In a place where they found business or amusement, why should you alone sit corroded with idle melancholy? or why could not you bear for a few months that condition to which they were condemned for life?”

“The diversions of the women,” answered Pekuah, “were only childish play, by which the mind accustomed to stronger operations could not be kept busy. I could do all which they delighted in doing by powers merely sensitive, while my intellectual faculties were flown to Cairo. They ran from room to room, as a bird hops from wire to wire in his cage. They danced for the sake of motion, as lambs frisk in a meadow. One sometimes pretended to be hurt that the rest might be alarmed, or hid herself that another might seek her. Part of their time passed in watching the progress of light bodies that floated on the river, and part in marking the various forms into which clouds broke in the sky.

“Their business was only needlework, in which I and my maids sometimes helped them; but you know that the mind will easily straggle from the fingers, nor will you suspect that captivity and absence from Nekayah could receive solace from silken flowers.

“Nor was much satisfaction to be hoped from their conversation: for of what could they be expected to talk? They had seen nothing, for they had lived from early youth in that narrow spot: of what they had not seen they could have no knowledge, for they could not read. They had no idea but of the few things that were within their view, and had hardly names for anything but their clothes and their food. As I bore a superior character, I was often called to terminate their quarrels, which I decided as equitably as I could. If it could have amused me to hear the complaints of each against the rest, I might have been often detained by long stories; but the motives of their animosity were so small that I could not listen without interrupting the tale.”

“How,” said Rasselas, “can the Arab, whom you represented as a man of more than common accomplishments, take any pleasure in his seraglio, when it is filled only with women like these? Are they exquisitely beautiful?”

“They do not,” said Pekuah, “want that unaffecting and ignoble beauty which may subsist without sprightliness or sublimity, without energy of thought or dignity of virtue. But to a man like the Arab such beauty was only a flower casually plucked and carelessly thrown away. Whatever pleasures he might find among them, they were not those of friendship or society. When they were playing about him he looked on them with inattentive superiority; when they vied for his regard he sometimes turned away disgusted. As they had no knowledge, their talk could take nothing from the tediousness of life; as they had no choice, their fondness, or appearance of fondness, excited in him neither pride nor gratitude. He was not exalted in his own esteem by the smiles of a woman who saw no other man, nor was much obliged by that regard of which he could never know the sincerity, and which he might often perceive to be exerted not so much to delight him as to pain a rival. That which he gave, and they received, as love, was only a careless distribution of superfluous time, such love as man can bestow upon that which he despises, such as has neither hope nor fear, neither joy nor sorrow.”

“You have reason, lady, to think yourself happy,” said Imlac, “that you have been thus easily dismissed. How could a mind, hungry for knowledge, be willing, in an intellectual famine, to lose such a banquet as Pekuah’s conversation?”

“I am inclined to believe,” answered Pekuah, “that he was for some time in suspense; for, notwithstanding his promise, whenever I proposed to despatch a messenger to Cairo he found some excuse for delay. While I was detained in his house he made many incursions into the neighbouring countries, and perhaps he would have refused to discharge me had his plunder been equal to his wishes. He returned always courteous, related his adventures, delighted to hear my observations, and endeavoured to advance my acquaintance with the stars. When I importuned him to send away my letters, he soothed me with professions of honour and sincerity; and when I could be no longer decently denied, put his troop again in motion, and left me to govern in his absence. I was much afflicted by this studied procrastination, and was sometimes afraid that I should be forgotten; that you would leave Cairo, and I must end my days in an island of the Nile.

“I grew at last hopeless and dejected, and cared so little to entertain him, that he for a while more frequently talked with my maids. That he should fall in love with them or with me, might have been equally fatal, and I was not much pleased with the growing friendship. My anxiety was not long, for, as I recovered some degree of cheerfulness, he returned to me, and I could not forbear to despise my former uneasiness.

“He still delayed to send for my ransom, and would perhaps never have determined had not your agent found his way to him. The gold, which he would not fetch, he could not reject when it was offered. He hastened to prepare for our journey hither, like a man delivered from the pain of an intestine conflict. I took leave of my companions in the house, who dismissed me with cold indifference.”

Nekayah having heard her favourite’s relation, rose and embraced her, and Rasselas gave her a hundred ounces of gold, which she presented to the Arab for the fifty that were promised. [Rasselas considers devoting himself to science. Imlac’s description of an astronomer causes Rasselas to pause.]

### Chapter XLI: The Astronomer Discovers the Cause of His Uneasiness

“At last the time came when the secret burst his reserve. We were sitting together last night in the turret of his house watching the immersion of a satellite of Jupiter. A sudden tempest clouded the sky and disappointed our observation. We sat awhile silent in the dark, and then he addressed himself to me in these words: ‘Imlac, I have long considered thy friendship as the greatest blessing of my life. Integrity without knowledge is weak and useless, and knowledge without integrity is dangerous and dreadful. I have found in thee all the qualities requisite for trust— benevolence, experience, and fortitude. I have long discharged an office which I must soon quit at the call of Nature, and shall rejoice in the hour of imbecility and pain to devolve it upon thee.’

“I thought myself honoured by this testimony, and protested that whatever could conduce to his happiness would add likewise to mine.

“’Hear, Imlac, what thou wilt not without difficulty credit. I have possessed for five years the regulation of the weather and the distribution of the seasons. The sun has listened to my dictates, and passed from tropic to tropic by my direction; the clouds at my call have poured their waters, and the Nile has overflowed at my command. I have restrained the rage of the dog-star, and mitigated the fervours of the crab. The winds alone, of all the elemental powers, have hitherto refused my authority, and multitudes have perished by equinoctial tempests which I found myself unable to prohibit or restrain. I have administered this great office with exact justice, and made to the different nations of the earth an impartial dividend of rain and sunshine. What must have been the misery of half the globe if I had limited the clouds to particular regions, or confined the sun to either side of the equator?’”

### Chapter XLII: The Opinion of the Astronomer is Explained and Justified

“I suppose he discovered in me, through the obscurity of the room, some tokens of amazement and doubt, for after a short pause he proceeded thus:-

“‘Not to be easily credited will neither surprise nor offend me, for I am probably the first of human beings to whom this trust has been imparted. Nor do I know whether to deem this distinction a reward or punishment. Since I have possessed it I have been far less happy than before, and nothing but the consciousness of good intention could have enabled me to support the weariness of unremitted vigilance.’

“‘How long, sir,’ said I, ‘has this great office been in your hands?’

“‘About ten years ago,’ said he, ‘my daily observations of the changes of the sky led me to consider whether, if I had the power of the seasons, I could confer greater plenty upon the inhabitants of the earth. This contemplation fastened on my mind, and I sat days and nights in imaginary dominion, pouring upon this country and that the showers of fertility, and seconding every fall of rain with a due proportion of sunshine. I had yet only the will to do good, and did not imagine that I should ever have the power.

“‘One day as I was looking on the fields withering with heat, I felt in my mind a sudden wish that I could send rain on the southern mountains, and raise the Nile to an inundation. In the hurry of my imagination I commanded rain to fall; and by comparing the time of my command with that of the inundation, I found that the clouds had listened to my lips.’

“‘Might not some other cause,’ said I, ‘produce this concurrence? The Nile does not always rise on the same day.’

“‘Do not believe,’ said he, with impatience, ‘that such objections could escape me. I reasoned long against my own conviction, and laboured against truth with the utmost obstinacy. I sometimes suspected myself of madness, and should not have dared to impart this secret but to a man like you, capable of distinguishing the wonderful from the impossible, and the incredible from the false.’

“‘Why, sir,’ said I, ‘do you call that incredible which you know, or think you know, to be true?’

“‘Because,’ said he, ‘I cannot prove it by any external evidence; and I know too well the laws of demonstration to think that my conviction ought to influence another, who cannot, like me, be conscious of its force. I therefore shall not attempt to gain credit by disputation. It is sufficient that I feel this power that I have long possessed, and every day exerted it. But the life of man is short; the infirmities of age increase upon me, and the time will soon come when the regulator of the year must mingle with the dust. The care of appointing a successor has long disturbed me; the night and the day have been spent in comparisons of all the characters which have come to my knowledge, and I have yet found none so worthy as thyself.’” [Rasselas decides that the Astronomer suffers from a malady of the mind induced by over-imagination. They encounter a discontented old man but attribute his discontent to age, not experience. Grounding experience in reality, the Astronomer recovers his senses. They pursue sensation in the novel.]

### Chapter XLVIII: Imlac Discourses on the Nature of the Soul

“What reason,” said the Prince, “can be given why the Egyptians should thus expensively preserve those carcases which some nations consume with fire, others lay to mingle with the earth, and all agree to remove from their sight as soon as decent rites can be performed?”

“The original of ancient customs,” said Imlac, “is commonly unknown, for the practice often continues when the cause has ceased; and concerning superstitious ceremonies it is vain to conjecture; for what reason did not dictate, reason cannot explain. I have long believed that the practice of embalming arose only from tenderness to the remains of relations or friends; and to this opinion I am more inclined because it seems impossible that this care should have been general; had all the dead been embalmed, their repositories must in time have been more spacious than the dwellings of the living. I suppose only the rich or honourable were secured from corruption, and the rest left to the course of nature.

“But it is commonly supposed that the Egyptians believed the soul to live as long as the body continued undissolved, and therefore tried this method of eluding death.”

“Could the wise Egyptians,” said Nekayah, “think so grossly of the soul? If the soul could once survive its separation, what could it afterwards receive or suffer from the body?”

“The Egyptians would doubtless think erroneously,” said the astronomer, “in the darkness of heathenism and the first dawn of philosophy. The nature of the soul is still disputed amidst all our opportunities of clearer knowledge; some yet say that it may be material, who, nevertheless, believe it to be immortal.”

“Some,” answered Imlac, “have indeed said that the soul is material, but I can scarcely believe that any man has thought it who knew how to think; for all the conclusions of reason enforce the immateriality of mind, and all the notices of sense and investigations of science concur to prove the unconsciousness of matter.

“It was never supposed that cogitation is inherent in matter, or that every particle is a thinking being. Yet if any part of matter be devoid of thought, what part can we suppose to think? Matter can differ from matter only in form, density, bulk, motion, and direction of motion. To which of these, however varied or combined, can consciousness be annexed? To be round or square, to be solid or fluid, to be great or little, to be moved slowly or swiftly, one way or another, are modes of material existence all equally alien from the nature of cogitation. If matter be once without thought, it can only be made to think by some new modification; but all the modifications which it can admit are equally unconnected with cogitative powers.”

“But the materialists,” said the astronomer, “urge that matter may have qualities with which we are unacquainted.”

“He who will determine,” returned Imlac, “against that which he knows because there may be something which he knows not; he that can set hypothetical possibility against acknowledged certainty, is not to be admitted among reasonable beings. All that we know of matter is, that matter is inert, senseless, and lifeless; and if this conviction cannot he opposed but by referring us to something that we know not, we have all the evidence that human intellect can admit. If that which is known may be overruled by that which is unknown, no being, not omniscient, can arrive at certainty.”

“Yet let us not,” said the astronomer, “too arrogantly limit the Creator’s power.”

“It is no limitation of Omnipotence,” replied the poet, “to suppose that one thing is not consistent with another, that the same proposition cannot be at once true and false, that the same number cannot be even and odd, that cogitation cannot be conferred on that which is created incapable of cogitation.”

“I know not,” said Nekayah, “any great use of this question. Does that immateriality, which in my opinion you have sufficiently proved, necessarily include eternal duration?”

“Of immateriality,” said Imlac, “our ideas are negative, and therefore obscure. Immateriality seems to imply a natural power of perpetual duration as a consequence of exemption from all causes of decay: whatever perishes is destroyed by the solution of its contexture and separation of its parts; nor can we conceive how that which has no parts, and therefore admits no solution, can be naturally corrupted or impaired.”

“I know not,” said Rasselas, “how to conceive anything without extension: what is extended must have parts, and you allow that whatever has parts may be destroyed.”

“Consider your own conceptions,” replied Imlac, “and the difficulty will be less. You will find substance without extension. An ideal form is no less real than material bulk; yet an ideal form has no extension. It is no less certain, when you think on a pyramid, that your mind possesses the idea of a pyramid, than that the pyramid itself is standing. What space does the idea of a pyramid occupy more than the idea of a grain of corn? or how can either idea suffer laceration? As is the effect, such is the cause; as thought, such is the power that thinks, a power impassive and indiscerptible.”

“But the Being,” said Nekayah, “whom I fear to name, the Being which made the soul, can destroy it.”

“He surely can destroy it,” answered Imlac, “since, however imperishable, it receives from a superior nature its power of duration. That it will not perish by any inherent cause of decay or principle of corruption, may be shown by philosophy; but philosophy can tell no more. That it will not be annihilated by Him that made it, we must humbly learn from higher authority.”

The whole assembly stood awhile silent and collected. “Let us return,” said Rasselas, “from this scene of mortality. How gloomy would be these mansions of the dead to him who did not know that he should never die; that what now acts shall continue its agency, and what now thinks shall think on for ever. Those that lie here stretched before us, the wise and the powerful of ancient times, warn us to remember the shortness of our present state; they were perhaps snatched away while they were busy, like us, in the CHOICE OF LIFE.”

“To me,” said the Princess, “the choice of life is become less important; I hope hereafter to think only on the choice of eternity.”

They then hastened out of the caverns, and under the protection of their guard returned to Cairo.

### Chapter XLIX: The Conclusion, in Which Nothing is Concluded

It was now the time of the inundation of the Nile. A few days after their visit to the catacombs the river began to rise.

They were confined to their house. The whole region being under water, gave them no invitation to any excursions; and being well supplied with materials for talk, they diverted themselves with comparisons of the different forms of life which they had observed, and with various schemes of happiness which each of them had formed.

Pekuah was never so much charmed with any place as the Convent of St. Anthony, where the Arab restored her to the Princess, and wished only to fill it with pious maidens and to be made prioress of the order. She was weary of expectation and disgust, and would gladly be fixed in some unvariable state.

The Princess thought that, of all sublunary things, knowledge was the best. She desired first to learn all sciences, and then proposed to found a college of learned women, in which she would preside, that, by conversing with the old and educating the young, she might divide her time between the acquisition and communication of wisdom, and raise up for the next age models of prudence and patterns of piety.

The Prince desired a little kingdom in which he might administer justice in his own person and see all the parts of government with his own eyes; but he could never fix the limits of his dominion, and was always adding to the number of his subjects.

Imlac and the astronomer were contented to be driven along the stream of life without directing their course to any particular port.

Of those wishes that they had formed they well knew that none could be obtained. They deliberated awhile what was to be done, and resolved, when the inundation should cease, to return to Abyssinia.

## 4.12.5 Reading and Review Questions

1. What do you think Johnson hopes to achieve with the record of England’s decline in “London,” and why? How do you know?
2. How, if at all, does Johnson reconcile his biases, for instance, against the French and Spanish, or against female intellectuals, with his bent for truth? How self-aware is he? How do you know?
3. How, if at all, does the style of Johnson’s writing affect its sense or meaning? Consider whether or not the stately cadence of the opening lines of “The Vanity of Human Wishes” militate against the poem’s observations on human futility. Consider, too, the ringing declamations of the same poem’s closing lines.
4. How does Johnson balance fancy, which he often characterizes as self-delusional, with fact, or history, in *Rasselas*? Why and to what end does he fictionalize history?
5. According to Johnson, what, if anything, does life offer, and why? How do you know?