2. Lope de Vega (1562–1635), Spanish dramatist.
3. Johnson wrote a preface for Baretti’s *Phraseology for the Use of Young Ladies Who Intend to Learn the Colloquial Part of the Italian Language* (1775).
4. Dr Thomas Lawrence (1711–83), President of the Royal College of Physicians (1767–74), described by Boswell as Johnson’s ‘intimate friend and physician’, and by Johnson himself as ‘one of the best men whom I have known’ and ‘a learned, intelligent, and communicative companion’ (19 March 1782). Boswell quotes one of Johnson’s letters to Lawrence, written in Latin and describing his symptoms.
5. Fanny Burney’s diary dates this conversation 26 August 1778 and gives the following version of Johnson’s reply: ‘Palmyra, sir?’ said the Doctor; ‘why, it is a hill in Ireland, situated in a bog, and has palm trees at the top, whence it is called Palm-mire.’

Life at Streatham V*
FRANCES REYNOLDS

On the praises of Mrs Thrale, he used to dwell with a peculiar delight, a paternal fondness, expressive of conscious exultation in being so intimately acquainted with her. One day, in speaking of her to Mr Harris, author of *Hermes*, and expatiating on her various perfections—the solidity of her virtues, the brilliancy of her wit, and the strength of her understanding, &c.—he quoted some lines, a stanza, I believe, but from what author I know not, with which he concluded his most eloquent eulogium, and of these I retained but the two last lines:

Virtues—of such a generous kind,
Good in the last recesses of the mind.

Dr Johnson had a most sincere and tender regard for Mrs Thrale, and no wonder; she would with much apparent affection overlook his foibles. One Day at her own Table, before a large company, he spoke so very roughly to her, that every person present was surprised how she could bear it so placidly; and on the Ladies withdrawing, one of them expressed great astonishment how Dr Johnson could speak in such harsh terms to her! But to this she said no more than ‘Oh! Dear good man!’ This short reply appeared so strong a proof of her generous virtues that the Lady took the first opportunity of communicating it to him, repeating

her own animadversion that had occasioned it. *He seemed much delighted* with this intelligence, and sometime after, as he was lying back in his Chair, seeming to be half asleep, but more evidently musing on this pleasing incident, he repeated in a loud whisper, "Oh! Dear good man!" This was a common habit of his, when anything very flattering, or very extraordinary ingrossed his thoughts, and I rather wonder that none of his Biographers have taken any notice of it, or of his praying in the same manner; at least I do not know that they have.

Nor has any one, I believe, described his extraordinary gestures or antics with his hands and feet, particularly when passing over the threshold of a Door, or rather before he would venture to pass through any doorway. On entering Sir Joshua’s house with poor Mrs Williams, a blind lady who lived with him, he would quit her hand, or else whirl her about on the steps as he whirled and twisted about to perform his gesticulations; and as soon as he had finished, he would give a sudden spring, and make such an extensive stride over the threshold, as if he was trying for a wager how far he could stride, Mrs Williams standing groping about outside the door, unless the servant or the mistress of the House more commonly took hold of her hand to conduct her in, leaving Dr. Johnson to perform at the Parlour Door much the same exercise over again.

But the strange positions in which he would place his feet (generally I think before he began his straddles, as if necessarily preparatory) are scarcely credible. Sometimes he would make the back part of his heels to touch, sometimes the extremity of his toes, as if endeavouring to form a triangle, or some geometrical figure, and as for his gestures with his hands, they were equally as strange; sometimes he would hold them up with some of his fingers bent, as if he had been seized with the cramp, and sometimes at his Breast in motion like those of a jockey on full speed; and often would he lift them up as high as he could stretch over his head, for some minutes. But the manoeuvre that used the most particularly to engage the attention of the company was his stretching out his arm with a full cup of tea in his hand, in every direction, often to the great annoyance of the person who sat next him, indeed to the imminent danger of their clothes, perhaps of a Lady’s Court dress; sometimes he would twist himself round with his face close to the back of his chair, and finish his cup of tea, breathing very hard, as if making a laborious effort to accomplish it.

What could have induced him to practise such extraordinary gestures, who can divine! His head, his hands and his feet were often in motion at the same time. Many people have supposed that they were the natural effects of a nervous disorder, but had that been the case he could not have sat still when he chose, which he did, and so still indeed when sitting for his picture, as often to have been complimented with being a pattern for sitters, no slight proof of his complaisance or his good nature. I