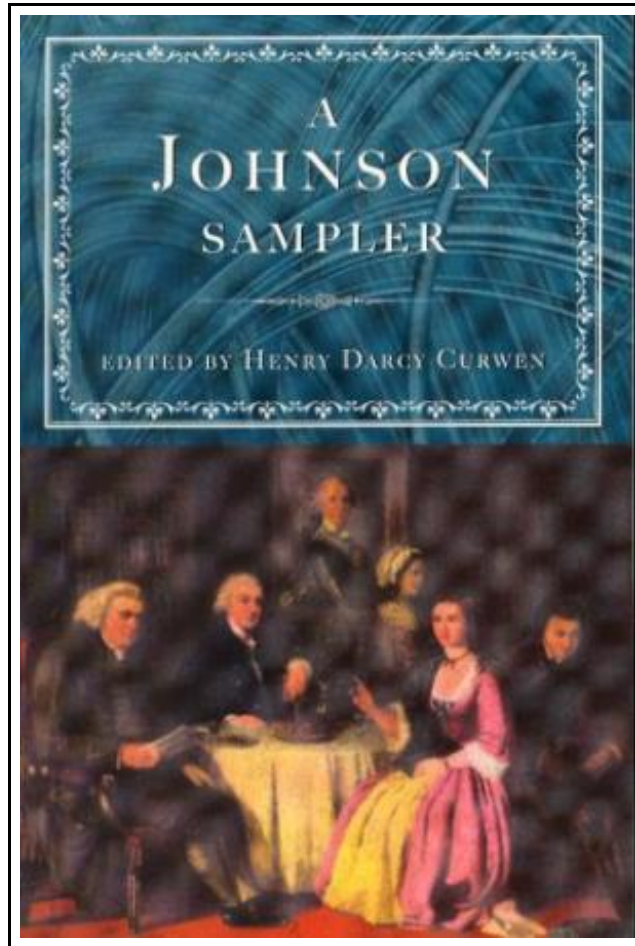


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David R. Godine Publisher June 2002, 2002. Paper Back. Book Condition: New. Curwen's opening sentiment on Johnson in the introduction to this exceedingly quotable miscellany begs to be borrowed: 'A Mrs. Cotterell one day asked Samuel Johnson to introduce her to a celebrated writer. 'Dearest Madam' he replied, 'you had better let it alone; the best part of every author is in general to be found in his book, I assure you.' This statement is not true of Johnson. Johnson the man is greater than Johnson the writer.' More craftsman than literary genius, Johnson wrote to earn his pay-hardly for the 'love' of writing. Almost given up for dead at his own birth, Johnson faced a number of afflictions early in life that set the pattern for later afflictions-poverty, defective schooling, melancholy, and chronic hypochondria-through which he eventually persevered and found success. Curwen has given us Johnson himself, collecting commonsensical and arresting phrases from his major works (The Rambler, The Idler, Rasselas, and A Journey) as well as letters, poems, and overheard conversations. Johnson was known to discuss everything except history (which he hated)-reading, writing, wooing, wedding, business, price fixing, politics, law, wealth, teaching, learning, pleasure, punishments, and (in Curwen's words) 'from innumerable angles man's place in the universe and his relationship with his fellow men and with God.' At once pious, astute, and acerbically witty, Johnson is not only hugely important in the history of English letters, but also exemplar of a man fully human.

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