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978-1-108-06903-8 - Life and Times of Sir Joshua Reynolds: With Notices of Some  
of his Cotemporaries: Volume 1  
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This two-volume life of Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723–92) was begun by the Royal Academician Charles Leslie (1794–1859), who had previously published a life of John Constable, also reissued in this series. On Leslie's death, the journalist and dramatist Tom Taylor (1817–80) completed the work, published in 1865. Leslie's motive was that he felt that Reynolds had been unfairly treated by an earlier biography. He aimed to show that Reynolds was 'the genial centre of a most various and brilliant society, as well as the transmitter of its chief figures to our time by his potent art'. One of the greatest artists of the eighteenth century, especially famous for his portraits, Reynolds was also instrumental in founding the Royal Academy, and was its first president. Volume 1 covers his early life and his progress as an artist until his fiftieth year.

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# Life and Times of Sir Joshua Reynolds

*With Notices of Some of His Cotemporaries*

VOLUME 1

CHARLES ROBERT LESLIE  
TOM TAYLOR



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JOSHUA REYNOLDS IN HIS YOUTH.

(From a medallion portrait by Falconnet.)

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LIFE AND TIMES  
OF  
SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS

WITH NOTICES OF SOME OF HIS COTEMPORARIES.

COMMENCED

BY CHARLES ROBERT LESLIE, R.A.

CONTINUED AND CONCLUDED

BY TOM TAYLOR, M.A.

IN TWO VOLUMES.—VOL. I.

WITH PORTRAITS AND ILLUSTRATIONS.

LONDON:  
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.  
1865.

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## P R E F A C E .



IN order to understand the part I have had in this book, and the circumstances under which I undertook it, it is necessary that I should inform my readers that it had been a cherished object of the late excellent and much-regretted painter, C. R. Leslie, R.A., for several years before his death, to do justice to the memory of Sir Joshua Reynolds, which he believed had suffered from the tone of Allan Cunningham's Biography of that great painter, contained in his 'Lives of the Most Eminent British Painters, Sculptors, and Architects.'

In the unfinished draft of a preface to his (unfortunately) unfinished work—written on his death-bed—I find this statement of Mr. Leslie's main object in writing a new Life of Reynolds :—

“As the impression made on my mind by all I have read and heard of Reynolds is very different from the estimate formed of his character by Allan Cunningham, I have endeavoured to show that he did not deserve the imputations that are dispersed through the most popular account that has yet been published of him, nor the aspersions on his character to be found in that author's Lives of Hogarth, Wilson, and Gainsborough.

“To this end,” he continues, “I have arranged in

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this volume many more particulars than have hitherto been published in any one account of Sir Joshua Reynolds.

“Among these are some anecdotes which were related to me, or to others from whom I received them, by Sir George Beaumont, the Earl of Egremont, Sir William Beechy, Mr. Stothard, Mr. Rogers, Lord Holland, and Sir Martin Shee; all of whom were personally acquainted with Reynolds.

“Of the materials I have used, which have appeared in print, though not in any Life of Sir Joshua, the accounts given of him in Madame d’Arblay’s Memoirs, and in the Memoirs of her father, Dr. Burney, are extremely interesting. That lady carries us into his town and country house, places us at his table, in his own drawing-room, or in the drawing-rooms of his friends,—where we see and hear him, with Johnson, Burke, Gibbon, Sheridan, Jackson of Exeter, and other people of eminence.”

Mr. Leslie then refers to the Collections illustrating the Life of Sir Joshua, published by the late W. Cotton, Esq.,<sup>1</sup> an enthusiast on the subject, to which he had devoted many years of research, crowned by his bequest to Plymouth of the Cottonian Library. For the purpose of these works Mr. Cotton had had placed in his hands most of the papers left by Sir Joshua, and then in the possession of his grand-niece, Miss Gwatkin, of

<sup>1</sup> ‘Sir Joshua Reynolds and his Works. Gleanings from his Diary, unpublished Manuscripts, and from other Sources.’ London, Longman, Colnaghi, and Co.; and Plymouth, Roger Lidstone, 1856. And ‘Sir Joshua Reynolds’s Notes and Observations on Pictures, &c. &c.; also the Rev. W. Mason’s Observations on Sir Joshua’s Method of Colouring, unpublished Letters of Johnson, Malone, and others; with an Appendix containing a transcript of Sir Joshua’s Account-book.’ London, John Russell Smith, 1859.

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Plymouth, and now in that of her nephew, Mr. Reynolds Gwatkin. To Mr. Cotton's extracts and transcripts Mr. Leslie was indebted for all he knew of these remains of Sir Joshua, except in the case of his account of his rupture with the Academy.

But Mr. Leslie did not live to complete his labour of love. It soothed him under his last great grief—the loss of a beloved daughter—and it continued to occupy him till the last moment of his life. He wrote in pencil, or dictated parts of it from his death-bed; but with all his efforts, had only completed a small part of the biography for printing, and sketched out, or outlined, the remainder.

After his death I was asked by Mr. Murray to take up and complete Mr. Leslie's fragment. I then found that it would be necessary to make a thorough examination and exhaustive use of the Gwatkin papers and memorials. I found that Mr. Cotton had in no case given full lists of the sitters, as recorded in the pocket-books; that he had, unfortunately, trusted a most inaccurate (so-called) transcript of Sir Joshua's Venetian notes, and had made no use of the Note-books in the Soane and British Museums; that the series of the pocket-books had since his publication been made much completer by the discovery of missing volumes; and that a second account-book had been discovered. I had, besides this, access given to all in the possession of the Gwatkin family that Sir Joshua had left behind him of written memoranda, letters, &c. I owed other unpublished letters of his, or papers of value in connection with him, to the kindness of Lord Lyveden, Sir C. T. F. Bunbury, Mr. Sheridan, the Hon. G.

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Barrington, Mr. John Forster, Mrs. St. John, Mr. Price of Torrington, &c. ; and I had placed in my hands for reference (by Sir W. Knighton) an unpublished autobiography of Northcote's, (by the Rev. T. Holme) a record of Northcote's conversations with Mr. Ward, a north-country painter, and (by Master Skardon) a commonplace-book of Sir Joshua's, formerly in the possession of the Gwatkin family. I have also been permitted access to the Archives of the Royal Academy, to Horace Walpole's Catalogues of the Royal Academy Exhibitions, containing his notes and names,<sup>1</sup> to the Note-books of Sir Joshua in the British Museum and the Soane Museum, to the books of "the Club," and the records of the Dilettante Society.

I have used, besides these original materials, all the printed sources of information or illustration which could help me in placing my subject vividly before the reader.

By the use of these materials I have attempted to carry out Mr. Leslie's intention of presenting Sir Joshua in his true character, as the genial centre of a most various and brilliant society, as well as the transmitter of its chief figures to our time by his potent art. I have given, year by year (with a gap here and there), a complete list of his sitters,—a work not yet even attempted by any of his biographers, but of great interest and importance, as a means of affixing the dates to pictures for family purposes, and of throwing light on changes of style and method. Information from these lists communicated by me while my MS. was

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<sup>1</sup> In the Sheepshanks Library.

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going through the press, has already, to my knowledge, led to several discoveries of portraits which had been lost sight of, or whose existence was unknown, and to the identification of others with the originals.

I have preserved all of Mr. Leslie's work that was sufficiently finished and continuous for use. My own additions are included in brackets, thus [ ].

My notion of what biography should be may be mistaken, and is certain to be contested. I am prepared to be told that I have lugged in irrelevant matter, accumulated trivial details, and told a great many things bearing so indirectly on Sir Joshua that they have no business in a book even with the elastic title of a Life and Times.

I can only say that I have exercised the best judgment I could, and told my story in my own way. It seems to me that a life can only be told by the facts out of which it is made up, and by which it is environed and influenced; and that, as we can but imperfectly estimate the relative importance of facts, it is unsafe to disregard any that can be ascertained with reasonable certainty. Again, the life of a painter, more than most men, as a rule, derives its interest from his work, and from the people he paints. When his sitters are the chief men and women of his time, for beauty, genius, rank, power, wit, goodness, or even fashion and folly, this interest is heightened. It culminates when the painter is the equal and honoured associate of his sitters. All these conditions concur in the case of Reynolds. It is impossible to write a Life and Times of the painter without passing in review—hasty and brief as it must be—the

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great facts of politics, literature, and manners during his busy life, which touched—often very closely—the chief actors in a drama taking in the most stirring events of the last century, and containing the germs of many things that have materially operated to shape our arts, manners, and institutions.

Mr. Cotton has published the fullest list yet printed of Sir Joshua's portraits. But it is both incomplete and inaccurate, defects hardly to be avoided in the first edition of such a work.

I soon found that, if my labours in connection with Sir Joshua were to be complete, it would be necessary to compile the fullest possible catalogue of his pictures. But when their number was taken into account (I am satisfied I do not overestimate them at between two and three thousand, and I rather think the latter figure will be passed before my work is done), it became evident that a volume would be required for the catalogue alone. I have compiled—with the aid of my friend, C. Franks, Esq.—the fullest list I could of proprietors of Sir Joshua's pictures, and have asked of them all the latest and exactest information as to the subjects and states of these pictures. I have received, in the great majority of instances, ready and careful replies. I have made a point, for some years past, of examining all Sir Joshua's pictures that I could get access to, and facilities for such examinations have been granted me as obligingly in every instance, as information has been supplied, in almost all, in answer to my letters.

I hope that this volume, now in the press, will contain something as near a full *catalogue raisonnée* of Sir

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Joshua's pictures as is to be hoped for at present. Future editions must be waited for to fill up gaps and correct errors.

In sending to the printer the last sheet of 'The Life and Times of Sir Joshua Reynolds,' I lay down a task which would have been delightful had I not felt so painfully my own inadequacy to complete Leslie's unfinished work, and had I not been hampered by the sense that much which I was attempting could only be well done by a painter. I may have erred in my conception of the way in which the work ought to be done, but I can conscientiously say I have not spared on it either time or trouble. I love and honour both my subject and the man to whose unfinished labours I succeeded too much not to do my best for the sake of one as much as the other.

TOM TAYLOR.

*Lavender Sweep, Wandsworth.*

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THE REYNOLDS FAMILY.

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## THE REYNOLDS FAMILY.

(Pages 3-6.)

AFTER this volume was worked off I received from Master J. Skardon, of Laira, near Plymouth (into whose hands it came from a servant of Miss Gwatkin's), a commonplace-book of Sir Joshua's (the gift of his father), kept on Locke's principle, and containing, *inter alia*, a family record, evidently copied by Sir Joshua from the family Bible. This settles the disputed point as to the number of children (in favour of eleven), and shows "Offy" to have been about fourteen months, instead of five years old, as stated in the text, when she died by a fall from a window. It also fixes the spelling of the Plympton surgeon's name as Rupert, and gives us, for the first time, the date of the marriage of Sir Joshua's parents, and his own attack of small-pox, which left its marks in his face for life:—

1609, Aug. 20.—My Great Grandmother Margaret Reynolds was born.

1609-10, Jan. 2.—My Great Grandfather Joshua Reynolds was born.

1641, Aug. 14.—My Grandfather John Reynolds was born.

1644, Oct. 24.—My Grandmother Mary Reynolds was born.

1680-1, Jan. 31.—Monday, about  $\frac{1}{2}$  after 8 in the morning, my Father Samuel Reynolds was born.

1688, Jun. 4.—Whitsunday, my Mother Theophila Reynolds was born.

„ Jun. 5.—My Great Grandmother Margaret Reynolds died, aged 79.

1692, July 16.—Died my Grandfather John Reynolds, between 9 and 10 at night.

1693, Sep. 25.—'Squire Parker and his man were hang'd.<sup>1</sup>

1711, Aug. 30.—Thursday night, betwixt 11 and 12, my Great Aunt Potter died.

„ Dec. 9.—My Father was married to Mrs. Theophila Potter, at Monkley, by the old Mr. Ley.

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<sup>1</sup> Why? This was a time of great Jacobite excitement. Had Squire Parker been plotting against William?



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## THE REYNOLDS FAMILY.

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- 1713, Feb. 2.—Monday, my brother Humphrey was born, about  $\frac{1}{2}$  of an hour before 9 in the morning.  
 „ Feb. 24.—Humphrey was baptiz'd by Mr. Luke Glub.
- 1714, May 29.—Saturday, my Brother Robert was born  $\frac{1}{2}$  after 2 in the afternoon, or somewhat better.  
 „ June 2.—Tuesday, he was baptiz'd.  
 „ July 6.—About  $\frac{1}{2}$  after 3 in the morning, my Grandmother died.
- 1715, June 20.—My Father came to Plymton.  
 „ July 13.—My Father begun the school at Plympton.
- 1716, Feb. 9.—Thursday, exactly at two in the afternoon, my sister Molly was born.  
 „ Mar. 7.—Wednesday, she was christen'd.
- 1718, Mar. 3.—Munday, betwixt one and two in the morning (almost 2), my mother was brought to bed of a daughter.  
 „ Mar. 9.—She was baptiz'd by the name of Ann.
- 1720, Jan. 14.—Thursday, at a quarter after 6 in the morning, my sister Jenny was born.  
 „ Feb. 10.—She was baptiz'd.  
 „ April 7.—Thursday, a quarter before 9 in the morning, my sister Ann died.
- 1721, Jul. 8.—Saturday, a quarter before 6 in the morning, or somewhat better, my sister Betty was born.
- 
- 1723, July 16.—Thursday, about  $\frac{1}{2}$  an hour after 9 in the morning, I, Joshua Reynolds, was born. Godfathers, Uncle Joshua (Mr. Aldwyn, Proxy), Mr. Joie; Godmother, Aunt Reynolds of Exeter (Mrs. Darby, Proxy).
- 
- 1725, Feb. 4.—Bells rung for Mr. Treby's wedding.  
 „ Aug 14.—Saturday morning, just after the Clock had struck 9, my mother was brought to bed of a Daughter (Theophila).
- 1726, Nov. 8.—Tuesday morning, about 7 o'clock, Offy fell out of the window, and died between 6 and 7 at night.
- 1727, Aug. 7.—Munday, at a quarter past two in the afternoon, my Brother Samuel was born.  
 „ Sep. 1.—Friday, he was baptized.

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- 1729, May 10.—Saturday, just before 10 in the morning, my sister  
 Frances was born.  
 „ June 6.—Friday, she was baptized.  
 1731, July 5.—Munday,  $\frac{1}{2}$  before 7 in the morning, my brother  
 Martyn was born.  
 „ July 29.—Thursday, he was baptized.  
 1733, Jan. 4.—I was ill of the measles. This day the measles came  
 out; I went to bed.  
 „ Jan. 7.—I was in a manner Well.  
 „ Jan. 11.—I took Physick.  
 1734-5, Mar. 5.—I was seiz'd with the small-pox.  
 „ Mar. 10.—Munday, the 6th day of the Distemper, nothing  
 amiss in my Regimen hitherto. I had a blister  
 at 4 this morning.  
 „ Mar. 11.—Tuesday, the 7th day, perhaps the 8th, seems to  
 have been the worst day: then most outrageous.  
 „ Mar. 12.—Wednesday, the 8th day, extremely low.  
 „ Mar. 13.—Thursday, the 9th day, being low, and somewhat  
 hungry, I had broth at night, tho' contrary to  
 Mr. Ruport's express order.  
 „ Mar. 14.—Friday, the 10th day, having slept well, I was  
 brave.  
 „ Mar. 15.—Saturday, the 11th, rather the 12th day, taken out  
 of bed.  
 „ Mar. 16.—Sunday, the 13th day, I sat up.  
 „ Mar. 17.—I ventured down stairs.  
 „ Mar. 18.—I staid down a long time.  
 „ Mar. 19.—Wednesday, the 16th day, I took physic.  
 „ Mar. 22.—Betty first seiz'd with the Small Pox.
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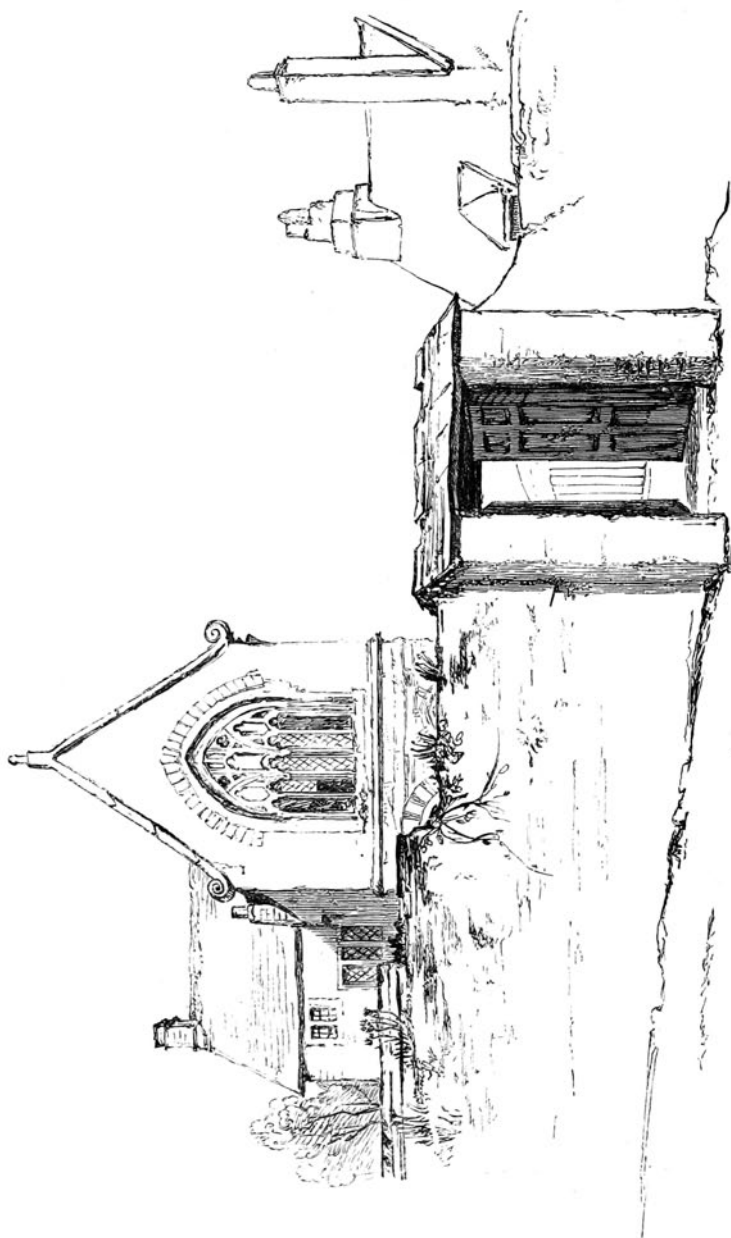
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- Page 29, lines 4, 5, 6, 7. The persons here described as Richard first Lord Eliot and Harriet Lady Eliot, are so described in error. This Richard Eliot, who died in 1748, was not created a Peer. His son Edward was the first Lord Eliot, and he was so created in 1784.
- „ 92, *note*, for “Dr. Hoole” read “Mr. Hoole.”
- „ 95, line 14, for “Sir George” read “Sir John.”
- „        ” for “Mountford” read “Montford.”
- „ 206, line 23, for “Charlotte” read “Catherine.”
- „ 223, line 6, for “the other” read “another”
- „ 284, *note*, for “Beasley’s” read “Bensley’s.”
- „ 291, line 28, for “capias ultagatum” read “capias utlagatum.”
- „ 342, line 2, for “Eyen” read “Even.”
- „ 360, line 3, for “Coates” read “Cotes.”
- line 4, for “Dancer” read “Dance.”
- „ 390, line 8, for “Lord Buckingham’s” read “Lord Buckinghamshire’s.”
- „ 399, *note*, col. 1, last line, for “Miss” read “Mrs.”
- „ 437, *note*, for “Grizzell” read “Grissell.”

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SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS'S SCHOOL.

From a sketch by the late C. R. Leslie R.A.