

Dr. John Armstrong, littérateur, and associate of Smollett, Thomson, Wilkes, and other celebrities / Lewis M. Knapp.

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LVII

DR. JOHN ARMSTRONG, LITTÉRATEUR, AND
ASSOCIATE OF SMOLLETT, THOMSON,
WILKES, AND OTHER CELEBRITIES

TWO hundred years ago, in April, 1744, there was printed in London a long didactic poem in blank verse, *The Art of Preserving Health*, which brought its author, Dr. John Armstrong, considerable literary reputation during the following century in England, Italy, and America.¹ In this work there are occasional passages of very pleasing poetry, but the goddess Hygeia, whom Armstrong invoked with all due fervor, failed to inspire him to create an enduring masterpiece on such themes as air, diet, and exercise. Consequently, during the last century there has been little interest in his poems and essays, or in his life, personality, and friendships. There is, of course, A. H. Bullen's short article in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, which added little, however, to Robert Anderson's memoir,² or to Robert Chambers' account,³ and more recently Mr. Iolo A. Williams paid tribute to *The Art of Preserving Health* and published a bibliography of Armstrong's works.⁴ But there is no likelihood that Armstrong's writings will be much read or discussed in the future except by literary antiquarians and special students of the eighteenth century.

Why, then, should anyone write about Armstrong today? There are several valid reasons. The first is that all written accounts of his life are woefully incomplete. Secondly, no one has attempted to give a complete evaluation of his personality. And finally, Armstrong's associations with eighteenth-century celebrities, such as Thomson, Wilkes, the painter Fuseli, and especially Smollett, are of lively interest to explorers of that age of worthy "originals." My purpose, therefore, is to present a rather complete account of Armstrong in order to restore the faded colors of his portrait, and to reveal him and his associates more clearly.

I

According to Robert Chambers, Armstrong's family⁵ had been prominent among the old rieviers of the Scottish border. Armstrong himself was

¹ *The Art of Preserving Health* was many times reprinted in England. In 1745 Benjamin Franklin printed it in Philadelphia. It was issued in Boston in 1757 and subsequently; it was translated into Italian by Thomas J. Mathias and published at Naples in 1825. Hazlitt included the whole poem in his *Select British Poets* (London, 1824).

² *The Works of the British Poets*, ed. Robert Anderson, M.D., x (London, 1795), [963]-966.

³ Robert Chambers, *A Biographical Dictionary of Eminent Scotsmen* (Glasgow, 1835), I, 58-64.

⁴ See Iolo A. Williams, *By-Ways Round Helicon* (London, 1922), pp. 8-14; and his *Seven XVIIIth Century Bibliographies* (London, 1924), pp. 17-38. ⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 58

clearly related in some degree to that stately old Jacobite and blue-blood, Andrew Lumisden,⁶ who fled from Scotland after Culloden and became the Pretender's Secretary in Rome. Lumisden, in turn, was a cousin of the proud and influential Sir Alexander Dick of Prestonfield, Midlothian, with whom Armstrong carried on a correspondence. Armstrong's youth was spent on the banks of the Liddal in the parish of Castleton, Roxburghshire, where his father, Robert Armstrong, was the minister from 1693-1733. Only a short distance away, grew up the poet Thomson, who was some nine years older than Armstrong. Their later friendship in London originated no doubt in the idyllic and romantic environment of which each cherished vivid memories.

Born about 1709, Armstrong, according to his own statement, wrote "when he was very young," verse in the styles of Shakespeare and Spenser. The theme of his first imitation, that of winter, was "just finished when Mr. Thomson's celebrated poem upon the same subject appeared" in 1726, Armstrong being then a lad of about fifteen. "Mr. Thomson, soon hearing of it, had the curiosity to procure a copy by the means of a common acquaintance,"⁷ and showed it to Mallet, Aaron Hill, and Dr. Young. Mallet promised to publish it, but failed to do so. It is easy to see, however, that the interest of this group must have been encouraging to young Armstrong, who went on to undertake a tragedy, never finished, on the story of Tereus and Philomela.

But as there was the need of making a living, Armstrong, like young Smollett, decided to prepare himself for a medical career, and obtained his M.D. from Edinburgh in 1732, two years after Thomson had completed *The Seasons*. Naturally enough then Armstrong went down to London, having dedicated his medical dissertation to that distinguished patron of learning, Sir Hans Sloane.⁸ He must have arrived there by 1735, for early in that year he read a medical article before the Royal Society and then published, also in 1735, a shilling pamphlet called *An Essay For Abridging the Study of Physick*,⁹ which contained, along with other sat-

⁶ For Andrew Lumisden, see *D.N.B.* and Robert Warnock, "Boswell and Andrew Lumisden," in *M.L.Q.*, II (1941), 601-607. Lumisden called Armstrong "my cousin" in a letter written to Sir Alexander Dick from Paris in 1770.

⁷ These "Imitations" together with Armstrong's introduction were first published in his *Miscellanies* (1770), I, [145] ff.

⁸ Armstrong's dedicatory letter in Latin to Sloane is preserved in the British Museum, MS. Sloane 4052, f. 62. For its text see the memoir of Armstrong in *Lives of Scottish Poets with Portraits and Vignettes*, 3 vols. (London, 1822), II, 115-134. The subject of Armstrong's thesis was *De Tabe purulenta*.

⁹ For some account of its contents, see Iolo A. Williams, *Seven XVIIIth Century Bibliographies* (London, 1924), pp. 18-19. There is a reprint of it in *The Repository: a select collection of fugitive pieces of wit and humour* . . . 4 vols. (London, 1790-1793), III, [121]-162.

ire, an attack on the well known quack, Dr. Joshua Ward. These activities suggest that Armstrong, aged about twenty-four, was an ambitious young doctor utilizing all means of promoting a successful career without allowing the muses to interfere very much with his scientific profession.

But he found time to write and publish anonymously the next year what has always seemed to its readers a very curious, humorless, equivocal, and erotic piece of writing called *The Oeconomy of Love*.¹⁰ It is charitable, and perhaps true, to assume, as some critics have done, that Armstrong intended this poem partly as a playful satire on erotic writing, but its seeming lack of humor has suggested to others that his intention was partly didactic. This is my own belief. Whatever the author's motives, the piece became the joy of the prurient and a financial plum to various publishers from 1736 to 1768, when according to the rather vague declarations of Armstrong's bibliographers, he expurgated certain passages. At any rate he did not publish it in his *Miscellanies* in 1770.

Upon Armstrong and his subsequent literary and medical career the effects of *The Oeconomy of Love* are difficult to estimate. The poem made him well known among the gay blades of the time. However, it must have produced among his sobersided Scotch friends and relatives considerable consternation. For Armstrong himself the reception of the poem could only have created much irritation and embarrassment because, even if he were something of a sly young dog, he wanted to succeed as a doctor by gaining the patronage of a respectable clientele. The reaction to the poem or to gossip about it by many prospective patients may have been pretty accurately summed up by a certain Mr. Meyrick, who told Charles Bucke, Dr. Akenside's biographer, that Armstrong "ruined himself . . . by that foolish performance of his, the Economy of Love. How, in the name of heaven, could he ever expect that a woman would let him enter her house again, after that? The man was a fool! He, who undertakes to be a physician, must be chastity itself."¹¹ This view was also held by Robert Chambers, who declared that the poem "greatly diminished the reputation of the author," asserting in the same breath, that it was clear from "one of the 'Cases of Literary Property,' that Andrew Millar, the bookseller, paid [? Armstrong] fifty pounds for the copy-right of this poem."¹² It was also recorded by Timperley that the author received fifty guineas

¹⁰ See the *C.B.E.L.* for the numerous editions of this poem, including one in Italian in 1755. I have not compared the alleged revision in 1768 with the earlier versions. My copy, dated 1747, is not included in the list in the *C.B.E.L.* This edition contains forty-three pages, the same number as in the first edition, according to Williams' bibliography. The poem itself offers practical advice to the young man of 1736 as to how to behave in the art of love.

¹¹ Charles Bucke, *On the Life, Writings, and Genius of Akenside* (London, 1832), p. 30.

¹² Chambers, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

from Millar.¹³ In view of Armstrong's intimacy with Millar, this may be true, but there are no documents available to verify such a transaction.¹⁴ As to what Armstrong thought about *The Oeconomy of Love* and Millar years later, certain fairly clear inferences may be made from the following statement gleaned from the *Medical Essays*, Armstrong's final publication in 1773:

As an author too his fate has been somewhat particular. . . . His having written a Poem upon a subject reckoned of no inconsiderable consequence to the health of mankind was, as some say, sufficient alone in this age and meridian, to have ruined him as a Physician. At the same time, from the treachery of one Bookseller after another, it is true enough what one of his friends guessed not long ago . . . that tho' his works, as he called them—, had *sold greatly*; he did not believe they had all together brought near so much as has often been made by one play that deserved to have been damned.¹⁵

From the above it would appear that Armstrong defended the theme and purpose of his extraordinary poem, and may never have made much money out of it. Partly as an antidote to *The Oeconomy of Love*, and more probably as an attempt to maintain and increase his medical reputation, Armstrong published in 1737 *A Synopsis of the History and Cure of Venereal Diseases*.¹⁶

Meantime Armstrong was cultivating his social contacts in London, chiefly, it seems, with Thomson and his circle. In 1737 he was initiated into the Masonic brotherhood, if we can trust alleged newspaper evidence of that year, reported in the following contribution to *Notes and Queries*:

A scrap from the *Daily Advertiser* of Tues., Sept. 13, 1737 preserved in a volume of *Masonic Collections*, by Dr. Rawlinson (now Bodl. MS., Rawl. c. 136) informs us that on the preceding Friday, James Thomson, Esq., author of *The Seasons*, Dr. Armstrong, and others, were admitted free and accepted Masons at Old Man's Coffee-House, Charing Cross, on which occasion 'Richard Savage, Esq., son of the late Earl Rivers, officiated as master.'¹⁷

Unfortunately this note cannot be found in the *Daily Advertiser* for Sept. 13, 1737, but I assume that it appeared in another newspaper of the same date, as it has every ring of authenticity.

¹³ C. H. Timperley, *Dictionary of Printers and Printing* (London, 1839), p. 719.

¹⁴ The first edition of *The Oeconomy of Love* was, according to Williams, printed for T. Cooper, at the Globe in Pater-Noster-Row. I have seen editions of 1747 and 1749, both printed for M. Cooper at the same address. *The Public Advertiser* (August 28, 1753) listed another edition also printed for M. Cooper.

¹⁵ Armstrong's *Medical Essays* (London, 1773), pp. 37–41.

¹⁶ Printed for A. Millar.

¹⁷ Quoted *Notes and Queries*, 2 Ser., I (No. 7, Feb. 16, 1856), 131. This note sent in by W. D. Macray of New College was reprinted by Léon Morel in his *James Thomson Sa Vie et Ses Œuvres* (Paris, 1895), p. 123 n. See also Stanley V. Makower, *Richard Savage a Mystery in Biography* (London, 1909), pp. 253–254.

For the next three years of Armstrong's career all data have vanished, but it is known that in June, 1741, he asked for the Rev. Thomas Birch's recommendation to the famous Dr. Richard Mead in order to be appointed physician to the troops going to the West Indies.¹⁸ This appointment Armstrong failed, it seems, to receive. On July 20, 1741, he wrote to Birch from Rawthmell's¹⁹ as follows:

Dear Sir:

I should be glad if it were convenient for you to carry me to Dr Mead again tomorrow morning. If it is please leave word at the Barr here and they will communicate it to me this evening. I shall make no apology to so good a Friend for this trouble, as it is a mere trifle to what you have submitted to on my account. I am

Dear Sir

Your most humble & obliged

Serv^t

John Armstrong²⁰

This letter shows that Armstrong was already on familiar terms with Birch, who by 1741 was in a position to help many friends less established than he.²¹ Another glimpse of Armstrong's friendship with Birch appears in the following letter, unaddressed, but surely to Birch, written again at Rawthmell's October 6, 1742:

Dear Sir:

If you are to be at Leisure next Friday M^r Spence²² and I shall be glad to meet you about two at Richard's Coffee house within Temple Barr, from whence we shall adjourn to any Tavern you please to dine together. If Friday is not convenient for you please leave word at the Barr here at at [sic] meeting we shall agree upon some Day next Week

I am

Dear Sir

Your most humble and obliged

Servant

John Armstrong²³

¹⁸ See John Nichols, *Biographical and Literary Anecdotes of William Bowyer, Printer, F.S.A.* (London, 1782), p. 583. See also Bullen's account of Armstrong in *D.N.B.*

¹⁹ For Rawthmell's Coffee-House in Covent Garden, see P. H. Ditchfield, *Memorials of Old London* (London, 1908), II, 138.

²⁰ Printed from Br. Mus. MS. Sloane, 4300, f. 90.

²¹ For the Rev. Thomas Birch (1705-1766), see *D.N.B.* To that account it should be added that Birch was on the Committee of Managers of the Society for the Encouragement of Learning in 1736, along with Dr. Mead, the poet Thomson, and the latter's friend, George Lewis Scott, the mathematician. Birch seems to have had boundless kindness and energy. For a lively account of his walking around London city in one day see the *Political Magazine*, XII (1787), 324. ²² Presumably the Rev. Joseph Spence.

²³ From Br. Mus. MS. Sloane 4300, f. 90. This letter and that of July 20, 1741, are side by side in the MSS.

In April of 1744 appeared Armstrong's *The Art of Preserving Health*,²⁴ his one poem which deserved much contemporary fame, and which presumably added luster to his medical reputation. The publisher of the successful work was Andrew Millar, with whom Armstrong was intimate for many years. In October, 1744, Millar wrote to John Forbes the younger, of Culloden, then in Flanders, a letter containing the following: "Our friend Peter [Rev. Patrick Murdoch]²⁵ is well in Suffolk, Mr Mitchell,²⁶ Thomson and Armstrong are all in good health and frequently join wt [sic] me in remembeering [sic] you."²⁷ Such was the congenial group of gifted Scotsmen with whom Armstrong appears to have been increasingly associated in 1744, when Smollett began to practice medicine in London.

Next year came the Forty-Five, and in April, 1746, Culloden, concerning which Armstrong, as far as I know, never commented in his writings or correspondence. His feelings may only be guessed at from the fact that one of his brothers was opposed to the rebellion.²⁸

Armstrong's first known medical appointment came in February, 1746, according to John Nichols' note: "In Feb. 1746 Dr. Pringle, Dr. Armstrong and Dr. Baker were nominated physicians to the Hospital for lame, maimed, and sick soldiers, behind Buckingham-house."²⁹ The Dr. Pringle mentioned above was presumably the brilliant Sir John Pringle, born in Roxburghshire in 1707, and hence about two years older than the poet. In 1730 Pringle received his M.D. from Leyden; he then became a physician in Edinburgh and from 1734 to 1742 taught pneumatics and moral philosophy at the University of Edinburgh, where Armstrong had received his M.D. in 1732. It is possible that Armstrong while an ad-

²⁴ This poem in quarto appeared about April 12, 1744, according to the *Daily Advertiser* for that date. The printer was William Strahan, and thanks to Messrs. Spottiswoode, Ballantyne & Co., Ltd., London, I am able to furnish the following entry from Strahan's ledger (fol. 39a):

Andrew Millar Dr.

April 1744 Armstrong's Art of Preserving Health 17 Sheets Double Pica 4^{to} No. 1250
Coarse and 50 Fine @ 21s p Sheet.....17/17/0

²⁵ Murdoch was the biographer of the poet Thomson.

²⁶ Mr. Mitchell was Sir Andrew Mitchell, F.R.S. in 1735, close friend of Thomson, and related to Smollett. He was later envoy to Berlin.

²⁷ Quoted from the complete letter in *More Culloden Papers* ed. Duncan Warrand (Inverness, 1927), III, 233 ff.

²⁸ In *The Poetical Works of Armstrong, Dyer, and Green* (Edinburgh, 1858), xxii^a, the editor, the Rev. George Gilfillan, printed a note on one of the poet's brothers who succeeded his father as parish clergyman and who according to local tradition was a "flaming Anti-Jacobite." This brother, William Armstrong, was minister of Castleton from 1733 to 1751. See A. W. Somerville "Dr. John Armstrong, Poet and Physician," *Border Magazine* (London, 1926), xxxi, [49]-51.

²⁹ John Nichols' *Literary Anecdotes* (London, 1812-15), III, 144.

vanced student at Edinburgh had known him there. At any rate, the above appointment was a relatively minor matter for Pringle.³⁰ Armstrong's other associate, Dr. Baker, is hard to identify, but was possibly Dr. Henry Baker, F.R.S., known as "Microscope" Baker, whom Alexander Carlyle met in London in 1746,³¹ at which time he also met Armstrong and Thomson.

Carlyle's account of Armstrong in the spring of 1746 is invaluable for revealing him at that period.

Of the literary people I met with at this time in London [wrote Carlyle] I must not forget Thomson the poet and Dr. Armstrong. Dickson³² had come to London from Leyden with his degree of M.D., and had been introduced to Armstrong, who was his countryman. A party was formed at the Ducie Tavern at Temple Bar, where the company were Armstrong, Dickson, and Andrew Millar, with Murdoch his friend. Thomson came at last, and disappointed me both by his appearance and conversation. Armstrong bore him down, having got into his sarcastical vein by the wine he had drunk before Thomson joined us.³³

Armstrong's sarcasm was, as we shall see, one of the salient features of his character. The indolent Thomson was probably later than usual in arriving at the party. However, he knew Armstrong's kindly as well as his satirical side.

Some time after 1746, the Rev. Joseph Spence, who, as we have seen, knew Armstrong in 1742, received a letter from one N. Herbert, answering a request from "Dr. Armstrong" on the technique of resuscitating drowned persons.³⁴ Perhaps Armstrong was trying to read up on that subject. Possibly some other doctor named Armstrong was making the inquiry. Little is known, indeed, as to the precise nature and extent of Armstrong's private practice.

It looks as though Armstrong, along with his medical work, always

³⁰ Pringle had been physician to the Earl of Stair in the Dettingen campaign. In 1746 he accompanied the Duke of Cumberland to Culloden. In 1747 and 1748 he was abroad again with the army. The standard accounts of Pringle do not refer to this appointment to the hospital for incapacitated soldiers.

³¹ See *The Autobiography of Dr. Alexander Carlyle*, ed. John Hill Burton (London and Edinburgh, 1910), p. 204.

³² This Dickson referred to was Thomas Dickson, M.D. and F.R.S., (ca. 1727-1784). In Leyden Dickson was a student with Charles Townshend and John Wilkes. In 1758 he married Carlyle's eldest sister, Margaret, in London. For the best account of Dickson, see his obituary, *Gent. Mag.*, LIV (June, 1784), 476. See also R. W. Innes Smith, *English-Speaking Students of Medicine at the University of Leyden* (Edinburgh, 1932), p. 67, where it is stated that Dickson obtained his M.D. on April 8, 1746.

³³ Carlyle, *op. cit.*, pp. 205-206.

³⁴ See the Rev. Joseph Spence, *Anecdotes, Observations, and Characters, of Books and Men* (London, 1858), pp. 316-317.

maintained a lively though irregular interest in writing. There is a kind of autobiography lurking in his couplet:

Yet once a moon, perhaps, I steal a night
And, if our sire Apollo pleases, write.
(Of *Benevolence*, ll. 16-17)

After the success of *The Art of Preserving Health*, the ingenious doctor broke into print at fairly regular intervals from 1744 to 1761. And his medical practice grew. Thomson, shortly before his death (about April, 1748), wrote to his friend Paterson: "Good-natured, obliging Millar, is as usual. Though the Doctor increases in business he does not decrease in spleen; but there is a certain kind of spleen that is both humane and agreeable, like Jacques in the play: I sometimes too, have a touch of it."³⁵ Shortly after this letter was written, there appeared in print "after fourteen or fifteen years," as Thomson expressed it,³⁶ his well known *Castle of Indolence*. This poem contained portraits of his friends, Armstrong being depicted, it was thought, in stanza 60 of Canto 1:

With him was sometimes join'd, in silent walk
(Profoundly silent, for they never spoke)
One shy still, who quite detested talk:
Oft stung by spleen, at once away he broke,
[To groves of pine, and broad o'ershading oak;
There, inly thrilled, he wandered all alone,
And on himself his pensive fury wroke,
Ne never utter'd word, save when first shone
The glittering star of eve—"Thank Heaven! the day is done."

To *The Castle of Indolence*, the best Spenserian poem of the eighteenth century, Armstrong made a slight contribution which indicates his real interest in Thomson's creative work. To the self-portrait of Thomson, he may have contributed the line, "A bard here dwelt more fat than bard beseems,"³⁷ and he certainly furnished many of the lines for the last four stanzas of the first canto. But a comparison of Armstrong's four stanzas which he printed in his *Miscellanies* ("An Imitation of Spencer. Written at Mr. Thomson's desire, to be inserted into the *Castle of Indolence*")³⁸ with the four stanzas as they stand in *The Castle of Indolence* discloses

³⁵ See *The Poetical Works of James Thomson*, Aldine Edition (London, n.d. [c. 1860]), I, cxii. ³⁶ *Ibid.*, I, cxi.

³⁷ Oliver Elton in his *Survey of English Literature, 1730-1780* (London, 1928), I, 364, cited a variant of this line as Armstrong's contribution. See *Castle of Indolence*, Canto 1, stanza 68.

³⁸ Quoted Armstrong's *Miscellanies* (1770), I, 164-166.

Thomson's partial revision of Armstrong's contribution,³⁹ so that the usual editorial statement that Armstrong *wrote* these stanzas in Thomson's poem is inexact.

At an uncertain date, before Thomson's death in August, 1748, and when John Forbes of Culloden was in London, Armstrong wrote him the following note:

My dear F.:

As the D—I, my particular Enemy, would have it, I can't go with you. God send us good Luck in the Lottery! If mine comes up a ten thou^d, I intend to turn Gentleman; for if I drudge more, poyson me. My service to Thomson.

I am ever yours,

J. A.

Sunday, near ten.⁴⁰

The note reveals Armstrong's typical view as to the dog's life led by a physician. We shall see it repeated later.

When Thomson died he was deeply mourned by his small circle of loyal Scottish friends. Armstrong, who was present at his friend's deathbed, wrote letters to Murdock and to John Forbes of Culloden which reveal his grief and his melancholy view of life. In his letter to Forbes, written seven days after Thomson died, he described his death and continued with a strain of melancholy as romantic as that of Keats:

Besides, I think him greatly to be envied, to have got fairly rid of this rascally world, and to have left it so universally regretted. We are to be pitied that are left behind; and if it was not for a very few friends whom I have still remaining, and who I have reason to hope will live as long as I, life would soon become too tedious and melancholy to be supported. I have often been tempted to wish, that nature had made me a little more callous; but then we should lose sensations too that give perhaps the most exquisite pleasures: there is even a luxury in melancholy; and I do not know, whether it is not best to indulge it, at first, and give it a full vent, that it may exhaust itself, and leave the mind restored to its natural serenity, after those heavy clouds have fallen.

I have the pleasure to tell you, that all other friends are well; Mitchell, Millar, Melvil, Sargent, are all well.

My dearest Friend,

Your most affectionate

John Armstrong.⁴¹

³⁹ I have not checked Armstrong's stanzas with the first edition of Thomson's *The Castle of Indolence*, published in May, 1748. It is possible that Thomson made additional revisions before his death in August of that year.

⁴⁰ Printed in *Culloden Papers* (London, 1815), p. 315.

⁴¹ *Culloden Papers*, pp. 307 ff.

Probably at the very end of 1748 Armstrong printed a trivial, mildly amusing *jeu d'esprit*, *The Muncher's and Guzzler's Diary . . . The Universal Almanac*, which he cherished sufficiently to reprint in his *Miscellanies*, vol. I, "as First Printed In the Year MDCCXLVIII." When Mr. Iolo Williams prepared his bibliography he had not seen a copy of this slight pamphlet, but one turned up in 1933, and was offered for sale by the bookseller Elkin Mathews, Esq. of London.⁴² This parody on quack almanac-makers with its comic prognostications for the year 1749 certainly added nothing to Armstrong's literary achievement.

II

Toward 1750 Armstrong began corresponding with John Wilkes, who kept a good many of Armstrong's notes and letters.⁴³ Many of them are without date, but I shall cite some of them, and draw from others specific material to reveal aspects of Armstrong during his intimacy with Wilkes, which was finally severed about 1763. A more permanent friendship with Tobias Smollett was developing about 1750, though recently published Smollett letters show that they both were Scotsmen; both moved in medical circles; both were well known in literary groups by 1748; and both liked tavern life. Armstrong's friendship with Smollett remained steadfast until the latter's death in 1771.

Probably after Smollett was settled in Chelsea (he moved there in the summer of 1750) Armstrong wrote to Wilkes the following undated note:

Dear Sir:

I am extreamly obliged to you for your kind Invitation and the fragrant present with which it was attended, but am very sorry I can't possibly have the pleasure to dine with you to morrow except you can favour us with your Company to Chelsea where D^r. Maghie⁴⁴ and I are to meet D^r. Smollet at the Swan.

⁴² The description in Mathews' Catalogue, No. 52, 1933, runs: "The Muncher's and Guzler's Diary. The Wit's, the Critic's, the Conundrumist's, the Farmer's, the Petit-Maitre's Pocket Companion . . . in a Word, the Universal Almanack. By Nouredin Alraschin formerly of Damascus, now of Datchet-Bridge, Esq. Printed for R. Baldwin, 1749. First Edition, Sewn, 8vo." Incidentally, the title page, as printed by Armstrong in his *Miscellanies*, is slightly different from that above.

⁴³ There are numerous letters and notes from Armstrong to Wilkes in the British Museum. They have been utilized effectively by Horace Bleackley in his excellent *Life of John Wilkes* (London, 1917). I do not deal with all of them in this essay.

⁴⁴ Dr. Maghie was Dr. William Magie (or Macgie), a physician at Guy's Hospital. See the list of subscribers to the Rev. John Blair's *The Chronology and History of the World* (London, 1754). He is referred to in a letter of 1754 from Dr. William Hunter to Dr. William Cullen (in Dr. John Thomson's *An Account of . . . William Cullen, M.D.*, 2 vols. [Edinburgh and London, 1859], I, 661) as among Scotch physicians of eminence in London. See also Sir John Hawkins' biography of Dr. Johnson for illuminating material on Dr. Maghie.

There is only one Gentleman more to be of the party, and it is one I assure myself you will like at the first interview, perhaps we may be joined by L—— Kenmure⁴⁵ who is so much of a Gentleman that one forgets he is a Lord. The Rendezvous [*sic*] is to be at the British Coffee house Charing Cross between twelve and one. For god's sake come if you can, and if you incline to take Ranelagh in your way home I'm your man for that too.

Dear Sir

Your most faithful humble Serv^t.

John Armstrong.⁴⁶

Thursday Night.

This dinner at the old Swan tavern, not far from Smollett's home in Chelsea, suggests other associations between Smollett, Dr. William Magie, and their friend Lord Kenmure.

On such convivial occasions there was surely some discussion of Armstrong's current publications. His poem *Of Benevolence: An Epistle to Eumenes* appeared in folio in 1751, printed for Millar. This is a short piece of 153 lines written in prosy couplets. It displays a strong humanitarian impulse consistently characteristic of its author. In his *Miscellanies* (I, 113) Armstrong wrote: "This little piece was addressed to a worthy Gentleman, as an expression of gratitude for his kind endeavors to do the Author a great piece of service." Who the gentleman (Eumenes) was remains a mystery. In his poem Armstrong declares that he has no serious literary ambitions:

Not oft I sing: the happier for the town,
So stun'd already they're quite stupid grown
With monthly, daily—charming things I own.
Happy for them, I seldom court the Nine;
Another art, a serious art is mine.
Of nauseous verses offer'd once a week,
You cannot say I did it, if you're sick.
'Twas ne'er my pride to shine by flashy fits
Among the daily, weekly, monthly wits.
Content if some few friends indulge my name,
So slightly am I stung with love of fame,
I would not scrawl one hundred idle lines—
Not for the praise of all the Magazines.⁴⁷

To please a few select souls above the vulgar mob and to be a man of benevolence and honor is better than to be merely successful as a poet—such is Armstrong's central theme, presented, I believe, in all sincerity.

⁴⁵ L-Kenmure was probably the Hon. John Gordon of Kenmure (1713–69). But for the forfeiture of the title in 1715 he would have been a lord.

⁴⁶ B.M. Add. MS. 30, 875, f. 13.

⁴⁷ *Of Benevolence*, ll. 3–15.

A more vigorous and very readable poem by Armstrong was printed in 1753 in quarto for R. Griffiths, editor of the *Monthly Review*. It bore the title *Taste: An Epistle To A Young Critic* and ran to 249 lines in the usual couplet form. Here Armstrong in his advice to a young critic expresses views on criticism which are of real interest to a student of pre-Romantic theories:

Good native Taste, tho' rude, is seldom wrong,
Be it in music, painting, or in song.
But this, as well as other faculties,
Improves with age and ripens by degrees.
I know, my dear; 'tis needless to deny't,
You like Voiture,⁴⁸ you think him wondrous bright:

But seven years hence, your relish more matur'd
What now delights will hardly be endur'd.⁴⁹

Read boldly, and unprejudic'd peruse
Each fav'rite modern, ev'n each ancient muse.⁵⁰

'But to the ancients.'—Faith! I am not clear,
For all the smooth round type of Elzevir,
That every work which lasts in prose or song,
Two thousand years, deserves to last so long.⁵¹

Tasteless, implicit, indolent and tame,
At second-hand we chiefly praise or blame.⁵²

Judge for yourself; nor wait with timid phlegm
'Till some illustrious pedant hum or hem.⁵³

In concluding the poem, Armstrong develops in a lively manner an analogy (which he accepts as valid) between good taste in literature and good taste in food and drink:

For all the fine sensations still have dwelt,
Perhaps, where one was exquisitely felt.
Thus he who heavenly Maro truly feels
Stands fix'd on Raphael, and at Handel thrills.
The grosser senses too, the taste, the smell,
Are likely truest where the fine prevail:
Who doubts that Horace must have cater'd well?
Friend, I'm a shrewd observer, and will guess
What books you doat on from your fav'rite mess.
Brown and L'Estrange will surely charm whome'er

⁴⁸ Armstrong evidently referred to Vincent Voiture's *Works* published in London in 1736.

⁴⁹ *Taste*, ll. 26–33.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, ll. 111–112.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, ll. 125–128.

⁵² *Ibid.*, ll. 151–152.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, ll. 178–179.

The frothy pertness strikes of weak small-beer.
 Who steeps the calf's fat loin in greasy sauce
 Will hardly loathe the praise that bastes an ass.
 Who riots on Scotcht Collops scorns not any
 Insipid, fulsome, trashy miscellany.⁵⁴

These lines express the anti-Neoclassical critical theories aired in the middle of the century by the most original and independent minds. And Armstrong was an independent spirit, a "man inadvisable," as Hume put it. It is hard to say what the critics thought of *Taste*. Wilkes, no mean judge of literature, approved, for Armstrong thanked him for his praise in a letter of May 22, 1753, in which he added however that he had overheard adverse criticism of it "at Slaughters⁵⁵ last Sunday."⁵⁶ Such criticism, indeed, Armstrong had anticipated in a letter to Wilkes on May 2, 1753: "I have ventured my Ep-[sic] into the press, and had the first proof last Night. If it should come out from what hand it came, and my Lord the Town should damn it for execrable Stuff, I have the old Excuse ready cook'd."⁵⁷

In this same year of 1753, one Dr. Theobald⁵⁸ addressed two Latin odes "Ad ingenuum Virum, tum medicis tum poeticis, facultatibus prae-stantem, Johannem Armstrong M.D." These probably appeared in the magazines; they were printed again in 1782 by John Nichols.⁵⁹

During the 1750's Armstrong wrote frequently to Wilkes, and from this correspondence some gleanings are of interest. In a note of January 17, 1750/1,⁶⁰ he thanked Wilkes for a cheese and conveyed to him his brother's⁶¹ best compliments. There is also a very friendly epistle to Wilkes written July 18, 1751, in which Armstrong expressed unbounded enthusiasm for the countryside: Armstrong used to visit Wilkes at his fine country manor at Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire,⁶² at this period. On October 12 [?1752], Armstrong notified Wilkes⁶³ that he had just moved from Cursitor Street⁶⁴ to Arundel Street in the Strand. The letters of Armstrong to Wilkes, generally speaking, were very confiding, informal, gay, and occasionally risqué. In 1753 he sent through Wilkes his compli-

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, ll. 231-245. ⁵⁵ Slaughter's Coffee-house.

⁵⁶ From B.M. Add. MS. 30867, f. 82.

⁵⁷ Quoted from Armstrong's letter, B.M. Add. MS. 30867, f. 80.

⁵⁸ Perhaps Dr. Theobald is to be identified as John Theobald, M.D., author of minor medical publications.

⁵⁹ See Nichols, *Biographical and Literary Anecdotes of William Bowyer* (London, 1782), p. 583. ⁶⁰ B.M. Add. MS. 30867, f. 42.

⁶¹ See footnotes 27 and 146 for Armstrong's brothers.

⁶² For an account of Wilkes as a country gentleman, see Bleackley, *op. cit.*, pp. 18 ff.

⁶³ B.M. Add. MS. 30867, f. 64.

⁶⁴ Cursitor Street was off Chancery Lane, opposite Lincolns Inn.

ments to Dr. Brewster⁶⁵ of Bath, where Wilkes spent rakish weekends, and to "that genial Soul good Master Quinn" at the same resort. Armstrong was continually thanking Wilkes for favors and at times he referred to his medical attentions to Wilkes' daughter Mary (Polly), born in 1750. Writing October 4, 1755, he acknowledged Wilkes' kindness in recommending a poor girl (probably one of his charity cases) to St. Thomas' hospital.⁶⁶

Certain letters from Armstrong to Wilkes show their common interest in literature and involve their mutual friend, Smollett, who may well have dispatched to Wilkes more letters than have survived. For example, in Armstrong's letter to Wilkes dated December 30, 1755, we find the following:

I am very glad if my little great Book⁶⁷ has given you any Amusement, and it pleases me particularly [*sic*] to find you approve of Mr. Arnold's Epitaph.⁶⁸ You take it as it was intended, a Scetch [*sic*] of the Character of a good and amiable Man, who *should have died hereafter*. Your Opinion of it gives me double pleasure because I have heard the Alderman's Heirs and Executors abused in a most violent manner for putting up such a low piece of stuff. I did not know till now that D^r Smollet and I had wrote upon the same Subject. I long to see his and your bawdy (I suppose) Translation of us both to Peggy. I have a great number of serious and important things to say upon this and other subjects but must defer them.⁶⁹

The subject (so vaguely referred to) upon which both Armstrong and Smollett wrote remains dark: it could not have been Arnold's epitaph, which would seem to be a curiously unpromising theme to translate into bawdry. I know of nothing written in a foreign language at this time by either writer. And who was Peggy? What was she? To such queries Armstrong recorded a partial but perhaps perfect answer in another letter, undated, when he recalled the "gay pleasures of your [Wilkes'] company and that dear coy Wanton, Peggy,"⁷⁰ whose frailties or virtues are not recorded in any known epitaph.

A week later Wilkes opened another epistle from Armstrong dated January 6, 1756, in part as follows:

Dear Sir

I am going to answer your very kind and entertaining Letter at a time of the day when I am seldom or never in the Humour of writing, because I shall have no time

⁶⁵ For Dr. Thomas Brewster, see Bleackley, *op. cit.*, p. 23. From the Wilkes correspondence it is clear that Brewster had met Armstrong and liked him.

⁶⁶ B.M. Add. MS. 30867, f. 109.

⁶⁷ This must refer to some sort of common-place book in which Armstrong copied his minor writings and reflections.

⁶⁸ I know not whether this was ever printed, nor can I identify Mr. Arnold.

⁶⁹ B.M. Add. MS. 30867, ff. 112-112a. ⁷⁰ B.M. Add. MS. 30875, f. 17.

for it in the Evening. Your praises make me more than an amends for all that the vulgar herd of Criticks at the Bedford George's, &c. &c. &c., can ever say against me, and I thank you most heartily for your alteration of that flat Line in *Benevolence*;⁷¹ you have improved it greatly by two slight Strokes, and it shall be read so in all future Editions. I like your Translation of E. I's Inscription much, and dare say Peggy must have approved of it greatly, at least at her heart; it is not verbum verbo to be sure but has all the Freedom of an Original, what few Translations can boast of[.] D——n⁷² is gone to the Country for two or three weeks so you'll probably see him as soon as I shall. I am just going to take the step you so very kindly push me on to, and which I should have ventured upon nine years ago if it had not been for that State of Spirits which has made me set about it with some reluctance now, as it is an attempt to plunge deeper into a Business which upon some Occasions fills me with insupportable Anxiety the Cause of a thousand Reveries and Blunders which you have often seen me ashamed of. Smollett imagines he and I may both make Fortunes by this project of his; I'm afraid he is too sanguine, but if it should turn out according to his hopes farewell Physick and all its Cares for me and welcome dear Tranquillity and Retirement.⁷³

This correspondence is difficult to understand. What was Wilkes praising which the coffee-house critics were condemning? As Armstrong had published nothing since his *Taste* (1753), perhaps Wilkes was praising some new and still unpublished piece as well as "improving" *Of Benevolence*. Of "E. I's Inscription" there appears no record. Again, what was "the step" toward which Wilkes was so kindly urging his friend—a step he might have taken nine years previously? One point however is clear: Smollett's "project" was either what he called "an extensive Plan which I last year [1755] projected for a sort of academy of the belles lettres; a Scheme which will one day, I hope be put in Execution to its utmost extent,"⁷⁴ or it was what Smollett called a "small branch" of that plan, *The Critical Review*, initiated at the end of 1755, with its first number already in the press when Armstrong was writing his letter. In either case it is clear that Armstrong was one of the committee of projectors of which Smollett was chairman, and this means that Armstrong must be regarded as perhaps one of the "four gentlemen of approved abilities"⁷⁵ who "conducted," to use Smollett's word, *The Critical Review*, in its beginnings at least. Armstrong at this period was doctoring Wilkes' daughter, who, after the separation of Wilkes and his wife in 1756, was sent to a girls' school in Chelsea. In an undated letter written about this

⁷¹ *Of Benevolence*, published 1751.

⁷² D——n was possibly Sir William Duncan, physician in ordinary to George III, and one of Wilkes' physicians in 1763. ⁷³ B.M. Add. MS. 30867, ff. 113–113a.

⁷⁴ Quoted Smollett's letter to Dr. John Moore, written Aug. 3, 1756. See *The Letters of Tobias Smollett, M.D.*, ed. Edward S. Noyes (Harvard University Press, 1926), p. 39.

⁷⁵ *Idem*.

time, Armstrong thanked Wilkes as usual for favors and continued: "I owe more jaunts to Chelsea than I hope my dear Miss Wilkes will have occasion for all the time she is to pass there. I found her so free of her little complaint that I thought it would be sufficient for her to take the few remaining powders. However I propose to give her another call within a day or two."⁷⁶ How far in Chelsea Armstrong had to walk from Mary Wilkes' school⁷⁷ to Smollett's home I do not know, but the two doctors probably got together at Monmouth House repeatedly to discuss the deplorable state of medicine and literature in the 'fifties.

Another theme on which they agreed, no doubt, was the blindness of a certain theatrical manager named Garrick in failing to recognize and promote a sterling tragedy when it was offered to him. Good strong Smollettian invective on this subject warmed Armstrong's heart, for he too had created a tragedy, *The Forced Marriage*, which he piously preserved for printing in 1770 in *The Miscellanies*, where it is recorded that the drama was written in 1754. Prefixed to the play is this peevish foreword:

The following Play, which was written chiefly with a view to expose a most cruel and absurd piece of tyranny too common in life, might have appeared upon the Stage many years ago: If the Author could have dangled after Managers; or have used the access he had been offered to the prostituted patronage of two or three great Men, to whose taste he did not chuse to appeal; or after all, if any but the two female characters could have been properly represented at the time when the piece was finished.⁷⁸

The cryptic references in this introduction were never explained in print by the indignant author, but fortunately David Hume commented on them to the printer William Strahan to whom he wrote on March 13, 1770, just after *The Miscellanies* appeared:

I am sorry to hear that Dr Armstrong has printed his Tragedy among his Miscellanies. It is certainly one of the worst pieces I ever saw; and totally unworthy of his other Productions. I should have endeavored [*sic*] to dissuade him from printing it, had he been a man advisable. But I knew, that he keeps an Anger against Garrick for above twenty Years for refusing to bring it on the Stage; and

⁷⁶ B.M. Add. MS. 30875, f. 30.

⁷⁷ Mary Wilkes lived at a boarding school run by a Mrs. Aylesworth and a Madame Beete. On August 12 (no year stated) Armstrong wrote Wilkes: "D^r Smollett told me that the School you directed me to enquire about was a very reputable one and that a great number of young Ladies of the first fashion in England were educated there." (B.M. Add. MS. 30875, f. 28). Smollett would have known about this Chelsea school, where it is likely that his daughter Elizabeth, two years older than Mary Wilkes, was educated.

⁷⁸ Quoted Armstrong's *Miscellanies*, II, [3].

he never since woud [*sic*] allow him to be so much as a tolerable Actor. I thought therefore it was wiser not to meddle in the affair.⁷⁹

From this it must be inferred that Hume, who knew Armstrong by 1754, had read the play in manuscript⁸⁰ and knew the details of Armstrong's efforts to stage it. Armstrong still valued it in 1770, even to the point of perhaps issuing it then in pseudo-separate form.⁸¹

In 1758, in May, when his friend Smollett was having a final look at his most indiscreet libel against Admiral Knowles, Armstrong had the satisfaction of seeing in print his small pamphlet in prose called *Sketches Or Essays On Various Subjects, By Launcelot Temple, Esq.*⁸² This was reprinted in Armstrong's *Miscellanies* (1770) as "Sketches," vol. I, and to it he added in 1770 "Sketches," vol. II, never before published. Both of these parts present material of distinct interest to the student of mid-eighteenth-century literature and ideas. Here we find a mixture of liberal and conservative attitudes on a variety of subjects. As in his poem *Taste*, he insisted that good taste was innate. He inveighed against obscure writing, modernized spelling, and newly coined words. He preferred natural to artificial beauty in gardens, finding "the wild variety of the woods"⁸³ far better than artificial flowering shrubs. In music he confessed his dislike of the Italian variety, but declared "the *Welch*, the *Scotch*, the *Irish* music, reaches the heart."⁸⁴ On the English poets he expressed himself freely, revealing his admiration for Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton. He accepted the irregularities in Shakespeare's versification and asserted that he "had the most musical ear of all the *English* poets."⁸⁵ Upon his own decade he was extremely severe, terming it

the sickly wane, the impotent decline of the eighteenth century: which from a hopeful boy became a most insignificant man; and for any thing that appears at

⁷⁹ See *The Letters of David Hume*, ed. J. Y. T. Greig (Clarendon Press, 1932), II, 218.

⁸⁰ It is perhaps significant that Hume's first epistolary reference to Armstrong is found in his correspondence for the year 1754, shortly after he missed seeing Wilkes, who called on him in the fall of that year. Hume wrote October 16, 1754 (in his second letter to Wilkes): "if you see Dr Armstrong let him know, that I am ambitious of retaining a Part in his Memory." From Hume's *Letters*, ed. Greig, I, 206.

⁸¹ For vague evidence on this point, see Iolo A. Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

⁸² *Sketches* was announced as published May 22, 1758, in *The Public Advertiser* of that date. The same newspaper for June 29, 1758, announced that a second edition corrected would be available the next day. Bibliographers and collectors of Armstrong will find of interest the following note in *The Public Advertiser* of June 16, 1758, appended to the notice of *Sketches*, printed for A. Millar: "A few Errors having escaped the Author's Notice in Correcting the Sheets, they are now rectified on a small Slip of Paper, which those who purchased this Pamphlet before the Errata were printed, may have on applying as above."

⁸³ Armstrong's *Miscellanies*, II, 142.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

present will die a very fat drowsy blockhead, and be damned to eternal infamy and contempt.⁸⁶

About the time the *Sketches* was published, Alexander Carlyle was in Armstrong's company in London and recorded very vivid recollections of him and Smollett:

As soon as my sister⁸⁷ got into her house in Aldermansbury, Dr. Dickson and she gave a dinner to my friends with two or three of his. There were Doctors Pitcairn, Armstrong, Smollett, and Orme, together with Dr. Robertson,⁸⁸ John Blair, Home⁸⁹ and myself. We passed an exceedingly pleasant day, although Smollett had given Armstrong a staggering blow at the beginning of dinner, by asking him some questions about his nose, which was still patched, on account of his having run it through the side-glass of his chariot when somebody came up to speak to him. Armstrong was naturally glumpy, and this, I was afraid, would have silenced him all day, which it might, had not Smollett called him familiarly John soon after his joke on his nose; but he knew that Smollett loved and respected him, and soon recovered his good-humour, and became brilliant.⁹⁰

With such a group of Scottish dramatists, divines, historians, and physicians practicing the art of health by enjoying Dickson's food and drink, the conversation was indeed worthy of a recording Boswell to jot down the good stories of old days north of the Tweed which set the table in a roar. And if Armstrong indulged regularly in the luxury of his own chariot, he must have been doing very well with his medical fees!

However, in October, 1758, he was on the point of joining the military expedition to the West Indies. On the 21st of the month he confided in Wilkes: "You'll perhaps have seen by this Time how the news papers have provided for me—⁹¹ But you know what sort of oracles they are. It is true I have been almost spirited away along with this Expedition to the West Indies by some of my Friends, while others who know the Climate, the Service &c have been as busy and more effectually so in dissuading me from it."⁹² Among those who discouraged Armstrong from visiting the West Indies was perhaps Smollett, who knew from experience what he was talking about.

To revert briefly to Armstrong's prose essays, *Sketches*, it is to be noted

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

⁸⁷ Carlyle went to London about the end of February, 1758, to assist at his sister Margaret's wedding. Her marriage to Dr. Thomas Dickson took place on March 6. (See *The Public Advertiser*, March 6, 1758.) The dinner described by Carlyle was given probably sometime in March or April, 1758.

⁸⁸ Dr. William Robertson, known as Principal Robertson, the Scottish historian.

⁸⁹ John Hume, author of *Douglas*.

⁹⁰ Quoted Carlyle, *op. cit.*, p. 363.

⁹¹ I do not know what unkind comment on *Sketches* appeared in the papers in 1758.

⁹² B.M. Add. MS. 30867, f. 148.

in passing that the pamphlet was read by Hume, in Edinburgh. His reaction we discover in his letter June 20, 1758, to Andrew Millar, for whom the work was printed:

I have read a small Pamphlet call'd Sketches, which from the Style I take to be Dr Armstrong's, tho' the public Voice gives it to Allan Ramsay. I find the ingenious Author, whoever he be, ridicules the new Method of Spelling,⁹³ as he calls it: But that Method of spelling, Honor, instead of Honour, was Lord Bolingbroke's, Dr Middletons, & Mr Pope's; besides many other eminent Writers. However, to tell truth, I hate to be any way particular in a Trifle; and therefore, if Mr Strahan has not printed off above ten or twelve Sheets,⁹⁴ I should not be displeas'd, if you told him to follow the usual, that is, his own, way of Spelling throughout. We shall make the other Volumes conformable to it. If he be advanced farther, there is no great Matter.⁹⁵

The very prompt and on the whole complimentary review of *Sketches* in *The Critical Review* for May 1758 (composed, I feel sure, by Smollett) made very pleasant reading for Armstrong. The reviewer went on record that "in these Sketches, careless as they are, we can plainly perceive the hand of a master."⁹⁶ The reviewer after deferentially taking exception to Armstrong's definition of true genius, continued in friendly good humor:

We likewise beg leave to differ from our author's opinion, that mutton has a more delicious flavour than venison; and that flounder is preferable to turbut. This, we conceive, is a downright solecism in eating, on which we should be glad to hold a practical conference with Mr. Launcelot Temple.⁹⁷

In gastronomical theory and practice both Drs. Smollett and Armstrong had definite ideas which were not always in agreement. Smollett was, we hope, amused by Armstrong's theory in his poem *Taste* that one could tell a person's literary taste from his gustatory preferences. In fact, the editor of *The Critical Review* preferred venison to mutton, only conceding in *Humphry Clinker*, through his spokesman Bramble, that "five-year old mutton, fed on the fragrant herbage of the mountains . . . might vie with venison in juice and flavour."⁹⁸ The worthy doctors disagreed also on the subject of veal. In *Taste* Armstrong insisted that:

Who steeps the calf's fat loin in greasy sauce
Will hardly loathe the praise that bastes an ass.

⁹³ For Armstrong's essay, "Of the Modern Art of Spelling," see his *Miscellanies*, II, 145-147. Armstrong objected to omitting the "u" in words like *favour*, *honour*, *labour*.

⁹⁴ For the historical work of Hume, then printing, see his *Letters*, ed. Greig, I, 283.

⁹⁵ *Letters of Hume*, ed. Greig, I, 282.

⁹⁶ *The Critical Review*, v (May, 1758), 380.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 381.

⁹⁸ *Humphry Clinker*, Letter of Bramble to Dr. Lewis, London, June 8.

A literary ass, that is. The couplet obviously indicates Armstrong's dislike of veal served with sauce, an aversion at which Smollett glanced in a jocular letter to Wilkes, April 20, 1759, where he described his own editorial drudgery as

a Task almost as disagreeable [*sic*] as that of dining with our friend Armstrong when the wind blows from the East, on a Loin of Veal roasted with Butter Sauce. I wish to God you who have so much Influence over our friend would persuade him to write an ode to Eoster the Goddess of the East wind, so religiously cultivated by our Saxon Progenitors, especially in the month of April: It would doubtless be the finest Satire that ever appeared. It would contain the very Essence of peevish Delicacy inflamed to a poetical Orgasm.⁹⁹

From this jovial Smollettian comment, it is quite apparent that the finicky Armstrong was disagreeably glumpy when obliged to dine (? at Smollett's house) on veal roasted with butter sauce. And like Sterne's Shandean friend, Hall-Stevenson, he had a keen aversion to the wind blowing from an easterly direction. Undoubtedly Smollett, too, shuddered when the Eoster ruffled the near-by Thames, but, to quote Bramble again, he seems to have had a weakness for veal, "my delicious veal, fattened with nothing but the mother's milk, that fills the dish with gravy."¹⁰⁰ But we must leave the gastronomic concerns of Armstrong and Smollett and weave together the remaining threads of Armstrong's life.

In 1759 or thereabouts, Armstrong figured in a series of preposterous jokes written by Hume to amuse his friend William Rouet. Hume fabricated the following: "Miss Elliot yesterday Morning declard [*sic*] her Marriage with Dr Armstrong; but we were surpriz'd in the Afternoon to find Mr Short, the Optician, come in & challenge her for his Wife. It seems she has been marry'd privately for some time to both of them."¹⁰¹ Professor Greig, the editor of Hume's letters, speculates that Short the Optician was perhaps an alias of Armstrong's at this time and that he was then combining practice as an optician with medical practice.

In April 1760, Armstrong, being appointed physician to the army,¹⁰² left for Germany and remained abroad with the expeditionary forces, it seems, until the Peace of Paris was finally signed February 10, 1763. Armstrong, in his fifties, evidently had a rather miserable time, as one would expect. He wrote to Wilkes from Osnaburg, May 13, 1760, a very querulous letter, including a wish to be remembered to Sir Alexander

⁹⁹ Smollett's *Letters*, ed. Noyes, p. 61.

¹⁰⁰ *Humphry Clinker*, Letter of Bramble to Dr. Lewis, London, June 8.

¹⁰¹ Quoted Hume's *Letters*, ed. Greig, I, 311.

¹⁰² Andrew Millar wrote to Sir Andrew Mitchell from London April 15, 1760: "Armstrong is appointed Physician to ye army and goes on Friday." (From B.M. Add. MS. 6858, f. 28 [Marked in pencil, f. 29]).

Dick and "all friends at the Beef Stake Society."¹⁰³ The quoted phrase is of interest because it suggests quite definitely that Armstrong had attended meetings of the members of the Sublime Society at the Beef-Stakes,¹⁰⁴ probably as Wilkes' guest. In this convivial society Armstrong would have been quite welcome, and there he could have met such celebrities as Dr. Barrowby; William Huggins, Smollett's friend; the great Hogarth; Paul Whitehead; the singer, John Beard; and Alexander Reid, Smollett's friend in Chelsea.

In the dreary Continental campaign, however, he found no such society and probably little of the roast beef of old England. Writing to Wilkes July 20, 1760, Armstrong bewailed his hard plight and then expressed a forthright and lively opinion of *Tristram Shandy* which deserves print:

I met with the second volume from which I imagine one may presume to guess what the first must be. If your patience or curiosity or leisure has carried you half so far I am sure you despise him most heartily. Such a pert insipid crazy conceited pedantick impertinent piece of Buffoonery never had the impertinence to shew its posteriors in broad daylight before and it is no wonder it has met with such applause . . . [MS. illegible] how proud the Parsons are of their jaunty brother and how they chuckle and laugh and smother themselves I warrant you when the dull Glee is on them.¹⁰⁵

Was it grumpiness, offended literary decorum, or envy which generated this invective? And did Wilkes agree with Armstrong's tirade? At least he owned a volume of *Tristram Shandy* along with two editions of *The Art of Preserving Health*.¹⁰⁶

Armstrong's next letter to Wilkes was sent from Cassel, August 31, 1760; in this note Armstrong reported progress on "an Epistle I have long projected,"¹⁰⁷ which must refer to *A Day: An Epistle to John Wilkes of Aylesbury, Esq.*, which Wilkes saw through the press. On November 3, 1760, Wilkes received another communiqué alluding to an enclosed rhymed tribute to himself, intended, I think, for the dedicatory preface (? never printed) to *A Day*. He then proceeded:

¹⁰³ From Armstrong's letter to Wilkes, May 13, 1760, in B.M. Add. MS. 30867, f. 154.

¹⁰⁴ I have before me "A List of the Original Members of the Sublime Society at the Beef-Steakes Instituted 6.th December 1735 and their Successors," copied from Add. MS. 30891, folios 1-11, in the British Museum. John Wilkes became a member January 19, 1754. The "List" carries the records down to the year 1780. On fol. 10 of the "List" is written the following regulation: "No Member can bring more than on [sic] Visitor on any day of Meeting." If this regulation applied in 1754, Armstrong probably visited the society with Wilkes.

¹⁰⁵ B.M. Add. MS. 30867, ff. 156 ff.

¹⁰⁶ In the sale-catalogue of Wilkes' books sold May 3, 1764, in the British Museum, one finds *Tristram Shandy*, 1760, and Armstrong's *Art of Preserving Health*, editions of 1745 and 1754.

¹⁰⁷ B.M. Add. MS. 30867, f. 158.

I . . . send you letters by the brace. If you approve of that in rhyme, I wish all the people in Britain and Ireland would read it, that I might be indulged in the vanity of being known for your friend. But if you think it worthy of Mr. Bowyer's press, don't submit it to that severe operation till everything you find wrong in it is altered.¹⁰⁸

It is clear from Armstrong's own words that he gave Wilkes a free hand to revise *A Day* as he wished. The poem was much on Armstrong's mind; four days later he returned to it: "I find in my blotted Copy of my Ep [sic] to you in metre two things that deserve correction and probably you will find a great many more—I would alter the one to *beyond* all Grapes mellow to eat, &c and the other to Niagara's steep abyss."¹⁰⁹ In the spring of 1761 Armstrong wrote from Bremen, May 2: "I have not yet seen a *Day* but approve entirely of the manner of publishing it."¹¹⁰ The ill-fated poem, however, had come off the press in January, 1761,¹¹¹ having been freely corrected and abbreviated by Wilkes. Moreover, incredibly enough, it seems that Armstrong had not seen his poem in print by October of the following year, when he requested Wilkes to hand over to Millar "one strayed ode—item one elegy—item one epistle entitled a *Day*, which I shall be glad to clear of a few clouds. You must know I kept only the first copy, which is mislaid or more probably lost."¹¹² In the above letter Armstrong thanked Wilkes for what may be interpreted as financial assistance. His long-suffering patience may be explained, if we accept the theory put forth by Bullen that he may have owed to Wilkes his appointment as physician to the army. When he finally saw his poem in print, however, he must have been extremely angry. But he was soon to be beyond the need of Wilkes' literary or financial patronage.

While abroad Armstrong kept in touch with his relative Sir Alexander Dick, who passed on to the Rev. Joseph Spence one good piece of news from the doctor:

I have heard from Dr. Armstrong from Osnaburg, who is very well, but *longing for a peace*, and to be out of the way of greasy sauces and bad old hock: he promises to bring some of the olive branches with him to decorate my house, and stay two or three months with me, having half a guinea a day during his life; which is more than he ever expected, he says; and more than he needs.¹¹³

¹⁰⁸ Quoted Bullen's essay in *D.N.B.*

¹⁰⁹ From Armstrong's letter, Nov. 7, 1760, B.M.Add. MS. 30867, f. 161. Armstrong's revised phrases appear in *Day*.

¹¹⁰ From Armstrong's letter, May 2, 1761, B.M.Add. MS. 30867, f. 169.

¹¹¹ *A Day* was announced in *The Public Advertiser* for January 14, 1761. It was printed for A. Millar. The date on the title-page was MDCLXI.

¹¹² Quoted from Bullen's essay in *D.N.B.* I have seen the original letter dated October 29, 1762, in B.M.Add. MS. 30867, f. 195.

¹¹³ See Spence, *op. cit.*, p. 365.

By 1762, then, which, I conclude from internal evidence was the year of Dick's letter, Armstrong could count on leaving the service with a pension of almost £200 annually. Perhaps he left the army in 1762. At any rate he knew he could do as he wished and be as indolent as he pleased. And financial independence resulted in the death of whatever ambition he had ever had to seek new laurels in literature.

Meantime Wilkes in the *North Briton* was reviling in scurrilous language Scotland and all its sons and was developing his intimacy with the satirist, Churchill, who enjoyed nothing more than to lambaste everything and everybody originating in Caledonia. Armstrong's break with Wilkes was inevitable. The first we hear of it is from Hume, who was checking up on the matter in his letter to Andrew Millar, March 28, 1763: "I hear Dr Armstrong has sent you over a most violent Renunciation of Wilkes's Friendship. Wilkes is indeed very blameable in indulging himself so much in national Reflections, which are low, vulgar, & ungenerous, and come with a bad Grace from him, who conversed so much with our Countrymen."¹¹⁴ When the break actually came is uncertain, but the following letter from Armstrong to the Champion of Liberty leaves no doubt as to its finality:

London 17th Sept 1763

Sir

I thank you for the honour of a Letter, and continue sensible of every Mark of Friendship I have received from you, which makes me regret it the more that you have forever deprived me of the Pleasure of your Conversation. For I cannot with Honour or Decency associate myself with one who has distinguished himself by abusing my Country. I am with all due Sincerity

Sir

Your most humble servant

John Armstrong¹¹⁵

Thus ended Armstrong's long friendship with Wilkes, an association not completely revealed partly because of our lack of all the correspondence involved. It has been suggested without any material foundation that Wilkes assisted Armstrong in his *Sketches*, but what we have seen here and there in preceding citations offers no basis for assuming that Wilkes every really helped Armstrong as a serious literary adviser. Was Armstrong a man not advisable in his relations with Wilkes? Was there a little irony in Smollett's sentence to Wilkes in 1759, "I wish to God you who have so much Influence over our friend would persuade him to write an ode to *Eoster*," or was the statement literally exact? I do not see how

¹¹⁴ *Letters of Hume*, ed. Greig, I, 382-383.

¹¹⁵ Quoted here from B.M.Add. MS. 30867, f. 216. The manuscript which I saw is *not in Armstrong's usual hand*. Because Bullen printed this letter in his essay in *D.N.B.* as from Add. MS. 30867, p. [sic] 216, I assume that he quoted from the same sheet of manuscript.

one can find a clear answer to either question. One matter, however, is crystal clear: Armstrong's genuine gratitude and admiration for Wilkes, which prompted him to write *Day* as a kind of personal tribute, did not result (at least in the piece as printed by Wilkes) in what can be called poetry. The satirical Churchill, piqued by what he may have taken as a personal reference in the line, "What crazy scribbler reigns the present wit?" (*Day*, l. 14), took full advantage of its flatness in his posthumously published fragment, *Journey*:

Let Them with Armstrong, taking leave of Sense,
Read musty lectures on *Benevolence*
Or conn the pages of his gaping¹¹⁶ *Day*,
Where all his former Fame was thrown away,
Where all, but barren labour, was forgot,
And the vain stiffness of a *Letter'd* Scot.¹¹⁷

To write the above, Churchill was probably urged on by Wilkes, as Robert Chambers believed:¹¹⁸ and, as he pointed out, the embers of the quarrel between Armstrong and Wilkes flamed up again in 1773 in an angry meeting between the two men, initiated, it seems, by Armstrong, because of certain communications which appeared in *The Public Advertiser* for March 23, 24, and April 1, 1773. These newspaper notes were signed by "Truth," "Dies," and "Nox." They had to do with Wilkes' publication of *Day*, and Armstrong believed, according to the printed dialogues between him and Wilkes, that the latter wrote them all, which is quite possible. Armstrong was insulted by "Nox": "If ever M[r] W honored him with his Company, sure I am it was more to laugh at his cynical Folly and Absurdity than to receive either Information or Delight from his Conversations." The curious student may read the angry dialogue between Armstrong and Wilkes in the printed "Conversation,"¹¹⁹ too long and too dubious to present here because it originated with Wilkes and because it was printed only after Armstrong's death. Armstrong's reaction to the resurgence of the quarrel I do not know.

III

The remaining years of Armstrong's life, 1761-1779, were not productive of literature. Of his life and character, however, there are glimpses and testimonials of importance.

¹¹⁶ "Gaping" refers to the gaps in Armstrong's *Day*, which Wilkes indicated by frequent asterisks.

¹¹⁷ See *Poems by Churchill*, 2 vols., quarto (London, 1763-1765). "The Journey" comprises 8 pages at the end of vol. II.

¹¹⁸ See Robert Chambers' account of Armstrong, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

¹¹⁹ This was printed in the *Gent. Mag.*, LXII (Jan., 1792), 33-35; in *The Correspondence of the late John Wilkes with his Friends*, ed. John Almon, 5 vols. (London, 1805), I, 204-211, and again in Robert Chambers' memoir.

It seems that Armstrong, while abroad with the army, looked up Sir Andrew Mitchell, British Minister at the court of Prussia. At Mitchell's house he first met young Henry Fuseli,¹²⁰ later to become a distinguished painter. Fuseli, a native of Switzerland, came to England at the end of 1763 with Sir Andrew, who introduced his young protégé to Thomas Coutts the banker, and to Millar. Armstrong was also helping young Fuseli to get established, as is evident from the following excerpt from Millar's gossipy letter to Mitchell, London, May 4, 1764:

Our friend Dr Murdock has been in Suffolk ever since my last[;] he writes Mr Fussli will do very well soon and desires he may continue where he has lodged & boarded.—The D^r is to be in Town next week and I hope something will soon be found to employ Fussli who continues very sober and attentive to advice. John Forbes and D^r Armstrong who dines w^t me yesterday are very fond of him and doing all they can.¹²¹

In the summer of 1764 Armstrong travelled in Scotland for his health, taking along the following cordial letter to Alexander Rose, Factor of Ferrintosh at Culloden, from John Forbes¹²² at Hampstead, June 5, 1764:

Our dear kind friend Doctor John Armstrong, who is takeing [*sic*] a jaunt through Scotland for his health and amusement, will deliver you this. Let him want for nothing that the Sea, the River, or the Hill can produce. Be as kind to him as you would be to

Duncan Forbes
William Forbes
P. Murdoch
Poor Little Arthur Forbes
John Forbes

P.S. You must go alongst with him, and show him Bunchrew; my father did so to those he lov'd. I desire that Bell Fraser, Dunkie's nurse, may sing McGill Tou Kerou to him.¹²³

In Scotland Armstrong apparently remained until the following year, as Sir Alexander Dick wrote to his friend Joseph Spence, August 25, 1765:

I give over hopes of ever seeing *any thing of Dr. Armstrong but his Ghost!* He tantalized me with hopes of a visit, but Lord Granby wafted him away another way, so all I said, was pox take my Lord Granby! . . . He sent me a very good letter, with a Dutch physician, who call'd here last week to see the *progress of physick here*, which indeed is something surprizing.¹²⁴

¹²⁰ For Armstrong's relations with Fuseli, see John Knowles, *The Life and Writings of Henry Fuseli, Esq. M.A.R.A.*, 3 vols. (London, 1831), *passim*.

¹²¹ B.M.Add. MS. 6858, f. 30 (numbered in pencil, 31).

¹²² Presumably John Forbes the younger of Culloden. See Armstrong's letter to him in *Culloden Papers*, p. 307 and p. 315.

¹²³ See *Culloden Papers*, p. 312.

¹²⁴ See Spence, *op. cit.*, p. 368.

Of Armstrong's association with John Manners, Marquis of Granby, nothing more is known, but it is tempting to speculate that Armstrong knew him in Germany when he was commander of the British forces there.

In the summer of 1766 Armstrong was enjoying the society of Hume, then in London. Hume, planning to visit his friend Richard Davenport, Rousseau's host at the time, wrote as follows: "You will allow me to bring my Friend along with me: It is Dr Armstrong, Author of the Art of preserving Health, and of many other fine pieces: He is besides a very worthy Man."¹²⁵ But the trip failed to materialize.

Two years later, in April, 1768, Boswell carried to London a letter to Armstrong from the aged Sir Alexander Dick and informed Dick of his friend:

You may figure how he and I, your common friends, at once loved each other. We talked much of you. He has his best compliments to you all. He has been very ill; so has not yet answered your letters; but will write to you very soon. In ten days or a fortnight, he and I will go and visit Mr. Spence.¹²⁶

The following year, 1769, was an eventful one for Armstrong, now sixty years old. As a doctor, *littérateur*, and companion of prominent people he seems to have been looked upon as a considerable figure. Alexander Carlyle visiting London that year wrote down a few illuminating lines:

My connection with physicians made me a member of two of their clubs, which I seldom missed. One of them was at the Horn Tavern in Fleet Street, where they had laid before them original papers relating to their own science . . . Armstrong, who took no share in the business generally, arrived when I did, about eight o'clock; and as they had a great deference for him, and as he was whimsical, they delayed bespeaking supper till he came, and then laid that duty on him. He in complaisance wished to turn it over on me . . . but I declined the office. The conversation was lively and agreeable, and we parted always at twelve.¹²⁷

Enjoying independence, dealing out medical advice to a few retired gentlemen, no doubt, and basking in the favor of congenial friends, Armstrong naturally wished to see his best writing collected and preserved for posterity. So he made a deal with the publisher Thomas Cadell¹²⁸ and prepared his *Miscellanies*¹²⁹ for the press.

The record of Armstrong's contact with Cadell is preserved in the

¹²⁵ *Letters of Hume*, ed. Greig, II, 66.

¹²⁶ *Letters of James Boswell*, ed. Chauncey Brewster Tinker, 2 vols. (Clarendon Press, 1924), p. 152. ¹²⁷ Carlyle, *op. cit.*, p. 542.

¹²⁸ For Thomas Cadell see Henry Curwen, *A History of Booksellers* (London, 1873), p. 66.

¹²⁹ His *Miscellanies* were advertised as forthcoming in October, 1769. See *London Chronicle*, 1769, II, 407, October 24-26.

R. B. Adam Collection on deposit in the University of Rochester Library. Thanks to the courtesy of the curator, Robert F. Metzdorf, I am able to print it here for the first time. It runs as follows:

Memorandum Sept^r 25. 1769 It is agreed between D^r. John Armstrong and Tho^s Cadell Bookseller that an Edition of the Doctors Works with several new pieces shall be printed and published with all possible expedition. That D^r Armstrong and Tho^s Cadell shall go share equally in profit and Loss. and it is also agreed between D^r Armstrong and Ts Cadell to be at the Joint expence in prosecuting Mess^{rs}. Lynch and Pearch for Pyrating part of the Doctors Works

John Armstrong

Tho: Cadell.

During 1769, moreover, Armstrong kept in repair his friendship with the brilliant and versatile Smollett, twelve years younger but aged by incessant work and failing health, who had left England for Italy in the late months of 1768. It is impossible to say how much the two friends had corresponded since the 'fifties, or how frequently they had seen each other. Since that period their goings and comings had often kept them apart. While Armstrong was abroad from 1760 to 1763, Smollett had suffered imprisonment, the loss of his health, and in April, 1763, the loss of his only child. In the summer of 1763, perhaps before Armstrong's return to England, Smollett had gone abroad for his health, to remain in France and Italy until the summer of 1765, at which time Armstrong was traveling with Lord Granby. In the winter of 1765-66 Smollett was at Bath, where Armstrong may have visited him, but there is nothing to prove that the friends met before Smollett left for Italy in the latter part of 1768. Despite these facts and the non-existence of any correspondence for these years, there is no reason to assume any cooling of their friendship, which had been firmly established in the 'fifties. That Smollett knew *The Art of Preserving Health* is seen in the fact that when he wrote his romantic description of the forest in *Count Fathom* (ch. 20), he introduced as a quotation the phrase, "stretching their extravagant arms athwart the gloom," which is virtually Armstrong's blank-verse line, "Stretch their extravagant arms athwart the gloom," in his *The Art of Preserving Health*, Book II, l. 370. Surely Armstrong appreciated this gracious gesture, as well as Smollett's later compliment in *Humphry Clinker*.¹³⁰

Moreover, Armstrong always received complimentary treatment in

¹³⁰ In *Humphry Clinker* (letter of J. Melford, Morpeth, July 13), Smollett utilized Armstrong's phrase, "the mind's elbow-room" from *A Day* and referred to its author as "an excellent writer." For other echoes of Armstrong in *Humphry Clinker*, see Mr. Charles Lee's notes for this novel in the Everyman edition, with an Introduction by Howard Mumford Jones (London and New York [1943]), pp. 353, 359, and 369.

The Critical Review, in references and reviews which we may assume were inspired or written by Smollett himself.

From the review of *Sketches* we have already cited; its note of general approval was sounded in its final sentence, where Armstrong was said to be "a better judge of the productions of other men, than acquainted with the merit of his own performance."¹³¹ And the review of *Day* published the same month as the poem is noteworthy for its indulgent praise; and in its material and manner it strikes me as definitely written by Smollett, then confined in the King's Bench Prison, but not isolated from friends and the latest batch of publications hot from the press. The reviewer (? Smollett), began: "This, we find, by an advertisement prefixed,¹³² is an imperfect copy of a poetical epistle, published without the knowledge of the author, who is abroad in the service of his country." Then, having referred archly to comment by "Connoisseurs" on the avarice of the editor, he went on to admit that *Day* contained "ill-suited rhimes, and hobbling verses" but charitably suggested that "perhaps they were intended." He then quoted the following couplet from *Day* dealing with poetic meter:

There smooth, here rough, what I suppose you'd chuse,
As men of taste hate sameness in the Muse,

and then continued mischievously:

Now though we know some commentators, who have the honour to be acquainted with the free, the gay, the witty Mr. W——s, pretend to say that more is meant than meets the ear in these words—'here rough,¹³³ what I suppose you'd chuse'; yet we are of a different opinion, and understand the words in their literal meaning. Be that as it may, we can forgive a thousand inadvertences, in favour of the many poetical images, the hints of criticism, the precepts of taste, the wit, humour, sentiment, and friendship, that are sown, and that not thinly, through the extent of this epistle. Nothing, for example, can be more poetical, and pathetically picturesque, than the Exordium.¹³⁴

¹³¹ *The Critical Review*, v (1758), 386.

¹³² Prefixed to *A Day* is the following mysterious "Advertisement," possibly concocted by A. Millar, the publisher, or perhaps penned by Wilkes: "The Editor laments that it is not in his Power to present The Public with a more perfect Copy of the following spirited Epistle. He ventures to publish this exactly as it came to his Hands, without the Knowledge or Consent of the Author, or of the Gentleman, to whom it is addressed. His sole Motive is to communicate to others the Pleasure he has received from a Work of Taste and Genius. He thinks himself secure of the Thanks of the Public, and hopes this farther Advantage will attend the present Publication, that it will soon be followed by a correct and compleat Edition from the Author's own Manuscript."

¹³³ The word "rough" in Armstrong's time could mean rude or unpolished, according to the *N.E.D.* Perhaps it had other connotations.

¹³⁴ *The Critical Review*, xi (1761), 73.

The reviewer, after further praise, ended by hoping to see the "blanks" filled up in another edition. The reviewer (? Smollett) was very clever: he praised the poem sincerely enough, and his hints about the "free" ways of Wilkes were not crudely offensive. Whether Smollett wrote it or not, it reflected his cordial friendship for Armstrong and probably also his initial skepticism about Wilkes. Over this review Armstrong could only have been much pleased. He was again gratified, of course, when in a review of de Monchy's *Essay on . . . Diseases in Voyages to the West Indies* in 1762, the reviewer (? Smollett) quoted ten lines from *The Art of Preserving Health* to show how a point of de Monchy was "infinitely more beautifully and philosophically expressed"¹³⁵ by Armstrong.

After this digression we must return to Armstrong's final correspondence with Smollett and their meeting in Italy. On March 28, 1769, Armstrong wrote him, addressing his letter "A Monsieur Monsr Ts. Smollett, Inglese, en Casa Lenzi al Ponte Grande Pisa, Toscana." From this long letter I quote only in small part:

O, my dear Doctor, I should severely reproach myself for having so long delayed answering your Letter, which gave much pleasure and entertainment, not only to me but to all our common Friends, if it was not that I waited for some News that might please you. . . . It is needless to say how much I rejoice in your Recovery . . . I hope you may within a year or two be able to weather out if not an English winter at least an English summer. Meantime, if you won't come to us, I'll come to you; and shall with the help of small punch and your Company, laugh at the Tuscan dog days.

I enjoy with a pleasing Sympathy the agreeable society you find amongst the professors¹³⁶ at Pisa. All countries and all Religions, are the same to men of liberal minds . . . Your Friends at Pisa envy our Constitution—I'm afraid we may in a short time be reduced to sigh after theirs. For the View at present all around us is an object of the most extreme Indignation, Contempt, and Horror."¹³⁷

Smollett's letter referred to above is lost along with many others. In October, 1769, Armstrong sent another letter, hitherto unpublished, to Smollett, which I shall print in full:

¹³⁵ *The Critical Review*, xiv (1762), 113.

¹³⁶ In this letter, as printed by Smollett's biographer, Robert Anderson, in *The Miscellaneous Works of Tobias Smollett*, 6 vols. (Edinburgh, 1820), i, 187-189, the word *professors* is printed *performers*! I print the correct reading from Armstrong's original manuscript at the Pennsylvania Historical Society, Dreer Collection. There is (or was in Pisa), we hope, some slight distinction to be drawn between the two terms. As for Anderson, it is charitable to say that he was plagued by more than his share of editorial, biographical, and typographical "gremlins."

¹³⁷ Quoted from the original manuscript, Pennsylvania Historical Society, Dreer Collection.

London Oct. 10th, 1769

Dear Doctor

Your letter of Sept. 6th came to hand on Sept. 23rd and according to my calculation you'll receive this upon the 27th of the present month, with the kindest Salutations of all your friends here. Notwithstanding all you tell me, I have still such confidence in your Stamina that I hope to enjoy a pleasant ramble with you through several parts of Italy next Spring. It is my serious Intention and if neither Bob (or Rob) Smith¹³⁸ who is I don't know where, nor Gov. Bell¹³⁹ who is somewhere in France, will lend me their Company I'll come alone—I am but lately returned from a most agreeable Excursion through South Wales with two Friends who remember you with particular regard (Mr. Forbes and Dr. Murdock), till the Sea stopd [*sic*] us at Milford Haven. We past [*sic*] through a Country so romantick and at the same time so rich and so highly cultivated, that all I have seen of England is insipid to it. D. Maccullo came here only for a trip and returned to Airshire after a stay of a few weeks. I was sorry to hear two days ago that your Friend and Agent Mr. Th. Bunting very lately died of a Dropsy at Jamaica.

I have given your address to Capt. ? Brydone and promised to pave the way to an acquaintance with you at his own particular desire. I had the pleasure to dine in Company with him t'other day, and liked him much, as a very sensible modest agreeable Gentleman; and as he has been in foreign parts before he seems extremely well qualified to shew those Scenes of Life with which a young man of Fortune ought to be acquainted. For the Captain travells at present in quality of Tutor to a near Relation of his own, Mr. Fullarton of Fullarton.

I wish you could without fatiguing yourself employ or amuse a little time upon

¹³⁸ Bob (or Rob) Smith was the Robert Smith mentioned in Carlyle's *Autobiography* as an intimate friend of Smollett in 1746. John Hill Burton was wrong in suggesting that he was Dr. Robert Smith of Cambridge. Carlyle declared that he was afterwards called the Duke of Roxburgh's Smith. According to Carlyle he had been abroad with the young Laird of McLeod before the Rebellion, and was a gentleman of superior understanding. Later, in 1754, he was tutor to Lord Garlies. (See Smollett's *Letters*, ed. Noyes, p. 30). Subsequently he became tutor and traveling companion to John Ker, Third Duke of Roxburghe (1740–1804), the famous bibliophile. In a publication entitled *The National Portrait Gallery of Illustrious and Eminent Personages of the Nineteenth Century; With Memoirs*, by William Jerdan (vol. iv, London, 1833), there is more information about Smith. Jerdan states there in his memoir of the Duke of Roxburghe, accompanying the Duke's portrait (no pagination): "Mr. Smith was his tutor, and the companion of his travels; and the Duke's attachment to him continued with unabated warmth to the end of his life. He was accustomed to read to him, and often to take his meals in his apartment; and at last he died in the house of his friend and patron."

¹³⁹ Gov. Bell was Charles Bell of Craigfoodie, Fifeshire, governor at Cape Coast, and a close friend of Smollett. For Smollett's regard for him, see my article, "An Important Smollett Letter," in *R.E.S.*, xii (1936), 75–77. He was related to Andrew Lumisden, as was Armstrong. After wintering at Montpellier, he met Lumisden at Marseilles in May, 1769.—See James Dennistoun's *Memoirs of Sir Robert Strange, Knt., Engraver*, 2 vols. (London, 1855), II, 121.—Bell died at Cupar, Fifeshire, in 1785. His obituary is in *Gent. Mag.*, LV (August, 1785), 667.

the dramattick subject you mention. There is nothing can be conceived so ridiculous, so stupid, so horrible and so contemptible as the present Struggles—Tho one would gladly hope they will hardly grow too serious to laugh at. I send my best wishes to Mrs Smollet and the Lasses, with much joy to Mrs Renner and am always,

My dear Doctor
Your most affection [Ms. torn]
John Armst [Ms. torn]

Pray write soon.¹⁴⁰

This letter contains our only information about Armstrong's trip in Wales. It shows also that Armstrong and Smollett had many old friends in common,—particularly Robert Smith and Charles Bell.

Early in 1770, in January probably, Armstrong dispatched another letter¹⁴¹ to Smollett at Leghorn. Herein he sent the latest news, including his publishing "within this month" his *Miscellanies*, outlined a possible itinerary for his projected trip to Italy the following summer and concluded:

All Friends here remember you kindly, and our little club at the Q. Arms never fail to devote a bumper to you, except when they are in the humour of drinking none but scoundrels. I send my best Compliments to Mrs Smollett and two other Ladies, and beg you'll write me as soon as it suits you, and with black Ink. I am always my dear Doctor most affectionately yours

John Armstrong¹⁴²

The reference above to the club at the Q. Arms¹⁴³ I cannot explain.

Sometime in 1770 after sending the above letter, Armstrong journeyed to Italy, accompanied by the painter Fuseli. Knowles, Fuseli's biographer, stated that Fuseli and Armstrong left the end of November, 1769, planning to go to Leghorn by sea. But as we have noted, Armstrong was in London as late as January 1770. According to Knowles, after a tedious voyage of twenty-eight days in which they quarreled over the pronunciation of an English word, the unhappy travelers were blown by a gale into the port of Genoa.¹⁴⁴ Eventually Armstrong met Smollett in Leghorn, but just when is not certain. He was in Leghorn before May 18, 1770, but, as Smollett wrote Caleb Whitefoord, "he stayed . . . only

¹⁴⁰ This letter is printed from the original manuscript at the Ridgway Library, Philadelphia, MSS. Rush, vol. 28, p. 52. It was addressed "A Monsieur, Mons^r Smollett, Gentilhomme Anglois, Chez Mons^r Renner, Negociant, a Livourne, en Toscane."

¹⁴¹ This letter was printed by Anderson in his edition of Smollett's *Miscellaneous Works*, 6 vols. (1820), I, 189.

¹⁴² Printed from the original manuscript, Ridgway Library, Philadelphia.

¹⁴³ For "Q. Arms," Anderson, following the Philadelphia *Port Folio*, printed "Two Arms," which, I think, was incorrect.

¹⁴⁴ See Knowles, *op. cit.*, I, 46-47.

to dine with me."¹⁴⁵ From Rome he sent two notes to Smollett June 2 and June 30, 1770, promising in the latter to arrive in Leghorn within a week. It may seem surprising that Armstrong postponed for some time his reunion with Smollett, but the delay may be understood from the fact that Armstrong's brother¹⁴⁶ was then in Italy and hence would naturally receive his first attentions. About July 6, 1770, as nearly as can be determined, Armstrong settled down for two weeks with the Smolletts and their friends, the Renners, at Monte Nero, about four miles from Leghorn. Unfortunately there is no detailed record of this reunion. Remembering Smollett's unfailing generosity, and being sure from the tone of his correspondence in 1770 that he still possessed something of his former spirits, it is certain that he gave the elderly Armstrong an excellent reception. But Armstrong was too indolent to do justice to it in his *A Short Ramble Through Some Parts of France and Italy*, published in 1771, for all that he recorded there was a very brief reference to "having enjoyed above a fortnight of domestic Happiness with a worthy old Friend, in the agreeable society of two small Families who lived most cordially together on the Side of Monte Nero, a romantic Mountain, which affords great variety of Situation to a number of little Villa's and looks over the Sea at about the distance of four English miles from Leghorn."¹⁴⁷ The fact is, however, that Armstrong enjoyed the visit very much, judging from a letter he sent to Mrs. Smollett from London in 1775, which follows in part:

London, 19th Janry 1775—

My dear Madam

You need not have made so many apologies for your seeming neglect; for I could not consistently with my knowledge of the politeness natural to you impute it to any thing but the real Cause; the neglect of People entrusted with the Conveyance, which happens so often that I am afraid this scrawl may never reach you.

After passing a fortnight most agreeably with you at Monte Nero, where I was really ashamed of some part of the Attention paid to me, upon my arrival at

¹⁴⁵ Quoted Smollett's *Letters*, ed. Noyes, p. 106.

¹⁴⁶ Armstrong, in his communication to Smollett from Rome, June 2, 1770, reported: "I wrote to my brother from Genoa, and desired him to direct his answer to your care at Pisa." Armstrong's brother, Dr. George Armstrong (see *D.N.B.*), may have been the person to whom Dr. John was writing. It was perhaps he, rather than the poet, who, according to Sir Walter Scott, "procured for Dr. and Mrs. Smollett a house at Monte Novo [*sic*]." See Scott's memoir of Smollett in his *Lives of the Novelists* (New York, 1872), pp. 146-147. Where Scott got his data I know not, and his assertion may be entirely without factual foundation.

¹⁴⁷ See *A Short Ramble Through Some Parts of France and Italy* by Lancelot Temple Esq. (London, 1771), p. 51. The only copy of this very rare book which I have seen was in the British Museum.

Paris I wrote my dear worthy Friend a long Letter; and to avoid as much as possible all chance of a Miscarriage delivered it to the Post myself. That it never arrived is a most severe Mortification to me, as I find by your Letter it hurt him so much, and must have hurt me in his honest generous mind, under the Idea of a faithless Deserter from a Friend whom I loved esteemed and admired. Bless me, dear Madam, how could I possibly take umbrage at any Behaviour I met with at Monte Nero, where I found every thing perfectly agreeable, kind and obliging to the utmost degree. In short the fortnight I past with you there is one of the favourite Morsells of my Life.¹⁴⁸

The facts brought to light in this letter testify to Armstrong's inveterate indolence, I think, rather than to any minor discord in the harmony of his last visit with Smollett. Armstrong could not have written his "long letter," never received by Smollett, before September 1770, when he arrived at Paris to visit Andrew Lumisden, who communicated on September 22, 1770, from Paris with Sir Alexander Dick, as follows:

Your old friend and my cousin Dr Armstrong is now with me. He is just returned from Italy, where he had gone on account of his health. He is now tolerably well, and intends to set out for London in a few days. He desires me to convey to you his kindest compliments. When I name Dr. Armstrong, you will not doubt of the pleasure I enjoy in his company.¹⁴⁹

Back in London in the fall of 1770, Armstrong found time during the winter to write a hundred small pages on his travels, called *A Short Ramble Through Some Parts of France and Italy*, printed for T. Cadell, under the old *nom de plume* of Lancelot Temple. This book was in the press in May, 1771.¹⁵⁰ Smollett received from an acquaintance, John Gray, who had visited him at Leghorn after Armstrong had come and gone, a very scornful account of this book. Writing from London July 8, 1771, Gray declared:

Dr Armstrong has given, in the name of Launcelot Temple, a short journal of his trip to Italy, which is altogether trifling, and unworthy of him: it consists of 102 pages duodecimo, printed in the Shandean manner; so that the whole, when cast up, contains only about two thirds of a sheet of the Universal History.¹⁵¹

After this Gray quoted the very passage printed above, i.e., Armstrong's summary of his visit with the Smolletts. It would be interesting to know Smollett's emotions when he perused this. But Gray wrote on with enthusiastic praise of *Humphry Clinker* and the latest news of Bell, and Bob

¹⁴⁸ Printed from the original manuscript, now at The Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Massachusetts. It was printed by Anderson, *op. cit.*, I, 202.

¹⁴⁹ See James Dennistoun's *Memoirs of Sir Robert Strange*, II, 137.

¹⁵⁰ See *The Whitehall Evening-Post*, May 2-May 4, 1771.

¹⁵¹ John Gray's letter to Smollett printed by Anderson, *op. cit.*, I, 196.

Smith, all of which may have helped Smollett forgive Armstrong, whose weaknesses he well knew. Armstrong's indolence did not prevent him, however, from writing a sincere and impressive elegy of Smollett which he sent to Mrs. Smollett at Leghorn, after his friend's death in 1771.

The remaining facts of Armstrong's life may be summarized very briefly. In 1773 he published his short and ill natured *Medical Essays*. In 1779, the year of his death, he was reconciled with Fuseli,¹⁵² with whom he had quarreled on his trip to Italy. He died in London on September 7, 1779, having written his will¹⁵³ three days before his death. An obituary in the *London Chronicle* [Tues, Sept. 7 to Thurs. Sept. 9, 1779 (No. 3555), p. 260], reads:

Tuesday about six o'clock in the evening, at his apartments in Russel-street, Covent-garden, died John Armstrong, M.D. Author of a Poem on Health, and several other valuable works. He had been to pay a visit to a friend in Lincolnshire, and unhappily received a contusion in his thigh in getting into the chaise which brought him to town on Friday evening last. His death is attributed to this accident. His skill in his profession was very considerable, and the benevolence of his disposition rendered him a blessing to society. He will be lamented by a numerous and very respectable acquaintance, who loved him very sincerely.

The place of his burial is uncertain, but in 1821 a memorial monument was erected in the Castleton churchyard.¹⁵⁴

IV

From the biographical material thus far considered the solid outlines of Armstrong's friendships and quarrels emerge clearly enough, and certain facts of his career, here supplemented and assembled, are reasonably definite. Before attempting a final analysis of his personality, I present a few further sidelights on his character from observations recorded by those who knew him or knew his friends, and from autobiographical data in his *Medical Essays*.

Among those aware of Armstrong's petty weaknesses was John Gray, whose letter to Smollett in 1771 has already been referred to. Herein Gray, along with finding Armstrong's *Short Ramble* "unworthy of him," attacked "Mylne the architect" (Robert Mylne, designer of Blackfriars bridge) as a person who "would almost match Dr Armstrong in the arrogance of an Aristarchus."¹⁵⁵ Boswell, always on friendly terms with the

¹⁵² See John Knowles, *op. cit.*, I, 58-59.

¹⁵³ Armstrong's will at Somerset House, London (Warburton, 364), shows that his trustees were Caleb Whitefoord and Joseph Martineau. Armstrong left his money to his relatives. His will was made on September 4, 1779.

¹⁵⁴ See A. W. Somerville, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

¹⁵⁵ Smollett's *Miscellaneous Works*, ed. Anderson (Edinburgh, 1820), I, 195-196.

doctor, once confessed that Armstrong was so lazy that his soul could not turn itself in its bed.¹⁵⁶ The Scottish novelist, Henry Mackenzie, glanced at another aspect of Armstrong in his *Anecdotes and Egotisms*: "He [Armstrong] was not quite temperate enough for a careful physician; yet notwithstanding his love for a friend and a bottle, he acquired considerable practice in London; as might be expected from his talents and disposition, he was in great favour with a circle of friends."¹⁵⁷ Besides being arrogant as a critic, extremely indolent, and somewhat devoted to Bacchus, Armstrong had a posthumous reputation of having been coarse in his speech, according to Leigh Hunt. In his *Autobiography*, Hunt commented on Armstrong's influence over Fuseli: "The licences he took were coarse and had not sufficient regard to his company. Certainly they went a great deal beyond his friend Armstrong; to whose account, I believe, Fuseli's passion for swearing was laid. The poet condescended to be a great swearer, and Fuseli thought it energetic to swear like him."¹⁵⁸ But this gossip of Hunt, who was born after Armstrong's death, amounts to very little. As a matter of fact there is nothing in the record of Armstrong's life to prove that he was ever addicted to serious vice in any form. He was, as we have seen, constitutionally lazy, romantically melancholy, and very thin-skinned.

Armstrong's acute sensitiveness about his reputation as a doctor and writer is remarkably evident in the *Medical Essays* (1773), his last publication, and what amounts to an apology or defense of his whole career. It contains the material, in fact, for a typical romantic piece of personal confession. The following passages are, therefore, a primary source of our understanding of Armstrong's character.

Meantime he does not send out these little Essays by way of a Quack's bill—Upon honour he does not—For he has not the least inclination to extend his practice beyond the circle of a few friends and acquaintances; amongst whom he commonly finds sufficient employment to secure him from the melancholy languor of idleness, and the remorse that in some minds must naturally haunt a life of dissipation—Tho' he could neither tell a heap of impudent lies in his own praise, wherever he went; nor intrigue with nurses; nor associate, much less assimilate, with the various knots of pert insipid, lively stupid, well-bred impertinent, good-humoured malicious, obliging deceitful, washy, drivelling Gossips; nor enter into juntos with people that were not to his liking; it will not appear a mighty boast to any one that is but moderately acquainted with this overgrown town to say, that he might have done *great things* in physick—Most certainly he could—But that his ambition had a great many years ago received a fatal check

¹⁵⁶ See James Boswell, *Boswelliana* (London, 1874), p. 255.

¹⁵⁷ *The Anecdotes and Egotisms of Henry Mackenzie*, ed. Harold W. Thompson (Oxford University Press, 1927), p. 39.

¹⁵⁸ See Leigh Hunt's *Autobiography* (London, 1891), p. 173.

from a ticklish state of spirits, that made him afraid of a Business in which he found himself exposed to much anxiety, and a croud of teizing uncomfortable mortifying circumstances; to be encountered at all hours, and in every kind of weather. But for that distempered excess of sensibility, he might have been as much renowned as almost any *Quack* . . . notwithstanding even his having imprudently published a system of what every body allows to be sound Physick . . . only indeed that it was in verse. However, it is well that some particular people never reckoned him the worse phhsician for all that. . . . And, as it is become the fashion to praise ones self . . . Tho he does not say that *none of his patients die*; he has some reason to believe, that in proportion to numbers, whether from skill or good-luck, not many physicians have been more successful in the management of dangerous and difficult cases. . . . Most probably indeed from good luck; as he has never been remarkable for it in any thing else. . . . In the meantime he has heard that his character as a physician, has been ungenerously nibbled at by people of his own profession; which he understands has had its intended effect upon some gentry, who it seems are too shallow in the knowledge of human nature, of mankind, and even of the world, to have observed that people of the same business are *sometimes* not very fond of one another; and that to be an object of detraction in such cases is no sign of inferior abilities. However, to comfort and support himself under the dark hints of such illiberal enemies, it is natural for him to recollect that there are *still some Gentlemen* of the faculty, who have candour and generosity enough amongst themselves to give him all reasonable credit, even as a phycisian. But the lies of malice are more listened to, and circulate much faster, than the fair reports of good-nature.

So much at present for his history as a Physician. . . . As an author too his fate has been somewhat particular. . . . His having written a Poem upon a subject reckoned of no inconsiderable consequence to the health of mankind was, as some say, sufficient alone in this age and meridian, to have ruined him as a physician. At the same time, from the treachery of one Bookseller after Another, it is true enough what one of his friends guessed not long ago . . . that tho' his works, as he called them, had *sold greatly*; he did not believe they had all together brought him near so much as has often been made by one play that deserved to have been damned.

To put an end to this detail of misfortunes and complaints, in which the public is very little interested . . . that his long sufferance and contemptuous silence may not for ever, by the most muddy wits be mistaken for acquiescence in the *severe* decrees pronounced against him by certain *Criticks*; who in *monthly, weekly, and daily* publications instruct the reading world as to the merits of every new work that comes from the press; from a bloated motley history of *shreds and patches*, that with much dignity and importance crawls out on all *four*, to a dry chip of an ode, a *sad* elegy, or a *most lamentable* monody; he finds himself at last in the humour to *protest* against the *severe* reprehensions with which these *said criticks* have from time to time, for many years grievously mortified and sorely afflicted him. It is true they have never, as far as he knows, attacked him except with general abuse; which is just as much Criticism as calling names is Satire. . . . But one needs only glance over a few specimens of their dry, barren, heavy labours, to dis-

cover that these ridiculous Dictators have neither taste, nor learning, nor candour. . . . They are despised by all people of sense and taste. . . . And when they come to be dragged out of that cowardly obscurity under whose shelter, in the true blackguard spirit of the mob, they insult and throw dirt on their superiors; they will be hooted, hiss'd, and hallooed by the very multitude they have long misled, in recommending the worst, and abusing the best productions. This dim and dark constellation of Geniuses appears to be chiefly composed of raw young people of low education; who praise or condemn by the lump, as they are directed by their masters *in the trade*, or their own malice and stupidity. And some say, that it is no uncommon thing with these *candid criticks* to pass sentence against a new performance, without the ceremony of giving it a few minutes poring perusal of a *lack-lustre eye*. . . . Such are the criticks who *modestly* pretend to dictate to the publick upon subjects of which themselves have not the least knowledge or taste. . . . Such are the Judges who have usurped the vacant Tribunal of Criticism. . . . But such Judges have in effect only constituted themselves The LORDS COMMISSIONERS OF KING MIDASES BENCH.¹⁵⁹

The above statements certainly appear to be unusually querulous and ill-natured. That Armstrong, at the age of sixty-four, in comparative prosperity, and enjoying the society of many good friends, should print this farewell invective against doctors, publishers, and literary critics is not surprising in view of his life-long uncompromising attitude toward contemporaneous evils, an attitude so conspicuous even in the prefaces to his works that Isaac Disraeli cited him as notable for his *Prologi Galeati*.¹⁶⁰ From the general tone of such writing it might be argued that Armstrong was still suffering in his final years from a psychological wound caused by some disappointment or frustration unknown to his biographers. But beneath his complaining sentences there lurks a kind of laughing mockery, along with what must have been a conscious and ironical exaggeration of what he had suffered from competing doctors, rascally publishers, and ignorant critics. Armstrong's invective is not savagely Swiftean or universally misanthropic. It includes indirect praise. In his reference to "the vacant Tribunal of Criticism," for example, Armstrong was glancing back a decade to 1763, I believe, when the editorial board of the *Critical Review* was beginning to lose (or finally lost) the learned and dyanmic leadership of his friend Smollett.

The indolence, melancholy, and sensitiveness of Armstrong are perfectly clear. So is his fondness for splenetic satire and acrid invective. But along with these traits he certainly possessed kindly, social qualities which endeared him to many friends, from Thomson and Smollett to Caleb Whitefoord; Thomas Coutts; Frances Burney; the Earl of Bu-

¹⁵⁹ Armstrong's *Medical Essay*, pp. 37-41. The three dot spacing in the above represents three short dash spacing the text of the *Medical Essays*.

¹⁶⁰ See Isaac Disraeli, *Curiosities of Literature* (New York and Boston, 1863), I, 129-130.

chan; and others already mentioned in this study, including Dr. Dickson, a life-long friend. A few testimonials from some of these friends will supplement our view of Armstrong's appealing personal qualities.

As Armstrong was Dr. Charles Burney's friend and family physician for many years, Frances Burney saw him repeatedly and recorded vivid recollections of him. She was impressed by his vitality and wit, declaring that "he was as gaily amiable as he was eminently learned; and though, from a keen moral sense of right, he was a satirist, he was so free from malevolence, that the smile with which he uttered a remark the most ironical, had a cast of good-humored pleasantry that nearly turned his sarcasm into simple sport."¹⁶¹ The Earl of Buchan paid Armstrong a pleasant compliment in the following words: "I cannot but remember with high pleasure that worthy character."¹⁶² Armstrong's power of holding the deepest friendship of a prominent medical friend is recorded in the obituary of Dr. Thomas Dickson, who, as we have seen, knew Armstrong very well. Therein Dickson was lauded as "a man of singular humanity and generosity. He had a warm heart and an open hand. His friendship was extended beyond the grave—his acquaintances have seen him drink to the memory of Dr. Armstrong, his most intimate friend, with tears in his eyes."¹⁶³ Finally there was Armstrong's old and loyal friend, Thomas Coutts, the prominent banker. In E. H. Coleridge's biography of Coutts, we are informed that the latter in early manhood became intimate with Armstrong, always valued him as a doctor, and commissioned Sir Joshua Reynolds to paint his portrait.¹⁶⁴ As we glance over these friendly tributes to Armstrong, we observe that all of them, except Burney's, were recorded by Scottish friends, but this fact does not detract from their validity. Armstrong certainly appealed to a variety of respectable and brilliant friends.

Much of the spirit of Armstrong in his late fifties is visible in Reynold's

¹⁶¹ Madame D'Arblay's *Memoirs of Doctor Burney* (London, 1832), I, 18. See also *The Early Diary of Frances Burney* . . . ed. Annie R. Ellis, 2 vols. (London, G. Bell and Sons, Ltd., 1913). (Bohn's Popular Library), *passim*.

¹⁶² See the Earl of Buchan's *Essays on the Lives and Writings of Fletcher of Saltoun and the Poet Thomson* (London, 1792), p. 232 n.

¹⁶³ Quoted Dickson's obituary in *Gent. Mag.* LIV (June, 1784), 476. It should be noted by students of Smollett that Robert Anderson, who apparently read this obituary, makes the curious error of stating that Armstrong drank to the memory of Smollett "with tears in his eyes." See Anderson's memoir of Smollett in Smollett's *Miscellaneous Works* (Edinburgh, 1820), I, 113.

¹⁶⁴ See E. H. Coleridge, *The Life of Thomas Coutts, Banker* (London, 1919), I, 72 and *passim*. Two letters of Armstrong to a Mrs. Coutts, presumably Mrs. Thomas Coutts, were offered for sale in 1936 by Dobell's Antiquarian Bookstore, Tunbridge Wells (Catalogue No. 15, 1936, Item 25). They were written in 1775. I have not seen them.

finished portrait. I have not seen the original, but I possess a clear photograph¹⁶⁵ of it. Reynolds did the portrait, it seems, in 1767.¹⁶⁶ It reveals a pensive, melancholy, and sensitive face, and suggests patrician pride and stubbornness, and certainly a touch of Puckish humor. It shows strength and individuality. Various engravings¹⁶⁷ of Armstrong were made, all apparently after his death.

Before giving a final appraisal of Armstrong's personality I must summarize a few of his central attitudes toward literature and society which are tersely and entertainingly expressed in his poems, *Of Benevolence* (1751); and *Taste* (1753); and in his prose *Sketches* (1758). These three works are all readable and revealing for one who wishes to know the whole story of the culture of the mid-eighteenth century. They show Armstrong's dislike of current trends in life and literature. He attacked turgid, florid, and obscure writing. He opposed newly coined words and modernized spelling. He pleaded for independence in literary judgments. Pope and Dryden he championed. "Shakespeare," he insisted, "had the most musical ear of all the English poets." Italian music was trivial, whereas the "*Welsh*, the *Scotch*, the *Irish* music reaches the heart." Along with a strongly humanitarian attitude toward the underprivileged, he showed repeatedly his contempt for the English mob, the "mobility" as he called it. Generally speaking, Armstrong was a conservative, but not a reactionary in all respects. In medical ideas he was a progressive: in his *Medical Essays* he advocated the value of scientific observation rather than that of conventional theory.

The amplified account of Armstrong's activities offered in the foregoing pages has added outline, detail, and color to the faded portrait of his external life. And through the portrait the voice of the living man is audible at times in his letters, verse, and prose, when Armstrong broke

¹⁶⁵ The photograph, which is 7 inches high and 5½ inches wide, is No. 5 in a series. It appears to have been torn out of a bound pamphlet, sales' catalogue, or a book.

¹⁶⁶ See Edward Hamilton, *A Catalogue Raisonné of the Engraved Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds* (London, 1874), p. 2. Hamilton stated that Armstrong's picture was painted in 1767, and that it was in the possession of the Marquess of Bute. For further information on Reynolds's painting, or paintings, of Armstrong see *Art Prices Current*, new series, vols. I, V, X, XVI, and XVIII, covering the years 1921-22 to 1938-39.

¹⁶⁷ I have an engraving by T. [J.] Cooke. In Armstrong's *Poetical Works* (Edinburgh: Apollo Press, 1781), a volume in Bell's Edition of the Poets of Great Britain, there is an engraving "by Trotter from an Original Picture by S^r J. Reynolds in the possession of M^r Coutts." This follows very faithfully my photograph of Reynolds' painting. *The Catalogue of the Valuable and Extensive Collection of Prints, Books of Prints, Drawings &c of Caleb Whitefoord, Esq. F. R. S. & F. A. S. Deceased . . . sold Thurs. May 10, 1810* in Br. Mus. lists the following: "Item 645, p. 43, Dr Armstrong by Cook circle 8^{vo}. Item 646, p. 43, Dr. Armstrong, by Fisher, with verses; the suffrage of the wise, etc."

away from the decorous objectivity of his century and spoke out as an independent individual. It is not the voice of a dominating personality of the first magnitude. And yet it is a very human voice with its notes of complaint, melancholy, fear, frustration, and maladjustment. It is the dour voice of a man sophisticated in medicine and literature. At times it is a tender, humanitarian voice. At times it is poetic. Often it is the proud, conservative Scottish voice of a sensitive doctor, who saw disease and degeneration in the social structure, literature, and *mores* of England from 1750-1770. Not infrequently it is the voice of Tobias Smollett,¹⁶⁸ but pitched in a lower key, and with less authority, range, and power. It is the voice of a sensitive, intelligent man in an age of transition, finding London and English life becoming progressively worse, and lacking the faith of the romantics in progress and man's perfectibility. It is a voice which expressed in many ways the moods of cultivated men living on the eve of great social and literary revolutions. It is an individual and articulate voice in that varied group of literary, philosophical, and scientific vocalists who created the "modern" dissonance of the third quarter of the eighteenth century.

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¹⁶⁸ The obvious resemblances in interests and temper between Armstrong and Smollett, which have often been noted, led the Rev. Henry Francis, in his *Lives of the English Poets, from Johnson to Kirke White* (London, 1846), p. 126, to suggest that Smollett's dedication "To Dr. xxxxx" of *Ferdinand Count Fathom* was intended for Armstrong. Francis offers no external evidence to support his theory, and the internal evidence in the dedicatory portrait fits Smollett himself much better than it does Armstrong.