

[Sheet] No 1
A Disultory Journal of Events &c at Bath

Dec.22 1779

For the entertainment of my beloved kinsfolk imprisond in the desarts of Old Samford thus writeth I, albeit my lucubrations be not like those of Martinus Scriblerius¹ of facetious memory, yet they may possibly exhilarate in some degree the vapours of a murky evening, while the domestic taper giveth its friendly light by the chearful fire side.

Far be it from me to accost you with the language of fiction, for of that you may be most plentifully supplyd in your own land; but my words shall be the words of truth & soberness, and guile shall not be found in my mouth – so be it, amen.

Give ear therefore & hearken unto my words, and profit by my instruction for verily it is not such as every one giveth – yet it may appertain to things in which you may wish for information, inasmuch as the mind of man is wont to wander.

This day I began to attend a course of phylosophical lectures on Electricity – the Air, Chemistry, Astronomy, Hydrostatics, & the Globes – these lectures are given by Wm Arden of this city, a very ingenious man, & who has a noble apparatus of the best instruments.² Entertainments of this kind are the most truly rational & instructive of any that can employ the human mind. And a few lectures explaind by experiments convey more lasting instruction than many volumes of theory. We have them read here all winter. At these lectures were many men of great scientific knowledge – among others Lord Petre of your county who is a very pleasing sensible steady man. He has several times been to see me, & stayd some hours, conversing with the greatest freedom.³

Dec 23 [1779]

Went to the Pump Room in the morning – full of company and the music very fine – Lord Chichester there in a suit of crimson sattin fring'd & lind with white fur, & spangled with silver stars. He was much star'd at & laughd at for being so foppish in a cold snowy morning – there seems to be an unfurnishd room under his hat.

We are now fuller of company than we have been for 3 years – not a lodging in the New Town to be taken. Two Gazettes Extraordinary to day – all the bells ringing, & talk of an illumination. The taking Fort Omoa a very capital acquisition – the Patriots at the coffee houses a little in the dumps. What brave fellows were Gen Prevost & his little band!⁴

In the evening made a letter from a Gentleman in Dorsetshire for the Societies publication.⁵ “Be ye wise as serpents” saith the scriptures. After supping on a red herring smokd a pipe with W Mathews⁶ in the simplicity. Cough very troublesome.

¹ *The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus*, a satire on the abuses of learning by John Arbuthnot et al. (1741).

² William Arden gave at least five courses of lectures in winter 1779-80. This one was advertised in *Bath Chronicle* 23 Dec 1779.

³ Robert Edward Petre, 9th baron Petre, of Thorndon Hall, Essex, was an enlightened Catholic.

⁴ Incidents in the American War of Independence. The fort of St Fernando de Omoa, Honduras, was captured from the Spanish in October 1779. Major-General Prevost, commander of British forces in Georgia, raised the siege at Savannah.

⁵ As the salaried Secretary of the Bath & West Society, which he founded in 1777, Rack edited its journal, *Letters and Papers*. He was also paid to keep at his house the Society's collection of model farming equipment.

⁶ William Matthews, Rack's colleague from East Anglia, regularly preached at Quaker meetings. He later succeeded Rack as Secretary to the Bath & West Society.

About 10 [o'clock] alarmd with a cry of Fire – went to the door & saw it blazing at the Hon Mr Egertons in Westgate Buildings opposite R Painters house. In less than an hour by the assistance of 5 good engines & about 30 firemen it was extinguishd – the only fire that has been known here for 15 years. Went to bed abt 12 & dreamd my own house was on fire; but it was the suggestion of a lying spirit.

Dec 25th 7th [day] & Christmas Day [1779]

All the city shut up, & throngs going to all the places of worship – frost severe. Wrote letters on sundry occasions – after dinner walkd with wife on the South Parade, which was full of gentry enjoying an hours sun.

Came home & read Duches sermons⁷ which are truly excellent. In the evening spent an hour with the Hon Mr Fairfax, who is about going to Virginia on acct of an Act of assembly passd there for confiscating the estates of absentees. He has 80 thousand acres of land there which rents at 23 thousand pounds pr [?] annum, but has rec[eive]d nothing for 4 years past. This Act alarms him & he is going to do what he can for the preservation of his property.⁸

1st day Dec 26 [1779]

Went to the burial of poor Richd Painter, who is gone to that undiscoverd country whence no traveller returns. I went to see him abt a week before he dyd. He seemd quite changd in his disposition, told me he was glad to see me, and was very still & calm towards his end. I hope his sins are forgiven him, and that he is in a place of rest. T.Rutter was there; & had an evening Meeting⁹ at which as many of the gentry attended as could possibly get in. It was a very satisfactory Meeting, truth being (as G Fox says) over all unruly spirits.

2nd day Dec 27 [1779]

Pump Room throngd – near 20 lords & dukes, & Count Manteufel from Saxony. Rec[eive]d a packet from Molly Knowles with some excellent matter to cure the spleen.

Had a card from T.Curtis Esq¹⁰ to dine with him at 4 o'clock – dind at home first by way of security – at 2 waited on Lord Petre, and proposd to him to become a member of the Bath Society. He did so without hesitation, & gave me 12 guineas. At 4 went to Curtis' house in Belmont Row; found there his son from Oxford, & 3 very agreeable Ladys from Gloucestershire. An elegant dinner of 2 courses, 4 dishes in a course – & a pretty desert with cold fruits. After dinner, the ladies retiring, he proposd to me the establishment of a select Literary Society¹¹ for the purpose of discussing scientific and phylosophical subjects & making experiments to illustrate them. The proposition was to me pleasing & I concurd in it. We then made a list of near 30 men

⁷ Jacob Duché, *Discourses on Various Subjects*. 2v. (Bath, Cruttwell, 1779). In 1777 Cruttwell had included Rack's life of William Penn in an edition of Duché's *Caspipina's Letters*.

⁸ Thomas Fairfax, 6th lord Fairfax, of Leeds Castle, Kent, was the heir to his mother's vast estates in Virginia.

⁹ References to 'Meetings' otherwise unqualified refer to Quaker gatherings held twice on Sundays and sometimes on Fridays. George Fox was the founder of the Society of Friends, otherwise the Quakers.

¹⁰ Thomas Curtis, of a Gloucestershire family, had a Bath town house and was already an active member of the Bath & West Society and a governor of the Bath General Hospital.

¹¹ This is the origin of the first Bath Literary and Philosophical Society, which Rack generally calls the 'Literary Society' (and on one occasion the 'Select Society'), though its interests were mainly 'philosophical' in the sense of scientific and experimental.

of science & distinguishd abilities all residing in this city to apply to on the occasion, & drew the outline of a plan. Returnd home at nine.

3rd day 28 Dec [1779]

This morning T Curtis taking one part of the town & I another, we communicated the proposal to one half the number on our list, & succeeded so well as to get nine gentlemens names, who held a prelim[in]ary meeting this evening & establishd the Society & agreed on the plan of which I inclose a printed copy.

As this Society is to be quite select we admit none but men of known abilities & learning in the different branches of science – myself & Wm Matthews excepted. We join it to learn wisdom; and it promises to furnish much.

4th day 29 Dec [1779] Rainy morning

Forenoon answerd letters, & arrangd some specimens of botany sent from Norwich. Went to an auction & bought some lots of broadcloth & buttons &c for Saml Day, very cheap. Had a visit from Col Web, Major Drax & Thomas Drax Erle Esq. – another from Sir Wm Langham Jones about Society business. Had a ticket sent me for the concert this evening at the New Rooms. After reflecting on the matter cooly, went thither

[Sheet] no.2

and found the most brilliant assembly my eyes ever beheld. The elegance of the room illuminated with 480 wax candles, the prismatic colours of the lustres, the blaze of jewels, & the inconceivable harmony of near 40 musicians, some of whom are the finest hands in Europe, added to the rich attire of about 800 gentlemen & ladies, was altogether a scene of which no person who never saw it can form any adequate idea. It began at half past 6 & ended at 10. The highest decorum was observd throughout the whole. The concertos by La Motte & Fischer surpass all description. On the violin & oboe they are not equalld by any performer in Europe. They are both Italians – Rauzina is a eunich & has a fine shrill pipe, but I dont admire these shreds of men, shells of human beings. Near 60 of the nobility were present & several foreigners of distinction.¹²

5th day Dec 30 [1779]

Having breakfasted went to the Grove Coffee House where Sir Archer Croft informd me 3 duputies from Congress are arrivd in Holland & wait there for safe passports from our Court, in order to propose terms of accommodation. It seems the depreciation of the paper currency in America has so distressd the inhabitants, that they wish for a reconciliation, being also tir[e]d of their haughty allies the French. I wish the foolish pride of George King may not prevent a compromise. The Irish also seem satisfied with the terms proposd to them, so that our hemisphere begins to clear a little; & I hope we shall escape the ruin that threatned us. If terms are made with America I doubt not but France & Spain will soon cry pecavi, and be glad to relinquish the Grenades.¹³ If peace is once restord things will mend & get into their

¹² The concert was advertised in *Bath Chronicle* 23 Dec 1779. Venanzio Rauzzini would become the distinguished director of the Bath concerts.

¹³ Pecavi – I have sinned. Grenades – Grenada and other Caribbean islands.

old channel again. Since the breaking up of the Camps we have had a great number of officers in town, and many regiments passd thro in their way to winter quarters.

At noon attended the phylosophical lecture, where the principles & laws of motion & the mechanic powers were clearly illustrated by many curious experiments.

Thence to dinner - then to the Long Room where a great number of gentlemen were walking. Thence to the Library – drank Tea with R Crutwell¹⁴ – home to supper. W Matthews smokd a pipe – talkd of Old Samford and wishd you with us. After debating the matter concluded thou wouldst repent thy stay there.

6th day Dec 31 [1779]

A fine frosty morning & curious chrystalizations of salts on all the windows. On viewing them with a magnifying lens found the figures all regular, and infinitely varied. How beautiful is Nature in all her works. Nothing new in the papers this morning. Spread some sea weeds & copyd some letters. Corrected some proofs of Societys vol[ume] & wrote some letters. Rec[eive]d a visit from Sir Wm Langham Jones Bart. Attended an auction and bought some more goods for S[amuel] Day.

At 4 in the afternoon went to see the famous new electrical machine of John Bryant Esq, a very ingenious member of the Literary Society.¹⁵ It is one of the finest ever made, & throws out the zig zag streams of lightning 14 inches from the end of the conductor. Cost upwards of 100 pounds. Saw some very curious experiments.

At seven this Evening went to the Literary Societies meeting. Present

Thos Curtis Esq in the Chair

Dr Watson FRS John Walcot Esq
Jno Lloyd Esq FRS John Bryant Esq
Revd Mr Rogers, a man of great learning & abilities
Mr Herschel, optical instrument maker & mathematician
Mr Arden, lecturer in natural phylosophy
B Collins Esq, a walking library & the picture of [John] Locke
Mathew Martin Esq, a man of great science
Mr Parsons the same
Mr Symons, surgeon and student in electricity
Wm Matthews - & my self

At this meeting the rules were revisd & agreed on, a room hir[e]d in the center of the city, a subscription opend for phylosophical instruments, and the following minutes made by the Chairman viz. –

“It being thought necessary that a Secretary & Treasurer should be chosen, Mr E Rack is requested by this meeting to undertake those offices, and the books are referd to his care & keeping.

Mr Rack having complyd with the above request this meeting unanimously agrees to dispense with his subscription, & elects him an honorary member of this Society.

By this means I shall have the opportunity of enjoying all the benefits of this noble institution without any expence – a circumstance which is the more agreeable as I shall have opportunity of insensibly turning their attention to such objects as are in my view of things most curious & interesting. Now dont say that this was a deep laid scheme of my own for it was no such thing.

¹⁴ Richard Crutwell, Bath’s leading printer, was also publisher of the *Bath Chronicle*.

¹⁵ John Bryant was by trade a successful linen draper and soap manufacturer.

It was quite foreign to my thoughts, & I had actually paid my subscription both to the meetings & fund for instruments; but my money was returned.

Another meeting is appointed for this day week, & several other members have sent in their names. This institution promises much rational improvement & instruction – and has a much more favourable beginning than the Royal Society in London had 100 years ago – there being only 5 members for more than 2 years and those 5 not superior in learning & genius to most of our members.

7th day Janry first [1780]

Cough very troublesome this morning. Rec[eive]d two excellent letters from M Knowles & Jas Beezley. Walkd into Town – every street throngd with gentry & carriages – Market very full of fine provisions - butter 10d a pound - meat & fowls reasonable. Went to Library, met there the celebrated Wm Melmoth, the Addison of this age.¹⁶ Proposd to him his joining the Literary Society. He said he was much pleased with the institution, but could not join it as his health never permitted him to be out in an evening. He however promisd to assist occasionally with his pen, which is the most truly classical of any we have in the kingdom.

I must now stop as my frank¹⁷ will be full – but if this narrative be not disagreeable I may perhaps continue it.

[Sheet] No 3

1st day Jan 2nd 1780

Went to meeting in the forenoon – W M[atthews] preachd about Regeneration. Coming home stepd into the Cathedral¹⁸, & heard the latter half of an excellent sermon on “Blessed are the peace makers”. When I got home my little dog & cat were at variance - I rememberd the text, parted them, & hope to inherit the blessing. In the afternoon it raining hard & laziness prevailing I stayd at home & wrote a letter to Molly Knowles – W Mathews came to Tea & reprovd me; afterwards ownd he might as well have been with me, so we settled the matter pretty well over a pipe – the evening passing about as usual.

2nd day Jan 3 [1780]

In the morning went to Pump Room – saw there the Dukes of Leeds, Marlborough & Beaufort; Lords Grantham, Dillon, Mulgrave, Drogheda, Rivers, Donnegal, Cashell, Chichester, Tracy, Northington, Colvill and Ilchester, Baron Wamsdale, Judges Willes & Buller, Bishops of Worcester, Man, and Salisbury; General Trapoud [?], Dunning, with as many other gentry as could croud into the Room. Sir Wm Jones, Sir John Smith & Col Stewart came to see the Societies machines. Being a fine day I walked to Prior Park and over the fine evergreen plantations. It being now six weeks since I was off the stones (except in a coach to R Painter’s burial) and the sun shining pleasantly, the walk was very pleasing & afforded much entertainment as I strayd thro that charming wilderness of sweets. Here seats & arbours, apparently artificial, with here a temple & there a purling grotto are distributed irregularly. I felt sensations of pensively pleasing joy as I revisited the

¹⁶ William Melmoth, author of *Fitzosborne’s Letters on Several Subjects* and translator of the younger Pliny and Cicero, had settled at Bath in 1762.

¹⁷ i.e. a franked letter allowing free postage.

¹⁸ i.e. the Abbey Church.

favourite scenes of my summers contemplation. Every breeze that playd upon the venerable laurels revivd in idea the balmy pleasures of spring. The cascades seem to have an improvd melody in their cadence, and trickled musically down the rugged rocks. The trees, though leafless, are adorn'd with beautiful mosses, 18 species of which I brought home & arrang'd on paper for the general collection. A number of the gentry were taking the same walk, but to them access within the paradise was denied. Like Miltons Devil I oerleap'd the mound, or in other words got over the wall of this paradise & was not seen by any person who had a right to interrupt me. Came home to tea – in the evening went to see Dr Wilson¹⁹, who is poorly but cheerful and sensible as ever. On my return home met a card from Lady Miller inviting me to the Vase meeting²⁰ on Thursday the 13th instant, which said invitation I shall scarcely comply with. I have been there only once this winter yet. Tis all parade & ceremony & chocolate & jellies & creams which by repetition lose their power of pleasing, and is trouble to little purpose when once it becomes customary. W Matthews is now got into his new habitation, wch being a mile nearer Old Samford than I am, we shall not see each other so often as we have done, at least while winter lasts.²¹

3rd day Jan 4th [1780]

This morning after breakfast Dean Tucker²² came to see me, & we had a long dish of politics in which we were like oyl & water which wont mix. He shew'd me part of a manuscript which he is going to publish on behalf of the present Ministry. I ask'd him how he, as a gentleman of sense & learning and who had made politics & commerce his peculiar study, could seriously defend a set of men who had prov'd themselves ignorant of both, and arrant novices in the art of government. He said that to be sure they had been mistaken in many things, but that still they had the nation on their side & ought to be supported at a time when we were threatn'd on all sides with imminent danger. Our dispute ended as most disputes do, without conviction on either side; however we did not quarrel. About 12 he left me. At one, just as the cloth was laying, in came Sir John Smith, Lord Kelly, Lord Rivers & Col Campbel to examine the Norfolk ploughs, and to see my collection of plants & grasses. As these gentlemen knew little of botany themselves I came off very well; having only to bring in hard names and a few Latin phrases, and talk of Rays Synopsis²³ & the Linnean system and hermaphrodite flowers & all that, to obtain the character of a very scientific man. Finding after a few minutes conversation that they were rather more ignorant in these matters than myself, I hit it off to a hair, but when gentlemen of real knowledge come (which I can soon discover) then I am more careful, & talk socratically about things, keeping to generals, & speaking in terms which may be apply'd either way. In that case when I find by their replys that I am wrong, I have only to explain myself by telling them they misunderstood me, & that my meaning was so & so. By this means I am never hobbled either way & by degrees begin to learn in general what is really right. Had I but undertaken this task 20 years ago I should certainly by this time have cut a figure. However late in the day

¹⁹ See note 32.

²⁰ The Vase meetings held by Sir John and Lady Miller at Batheaston Villa were fashionable literary and society events that resulted in four published volumes of verse sold for charity. See also note 45.

²¹ William Matthews was in the process of moving his brewery and coal merchant's business from Avon Street to a site on the outskirts of Bath near Walcot turnpike – *Bath Chronicle* 6 Jan 1780.

²² Josiah Tucker, vicar of St Stephen's, Bristol, wrote voluminously on economic and political affairs.

²³ John Ray, *Synopsis Methodica Stirpium Britannicarum* (1690), a catalogue of the British flora.

as it is I find I improve, and doubt not being able to keep it up for the good of the publick. Now dont grin & say it is for my own good, for verily I feel the spirit of patriotism within me, working like yeast, & surely “the Ox ought not to be muzzled that treadeth out the Corn”. If our Society increases as I hope it will, & we have a peace, I shall let them know my consequence, & get an augmentation of my salary. Perhaps thoult say I have already more than I deserve, but thats neither here nor there, so Ill turn over a new leaf. These gentry being gone I dind on a rabbit value 9d - & then went to the house of Robt Madden Esq to see his fine library in which are the most valuable books in natural history that are in being - there are in the whole abt 3000 vollumes, & near 100 in this branch of study. One of them cost 60 guineas being a very large folio containing 1000 plates, curiously engravd & colourd from nature, of all marine productions, corallines, fossils, shells and ores. He told me I was welcome to take them all home one at a time & look them over – so that here is a vast field of fine entertainment & instruction without any expence. He is a very learned polite man, and one of those few who take a pleasure in obliging, which renders the obligation doubly pleasing. He has also a fine sett of phylosophical instruments. The study of the sciences has been his employ for 40 years, & few men have more knowledge and good nature. O that thou hadst but been wise, & I would have brought them to the Barracks to enliven winter evenings! I hope thou wilt yet see thy error before its too late.

In the evening arrangd my coralines, & named them from Ellis’s treatise on that subject, where plates of every known species are given.²⁴ Cough somewhat better.

4th day Jan 5 [1780]

Pump Room extremely crouded – some new pieces of paintings & fine Italian music. Went to Coffee House – read acc[oun]t of the Dutch fleet being taken – this is a terrible stroke to the Brest fleet. It will change the system of affairs. The Dutch must pocket the affront or a general war will ensue – this will call forth Austria & Rushia. The acc[oun]t of delegates coming from the Congress loses ground – General Faucit is gone to hire more Hessians, & I fear the horrid trump of war will again be blown in the West.

Sheet 4th

Went to see a curious collection of butterflies, moths, beetles & other insects at T Robins, a person who bre[e]ds them for sale and for preservation. I suppose thou thinks these are articles that would not bring much money at Old Samford – true, but here, among the virtu, they are fashionable stock, & Robins gets as much by raising & painting them as your farmers do by turkies. He gave me about 60 curious specimens to add to my collection. I then went to another curious man on Bond Street who had a fresh collection of sea weeds & bought some that were curious. Came home & found some gentlemen waiting for me. Went to Market & bought a foreloin of pork 4d a pound, and 6 apples at 1d each, pretty large though – small ones would have been 1½d. Collected about 50/- for a poor woman in distress & had her blessing. Joy sat on her countenance. I wishd myself rich for her sake. Walkd the South Parade – met Lord Petre and a great deal of Company. Went to Dr

²⁴ John Ellis, *An Essay towards the Natural History of the Corallines* (1755).

Falconers²⁵ to dinner* – Jno Ford Esq & Lady & Sir John Stapleton there – dind by candle light – stayd till 7 – came home & wrote letters, read a chapter & went to bed.

Now I suppose thou wilt smile at my reading a chapter, but I did not say it was in the Bible – yet verily it was, although I dont every night do so. But know that I love the Bible, & should love it still more were there less blood & cursing in it. I dont love blood, not even in puddings, & as to cursing it cometh not of the truth.

*NB Eat 6 pennyworth of apples after dinner.

5th day Jan 6th [1780]

Stayd at home this morning & enterd & answerd letters. Went to Meeting – only 15 there – all silent – W M[atthews] gone to Devizes market. At 2 o'clock went to Rooms – 11 card tables – deep play – gold & bank notes very plentiful – what stupid amusement! At the Master of the Ceremonies ball this week 11 hundred gentry were present. Tickets on this occasion are always gold & generally guineas – the ball must therefore bring him in at least 800£ – pretty picking, especially as he has another ball in April. Staid at home in the evening, & studied botany & natural history after the Committee on Premiums²⁶ went away. Ringing from morning till night. Cough troublesome.

6th day Jan 7th [1780]

A fine morning. At 10 John Walcot Esq, a curious botanist,²⁷ calld me to ride with him to see & examine the fine scene of rocks at Wick in Gloucestershire 6 miles off. I accompanied him, & having left our horses at the village went to this very romantic scene. The valley which winds between these vast fragments of stone is near a mile in length & about 100 yards wide at the bottom, throug[h] which runs a little clear stream over a bed of marble fragments that are crumbling from the cliffs above, which rise almost perpendicular, on one side especially, to the height of near 200 feet. They are bold and craggy & finely shagd with bushes & small stunted trees, with many spots of grass between them. On the very top some bold projections threaten the traveler below, & look sublimely dreadful when frowning through the trees. About these rocks we crept & rambled 3 hours, and collected many fine specimens of mosses, funguses, lichens, ore, spars, & calcarious concretions which in a general collection are valuable. In summer this must be one of the most delightful spots in the country, & we agreed to visit it again in the month of May, as it seems to be a spot favorable to the production of scarce plants and insects. Returning to our inn at 3 o'clock we sat down with good appetites to a dish of eggs & bacon, excellent cheese & Bristol ale, which was all the entertainment this caravansera afforded.

In this romantic retreat remote from the habitations of men Nature exhibits a fund of beautiful scenery in her native rudeness, simplicity & grandeur. At the bottom of this vale the sun sets in summer before 3 o'clock & is not seen till near 10 in the morning. Art has not done so much as to make even a foot path; but some winding tracks made by the cattle & goats among the copses of hazel & other wood that grow out of the crevices of the rocks inabled us to climb them with security. Here & there a clear trickling spring from the top tumbled from ridge to ridge & from cliff to cliff in small foaming cascades, the sound of which being echod repeatedly from the

²⁵ William Falconer, physician to Bath General Hospital, lived in the Circus and wrote many medical works.

²⁶ A committee of the Bath & West Society responsible for awarding prizes.

²⁷ John Walcott had recently published *Flora Britannica Indigena* (1778) and a book on Bath fossils (1779).

winding of the vale formd a pleasing sound, & raise that kind of pensively pleasing sensation which hushes every tumult of the passions & inspires awe & admiration

“O Haunts belovd where contemplation roves

“With undisturbed step and prunes her wings

“For flights etherial – Here let me resort

“When Folly deckd in pleasures tinsel plumes

“Assails the vacant mind.”

Smokd a pipe & got home to tea. At 7 in the evening went to the Literary Society – 14 members present. Mathew Martin Esq in the Chair. Two new members admitted. The subject of this evenings debate was rather on science in general – but principally electricity – on which some new & very curious experiments were mentiond by Jno Bryant Esq, who was desird to perform them at a future meeting. The conversation was carried on with much order & propriety, and most of the members gave strong proofs of their ability to pursue the plan they have undertaken. To this meeting a letter was sent by an unknown person containing some very proper cautions & observations on the mode of conducting the prosecution of our studies, which was much aprovd & directed to be recorded. Several of the members said they beleived it to be written by Lord William Seymour, & were sure it was his handwriting. I did not contradict them though I knew they were mistaken, having written the letter myself & got John Eaton to copy it & put it in the office. So easy a matter it is to deceive wise men.

7th day Jan 8 [1780]

This morning waited on Sir James Tylney Long Bart for his subscription. Company grow still more numerous. There is scarce a lodging in the Upper Town to be had. Last night, besides the dress ball at Gydes Rooms, there was a ball & supper at York House at which more than 400 attended. The tickets were 3 guineas, each ticket admitting a gentleman and a lady. A ball was likewise held at the Town Hall at which upwards of 300 attended.

Lord Molesworth just come in with 3 carriages & abt 20 servants, himself & lady in a very high phaeton & 6 horses, harness plated with silver, & 3 blacks with French horns.

“Take physic, Pomp” said Young²⁸ in his time, & I think the advice is now equally necessary. Having occasion to night to go up Gay Street into the Circus abt 7 in the evening the streets were one continued blaze of flambea[u]x behind the carriages going to the different balls; and the chairs so thick

Sheet 5th

that it was with difficulty foot passengers could pass. Major Brereton tells me there has not been so much company at Bath for 7 years past as their is at present; and yet we find no increase in the price of provisions except butter & fish. The Market this day is [the] greatest I have seen. At 12 o'clock went to a publick lecture on optic's, in which several eyes were dissected, and the wonderful structure and use of the several parts explaind in a clear manner. It was very curious and instructive as well as entertaining. Here is also a course of lectures on oratory – and an exhibition of bees, several auctions of books, and a company of wire dancers, and wild beasts

²⁸ Edward Young, 1683-1765, poet.

with dexterity of hand. Of these however I know nothing but by theory as displayed in the hand bills. This evening wrote near 20 letters, and am so tired that I must wish you a good night.

1st day Jan 9th [1780]

A most severe Morning – loth to rise. However rose at ½ past 9 and breakfasted just time enough for Meeting – W.M[atthews] clever on the divine attributes. Came home & dind. The sun shining very bright I walkd up to the Crescent, where I suppose 3 or 4 thousand gentry were walking. It was quite full from point to point & rather crouded – walkd there half an hour. Came home by the South Parade; that was as full as the Crescent. Came home and went to Meeting. Home to tea – W Mathews smokd a pipe. The air too sharp for me; cough troublesome. Spent the evening solo, contemplating on the vanity of human wishes & human life, and sumd up the matter with this reflection of John Scots²⁹

“Enough has Heaven indulgd of bliss below

“To tempt our tarrance in this lovd retreat;

“Enough has Heaven indulgd of useful woe

“To make us languish for an happier seat.”

The great business of human life is, first, to be anxiously seeking after a state of preparation for that which is to come; and secondly to enjoy with grateful hearts those numerous blessings, and partake of those pleasures which a wise & kind being has bountifully scatterd through & about the path of our journey. By the first we lay up a good foundation against the time to come; and by the second we smooth the rugged path of life while we are in it. Those few who are steadily engaged in both these pursuits are the wisest of mortals. To contemplate the Deity in his essence is not the prerogative of man. It is in his works his glory is manifested. The more we explore the more we discover; and the more a sensible mind discovers the more it will admire, reverence, & worship the one eternal object of adoration & praise – this when the tribute of a grateful feeling heart is the most acceptable of all sacrifice to him who formd us with faculties capable of beholding him in the beauty, order & excellency of his works. “Great and marvellous are thy works”, was the language of the celestial choir on contemplating the unutterable wonders of creation & providence! And if we contemplate on the small part of that infinite scene which lies within our narrow ken, similar aspirations will arise in the delighted mind. The ideas that then rush on the soul will be too big for utterance, and even want a name; while all self exaltation will be humbled in the dust, under an abasing sense of human weakness and divine perfection. Adieu for this evening.

2nd day Jan 10 [1780]

A fine delightful, but very keen morning. A full Pump Room, & hand bills deliverd of several fine & curious specimens of the fine arts to be exhibited in Bond Street.

Every day produces something new here; arts & refinements are carried to the most exalted heights, and every thing which can embellish life, or render it pleasing, presents itself to us. After breakfast went to see a curious collection of paintings at a gentlemans in the Circus in which are many excellent peices of still life both in crayons & oyl colours, particularly some of Salvator Rosa’s Italian

²⁹ John Scott, 1730-83, Quaker poet.

landscapes. Calld on Orpin the organist, who playd some very fine notes on his new constructed harpsichord calld the Celestina. They were very fine indeed & thrill through the nerves of the whole system.

Went home & read Edens Letters to Lord Carlisle which are well written & very sensible.³⁰ Major Callis & Col Hunter calld to see the Societys machines. After dinner went to the Rooms & saw the tables of folly. Returnd home & prepard accounts for the Societys meeting tomorrow. After supper smokd a pipe at R Crutwels. This day was rung at St Micha[e]ls church, in 3½ hours a complete peal – in which not a bell was out of time.

3rd day Janry 11th [1780]

This day was held the General Meeting of the Bath Society.³¹

Saml Cam Esqr Vice President in the Chair. To this Meeting Lord Ilchester sent a letter requesting to resign his office as President, and wishing to render the Society any service in his power as a private member. His Lordships resignation was accepted & the Earl of Aylesbury was unanimously chosen President in his room.

Meeting ended about 3, and having to prepare the advertisement of the minutes & write to Lord Aylesbury this evening, must draw to a conclusion for the present.

We are through mercy in usual health – and wish to hear the same of you. My wife takes it a little unkind that Molly dont write as the opportunity of conveyance is so easy. Its a waste to send a single letter in a frank & I am sure your land is not so barren as not to furnish something in a fortnight. If Poll Chapman has paid her rent my wife will be obligd to Cousin Smith to remit it when thou writest – Sister Sallys also, if Peter has rec[eive]d it of W Candler, may come at the same time.

Our joint love concludes me thine affectionate

E Rack

Sheet 6th

4th day evening 10 o'clock – Jan 12 [1780]

This morning at 9 Alderman Sawbridge of London sent me a note from the Bear Inn that he came to town late last night & wishd to see me. I knew his business because several letters had passd between us on the subject. It was for me to act as an arbitrator between him & Dr Wilson in the dispute about Mrs Macaulay.³² At the time of her being his favorite he made over by a legal deed to her Alfred House, & gave her an annuity of 400£ a year during her life, at his own death. Her marriage was so great an affront that he wanted to get these securities from her. She refusd to deliver them. By way of terrorum the D[octo]r employd C Crutwell to write a narrative of her conduct relative to Dr Graham in which some letters would have appeard that would have blasted her honour for ever. This work was begun printing, & advertisd. Her relations & friends were alarmd. Her brothers Beckingham & Sawbridge both

³⁰ William Eden, *Four Letters to the Earl of Carlisle* (1779), defending negotiations with the Americans.

³¹ Reported in *Bath Chronicle* 13 Jan 1780.

³² Catharine Macaulay, author of a multivolume *History of England*, had scandalously married a ship surgeon's mate William Graham, brother to the well-known quack doctor James Graham, in 1778. John Sawbridge, a radical politician and former Lord Mayor of London, was Catharine Macaulay's brother. The Rev Dr Thomas Wilson was the son of the former Bishop of Sodor & Man, whose posthumous works, edited by Clement Cruttwell, Richard Cruttwell would soon be publishing.

wrote me on the subject & requested I would use my interest to stop the publication. I did so, & informd J Sawbridge that if he would come down I apprehended the affair might be accommodated. In consequence of this information Sawbridge came down; and as the D[octo]r was not well enough to treat, he left the matter to Crutwell on his part. Sawbridge & he met but could not nearly hit the matter. At length they both agreed to leave the matter to me; & after sitting on it 7 hours I at length determind, that in consequence of Dr Wilsons giving Mrs Macaulay eight hundred pounds, she should deliver up all the securities Dr Wilson had given her, and the manuscript of the narative, with all the letters and papers relative thereto, should be burnt in the presence of J Sawbridge Esq on or before the 25th of March next.

This seemd satisfactory on both sides, & an article was immediately drawn & signd by J Sawbridge & Crutwell on behalf of the principals. Thus the affair ended & J Sawbridge is just set off in a chaise for London.

I am sure the D[octo]r ought to give me 100£ in his will for it is a very good bargain for him – the house alone being worth 1400£ – but I dont expect anything.
adieu till

5th day Jan 13th [1780]

Earl & Countess of Scarborough, Lord & Lady Milford, Lady Head, Lady Middleton, & Count O Rourke, came in last night. Went to Library & saw Wm Melmoth. Thence to Robt Maddens Esq who shew me a number of fine specimens in natural history – in corallines & sea eggs &c in very high preservation – likewise some curious books in that branch of science, one of which I took home with me. Stepd in at the Town Hall & heard the sitting Alderman try some cases in which the evidences, being mostly Kingswood colliers, afforded matter for much risibility. Came home at 12. Col Pechel & lady call'd to see the cooking machine and Societies plants. My cough but poorly from the severity of the air. Sat down to a pipe & lookd over Dr Grews history of the sap in plants & trees, & examined his curious plates in which the texture of the different vessels is accurately delineated.³³

The wonderful structure & fineness of the air vessels in the stalks of plants & in the roots & branches of trees is a wonderful object to behold. These are easily seen by cutting very thin slices transversely, and placing them in the microscope before their surface is dry. The variety is prodigious & amazing. In short natural history is endless in its extent & beautiful in all its parts. Of almost every thing as well as man, it may with truth be said they are “fearfully & wonderfully made”. Every examination raises the mind up to the one first cause and exhibits marks of that power & wisdom which formed Orion and the numerous constellations, and which raisd also the moss of the wall. Equally perfect in the little as in the great his attributes are displayd throughout the unbounded extent of his works, and praise him in various language thro all their immense variety.

In the evening wrote letters & read 2 of Duche’s sermons which are written in the true spirit of the Gospel.³⁴

6th day Jan 14th [1780]

In the morning regulated my Beaureau & put the useless papers on a string for necessary purposes. At 11 went to the Library – met some geniuses there &

³³ Nehemiah Grew, *The Anatomy of Plants* (1682).

³⁴ See note no.7.

heard some learned conversation between Wm Melmoth Esq and Lord Grantham & the Bishop of Worcester, brother to Lord North. The Lord & the Bishop were both sensible but it was Melmoth who shone the real great man. Spent an hour with R Madden Esq in his library. Calld on Dr Watson & the Hon Hugh Ackland who is going to join the Literary Society.

After dinner wrote letters & read till tea – then calld on W Matthews & took him to J Bryants Esq to see some curious electrical experiments made on his new machine by himself, Arden & Herschel, some of them were quite new & astonishing, such as firing pistols, ca[r]tridges, &c, & lighting candles by the electrical sparks.

At 7 went to the Literary Meeting – 14 members present – T Curtis in the Chair. 2 new rules were made – 1st to hold the meetings every week in winter, & once a fortnight in summer, secondly to admit no person at any meeting but members – and, as the number is now 18, that no more gentlemen be admitted but by ballot, a single black ball to prevent admission. By this means we never can have any person a member, or even present, who is not agreeable to every other member of the Society. The institution begins to make some noise in the city; and “many will strive to enter in but shall not be able”. After confirming the rules, I proposd to the meeting the consideration of a very important subject in natural history, to wit whether (as generally suppos’d) the fine branches of sea corallines are formd by the Polypee that are always found to inhabit them, or be form’d by Nature as a receptacle for those animals? At the same time laying before the meeting an acct in writing of an experiment I lately made to prove whether, & in what degree, the growth of sea corallines may be promoted by keeping them in artificial sea water, that is, in a solution of common salt & nitre & Epsom salts in water. As this experiment was quite new, and very nearly decisive on one side of the question, it struck the meeting forcibly and was directed to be the subject

Sheet 7th

of debate next sixth day evening.

The meeting was conducted with great harmony & decorum, and several of the gentlemen began to open themselves in a manner that showd we might expect much from them without the fear of being disappointed. Particularly a Saml Pye Esq who joind the Society this evening, of whom nothing more need be said than that he is the intimate friend of Wm Melmoth who is certainly the first literary character of this age & nation. He is the learned, the ingenious, the accomplishd, & truly great man. What elegance in his translations and his letters. How far superior are they to any thing of the kind yet publishd.

I am never in his company without feeling a kind of awe & reverence from a consciousness of his great superiority to almost every other man: yet he treats me with all that respectful ease & politeness, which a person who is infinitely nearer on an equality could not wish to have exceeded. If there is any thing that can justify a little self estimation it is certainly the notice & friendship of a Melmoth, & I would not exchange it for the notice of all the lords that ever figurd in this splendid circle.

7th day Jan 15 [1780]

Did not cough once all last night, & but little this morning – owing I believe to the effect of a medicine which R Crutwell persuaded me to take. It is Griffins Tincture. I hope it will greatly alleviate, though not cure it. After breakfast came T Curtis Esq with Count Comhoof, a gentleman whom the Empress of Rushia sent to England to study agriculture. They came to examine the Societies new models & machines. The Russian seems a polite sensible man & speaks English pretty well. After looking over the machines, they came into parlour & chatted about an hour on the state of agriculture & arts in Rushia. From what he says, it appears that an excellent police is establishd in Rushia – that civilization, learning, arts & sciences are making rapid strides in those frozen regions of the north. The Empress is the Elizabeth of the present age, & being absolute has nothing to oppose her plan. In rude nations an arbitrary government seems the most proper for promoting civilization & refinement of taste & manners. The human mind in that chaotic state has few other objects of desire than what immediately gratify the animal passions. It has no ideas of science, taste, arts, and all that assemblage of motives to action which give birth to and promote the elegancies of life. The first principles or grand outline of action for the accomplishment of these must be inforced by authority, as in the most tender & delicate plants the first rudiments of vegetable life must be forcd into action by the power of hot beds & stoves. But to return (as Saml Spavold says), this evening was the annual concert for the benefit of the Pauper Charity, a noble institution set on foot some years since by Sir John Miller, & by which many thousands of poor distressd objects have been releived.³⁵ To this concert I have always gone since I livd in Bath, & I think from motives strictly justifiable. Of course I went to this, at which were about 600 persons, besides 400 tickets more taken by persons who did not attend, as its a very wet evening. So that the profits of the whole cannot be less than 220 pounds, as thirty pounds defrays the expences of the room & music. There were near 100 of the nobility* and abt 100 officers. On this occasion many gentlemen joind the band in the orchestra, and performd well on divers instruments.

The peices playd & sung were judiciously chosen, and had a very fine effect, and the appearance of the company was extremely brilliant. At 10 came home, smokd a pipe & wrote thus far.

*The Earl & Countess of Scarborough, Lord Grantham, Lord Milford, Lord Molesworth and Lady Brabazon were superbly dressd.

1st day Jan 16 [1780]

A very wet windy morning – rose at 9. Went to Meeting which on acct of the weather was small. Jno Whitehead & his wife & daughter from London were there. Wm Mathews preachd on “I planted thee a choice vine, but thou hast brought forth strange slips”. He applyd it to the Christian Church, which was planted pure through the powerful ministration of the word of eternal life preachd outwardly & inwardly by the Son of God; but became corrupt thro the influence of the spirit of this world working in the hearts of the children of disobedience and alienated from the true spiritual worship of its adorable author to the image of the earthly, and the adoration of the idols which it had formd to itself.

I have seldom heard him more clear, pertinent and animated. He concluded the Meeting with an excellent prayer, that the Church collectively & its members

³⁵ The Pauper Charity actually started up in 1747 and in 1792 became the Bath City Infirmary and Dispensary.

individually might be restored to that pristine purity & glory in which it was originally formed; & become the sanctified habitation of God through the Spirit. That from becoming the temples of the Holy Ghost in the present state of being, we might, when the days of our warfare are ended, join our elder brethren in glory, and become a part of that Church triumphant, whose acclamations of Holy Holy Holy will eternally ascend to the throne of the highest for ever.

Afternoon a dull, silent Meeting. W M[atthews] smoked a pipe & drank tea, talked of you, & wished you with us.

The remembrance of absent Friends is pleasing; but in the present instance attended with the painful recollection of the space that separates us. I wish much to see you, but the expense of a journey of 300 miles is too great to be dispensed with so often as inclination prompts. I wish Members of Parliament were qualified to frank the road as well as a letter, & then I would spend a week with you every three months. A thought has this moment run through or across my cranium which I want to have resolved. It relates to prophecies, and is a question which involves in its answer consequences of immense magnitude. It is this. If what is to be will certainly be, of what use is it to know what cannot be avoided. If thou dost not give me a satisfactory answer I may probably propose it for the subject of a debate at the Literary Society. On the proper & true answer to this single question depends the truth or falsity of a great part of our theological reasonings. I will not preclude thy thoughts by adding any of my own, & so for the present fare ye well.

Sheet 8th

2nd day Janry 17 1780

A fine morning – Pump Room full & music fine. At 11 went & spent an hour with Wm Melmoth whose character seems to rise on every interview. Called in at the Town Hall & heard some trials. Lord Chancellor left Bath this forenoon. Took a walk in the fields & returned to dinner. The south wind is awaked & blows on our garden. The tokens of coming spring begin to appear. Infant buds begin to grow turgid – the tender panicles of grass appear in the bosom of the parent tufts – the snowdrops begin to rise, and green peas were this morning for the first time in our Market, one guinea a pint. I did not buy any. Had a card inviting me to dine at Lt Col Pechels but did not go. I very seldom condescend to accept these invitations, unless from men of literature. Dined comfortably at home on beefsteaks. Went to the Library and met there Dr Bellamy, author of the Family Preacher.³⁶ He is not quite the thing – too much of the high priest, though very civil. Drank tea at R Crutwells & corrected some proofs. Came home to supper & wrote letters. After supper went to R. Crutwells again to meet Jno. Preistwich Esq, a member of the Antiquarian Society in London, who is about publishing the history and antiquities of Liverpool. He is a pleasing & very learned ingenious man. Stayed there till ½ past 11 – he is to breakfast with me tomorrow morning. There is more enjoyment in one evening's company with men of sense & learning than in an age spent among blockheads.

3rd day Jan 18 [1780]

Morning dull – the thick clouds hang upon the mountains misty brow, hiding their tops in darkness. Too lazy to go to the Pump Room – sat down & wrote letters

³⁶ Daniel Bellamy, *The Family Preacher* (1754).

into the north. At 11 sallied forth Don Quixote like, in search of adventure. The Coffee House the first scene of action. There I met a subject, a little Welch Gentleman with a nose as long as a leek – there was enough of it to write his whole pedigree upon. Having the General Advertiser in his hand, a letter abusing the Ministry calld the ancient blood of the Taffys into his face – he was movd – he wriggld like a fresh whipld school boy – he spilld his coffee, and at length exclaimed Zounds! This was only a signal gun – but it drew the eyes and ears of the company. “Sir (said a young Buck) you seem disconcerted.” Yes Sir replyd Taaf tis enough to disconcert the Devil to see – (hem, hem) – a parcel of scoundrels, hem, abusing their betters – their (hem) their Gov (hem) governors and their K (hem) King”. “Your warmth Sir is noble (said the Buck) – such d—d scriblers ought to be set in the pillory – but I suppose he is some poor devil of a Welch curate who has been refusd a living & taken this mode of revenge”. Here the laugh going rather against our Cambro Briton he placd his arms a kimbo, & ringing for the waiter paid his 9d & retird, growling inarticulately about – low bred, & dignity, & best blood, and more jargon of the kind. After he retird I was informd he was the son of a Welch Justice in the wilds of Carnarvonshire. Calld at Library & got the last voll publishd by the Society of Antiquarians in which are some very curious peices & plates. Coming home by the Pump Room calld in & saw Lady Clifford who is in person & accomplishments a master peice which my pencil is unable to paint. I can only apply to her the fine lines of the Swan of Avon

“Her voice is gentle as the summers breeze:

Her form is virtue by the Graces drest:

Her mind is purer than the Mountains Snow.”

Came home & dind. Went & spent an hour with the Revd Mr Rogers who is goutifyd. Took a little walk in the Crescent Fields. Home to tea – wrote answers to some letters. Quere, Was Adam created with or without a navel? I have no premeditated matter, and therefore deliver things just as they spring in my mind. Vols have been written on both sides, but demonstration has not attended the arguments of either. W Mathews came & smokd a pipe – I askd him, but he said he did not know, & so we agreed to drop the subject. This being the Queens birth day our bells have been ringing from morning to night & our corps of Volunteers been drawn up & firing 6 rounds on the North Parade. I heard them pop, pop, pop, but did not go to see them.³⁷ “Peace is my dear delight, not Fleury’s more”. So in peace I will lay me down if my cough will let me.

4th day Jan 19th [1780]

Dull wet morning – went to Library & took home some new publications Stayd at home all day reading them, answering letters & correcting proof sheets. Found it possible to stay within doors a whole day without time hanging heavy on hand. Poor Hans Stanley – what a delirium must have seizd him, to send himself out of the world with every thing in it (except a quiet conscience) that can render life pleasing; but he had been a tool in the dirty business of Ministry.³⁸ He was a man of parts, but wanted resolution to act agreeably to his own convictions. It is now feard that Capt Clerke has shard the fate of his brave & wise comander. What a loss is Capt Cook to the world, the ablest navigator in it, & probably furnishd with the greatest share of

³⁷ Reported in *Bath Chronicle* 20 Jan 1780.

³⁸ Hans Stanley, M.P. for Southampton, had just committed suicide at Althorp.

geographical knowledge.³⁹ But all things must come to an end. One generation lives upon the wisdom & labours of those which have passd away before it, and communicates the stock with some little additions to that which succeeds it. In the vast system of human things every thing is in perpetual revolution, & yet with respect to the whole every thing remains the same. Nature is perpetually changing forms but nothing is destroyd, different combinations of matter form the scenery, but the aggregate of things is neither increasd nor diminishd. A bubble of water bursts – an earthquake swallows up a city – an empire is torn from its foundations, & a louse is crackd by the revengeful thumb nail of a taylor , & all are equally important even in the vast system of Nature. But to return – I shall send these off this evening. Much pains do I take, perhaps in vain, for your entertainment, but it seems to have little effect in bringing a return of news, &c from your country. I am tird with writing, therefore adieu.

Sheet 9th

5th day Jan 20th [1780]

Rainy morning – arrangd mosses & studied botany. After [the] Meeting & dinner went to Library, where some of the literati were conversing on the present rapid progress science is making in France & Switzerland. In the latter place where ignorance & barbarism have reignd for many ages, the lamp of science is now diffusing its rays with great splendor; and the hunting of wild boars through dark & disolate provinces is now exchangd for the calmer pursuits of commerce, learning & phylosophy. The throne of ignorance and bigotry is shaken to its very foundations, and even in the frozen regions of Scythia & Rushia, the instruments of savage sports and gothic manners have given place to the arts which sustain commerce & the elegancies of polishd life. The Rushian, who a few years since lay half the year in his cave, wrapd in bearskins and enlightend only by their grease, now cultivates many of the manufactures necessary for extensive trade & erects his habitation in the face of the sun. He not only supplys the wants but enjoys many of the luxuries common to civilizd nations and is happy in emerging from animal to social life. I am fully convincd that the cause of humanity & liberty has made a swifter progress within the last 30 years throughout the north of Europe than in any former period. Whatever cause brings men of cultivated minds & polite manners together from different countrys, civilization, knowledge, & the love of science is thereby promoted. Men of bright parts & learning when remaining single in their different abodes only twinkle at a distance like individual stars. When assembled together they form a glorious constellation which enlightens the darkest hemisphere. They communicate light to & reflect it on each other, & on all around them. The late war between the Turks & Russians, though bloody & fatal to thousands, had this effect on those that survivd it. The number of English & French volunteer officers which on that occasion found the Russian fleet & army, sowd the seeds of learning, arts & politeness of manners among that enterprizing people. These have ever since been cultivated with avidity; and I have no doubt but that in the course of half a century Rushia will vie with most European nations in the arts of civilization and those acquirements which constitute much of lifes most refind enjoyments.

³⁹ Captain James Cook and Captain Charles Clerke were killed on Hawaii during Cook's third voyage.

Home to tea. Spent the evening at T.Curtis's Esq in revising the translation of a French author on bread & bread corn, which is to be publishd in the Societys voll.

6th day Jan 21 [1780]

Waited on Webb Esq & Dr Watson who wanted to consult me about a new institution in this city. Its yet in embrio – when brought into being I will describe it.⁴⁰ Forenoon being fine & frosty, walkd into the fields which were white with snow. Returnd to dinner – wrote letters.

Rec[eive]d a packet of 3 whole sheets on the culture of carrots & destroying vermin from a Mr Jacob of Wareham in dorsetshire (never mind its being spelld with a little d – we are above all forms). Half of it was pure nonsense, the other half was middling, and the third half pretty well. I melted it down into one sheet & sent it to the press.

In the evening went to the meeting of the Literary Society – 16 members present. Resumd the consideration of the experiment I had made on the growth of corallines. Many very ingenious observations were made on the subject, & as the corallines producd continued to exhibit some new & curious appearances, they are to be again examind this day week. A very ingenious member then proposd the following question for the consideration of another meeting, which was enterd on the journal & a copy taken by most of the members.

“Are the numerous classes of fossils usually called petrefactions formd by a real mutation of substance or by an injection of the surrounding matter into the interstices of the original subject, or, upon the exclusion of the animal or vegetable body by putrification, are they formd by the introduction of a calcarious substance?”

After many living testimonies being borne to great edification and comfort, the meeting broke up, & we all seperated in peace. This evening Counsellor Dunning arrivd from Bristol with an express from Plymouth containing an acct of the capture of the Spanish fleet by Rodney & Ross – a capital stroke indeed.

7th day Jan 22 [1780]

Met Dr Watson at Mr Webbs on a new scheme – ferments well – all goes on right – the completion of this will finish my schemings beneath the sun. “What is it”? Have patience – let that have its perfect work in you, as it had had in me. I will tell you in due season.⁴¹ Stept into the New Rooms as I returnd. 17 card tables full – gold & notes to considerable amount on each. What a pity when its so much wanted. What insignificant beings! How did I wish at that moment for the Gorgons snaky head to turn them all into stone and convert their treasure to a more rational use. Among all the municipal laws of this kingdom & publick hospitals, I wonder that the general interest of the people has not suggested the idea of building an hospital for gamesters and making a law that every person who shuffles cards & rattles dice for more than one shilling a game or throw shall forfeit his property to the State & be confind in said hospital as a lunatic till he has so far recoverd his senses as to give bond for the forfeiture of half his property on conviction of a second offence.

A grand ball & supper is this evening at Gydes Rooms, tickets one guinea each. I shall not go thither.

⁴⁰ A plan to establish a scholarly subscription library at Bath, covering the arts and sciences, history, natural history and belles lettres. The proposal was circulated in a leaflet dated 24 Jan 1780 but came to nothing.

⁴¹ See previous note.

A new species of luxury has taken place this winter here: chickens are fatted with chopd almonds & raisons & sold at 2 guineas a couple. The pastry cooks who have introduced this will get fortunes, as many are sold daily at that price. I suppose this is a mode of fattening fowls which your Samford higliers have no idea of. Well may raisons be dear – where will extravagance end? – Its now a very sharp frost & the hills are covered with snow. But when the country is most dreary this city is most pleasant – every coffee house, billiard room, publick library, long rooms &c is chearful & filld with gentlemen.

Sheet 10th

Smoked a pipe with R Crutwell in the evening. Dr Wilson not like to continue many days. A chairman broke his leg by slipping down in the Grove. Capt Dawson, Master of the Ceremonies⁴², & the Bishop of Worcester's lady had lately a dispute on a dress ball night. The lady came in with a hat on, which is contrary to the established rules. Capt D politely remonstrated – the lady would not obey. The Capt insisted – she would not, but retired into the tea room. The Capt followed her, & told her that if she would not comply, disagreeable as the task would be, he must be obliged to take her hat off himself. She was still obstinate and ordering her chair left the rooms. The conduct of Capt D was highly applauded, but the Bishop has been silly enough to resent it, & some abusive letters have appeared in the London papers on the occasion.

1st day Jan 23 [1780]

A severe morning. Meeting rather small – W M[atthews] gave us an excellent discourse on “I will build up the waste places of Jerusalem, and the remnant of Judah shall be gathered” – his amplification of this text was clear, cogent and animated, and the application pertinent & pathetic. Col Goreham & Capt Selby were there & some ladies with them. Afternoon Meeting many Methodists present – Wm M[atthews] gave us another discourse on the words of the disciples to our Lord “Whither shall we go thou hast the words of eternal life”, applying it to that restless disposition of mind which runs from form to form, living on words and rituals instead of centering on the one eternal saving word which is the alone sufficient teacher, & leads into all truth.

Several of them constantly attend meetings now & appear to be convinced of the principles we hold as a society. W M[atthews] drank tea with us & spent part of the evening. My cough is very troublesome – the air is too sharp. I fear we shall have a severe February. Wrote letters.

2nd day Jan 24 [1780]

A fine clear frosty morning. Pump Room full & fish very dear – bought 24 [oz?] fine Carmarthenshire butter at 6¼d a pound – new is 10d. Abundance of wild fowl at the poulterers – snipes 1/-, woodcocks 18d each, wild geese 2/6, mallard 18d, teal 1/-, fieldfares & starlings 6d, larks 12d dozn. Called on several gentlemen on Societies business. Heard some causes tryd at Town Hall – stepped into an auction – returned to dinner. Read & wrote all the afternoon. Evening went to Library & read the new opera. Returned to supper – corrected proof sheets.

⁴² i.e. at the Upper Assembly Rooms.

3rd day Jan 25 [1780]

Sharp morning – wrote till 11. Went to Dr Watsons – lookd over some curious books in his library – thence into fields & pickd up some petrifications in a quarry. Dined – smokd – had a visit from T Curtis Esq & Robt Hale Esq, the discendant of Judge Hale – arrangd some mosses & shells. Went to Dr Wilsons, who is better. Drank tea with W M[atthews]. In the evening wrote letters, and read some new pamphlets of small reputation. R Crutwell smokd a pipe en famille & W M[atthews]. “All dull without, chearful within/ Social freedom circles round”.

4th day Jan 26 [1780]

Severe morning & cough troublesome. Made some experiments to discover the causes of petrification and how far petrifyd bodies are soluble in acids – wrote an acct of them for the Select Society. Sent a man to Weston for some water from a petrifying spring there & put a variety of different bodies into it.

M Martin Esq, B Collins & Dr Manningham calld to examine some curious animals found in a reservoir of water – some of a new species & very surprizing. Put some in a vial & sent to Sir John Pringle, President of the Royal Society.

Went with them to see a fine collection of paintings just come to town for sale – some of them originals and valuable. R Crutwells brother James in London bought a small painting last winter for 70£ which he carried to Paris & sold for 800 guineas. A pretty way of making money.

Yesterday was our county meeting at Wells where it was agreed to petition Parliament. In the evening calld on Wm Melmoth who entertaind me with classic conversation. Came home & wrote letters. Some Friends have now sent for me to the Angel, I must see who they are. Tis Thos Meluish of Taunton & John Thomas, come to be at our Meeting tomorrow. I stayd with them about an hour, but they are heavy lumpish beings – nothing to be learnt from them – not only as harmless, but almost as silly as sheep. As preachers they may rank with John Kendal & T Day – hardly equal though.

5th day Jan 27 [1780]

The said Friends came & breakfasted. Just before the time of [the] Meeting I rec[eive]d a card from T Curtis Esq to wait on him directly. I did so –he wanted me to accompany himself, wife & daughter to see a curious collection of ores, fossils, minerals & marine productions. It being rather past Meeting time, & thinking I should be full as much edifyd with such a display of wonders as with such kind of preaching as was likely to be exhibited, I went with them & had a very pleasing entertainmt for near 3 Hours. On coming home I found those who had been at [the] Meeting were but little satisfyd with what they had heard, so I regretted not my absence. W M[atthews] was at Devizes Market. Stay'd at home the afternoon & evening, reading & writing.

6th day Jan 28 [1780]

The morning very severe – cough troublesome indeed. Went to Coffee House & read the papers – nothing material. Calld at R Maddens Esq & lookd over some of his books on nat. history. Returnd home pinchd with the sharp air. Smokd a pipe & wrote to Dr Fothergill on the growth of corallines. J Boylstone Esq call'd & chatted an

hour. Arrangd sea weeds till tea – then went to Literary Meeting. Thirteen members present.

Jno Lloyd Esq in the chair.

Several curious letters had been sent in on the subject of petrifications, and many singular specimens were produc'd. The debate on the subject was conducted with great propriety & very entertaining. Some new light was thrown on the subject but as I had begun a course of experiments on various kinds of petrifications, the subject was continued on the journal for full investigation when those experiments should be finish'd.

The following subject was then proposed for the consideration and debate of the next meeting, and enter'd in the following form on the journal.

Sheet 11th

A desideratum

The cause of the extinction of light in bodies is a subject of very great difficulty. If light was subject to no laws but those of reflection and refraction, no place into which light was once admitted would ever be dark, and the light of the universe would be continually increas'd.

If the same cause produce both these effects (to wit reflection & refraction) it might be expected that it would sometimes produce effects of an intermediate kind; in consequence of which, light might sometime not always be reflected, or refracted with equal velocity.

Monsieur Bouguer⁴³ supposes that the power which absorbs or extinguishes the light is confin'd to the surfaces of bodies, and that it operates chiefly when the rays fall upon it with a certain degree of obliquity, whereas Newton supposes that a ray is never stop'd but when it impinges on some solid body.

To whatever cause it be owing that light is stop'd in bodies, the question is
What becomes of it?

This very curious & interesting question was propos'd by Mr Herschel, the professor in astronomy, who is very great in that line of science. He is a German gentleman, and has made some great improvements in telesscopes. With one that he made some years since I have seen clearly a broken small wire lattice in a window at 3 miles distance.⁴⁴

7th day Jan 29 [1780]

A piercing black dull wind frost at northeast. About 11 I just got to Market, but was forced to retreat back into my shell like a snail, & there I have kept all the day. We are certainly colder in winter than you are there. The cold bleak northeast winds drive in between the hills with great severity. We are however happy in being so near the coal mines, and every thing we want but your company is within reach. Just as I had din'd came Sir John Miller & Parson Graves (author of the *Spiritual Quixote*).

Sir John came to request I would write an elegy on the death of Capt Cook, that being the subject for the next Vase day at Batheaston.⁴⁵ I however gave him no expectation of doing nor shall I trouble my self about it. I have enough on my hands

⁴³ Perhaps Pierre Bouguer, author of *Essai d'Optique sur la Gradation de la Lumière* (1729).

⁴⁴ William Herschel, organist at the Octagon chapel until 1776, was still earning his living as a musician, music teacher and concert director.

⁴⁵ See note 20.

already. He tells me they had 70 carriages there last 5th day. It must cost him no small matter to entertain such a company once a fortnight for 9 months with chocolate & sweetmeats. He says however that write or not I must go, and as there will doubtless be some excellent peices on the death of that great circumnavigator, I intend to make one of the company on the occasion. They stayd about an hour, and then left me to my studies.

Sir Jno is a very polite, good temperd, well bred man; and having till within 10 years spent most of his time in the army, and in France & Italy, his conversation is very pleasing & entertaining, but he is neither a man of much science, reading, or of great abilities.

Graves is a man of great learning, genius & taste, but so deaf & insignificant in his appearance & address that those are strangers would form an idea of him very inadequate to his merit. His Spiritual Quixote & Collumela prove him to possess much true wit & humour, and a great knowledge of mankind; but wit & humour have seldom resided in a form more unfavourable in its appearance.⁴⁶

About five J Collins Esq (alias Jno Locke) came & chatted about an hour. Every time I am in this gentleman's company my idea of him increases. His understanding is very great, his genius tow[e]ring, and his mind amply enrichd with almost every thing valuable in science & phylosophy.

The polite dignity & gravity of his manners, and the energy of thought & sentiment displayd in his conversation strikes me with a kind of reverence; and makes me shrink back into my own littleness with self abasement. Surely it must be Lockes soul in a new body. On mentioning this thought respecting him to Wm Melmoth, he told me it had been often his idea, as perhaps no two men were ever more alike in body & mind than Locke & Collins.

In the ev[en]ing W Matthews came & smokd a pipe in the sociality. We took a mental view of your fireside – the grate loaded with coal – thy self in thy armchair wishing that no body might knock this severe night to disturb thee – thy better half sewing with Abby by her side – Joey & Isaac bartering ducks & chickens with Turpin, & the maid cooking some of them for supper. Now is this not a pretty true picture. I imagine we had a right sense of things, but my sense seems to have been spun out too long, and perhaps to very little purpose as I fear this desultory narration will afford you but little entertainment. Friendship may perhaps stamp a value on it which it does not inherently possess. I however hope that that friendship will keep it within the circle of your own family, as it would be cruel to expose me to those who never talk upon paper. I am now going to sup on some roasted potatoes, having been so extravagant as to give 2/6 for a fine quarter of house lamb for dinner tomorrow.

After supper I shall go & smoke a pipe with my good friend Richd Crutwell, who is the only person I visit in the free social way without any business or ceremony.

1st day Jan 30th [1780]

Severe morning – had a bad night. Went to Meeting. Wm M[atthews] preachd near an hour on “In the name of our God we will set up our banners” – lively & energetic. A very excellent prayer concluded the Meeting.

I did not go out in the afternoon, the cold being intense and my stomach poorly. I wish for spring – till that comes I shall not be well. I never sufficiently knew

⁴⁶ The Rev Richard Graves also ran a private classical school for boys at Claverton.

the value of health while I had it. And did not my greatest pleasures consist in things which are in some measure independant of bodily health or sickness, I should be now very unhappy. But the study of science, the investigation of natural bodies, the works of the learned, & the conversation of ingenious [men] renders the mind inattentive to the defects and decay of its tenement of clay, beguiles its sorrows, and affords it pleasures of a kind that will run coeval with its being & increase with its increase of strength.

Adieu

[*Sheets 12-13, covering 31 January to earlier part of entry for 7 February 1780, are lacking*]

Sheet 14th

[*starting with latter part of entry for 7 February 1780*]

written a word on politics these 3 years. At one Sir Francis came; not with the black rod, but a pretty black eyed lady whom I could have saluted had it been proper, without any regret. They came to see the cooking machine, & arrangement of plants. I got 5/- of him for the poor woman whom I had wrote about in the paper. After dinner, it being fine & pleasant, walkd to the quarrys and found some fine petrifications of shells & some mundick.⁴⁷ How sweet the air, the buds begin to swell, the grass to spring, and Nature to give some tokens of the approach of that sweet season when all is beauty love & harmony. To morrow is the Ag[ricultural] Society meeting. When that is over I am determind to get on horseback and go into Dorsetshire, which is a charming county & replete with natural curiosities. I have many acquaintance there & can travel cheap. Another lady sent her footman with half a guinea. Go on good folks; tis better than buying two ball tickets. In the evening wrote letters & arrangd some fine mosses. Feel myself better for my walk.

3rd day Feb 8 [1780]

Dull morning – went to Library. At 11 [the Agricultural Society] gentlemen met at their room, Thos Curtis Esq in the chair. Sat about 2 hours – business conducted very well. Elected Monsieur Komhoff of the Court of Petersburg an honorary & correspondent member.

After dinner prepar'd the minutes for the papers & wrote to Monsieur Komhoff to inform him of his being elected a member, & to request his procuring us some Russian publications & seeds of plants from that country. I suppose its the first Quakerly letter he ever had.

Lord & Lady Dumfries come to town. This day Thos Rutter is married to Hety Farley. W M[atthews] is gone to preach the wedding sermon. I am rather fatigued with the employment of the day – so adieu.

4th day Feb 9th [1780]

A dull but warm morning – cough bravely. Went to Library – the new library. The late author Courtney Melmoth has now laid aside the pen, taken upon him his real name of Prat[t], and with one Clinch, another clever young fellow, have taken

⁴⁷ Mundic – iron pyrites.

the Library that was kept by Tennent in the top of Milsom Street, and is making it the best as well as the cheapest in town, as thou mayst see by their inclosed advertisement.⁴⁸ At 11, the forenoon proving fine, I walkd up Beeching Cliff & pickd some mosses. The sun was cheering, the air balsamic & sweet, & the views charming. Even in all the nakedness of winter our prospects are pleasing. The wild irregularity of surface, the extent of varied country, the number of objects, and changes of the scene at every step furnishes the spectator with unabated pleasure. Dull indeed must be that soul whose hours can hang heavy on his hands at Bath. If in business there is sufficient to attend to. If without it and independent, the sources of pleasure & rational entertainment are so numerous & so varied that the only difficulty a man feels is to fix on which he will first pursue. I this morning had a letter from S[amuel?] Day who mentions Jabez Wyatt being near the close of life. I think the brewery must be well worth thy notice if it can be had on good terms. Dont let it slip through thy fingers; for it is absolute injustice to thy self & family to remain coopd up in such a miserable, ignorant, wicked, dirty, lousy spot as Old Samford.

Afternoon read the life of the sweet Italian, Petrarch,⁴⁹ and corrected proofs for the press. Evening spent an hour at an auction of books but bought none. Wrote letters.

5th day Feb 10 [1780]

A dull warm morning. Went to Pump Room – a great deal of company – collected some money for a poor couple in distress – got 4 guineas in abt an hour. On such occasions as these I never applyd in vain, but as the number of cases of this kind here are a heavy tax on the company, I never undertake or give public sanction to any but such as I know well, and are deserving of help, altho I have many applications. Went to the Riding School & Tennis Court. Calld in at Dr Wilsons & returnd to dinner on a fine dish of roach which I bought for 6d. Afternoon went to view a fine collection of paintings just come from London for sale by auction – and another collection of fine foreign china. Drank tea at Ardens the phylosopher – returnd to supper with some increase of knowledge.

6th day Feb 11 [1780]

After breakfast went to Library & read the papers. Calld on Wm Melmoth, who is confind by a sprain in his ankle. This truly great man displayd his usual politeness & abilities. He possesses an understanding active & penetrating, a brilliant wit and a refine imagination. But as his wit never descends to levity, neither does his imagination run into unprofitable tracks of speculation. His heart is candid & benevolent, equally free from bigotry & scepticism, susceptible of the most likely affections, & inspird with the noblest sentiments of liberality & piety. Like his prototype Addison he is a great luminary in the literary world, who warms by his native fire and shines by his own intrinsic light. But altho Bath furnishes an Addison in Melmoth, a Locke in Collins & a second Newton in Herschel, we have neither a Pope nor a Swift in our literary circle. It is true the latter is not a very amiable or desirable character; as wit when pointed with ill nature is a dangerous ingredient in the compound of intellectual accomplishments. Nothing is sacred or secure from

⁴⁸ Details of Pratt & Clinch's circulating library are given in *Bath Chronicle* 27 Jan 1780. Pratt wrote poems, plays and fiction. His novel *Emma Corbett* was published at Bath in 1780.

⁴⁹ No doubt Susannah Dobson's *The Life of Petrarch*. 2v. (1775).

being wounded from its shafts, and often the sentence which sets the table in a roar inflicts a wound in the vulnerable bosom of unguarded innocence & friendship which rankles for many days & is attended with inexpressible pain. In this case it may be said of wit as Pope said of satire

“Cursd be the lines however smooth they flow
That tend to make one honest man my foe”.

At 12 drank chocolate at Esq Bowdlers* and got a guinea of him for charity. He told me Providence had blessd him with a great deal more than he deservd or wanted, and bade me on all similar occasions to apply to him. He is a good old man, & has an elegant library of about 3 thousand volumes.

*A Roman Catholic

Sheet 15th

Went to the Rooms & walkd half an hour with Webb, author of the *Beauties of Poetry & Painting*,⁵⁰ a man of great genius & politeness. Stept in at the Town Hall & heard some tryals. In the evening to the Literary Societys meeting – 14 members present. Another curious essay on light – an order given for a room to be made perfectly dark for making some new experiments on light by Mr Herschel. Many very ingenious speeches made & some light thrown on the subject.

7th day Feb 12 [1780]

Rested well – a dull cold northeasterly fog wind – did not go out till noon. Two gentlemen came to bring me money for the person whose case I represented in the papers. More money at the Pump Room. Very full Market – new butter 7½d – apples 1½d a peice – what a contrast. Went to Library – heard Admiral Montague say the Spanish prizes are come to Plymouth.

Two gentlemen are just gone up Claverton Down to fight a duel. If one of them is killed it will be a happy thing for Bath, as by cheating at play he has made many families miserable.⁵¹

At five rec[eive]d a card from Lady Brown to tea – I thought somthing more than tea was intended, so I went and after tea she gave me 3 guineas for the person whose case I had represented. She is an amiable good woman – this makes up 14 guineas that she has given me on different applications I have made to her on behalf of persons in distress. This is the way she spends her fortune instead of spending it at balls & plays. She has not a large income, but does more good than any person I know of in the city besides. In the evening wrote letters and ruminated with some pleasure on the employment of the day. Twelve guineas to a woman tenderly brought up, & now left with three children in the greatest distress, will be some consolation in their affliction altho they will never know thro what channel it comes.

Innumerable are the evils as well as the blessings in human life. To employ the one in counteracting the other is true phylosophy. When I consider the great outline of Christian conduct, and the benefit the observance of it are to society at large, the little paltry appendages which superstition & folly have annexd to it appear exceedingly uninteresting & beneath the notice of a truly wise man. The prudential rules of seperate societies may render them in some respect proper as auxiliary

⁵⁰ Daniel Webb, *An Inquiry into the Beauties of Painting* (1760) and *Remarks on the Beauties of Poetry* (1762).

⁵¹ The duel and its aftermath, commented on in later entries, are referred to in *Bath Chronicle* 17 Feb 1780.

guards against some inconveniences, but when men, losing sight of that which is of infinitely greater moment, lay so much stress on things in their own nature indifferent, and presume to declare the Almighty pleas'd or displeas'd with the observance or non observance of them, I cannot so far debase my self as to join in an opinion so irrational and absurd.

I am every minute expecting young Henderson for an evening of whose company thou wouldst not think riding fifty miles too great a purchase*. So capacious a soul was surely never before imprison'd in so little a body, but like Miltons spirits, he is nearly "all eye, all ear, all intellect". I am fully convinced that when in his company if he pleases there is not a thought in my mind which he does not know. Had I committed any secret crime I should tremble at meeting him. Nothing seems to be veild from his penetrating eye, which no other eye can steadily behold, it is so peircing.

*even on the back of a cow without a saddle.

1st day Feb 13th [1780]

I was disappointed last Night – Henderson did not come. Cough troublesome this raw cold morning. Went to Meeting. W M[atthews] preachd near an hour on "Ye shall reverence my sanctuary; I am the Lord" and in a beautiful stream of oratory explain'd what the sanctuary of the Lord was, and what the reverence that was to be paid to it. Many gentry at Meeting. Stayd at home in the afternoon & read Ciceros excellent Letters on Friendship, translated by Wm Melmoth. Whoever wishes to have a valuable library in a small compass need only to get the Greek & Roman classics. Every thing that is excellent in modern writers is deriv'd from those inexhaustible sources of wisdom & knowledge. I mean however to except natural history, the history of later times, and the late improvements in natural phylosophy. The style of this work is purity itself – the sentiments drawn from the genuine fountain of Nature; and the principles it inculcates are those of the purest morality, social virtue & a reverence of that being who made & governs the world.

There is no human compositions so well calculated to inspire the soul with a proper consciousness of its own dignity and the vast extent of its powers; none so well adapted to form the mind & the morals on that beautiful plan which virtue loves and wisdom will admire to the period of human things. From this mine the richest stores may be drawn. It is replete with invaluable treasure whose existence will be coeval with that of the mind who possesses it.

"Some felon hand may steal thy gold away
Or flames distructive on thy mansion prey
The fraudfull debtor may thy loan deny
Or blasted fields no more their fruits supply."

But the treasures of true science & learning remain when every other enjoyment vanishes as a vapour.

Last night about 11 just as were going to bed we were alarm'd by the watch with a cry of fire on our Parade. I went to the door and saw the flames bursting out of the windows at No 12. We were in no danger, nor should have been had it been at the next house, the party walls being 18 inches thick.

Two or three engines were got to work in a qtr of an hour, and after burning the inside of 3 rooms the fire was extinguish'd. A great deal of damage was done to the furniture by moving, but all was insur'd.

2nd day Feb 14 [1780]

Pretty fine morning. Took a ride to Bristol – sun shone sweetly – roads dry – buds swelling – birds twittering – fields ploughing – a sweet odour issues from the earth – all things proclaim the approach of lovely spring. Met & passd a variety of objects, such as a lord, a badger⁵², a coach & six, a dungcart & one, post chaises & four, knife grinders, officers, mole catchers, parsons & coal horses, rabbits, wildfowl, & Methodist preachers. All these and much more did I meet with or see or pass in my peregrination, and from each did I draw some instructive or entertaining idea. I heard colliers on their horses after selling their bags of coal dispise a grand equipage for which they were forcd to give way, & damn the owners with all the pride of a conscious (or at least imaginary) superiority.

It is on this principle that the poor & wretched bear up under & submit to the servitude they are in to the rich, who they all suppose will march directly to the D---I as soon as they die. In short the colliers seem to think themselves the wisest & happiest people in all the country. Its well for em they do

Sheet 16th

or else it would be still worse for them then it is. In short the more I consider wherein happiness consists the more I am puzld about it. It certainly is not confind to the possession of what we desire or think most excellent. Imagination in this case supplys all that can be expected from reality. Let but a man imagine he is wise, or learned or rich, great or happy, and it is – while that idea remains – just the same to him as tho he were so in reality. In other words, with respect to himself, he is so for the time being. The difference between imagination & reality having, in this case, no relation to himself, is known only by others who see or think they see that difference.

After all, however new or strange the doctrine may appear, experience & close observation proves that a mans own sensations are the only things realy existing to him. Whatever is out of the circle of his ideas or memory is, while so removd, with respect to him nonexistent or nothing. I got home abt 7 in the evening – had a gentleman calld & spent part of the evening. Capt Spooner, who was wounded in the duel on 7th day, is likely to die, the ball lying in his kidneys. I almost wish he might die that Geo Brereton might be hanged – this is the 20th duel he has fought & the 4th man he has killd. He is fled to Ireland its said. I will never fight a duel.

3rd day Feb 15 [1780]

A dull morning – regulated my draw of letters. Went to Library – called on the Hon Mr Ackland & saw some fine drawings in natural history. Walkd the Crescent. Calld on Dr Watson – home to dinner – read botany & arrangd mosses. At 5 Jno Prestwich Esq calld & invited me to take tea with a Mr Vere, a member of the Antiquarian Society, at his house. I went & found Vere a very curious man. We traced Saxon inscriptions, Roman coins & Arabic hieroglyphicks throughout the kingdom, & settled the Arms of several families to much edification. Returnd to supper – smokd a pipe with R Crutwel.

4th day Feb 16 [1780]

⁵² 'Badger' may possibly refer to an itinerant dealer rather than the normally nocturnal animal.

Went to Pump Room – [collected] more money there. To Coffee House & read the papers. To Market, and bought a leg of pork 3½d. To the Rooms – more money there. Dined & walked into the meads of Bathwick with two gentlemen. Returnd to tea – wrote letters & read Plinys Letters. My cough better. Capt Spooner somewhat better. Dr Wilson go[es] bravely. This evening the oratorio of the Messiah is performd at our Theatre. I would have been there had I not thought 3/- too much for sound; the band & chorus will consist of abt 40. I wish I had a ticket. Lord Newborough & the Earl of Kinnaird came in last night. This is ironing day with the good women.

This morning a public breakfast at the Rooms was appointed on behalf of a gentlewoman in distress recommended by a public letter from the Bishop of Worcester – but it did not raise her five pounds. I recommended another distressd family the same time by public letter, & without personal application have rec[eive]d on their account upwards of 16£. This shews the comparative estimation at Bath of a Bishop & a Quaker.⁵³

5th day Feb 17 [1780]

Fine morning – cough better – spirits cheerful. Went to Pump Room – heard the Coronation Anthem playd. Took a walk in Prior Park – “Sweet is the breath of Morn”. The beams of the sun gilding the mountains – the murmur of the cascades – the increasing greenness of the fields – the sweetness of the upland breeze, the notes of the rooks building their nests, the swelling of the buds, all conspire to charm the mind & awaken that lively sensibility of pleasure which is ever felt at the approach of spring. I found some curious mosses among the old grottos & matted rocks that hang over one part of this delightful vale, and after rambling near 3 hours returnd with a good appetite to dinner. Read 2 chapters in Gibbons History of the Roman Empire, which led one to a contemplation on the instability & perpetual revolution of all sublunary things. “And now a bubble burst, and now a world”.

In that reproduction of visible worlds which we call Creation, it is most reasonable to conclude, that the chaos of which it was formd was only the discordant elements of other systems in which the laws by which matter is governd were all suspended, perhaps on purpose to undergo new combinations adapted to the new race of beings calld man and the other innumerable classes of existence that inhabit the various planetary orbs. These revolutions may for ever [have?] been, & probably for ever succeed each other to all eternity. In infinite expansion & infinite duration every thing conceivable by the mind of man or angel may exist.

The multiplicity and immense variety of the Creators works give birth to the most exalted ideas of their glorious Author, who dwelling himself in that inconceivable majesty of light which even the eye of the exalted seraph cannot behold, is comprehended only in the infinite number & greatness of his works. We therefore find that of all men, those who have most studied the works of Nature, tracd effects to their causes, and darted their thoughts into the immensity of being, have always entertaind sentiments of the Deity the most consistent with the extent of his power wisdom & goodness.

They have not indeed always acted consistently with those exalted & sublime ideas they entertaind, but this was the fault of their wills & not of their understandings.

⁵³ The two public appeals by Rack and the Bishop of Worcester appear in *Bath Chronicle* 10 Feb 1780.

Went to Coffee House. To Library – got some books, among others a new work on the beauties of poetry in which selections are made of such passages as are most striking to the passions. Of these are Popes Elegy on an Unfortunate Lady; & Grays famous Elegy on a Church Yard. I can never read the former without tears, or the latter without feeling that sweetly pleasing pensive melancholy which is better felt than describd. These finishd productions being drawn from the genuine spring of Nature herself, and in unison with the finest feelings of humanity, will for ever please & enrapture the mind. Corrected proofs for the press till bedtime.

Sheet 17

6th day Feb 18th [1780]

A fine morning. Walked to King James Palace⁵⁴ – the gardens coming forward apace – the snowdrop & the crocus are ushering in the spring. The green houses are in full beauty and glow in all the radiance of exotic colouring. Green peas at Market half a guinea a pint. Asparagus half a guinea a hundred about the size of goose quilts.

Attended an auction of pictures in which were some capital pieces by Italian masters.⁵⁵ Din'd and read natural history. In the evening went to the Literary Societys meeting, J.Collins Esq in the chair. Many curious specimens of petrifications were brought for inspection. One an oyster shell in the inside of which grew the compleat neck and head of the Turtle Fish with eyes & mouth perfect about the size of my little finger. Mr Herschel gave in a very curious letter of his own on the central powers of the original particles of matter. I apprehend that in a year we shall have sufficient matter to publish a voll equally interesting as the annual volls of the Royal Society.

Many curious experiments were related by several of the members – and it provd a very pleasing instructive meeting. Wm Melmoth is still confind to his room, & I fear will not suddenly leave it. –

Some hopes now of Capt Spooners recovery.

7th day Feb 18th [i.e. 19th, 1780]

Cough troublesome in the night – slept late this morning. Breakfasted abt 10. Went to Library – to Market – provisions in great abundance – poultry in thousands – butter 7½d. Calld & chatted an hour with Dr Falconer – home to dinner. Read 30 pages in Livy. To what an amazing altitude of political glory did Rome arise – to what a depth its now fallen. But whatever rises must sink in the rotation of circling ages, as all that are born must grow old & die. It is only the mind that is exempted from the general fate. Formed of an ethereal substance they rise by their own strength on the wings of Nature and exult in the anticipation of their immortality.

Of this, let sceptic's spin the perplexing web of sophistry ever so fine, phylosophy as well as revelation furnishes innumerable proofs. There is nothing in Nature can rise higher than its own source or origin. All the laws of matter & motion confirm this truth. Why should it be otherwise with respect to the powers of the mind? Is there any reason to think that the human soul would have been capable of forming a hope or even an idea of an everlasting existence, were it not imperishable in its own nature? The powers of imagination are not of our own creating. We rec[eive]d

⁵⁴ A pleasure garden in Lyncombe Vale.

⁵⁵ William Birchall's auction of Italian and Dutch paintings is advertised in *Bath Chronicle* 10 Feb 1780.

them, as we have all other powers, from him who form'd us in his own image. We may indeed apply it improperly, but with regard to its extent we may be assur'd it can never rise to an object impossible to be attain'd in this or some future state of being. To implant in the mind hopes which could never be realiz'd, would be only tantalizing us. We hope for immortality and therefore our nature must be form'd capable of surviving all the changes of time, and ultimately mixing in that infinitude of existence from which it had its origin, & to which it is ever seeking to return as the dove to the Ark when the waters cover'd the face of the Earth. Had this globe and the short span of 70 or 80 years been design'd to bound & terminate our being, we should not probably have had an idea beyond it; but we cannot without doing violence to our own understandings suppose that beings endued with faculties & powers capable of rising above all that is visible, and of darting as it were into futurity, and traversing the boundless intellectual field of the spiritual world, of anticipating its joys, & surveying it as a future glorious & eternal inheritance, could be design'd by Infinite Wisdom to terminate their existence at the period of human life. Pardon this digression.

The afternoon proving fine I walk'd up Beacon Hill where I had not been for 6 months, and view'd the delightful and extensive prospect beneath & around me. I view'd it with the same sensations of pleasure as the first day I ever ascended it. Had I the pencil of a Poussin this scene should be drawn to decorate thy parlour, but a Poussin only could do it justice.⁵⁶ Here are many wonderful things to be seen in town – a zebra, a satyr, an Irish giant, a puppet show, a collection of shells & fossils, and an hermophradite.

Dr Watson & a gentleman came & brought me some curious specimens of corallines. In the evening Mr Herschel & Mr Parsons came & spent an hour very agreeably. When they were gone, Will came & supped & spent the rest of the evening, with Jno Eaton & R Crutwell. We convers'd on various subjects – such as politics, authorship, shopkeeping, free will, red herrings, the nature of light, & the circulation of the blood in a frogs foot.

I have just got my shoes sole'd & a new pair of breeches for riding & walking as soon as the weather admits.

Capt Spooner very bad this evening, & a warrant issued for apprehending Brereton. I hope this pest of society will now pay the debt due for his crimes.⁵⁷ He would go to the gallows with as general approbation as any man I know except Thicknesse, who has been lately abusing in the publick prints almost all the Physicians in Bath.⁵⁸ Never surely was a man so much & so justly detested! A frosty evening. Cough troublesome – the wind at east – and the Watch cries 11 o'clock. The coals are taking up & I suppose yours will not be long after us – we are bravely – adieu.

I wait with much impatience for a reply to my letter on the farm affair. It will not admit of delay – thou seemst quite insensible of the inconvenience thou hast occasion'd.

⁵⁶ Rack no doubt means Gaspard, not Nicolas, Poussin.

⁵⁷ See note 51. This refers to George Brereton, son of Major William Brereton who was still acting as Master of Ceremonies at the Lower Rooms (Gyde's), but see also note 73.

⁵⁸ Philip Thicknesse, a fearless Bath controversialist, claimed to have been disparaged by Rack around this time and attacked Rack in return in two pamphlets, *A Letter from Philip Thickscull Esq to Edmund Rack, a Quaker and Edmund, an Eclogue*.

[Sheets 18-21 covering 20 February to 9 March are lacking.]

Sheet 22

6th day March 10th [1780]

A very fine morning – I & Dame took a walk – sun shone sweetly & the birds hailed the genial spring. Bought a pair of soles for 1/- which din'd us all. Went to Library & read the debates & a new play – poor stuff, mere trifling – adapted to the galleries. I will not go to see it. Many a solicitation have I had & many a ticket offer'd me this winter, but all in vain – I have not entered the doors except once to the rehearsal of an oratorio, which is just within the outline of my system. Walkd half an hour in the Rooms – then half a mile up the London Road – met 11 carriages with luggage coming into town – the spring season now fills apace. Had a visit from Sir John Miller & Sir John Frederic. Corrected some proofs. Spent an hour at Wm Somertons – home to tea. Wrote letters, which by this time I find as easy as cracking nuts in autumn. I believe I have written more than a thousand within 2 years. What a curious farrago would they make if printed. The Bodleian Library hath not such a collection! I hope these will not be included in the catalogue of my sins. I have been guilty of shedding much ink, but very little gall has been mix'd with it; therefore I am the public's and the paper makers friend. The public revenue hath also been much benefited by the postage of letters to & from me – ergo I am a patriot. Often also have I kept the hands of our senators from doing much mischief by employing them in writing franks. He that preventeth evil thereby doeth good; therefore am not I, even I, a good animal – Good night.

7th day Mar 11 [1780]

A delightful morning. Walkd in the Publick Room gardens with R. Barclay – Earl Gower, Lord Kingston & the Duke of Chandois were there, but we did not descend so low as to mix with such company. In the moment of my humility I sometimes can sink to a baronet – but all beyond that is out of my way – a baronet being in the scale of understanding about the middle of that line which having its first appearance in ignorant nobility rises up into full lustre in the man of plain cultivated sense. Dukes & lords are well enough in their places, as China pagods are on a chimney piece, but in the scale of intelligence many a printers devil⁵⁹ or booksellers shopman beat them all hollow. The principal use they are of is to spend money for the benefit of wiser men, and to shew us the emptiness of mere titular dignity.

At 11 walkd up Comb Down hill, from whence a beautiful & varied landscape extends near 200 miles round. Wales, Herefordshire, Monmouthshire, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, Somersetshire, Dorsetshire & Devon all within the eyes range. The outline is finely wavd like Hogarths line of beauty, and vision is at length lost in the ridges of misty mountains. The primroses scent the warm banks of the south. The birds are joyfully greeting the approach of spring; and in the sublime imagery of sacred writ the “little hills clap their hands for joy”. I think I never felt the approach of spring with equal sensations of delight as this season. I feel the balmy influence which animates the Earth & all its inhabitants, and anticipate the waving foliage, the enameld carpet of earth, the general chorus of birds, the soft murmurs of

⁵⁹ A printer's young apprentice.

the rills shaded by umbrageous groves, and the sweet hum of the insect tribes, with more than common pleasure.

Returnd to dinner with some botanic stores. Smoked a pipe & read the new voll of Dr Blairs sermons, which are incontestibly the best that were ever printed. Among the excellent his are supremely excellent.⁶⁰ For energy of thought, purity of expression, fine masculine eloquence, and excellency of sentiment, he stands like a sun amidst a constellation of stars. The understanding and the heart cannot remain unimprovd in him who reads them with attention. (NB this last sentence is scurvily expressd but tis too late to mend it – rough it runs, and rough it shall go.) Had a visit from the Revd Dr Bellamy, author of the Family Preacher.⁶¹ Drank tea & spent the evening at Esq Curtis's, with his amiable family & a Miss Osborne, a very pretty creature with a lovely mind and voice harmonious as her expression is pure & her sentiments refin'd. Came home at 10, smokd a pipe (no pipes where I had been) and wrote thus far.

1st day morning March 12th [1780]

A very wet morning. Went to Meeting – 4 Friends from Exeter – good social West Country Friends – they were “black but comely”, 3 of them being in mourning. Saml Dyer of Bristol was there and did a little in his way, which is very inocent at least. It is something between John Kendal, Saml Day, and Stephen Levit – or rather in the best part of their line united. W M[atthews] stood up after him, and with his usual animation of sentiment and language rousd the languid spirits of the audience into something like devotion. Samuel then kneeld down, and telling the Almighty what he had been told a thousand times before, and directing him what he should do for the advanc[e]ment of his own honour & the good of his chosen people, said Amen. Rob Barclay very bad with an inflamation in his eyes – his wife also poorly, neither of them at Meeting. Dind on veal cutlets – smoked a pipe & read the beautiful book of Nahum. The more conversant I am with the true classical elegance of antiquity as delineated in the Greek & Roman remains, the more I am charmd with the style & speech of the Prophets, whose writings, besides possessing all the excellencies which embellish human composition, shine with super added lustre in all the dignity of inspiration.

Of the Prophets it may be said as was afterwards declar'd of the great founder of the Christian religion that they “speak as never man spoke”.

It is said of the structures which Pericles built⁶² that they had when first finishd the venerable air of antiquity, & when old they have the freshness of a modern building. So it may be said of the sacred writings, that a bloom is diffusd over them which preserves them untarnishd by time, as if they were animated with a spirit of perpetual youth & unfading elegance.

Harmony of periods, elegance of diction & melody of style have (as Shenstone observes) greater weight than is generally imagind in the judgment men pass on composition & authors. It influences even those who are insensible of what it is that affects them. As a proof of this let us reflect what texts of scripture, what lines of poet[r]y, what periods we most remember & oftneest quote, and we shall find them to be only musical ones.

⁶⁰ Hugh Blair, *Sermons* (1779).

⁶¹ See note n.36.

⁶² The Parthenon and other classical monuments in Athens.

Head achd in the afternoon. Wrote letters and read Mrs Dobsons admirable treatise on friendship.⁶³ S Dyer & W[illiam] M[atthews] drank Tea with us. Friends at Bristol have sufferd greatly in the late illumination – we were all still here.

Spent the evening at home in reading & writing.

Sheet 23

Mar 13 [1780] 2nd day

A fine morning – rec[eive]d 7 letters. Went to Pump Room & read countenances. I begin to have some skill in physiognomy. The turn & disposition of the soul is certainly imprinted in legible characters on the human face. We only want skill in the language. That may soon by observation be acquir'd. It is a knowledge that may prove useful in life. Human nature is nearly the same in all places and ages. The grand lines of virtue & vice are unalterable, but they branch out agreeable to favourable circumstances into an endless variety of smaller ramifications. Like a hill or a valley neither can subsist singly – they are mixd in a greater or lesser degree in every human being. Absolute purity & unmixd vice are rather adapted to a succeeding than to the present state of being.

At 10 several gentlemen calld on me. Went to Library & read the papers. A fine redicule of the Essex committee in the Gen Evg Post. Walkd the south Parade – full of Company – many new faces. The meads begin to put on their chearful livery and tempted me to trace the margin of the river while the stately swans majestically saild along the chrystal surface. Calld on Anthony Kington Esq at Widcomb and walkd over the new shrubbery which is laid out in high taste, with some almost breathing statues at the termination of the walks & in the secret recesses by the sides of dripping grotto's. Drank chocolate & returnd home to dinner. Sat down & abridgd a book of 60 pages into 3 sheets of paper, a tedious task but was obligd to finish it as it must go to the press in the morning.

Broke out for an hour – went to the Rooms and persuaded Franco, the great Jew who had lately four hundred thousand pounds left him by the death of his father, to become a member of the Bath Society. He is about 4 foot 7 inches high, made all askew, with legs like nine pins, an eye like a hawk & a nose formd like a quadrant. His mouth is very wide, his ears remarkably long, & the end of his chin turnd up like a bent potatoe. His voice is like Nat Brays, and he turns half round every step he walks. Yet this some thing like nothing has got near half a milion of money . Certainly all things are not quite right in this world at least. – Adieu I am tir'd.

3rd day 14th [1780]

A fine morning. The Agriculture Society meeting was this day – Jno Monck Esq in the chair – Sir Jno Miller, Hon Mr Fairfax, Wm Aldridge Ballard Esq, T Curtis Esq, and abt 12 other members present. Meeting held 3 hours, & business transacted to satisfaction.

Din'd & walkd to the Printshop - & Rooms – thence to W Matthews & drank Tea. Home to supper, wrote to Lord Dartmouth, and read the Abbe Millots universal history; a work replete with many striking anecdotes and judicious observations on

⁶³ Susannah Dobson, *Dialogue on Friendship and Society* (1777).

the manners of ancient times.⁶⁴ In the history of antient nations a phylosophic reader is peculiarly struck with those rites & ceremonies usd in religious worship which were the consequence of mens deviation from that pure & simple religion which God & Nature taught the primeveal inhabitants of the Earth. It was not long before the human mind, losing the original idea of a pure & spiritual being, worshipd the phantom which a licentious imagination had formd under the name of God. And when artful men had stampd the greatest absurdities with the name of religion, superiour understandings were subdued and levelld with the servile minds of the ignorant vulgar. Universal credulity took place – examination was deemd presumption and the minds of the people were degraded to a state little superior to those animals which in the eastern nations were the objects of their senseless adoration. There is however no doubt that those preists who formd the various systems of pagan theology saw themselves the futility of the errors they taught. For their secret theology, though strongly markd with fable, was much superior to the popular credulity of the times, and contain'd the great outlines of genuine truth. But as they found their pas[s]ion for supreme rule & domination over the minds as well as bodies of men best gratifyd by keeping them in ignorance, nothing but the desire of promoting singly the cause of virtue & truth could operate to the successful breaking up of those clouds of error & superstition which fear & folly had created. One of the beneficial effects arising from the perusal of ancient history is to awaken in the mind that complacency & delight which springs from the reflection that our lot is cast in happier times; and that we live under brighter displays of the light of truth; are favourd with more excellent communications of knowledge; and have access to those sources of information from which the purest principles of science are drawn and the sublimest human happiness is derivd. The early ages of the world may indeed boast as simplicity of manners not to be found in present times, but this seems to have principally arisen from that torpid inactivity which have at all periods distinguishd the inhabitants of the East and the want of those means of gratification which cultivated nations enjoy. If it might be deemd virtuous, it was a virtue of necessity, not of choice, and had only a negative merit. The grand & ruling passions of mankind, lust & revenge, were gratifyd in their utmost extent by those who possess none of the milder virtues or the elegances of polishd life. Excuse this digression.

4th day March 15 [1780]

A fine but cold day, cough now bravely. Market full of provisions – bought a nice fat fillet of veal at 3½d a pound. Robt Barclay confind by an inflammation in his eyes. Several gay Friends came to town from Exeter. Studied botany & wrote a letter to the Society under the character of a Suffolk farmer on the best means of preserving turnips for spring feed, which will be publishd in the collection. Read Plutarch & Osbecks Travels.⁶⁵ Dr Jones & Chas Owen Esq calld & chatted half an hour. Calld on R Madden Esq & lookd over his library & shells.

After dinner went to Rooms – Lord Gower there in the dress of a jockey – 7 card tables – walkd into the billiard room – high betting between Sir Jno Lindsey & Sir Edwd Littleton, Col Horne & Major Mallock. Went to Library – read Burkes speech.⁶⁶ Returnd to tea & spent the evening in writing a letter to the Literary Society on the advantages of civilization in which I attempted to prove mankind were happier

⁶⁴ C.F.X.Millot, *Elements of General History*. 5v. (1778-9).

⁶⁵ Pehr Osbeck, *A Voyage to China and the East Indies* (1771).

⁶⁶ On the question of abolishing one of the Secrerary of State offices.

in a savage state. I took this side of the question because I thought every body else would be on the other. But – “Much may be said on both sides”.

5th day March 16 [1780]

A fine day. Cough bravely. After breakfast walkd into the fir plantations on Widcomb Hill – the sun shone bright, the birds sung, the primroses adornd the banks, & I was in the right disposition for enjoying them. I walkd along a beautiful mead – on the left a vast ridge of rocks near

Sheet 24

an hundred feet high rose almost perpendicular in the form of a crescent. A copse of brush wood nearly coverd them from top to bottom. In the middle I crept up nearly to the top, and seating my self on a rock which was coverd with a cushion of the finest moss full in the chearing rays surveyd the beautiful diversifyd prospect before me. To the right lay Lansdown Hills – Beacon Hill – Sodbury Hill & at their foot the city of Bath & the Avon whose silver windings I could trace for 6 miles in length. Beneath me lay the villa of Lyncomb & all the fine plantations, temples, bridges & groves of Prior Park. To the left the house & Comb Down. Groves of fir above it. It was a spot I had never before visited but which I shall often visit in time to come. Beautiful beyond description and quite adapted to a mind charmd with the extensive variety of Natures works. In another month it will be a paradice of sweets. I sat here half an hour & pickd some curious mosses & lichens from rocks & roots of the shrubs – home to dinner. Read Smith on moral sentiments & Webb on painting.⁶⁷ In the evening went to the meeting of Literary Society – Mr Atwood in the chair.

To this meeting were sent a curious letter on the nature of light & the formation of fossils, a further account of the measurement of the lunar mountains by Mr Herschel, and a letter on civilization by E Rack. On the latter being read the meeting enterd into that subject, & Dr Watson, J Collings Esq & J Pye Esq distinguishd themselves remarkable in the debate. Indeed the observations they made & the fund of learning these great men displayd was such that the meeting wishd their thoughts on the subjects might be given in writing, & therefore the subject was continued on the books for that purpose. An appointment was then made for the members to meet on 7th day at their room for the purpose of making electrical experiments, and experiments on light, phosphorus, & with the solar microscope.

6th day Mar 17 [1780]

A fine morning. At 11 went with Sir J Miller, the Hon G W Fairfax, T Curtis Esq, Jno Monk Esq, the Revd Mr Howsman [?] & Mr Bryant to set out the land taken for the Society at T Bethels farm.⁶⁸ Set out 10 acres – the above committee to meet on Monday evening at 6 to determine on what experiments shall be made. From this land is a prospect equally beautiful as that from the Barracks hills which it overlooks. After walking several hours we all fastend on the farmers bread & butter like so many hounds, and demolishd near a loaf with several cups of sider. Returnd home. In the afternoon Saml Seaman calld on me in his way to Bristol where he is hankering after a girl with abt 200 [pounds] a year to her fortune, & intends carrying her into the

⁶⁷ Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759). Daniel Webb, *An Inquiry into the Beauties of Painting* (1760).

⁶⁸ At Weston. The Bath & West Society's experimental farm was perhaps the first in t6he country.

muddy region of Diss. He went by one of the evening coaches to Bristol. In the evening smoked a pipe with Wm Squires & his wife from Hartford who came this week to town. Home to supper – read Sydney on government and Gill Blas who is a looking glass for human nature.⁶⁹

7th day Mar 18 [1780]

A fine morning – full Pump Room – full coffee houses – & full Market. At 11 met 15 members of the Literary Society at their dark room. Many surprizing experiments were made of which notes were taken – and from some of them considerable light was thrown on the nature of the subject. Home to dinner at 3 o'clock. Drew out a plan of experiments for the Societys land – read botany. Drank tea at Dr Falconers with Mrs Dobson of Liverpool. Home to supper, wrote letters & read Moliere.

Coming along Russel Street to day I overtook a gentleman with such a face as this [*very small drawing of a head in right profile*]. The countenance indicated a prying, artful, malicious disposition, the ground of which was low cunning & knavery, with just such sense enough to keep out of a halter. There was something so singular in the countenance that I followd him to the Rooms, where he seemd to be a perfect stranger as nobody spoke to him, but several talkd of him as a remarkable phenomenon. He soon sidled up to one of the card tables & taking out his eye glass seemd to pay great attention to the players. At length he betted on one side & in a few minutes having swept five guineas off the table retird without speaking to any body. I apprehend him to be a black leg who come only to levy contributions on greater fools than himself.

1st day Mar 19 [1780]

A fine morning, & cough bravely. Large Meeting – Rich Gurney & family from Norwich – they have taken a house in the Circus. About 20 Friends strangers in town. W M[atthews] preachd on the words of David speaking of the Almighty, “His name shall endure for ever, as long the sun & moon remaineth”. And in a fine strain of Gospel eloquence set forth the excellency and permanency of those attributes of wisdom & goodness which make up his name and are from everlasting to everlasting. Some gentlemen of rank were there & sat with great attention. After Meeting stopd with R Barclay & wife, Jos Barclay & wife, Richd Gurney & wife, & Hinton Brown half an hour in the Pump Room which was quite crouded with gentry on the breaking up of the Abbey Church. Home to dinner – smokd a pipe & read Jno Woolsmans Journal⁷⁰. Afternoon Meeting small and dull – W M[atthews] drank tea. Walkd the South Parade. Spent an hour with W Squires & wife – home to supper.

In coming home stept a few minutes into the new Methodist chapel⁷¹ where one of their enthusiastic ranters was driving all before him to hell and destruction. He seemd to be delighted in degrading human nature as though there were no other way of exalting the deity than by debasing his offspring. He represented mankind as born in guilt & naturally incapable of performing the least action either virtuous in itself or acceptable to God. I soon left him with that resentment which is due to such impious doctrine. If we impartially survey the first impressions of nature & the origin

⁶⁹ Algernon Sydney, *Discourses concerning Government* (1698, rev.eds 1763 and 1773). A-R.Le Sage, *The Adventures of Gil Blas of Santillane*, trans T.Smollett (1749 and later eds).⁶⁹

⁷⁰ The Quaker John Woolman's *Journal* was in print by 1775-6.

⁷¹ The Methodist chapel in New King Street opened in March 1779.

of our passions we shall [find?] all the propensities that are not acquired are on the side of order, beauty & virtue. The mind of an infant no sooner begins to open & expand than he feels a dawn of reason, & sees the natural deformity of some actions, & the loveliness of others. He is pleas'd with order. He is delighted with striking colours, charmd with melting sounds, but terefyd at dis[c]ordant notes, such as the braying of an ass, the roar of bulls, a shreik, or a clap of thunder. Whence spring these early ideas of order, harmony, beauty & proportion if not founded in nature? How early does the child feel sentiments of gratitude for kind usage? How soon is its mind intenderd by the social affections of pity & compassion? For what reason does it start back from spectacles of violence & horror? Why, because it is movd with pity – shockd at the sight of misery. But why does its little heart bleed for miseries in which itself has no immediate concern? Because it is naturally virtuous, compassionate & sympathising. In short the doctrine of original depravity, whether held by Methodist or Quaker, is a lie, and dishonours the deity thro his works. Every examination shews its fallacy & the weakness of those who endeavour to propagate it – Adieu.

Sheet 25

2nd day March 20th [1780]

A fine morning – rose at 7 – walkd up Beechencliff before breakfast – NB the rolls sufferd on the occasion. Met the Barclays & Gurneys at Pump Room – went to Library – took home Pennants tour thro Scotland, a very entertaining work.⁷² He therein mentions the ruins of Finchal Abbey in the Highlands as a very surprizing place, being a very deep gloomy dell surrounded with amazing precipices & rugged rocks. As the following extract is curious I make it for thy entertainment.

“This rude scene was the place where formerly stood the monastery of St Godric, and where he carried his austerities to the most senseless extravagance. St Godric was born at Walpole in Norfolk. He made three pilgrimages to Jerusalem; and in the last was warnd in a vision to settle in this horrid desert. He livd a hermits life these 63 years & practisd unheard of austerities. He wore an iron shirt next his skin, day and night, and fairly wore out three. He mixd ashes with the flour he made his bread of; & lest it should be too good kept it 3 or 4 months before he venturd to eat it. In winter as well as summer he passd whole nights up to his chin in water at his devotions; and to allay his passions he used to roll naked among bushes and thorns; and when by this means his body became ulcerated, to increase his pain he usd to pour salt into his wounds. He dyd in 1170.”

Now I do not beleive that thine or my devotion would ever lead us to wear iron shirts, sleep in water, roll in briars &c. To be sure iron shirts are stronger then Irish, but the difficulty would be to get them made. Thy Polly could not sew them or iron them when washd. So that, all the difficulties considerd, I think we must try to get to heaven without them.

3rd day Mar 21 [1780]

A cloudy forenoon – cough bravely. Saunterd an hour at Pump Room, Coffee House & Library with R.Gurney & R.Barclay. R Gurneys is one of the most elegant chariots in Bath. About 11 provd fine. Walkd out into the country, but it was rather

⁷² Thomas Pennant, *A Tour in Scotland* (1771).

dirty – returned to dinner – went to the Rooms. Major Brereton is arrested & thrown into jail – papers are distributed for choosing a new Master of the Ceremonies for the Lower Rooms.⁷³ Every dog has his day. He has had his & of late playd his cards very badly. Tis all over with him. Returned home & read natural history 2 hours, arranged some mosses & wrote some letters. Called on Esq Madden. In the evening studied botany – after supper smoked a pipe with Wm Squires at his lodgings. Company come in very fast for the spring season. Many gentry from Yorkshire are here – & also from Norfolk. How dost like Lord Norths tax on malt? I think he ought to drink nothing but small beer till he takes it off again.

300 soldiers came in to day on their march from Leeds to Exeter. They are going to Jamaica, & a miserable corps as I ever saw. They are mostly old men & boys – all dressed in white uniforms & their officers mere clodhoppers. One of them very much like young Tom Winterflood of stupid memory. No reflection on Old Samford though. They got into the Pump Room & stard about like asses. No body knew them & they knew nobody. Major Kelly [?] told me he thought them the most contemptible fellows he ever saw with gorgets on their breasts. Adieu.

4th day March 22 [1780]

The morning proving pretty fine I prepared for making some more experiments on phosph[or]ic light and in electricity at the Literary Societys dark room. The members mostly met abt 11 - & Dr Priestley attended. Some new discoveries in electricity were made & notes taken. And it was found that divers kinds of bodies being exposed a minute to the suns rays and instantly drawn into the dark room would retain their light near a minute. Particularly a sheet of writing paper which on being drawn in appeared very light for half a minute. I then wrote a word upon it & pressed it with a hot smoothing iron. On exposing it again & drawing it in before it cooled it appeared for near a minute all on fire & the writing was very legible. Many other substances were tried – the next in brightness was a peice of stalactites, which was luminous as a coal. Dr Watson had a large diamond ring which shone so bright for near half a minute as to enable him to read by it. The times were exactly minuted by a stop watch. My hand being held 10 seconds in the sun & drawn in suddenly was luminous for half a minute. We also tried live fish, mosses, funguses, bread, lump sugar, leeks, dryd wood, red herring, silk handkerchiefs, alum, garden roots, fossils, spar, & minerals. Finished these experiments about 3. Dined, & walkd into fields. At six went to the oratorio having a ticket sent me by the manager. The Gurneys were there, & Lord Ilchester, Lord Gower, Lord & Lady Milford, Lord Trentham & Lord Spencer. It was a very full house. It was the Messiah – about 90 hands were employed in the music & choruses, which exceed every thing that art has yet found out. Some of the choruses rise so high that the French horns & kettle drums are hardly distinguishable; particularly in that sublime one “Open the everlasting doors & let the King of Glory come in” and “The Lord Omnipotent reigneth.” The last although it contains only 3 lines is more than 20 minutes in performing, as it runs, every distinct part of it, through every division of the scale in all the different keys of each instrument, although all play together. An oratorio when performed as they are with us is certainly the most exalted and ravishing entertainment the senses can enjoy – one excepted, but that consists not in sound. Came home at 10, smoked a pipe & wrote

⁷³ See also notes 51 and 57. Major Brereton had been arrested for debt and resigned his post of Master of Ceremonies to the Lower Rooms (Gyde's).

thus far. I think now to send this off tomorrow evening, but must again remind thee of enquiring whether Poll Chaplin has paid her rent. It is a necessary article in all places, and of course at Bath. We are thro mercy bravely. My cough troubles me but little now except in going to bed, when although its not strong it often keeps me awake several hours. Let me hear from thee very soon. Hope to have a good acct of Polly. Hast settled with J Burrows to satisfaction? How is Jabez Wyatt - & all our fr[ien]ds & relations? Does Peter or Joe court yet? We all join in love, to all universally the world over, now & henceforth forward to the last day and the day after. Amen.

[End of document.]