

H. P. Lovecraft

A Reminiscence of Dr. Samuel Johnson

The Privilege of Reminiscence, however rambling or tiresome, is one generally allow'd to the very aged; indeed, 'tis frequently by means of such Recollections that the obscure occurrences of History, and the lesser Anecdotes of the Great, are transmitted to Posterity.

Tho' many of my readers have at times observ'd and remark'd a Sort of antique Flow in my Stile of Writing, it hath pleased me to pass amongst the Members of this Generation as a young Man, giving out the Fiction that I was born in 1890, in *America*. I am now, however, resolv'd to unburthen myself of a Secret which I have hitherto kept thro' Dread of Incredulity; and to impart to the Publick a true knowledge of my long years, in order to gratifie their taste for authentick Information of an Age with whose famous Personages I was on familiar Terms. Be it then known that I was born on the family Estate in *Devonshire*, of the 10th day of August, 1690 (or in the new *Gregorian* Stile of Reckoning, the 20th of August), being therefore now in my 228th year. Coming early to *London*, I saw as a Child many of the celebrated Men of King *William's* Reign, including the lamented Mr. *Dryden*, who sat

much at the Tables of *Will's* Coffee-House. With Mr. *Addison* and Dr. *Swift* I later became very well acquainted, and was an even more familiar Friend to Mr. *Pope*, whom I knew and respected till the Day of his Death. But since it is of my more recent Associate, the late Dr. *Johnson*, that I am at this time desir'd to write; I will pass over my Youth for the present.

I had first Knowledge of the Doctor in May of the year 1738, tho' I did not at that Time meet him. Mr. *Pope* had just compleated his Epilogue to his *Satires* (the Piece beginning: "Not twice a Twelvemonth you appear in Print."), and had arrang'd for its Publication. On the very Day it appear'd, there was also publish'd a Satire in Imitation of *Juvenal*, intitul'd "*London*", by the then unknown *Johnson*; and this so struck the Town, that many Gentlemen of Taste declared, it was the Work of a greater Poet than Mr. *Pope*. Notwithstanding what some Detractors have said of Mr. *Pope's* petty Jealousy, he gave the Verses of his new Rival no small Praise; and having learnt thro' Mr. *Richardson* who the Poet was, told me 'that Mr. *Johnson* wou'd soon be *deterré*.'

I had no personal Acquaintance with the Doctor till 1763, when I was presented to him at the *Mitre* Tavern by Mr. *James Boswell*, a young *Scotchman* of excellent Family and great Learning, but small Wit, whose metrical Effusions I had sometimes revis'd.

Dr. *Johnson*, as I beheld him, was a full, pursy