SKETCHES OF BOOKSELLERS OF OTHER DAYS

E. MARSTON

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SKETCHES OF BOOKSELLERS

OF OTHER DAYS

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SAMUEL RICHARDSON, 1689-1761.

From a picture by Chamberlin.

SKETCHES OF BOOKSELLERS

OF OTHER DAYS

BY

E. MARSTON

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Dedicated

TO

THE BOOKSELLERS

OF

TO-DAY

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NOTE

INCE the death of the late Mr. George Murray Smith, who was a few months my senior, I am told that I am the oldest London publisher. To be called the *doyen* of the trade is of that kind of distinction which one can accept without pride, and adopt without vanity. It is a distinction to which everyone is heir who only lives long enough, and it is presumably one which no one specially envies or covets, seeing that

> ". . . barring all pother 'twixt one and the other,
> We shall all be kings in our turn."

An intercourse of sixty years and more with Books and Booksellers, Authors and Publishers, gives me almost the title to think that I am in my own person a kind of link between the Publishers of to-day and the Booksellers of the eighteenth century of whom I have endeavoured to give some glimpses. My late partner, Sampson Low, was a youth of twenty when my last

two subjects, William Hutton and James Lackington, died in 1815; and I was born not many years afterwards; this perhaps may serve as an excuse for writing the following SKETCHES OF BOOKSELLERS OF OTHER DAYS which have recently appeared in "The Publishers' Circular." The original idea was to condense into a readable sketch the main features of the "Lives" treated of. In bringing them together into a volume I have tried to make them a little more complete by adding matter here and there, which for want of space did not appear in the serial issue. I have gathered the material from various sources, chiefly from the autobiographies of those who have written an account of their own lives; for the rest I am indebted to the industry of Mr. Charles Knight, Mr. W. Roberts, "The Dictionary of National Biography" and to a curious book entitled "Fifty Years' Recollections of an old Bookseller." I have also found material in Nichols' "Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century" (nine volumes), in Southey's "The Doctor," and in other works. I am also indebted to Mr. W. H. Peet for the loan of several books pertaining to the subjects.

April 25, 1901. E. M.

JACOB TONSON, 1656-1736.

From the painting by Kneller.

SKETCHES OF BOOKSELLERS OF OTHER DAYS

I. JACOB TONSON, 1656-1736

F all the booksellers of the olden time whose figures stand out from the depths of the shadowy past perhaps the most conspicuous is the figure of Jacob Tonson. Doubtless there have lived in the past centuries hundreds of old booksellers, more worthy, more learned, and more beloved in their generation than Jacob Tonson, who, after pursuing the even tenour of their way, have passed into the shadowy world, not unwept but at least unsung and unrecorded in the pages of history, as unknown to posterity as if they

had never lived; their good deeds lie buried with their bones, and they did no evil that should live after them; that, indeed, is the common fate of many of the worthiest of human beings.

Only a few here and there of the shadows of old booksellers have been evolved from the surrounding darkness, either through their prominent connection with some celebrated writer who may have belauded or besmirched them into lasting fame or lasting infamy, or else their earthly careers have been brought to light by the industry of such writers as the late Mr. Peter Cunningham, Mr. Charles Knight, Mr. W. Roberts, or Mr. Henry Curwen—and thus it was that the life and doings of Jacob Tonson have been carried down for more than two hundred years.

"The Dictionary of National Biography" devotes considerable space to the Tonsons (for there were three of them) and other old booksellers; much of the same information somewhat differently told is to be found in each of the authorities above mentioned, but the "Dictionary of National Biography" is the most concise. It is from these authorities and from John Nichols' "Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth

Century," that the information given below has been mostly obtained.

Jacob Tonson, like John Gilpin, was born "a citizen of famous London town," about the year 1656—the younger of two sons of Jacob Tonson, barber-surgeon and citizen, who died in the year 1661, leaving £100 to each of his two sons and three daughters. "Ah! Jacob," once said his father to him, "if I hadn't a noble profession for you to follow I should like to see you a bookseller." Young Jacob had a decided aversion to the business carried on "under the pole." He had employed most of his holiday hours in reading plays and poems, and so two years afterwards he was apprenticed, on the 5th of June, 1670, to Thomas Basset, bookseller ("probably in Little Britain," says W. Roberts). He was then fourteen years old, and after seven years he was admitted to his freedom in the Stationers' Company, and immediately afterwards started in business with his capital of £100, following the example of his elder brother who had commenced business as a bookseller the year before in a shop within Gray's Inn Gate. Jacob's shop was for many years under "The Judge's Head," which he set up as his sign in Chancery Lane,

close to the corner of Fleet Street. Had he begun business a few years earlier he would have been a near neighbour of *Izaak Walton*, but they probably never met, for old Izaak was nearly ninety years of age, and had left Fleet Street before young Jacob started, and one can hardly imagine two characters so widely divergent as the tall and dignified *Izaak* and the short "bull-faced" *Jacob*.

Walton's printer and publisher was Richard Marriott, in St. Dunstan's Churchyard close by.

Jacob Tonson was very ambitious of getting in touch with authors of the highest standing, and in his twenty-third year, 1679 (four years before Walton died), he made the bold venture of purchasing Dryden's "Troilus and Cressida" for £20, which sum he had to borrow; and thus he became Dryden's publisher, and with Dryden he seems to have continued on more or less friendly terms till the death of the poet. Before this year he had published some of the plays of Otway and Tate. At this period he is imagined by Charles Knight, who endeavours to realize the shadow of the figure and deportment of the young bookseller in his twenty-third year as "short and stout," and twenty years later Pope

calls him "little Jacob." It was not till after his death that he was immortalized in "The Dunciad," as "left-legged Jacob."

It was in 1683 that Tonson became the purchaser from Brabazon Ailmer, the assignee of Samuel Simmons, of one half of his right in "Paradise Lost," and of the remaining half in 1690. Milton at that time was very unpopular, and Tonson waited four years after his purchase before he ventured to bring it out by subscription. Dryden had spoken of it as one of the greatest, most noble, and most sublime poems which either the age or nation had produced. It was an immediate success—and thus Jacob Tonson identified himself with Milton by making "Paradise Lost" popular.

He brought out the fourth edition in 1688, in folio, with a portrait by White. It was as a motto under this portrait that Dryden wrote the well-known lines:

> "Three poets in three distant ages born,
> Greece, Italy, England, did adorn,
> The first in loftiness of mind surpassed;
> The next in majesty, in both the last.
> The force of nature could no further go,
> To make a third she joined the former two.

In 1684 he brought out a volume of miscel-

laneous poems under Dryden's editorship. Other volumes followed in 1685, 1693, 1694, and 1703. The series was called indifferently Dryden's or Tonson's Miscellany.

Dryden's "Translation of Virgil" was published by Tonson in July, 1697, by subscription, and its publication gave rise to serious financial differences between the poet and his publisher. It has been stated that on one occasion, the bookseller having refused to advance money, the poet sent him the following triplet, with the significant message: "Tell the dog that he who wrote these lines can write more:

> "With leering looks, bull-faced, and freckled fair;
> With two left legs and Judas-coloured hair,
> And frowzy pores, that taint the ambient air."
> (From "*Faction Displayed.*")

These lines were never intended by Dryden to be transmitted to posterity—but a Tory satirist who gave vent to his spleen by including them in a poem, ridiculed both Tonson and the Kit-Cat Club. Pope has stated that Dryden cleared every way about £1,200 by his "Virgil."

Subsequently author and publisher became more friendly, and on the publication of the volume of "Fables"—which contained the cele-

brated "Ode to St. Cecilia," commonly known as "Alexander's Feast," for which he paid the author two hundred and fifty guineas, to be made up to £300 when a second edition was demanded—Dryden wrote to Tonson: "I hope it has done you service and will do more." Dryden died in May, 1700.

Nichols says: "However plain in his appearance, of which the above satirical description may be supposed to have been a caricature, he was certainly a worthy man, and was not only respected as an honest and opulent tradesman, but after Dryden's death lived in familiar intimacy with some of the most considerable persons of the early part of the last century."

Before the end of the century Tonson removed from Chancery Lane to Gray's Inn Gate, the shop previously occupied by his brother, who had died. Here he dropped the sign of "The Judge's Head," and adopted "The Shakspere's Head." Charles Knight says: "He was truly the first bookseller who threw open Shakspere to a reading public. . . . In 1709 Tonson produced Rowe's edition in seven volumes octavo."

Jacob Tonson and his successors of the same name quite justified the sign of "The Shakspere's

Head," for the various editions edited by Rowe, Pope, Theobald, Warburton, Johnson and Capell were all associated with the name of Tonson.

Jacob had no children, and seemingly never married; he took his nephew Jacob into partnership.

In the year 1700 Tonson was instrumental in founding the Kit-Cat Club, of which he became secretary. This club was composed of the most distinguished wits and statesmen among the Whigs. The meetings were first held at a shop in Shire Lane kept by Christopher Cat, who excelled in making mutton pies, which were regularly part of the entertainment. In 1703 he built a room at Barn Elms, Barnes, for the use of the club. This room was adorned with the portraits of the Kit-Cat club, painted by Sir Godfrey Kneller, on canvas of a special size which has always since been called Kit-cat, viz., 36 inches by 28 inches. A splendid volume, containing 43 portraits, beginning with Sir Godfrey Kneller and ending with Tonson, was published in 1735 by J. Tonson in the Strand. The plates were engraved by T. Faber. In a poem on the club, attributed to Sir Richard Blackmore, these lines occur:

Mr Jacob Tonson Dr to W Bowyer

July 25 For printing 80 Sheets of Eachard's first Vol: of Hist: of England beginning B ending 4 H No. 225 Ordinary and 25 large with Margin ... at 12s per sheet ye agreemt. — 48 : — : —

71

17 —

Recd 4 : 7 Royal 24 Sheets all used

and — 40 Crown inside all used

FACSIMILE OF BOWYER'S BILL TO TONSON FOR PRINTING ECHARD'S "HISTORY OF ENGLAND."

For the original I am indebted to the courtesy of Mr. George Suckling, Garrick Street.

"One night in seven, at this convenient seat,
Indulgent Bocaj (Jacob) did the muses treat."

This year (1703) he went to Holland to obtain paper and engravings for the fine edition of "Cæsar's Commentaries," which he published in royal folio, with eighty-seven plates, under the editorial care of Dr. Samuel Clark in 1712. Nichols describes this edition "as perhaps the most magnificent work that has been issued by the English press." The manufacture of paper in England at this period had become confined to the commonest sorts, chiefly used for packing, and the types used in the better English printing offices were imported from Holland. In 1705 he published "Addison's Remarks on several parts of Italy"; and in 1706 he became acquainted with "young Pope" and proposed the publication of his "Pastorals," which ultimately appeared in the "Miscellany" in 1709.

Writing of Tonson's "Miscellany Poems" in a letter dated May 20th, 1709, Mr. Pope says: "I shall be satisfied if I can lose my time agreeably this way, without losing my reputation. I can be content with a bare saving game, without being thought an *eminent hand* (with which *little Jacob* has graciously dignified his adventurers and volun-

teers in poetry). Jacob creates poets, as kings do knights; not for their honour, but for their money." Mr. Wycherley in reply, with an indecent allusion to scripture, observes, "You will make 'Jacob's Ladder' raise you to immortality."

In a letter to Steele, Pope says: "I should myself be much better pleased if I were told you called me your *little friend*, than if you complimented me with the title of a great genius or an *eminent hand*, as Jacob does all his writers."

In 1712 he removed to "The Shakspere Head," opposite Catherine Street, in the Strand. In 1711 Swift, Addison, and Steele met at young Tonson's, and from 1712 Tonson, in conjunction with Samuel Buckley, became the publisher of the "Spectator." In 1712 Addison and Steele sold all their interest in one half of the copies of the first seven volumes of the "Spectator" to Tonson, junior, for £575, and all rights, and the other half to Buckley for a like sum. In October 1714 Buckley resigned his half share to Tonson, junior.

In consequence of his attachment to the Whigs he obtained, in 1719-1720, a grant to himself and his nephew Jacob Tonson, junior, of the office of stationer, bookbinder, bookseller and printer, to

some of the principal public Boards, and great offices for the term of forty years, and in 1722 he assigned and made over the whole benefit of this grant to his nephew, who in 1733 obtained from Sir Robert Walpole a further grant of forty years. This lucrative business remained in the Tonson family till 1800.

In a dialogue between Tonson and Congreve, published in 1714, in a small volume of poems by Rowe, there is a pleasant description of Tonson before he had grand associates:

> "While in your early days of reputation,
> You for blue garters had not such a passion,
> While yet you did not live, as now your trade is,
> To drink with noble lords and toast their ladies,
> Thou, Jacob Tonson, were, to my conceiving,
> The cheerfullest, best, honest fellow living."

Tonson seems to have been fortunate, not only in his publishing ventures, but he was congratulated on his luck in South Sea stock; he made a large sum also in connection with Law's Mississippi Scheme.

In 1720 he gave up business and bought an estate called "The Hazells," at Ledbury, in Herefordshire.

Jacob Tonson died in 1736, and is reported, according to Nichols, on his deathbed to have

said: "I wish I had the world to begin again, because then I should have died worth a hundred thousand pounds, whereas now I die worth only £80,000." Nichols, however, regarded it as a very improbable story, for, in spite of Dryden's complaints, Tonson seems to have been a generous man for the times and to have fully earned his title of the "Prince of Booksellers."

Dunton, a contemporary publisher, says of Tonson: "He is a very good judge of persons and authors; and, as there is nobody more completely qualified to give their opinion of another, so there is no one who does it with a more severe exactness or with less partiality, for, to do Mr. Tonson justice, he speaks his mind upon all occasions and will flatter nobody."

Pope, writing of him to Lord Oxford, said that if he would come to see him he would show him a phenomenon worth seeing: "Old Jacob Tonson, who is the perfect image and likeness of Bayle's Dictionary; so full of matter, secret history, and wit and spirit, at almost fourscore."

The elder Tonson's death at Ledbury, April 2nd, 1736, was preceded by that of his nephew, November 25th, 1735—who at his death was de-

scribed as worth £100,000, whilst the uncle's estate is mentioned as £40,000.

Old Jacob made his will December 2nd, 1735, after his nephew's death, in which he appointed his great-nephew Jacob (the third of the name) his executor and residuary legatee. This Jacob —the third bookseller of the name—of whom Dr. Johnson speaks as "the late amiable Mr. Tonson," carried on business first in the old shop opposite Catherine Street, in the Strand, but latterly he removed to the other side of the way, where he died, without issue, March 31st, 1767.

According to Curwen, Tonson's only rival in business was Bernard Lintot, and he gives an amusing anecdote of competition between these two worthies for a work by Dr. Young. Both had made an offer for the work. The poet answered both letters the same morning, but unfortunately cross-directed them; in the one intended for Tonson he said that Lintot was so great a scoundrel that printing with him was out of the question, and in Lintot's that Tonson was an old rascal.

W. Roberts, whose account of the Tonsons is written in a kindly spirit, says of Jacob: "Lingering for a moment or two over the character of

old Jacob Tonson, we find it to be indubitably that of a thorough tradesman, not of a hero, but certainly of a generous, hearty, and good man, with a plentiful sprinkling of the worldly in his composition."

THOMAS GUY, 1644-1724.
Founder of Guy's Hospital.
From the statue by J. Bacon, R.A.

II. THOMAS GUY, 1644-1724

HE fame of Thomas Guy does not rest upon him as a bookseller, but as a philanthropist; it is true that by great industry, great frugality, and great tact he made much money as a bookseller, but, unlike his contemporary Jacob Tonson, he did not seek to attach his name to the works of great authors—such as Dryden, Pope, and Addison. The Bible first and the Great South Sea Bubble next were the chief sources of his wealth. "The Dictionary of National Biography" states, however, that he published numerous books, and his imprint is not so rare as has been represented.

From his earliest days he seems to have resolved to be rich, not, according to all accounts that I can gather, for the sake of being rich, but

from a real desire to do good in his generation and the generations that should come after him. Mr. Charles Knight, quoting mainly from Mr. William Maitland's memoir of Guy prefixed to his account of Guy's Hospital, published in his "History of London" in 1739, tells us that Guy was born in the north-east corner of Pritchard's Alley, in Fair Street, Horselydown, in the year 1645, but the precise date is not given. The statue says 1644.

He was the son of Thomas Guy, citizen and carpenter, who was by profession a lighterman and coal-dealer in Horselydown, Southwark; he died when his son was eight years old. His mother was a native of Tamworth, and after her husband's death she returned to that town, and soon afterwards married again.

Mr. Roberts states that a writer in the "Gentleman's Magazine," 1784, page 340, says that Tamworth was the place of young Guy's birth; but the probabilities are in favour of Mr. Maitland's more precise statement; the latter authority says that Mrs. Guy "was careful to have her children carefully educated." Thomas's education from the age of eight to eleven was in all probability in Tamworth.

He was bound apprentice September 2nd, 1660, to John Clarke, a bookseller, in the porch of Mercers' Chapel, Cheapside; and in 1668 he became a freeman of the City of London and of the Stationers' Company; he commenced business with a capital of £200.

Up to this point there is much similarity in the careers of Guy and Tonson. Both were shrewd, careful, and plodding, and both started with the intention of amassing wealth through the medium of the business in which they had been educated; there is, however, little or no evidence to show that either of them possessed any educational advantages or literary or intellectual gifts that should distinguish them from hundreds of their fellow tradesmen who have departed and left no trace behind them—Literature happened to be their trade, and they cultivated it at first doubtless on a little oatmeal, not however for its own sake, but as a means to bear them on to fortune.

Tonson's ambition seems to me to have been of the bullying, blustering sort, which eventually enabled him to patronize great authors and hob-a-nob with dukes and lords at the Kit-Cat Club.

> "Sweating and puffing for a while he stood,
> And then broke forth in this insulting mood;
> I am the touchstone of all modern wit;
> Without my stamp in vain your poets write."
> (From "*Faction Displayed.*")

His name will be carried down to remote generations on the title-page of the books of the greatest writers of his time, not as a great benefactor, but as a fortunate plodding tradesman.

Thomas Guy's ambition to make money seems to me to have been of the purely unselfish sort. He lived penuriously, and grew rich with the single purpose of doing good with his riches.

He started in business in 1668, two years after the Great Fire, in a little newly-built shop near Stocks Market. The shop was at the angle formed by Cornhill and Lombard Street, described by Maitland as the "little corner shop."

Charles Knight says that the area upon which the Mansion House now stands was for some centuries the market for butchers and fishmongers, deriving its name from "The Stocks," which were set up in the public thoroughfare for the punishment of evildoers. The whole place was swept clear by the Great Fire of 1666.

The position which Guy had chosen was an admirable one. Within a year after he had

opened his shop the second Exchange was opened with great pomp.

Mr. Knight fancifully portrays young Guy sitting in his little shop amidst his small stock of books of the value of £200, restless at the want of occupation, and envying the great merchant adventurers congregating at the Exchange, whose ships brought the produce of every land to the port of London.

Mr. Guy was a good Protestant, and as he sat in his shop, too often unvisited by customers, he meditated frequently on the large trade he could command if it was in his power to offer godly people well-printed and cheap Bibles.

The King's printer and the two universities possessed the exclusive privilege of printing the Bible, a monopoly which still remains with the Universities. The Oxford Bibles were chiefly for the use of the churches, but those issued by the King's printer were full of the grossest errors, which caused Thomas Fuller to write, under the quaint heading "Fye, for Shame!" "What is but carelessness in other books is impiety in setting forth of the Bible." Maitland relates that at the time when Guy opened his shop the English Bibles printed in this kingdom

being very bad, both in the letter and paper, occasioned divers of the booksellers in this city to encourage the printing thereof in Holland, with curious types and fine paper, and they imported vast numbers of the same, to their no small advantage.

Mr. Guy, soon becoming acquainted with this profitable commerce, became a large dealer therein. Mr. Knight, in his imaginary picture, says that Guy, not trusting the Dutch compositors, would carefully revise the proof sheets so that they should not print such terrible blunders as were printed in the Bible of 1653: "Know ye not that the *un*righteous shall inherit the kingdom of God." He had learned from Mr. Selden's "Table Talk" that in a Bible printed in the reign of Charles I. the word *not* was left out of the seventh commandment, for which blunder the printer was heavily fined.

The "Spectator" wickedly suggested that, judging from the morals of the day, very many copies must have got into continuous circulation.

It was found, however, that this trade of importing Bibles from Holland was injurious to the public revenue as well as to the King's printer; all ways and means were devised to

quash it, and consequently, owing to frequent seizures and prosecutions, the booksellers became great sufferers, so they judged a further pursuit thereof inconsistent with their interests. They could not stand out against the power of the King's printer and the two Universities, although as a matter of fact the King's printer and the Universities were not by any means in a state of cordial relationship.

Thomas Guy, says Mr. Knight, was too sagacious a man to resist the pretensions of powers so influential in the counsels of the Stuarts. With a more than common share of ability and perseverance he finally induced the University of Oxford to contract with him for an assignment of their privilege. He bought type from Holland and set about printing Bibles in London, and soon established a large trade therein.

In the first two or three years of his struggle for fortune he had to maintain his position by the exercise of the most scrupulous frugality. He was his own servant, having his dinner sent in to him from a neighbouring cookshop, and eating it on his counter, using an old newspaper for his table-cloth. Mr. Knight doubts the accuracy of this report, because at that time the

largest newspaper issued was the size of an ordinary dish. Well, it does not seem necessary on that account to deprive Mr. Guy of this mark and proof of his frugality—let us suppose that instead of a newspaper he used a couple of old demy broadside proofsheets.

Perhaps the most interesting episode in the young publisher's career occurred when he had attained his twenty-eighth year. He begins to feel lonely. He indulges himself with the luxury of a maidservant who cooks his meals and keeps his linen in order. He cares little about society, he but rarely dines in his Company's Hall. Now this neat-handed Phillis had never wasted his money or victuals while in his service; he asked her to marry him, and he was graciously accepted.

But alas! the frugal maiden made one fatal mistake; she had not sufficiently learned the lesson of implicit obedience to his will. Some paviors were at work laying down some pavement in front of the shop, under very special and definite instruction given them by Mr. Guy. The workmen finding that a certain portion remained unpaved went to him for further instruction. Unhappily for the future destiny of him-

self and the maiden, he was not at home. "Do as you wish," said the infatuated girl; "tell him I bade you, and I am sure he will not be angry!" History recordeth not the words that passed, but Thomas Guy's little love episode is for ever at an end, and if the maiden was ever married at all it must have been to some one else.

It had been stated by a writer in Mr. Nichols' "Literary Anecdotes" that the bulk of Mr. Guy's fortune was acquired by purchasing seamen's pay tickets at a discount of forty or fifty per cent. during Queen Anne's wars, and by South Sea stock—in the memorable year 1720. Mr. Knight, however, points out that the practice of paying seamen by tickets belonged to the time of Charles II. and had fallen into disuse before Queen Anne's time.

Under William III., in 1692, a loan of a million was sanctioned by Parliament, and of this he is said to have taken up a portion. Two years after he was elected as a member of Parliament for Tamworth, the town of his early days and his frequent benefactions.

Maitland says of his early career: "As he was a man of unbounded charity and universal

benevolence, so was he likewise a great patron of liberty and the rights of his fellow-subjects, which to his great honour he strenuously asserted in divers Parliaments whereof he was a member," from 1695 to 1707.

The only contemporaneous notice of Guy is by John Dunton, the bookseller. In his work published in 1705, he says: "He makes an eminent figure in the Company of Stationers, having been chosen Sheriff of London, and paid the fine, and is now member of parliament for Tamworth. . . . He is a man of strong reason and can talk very much to the purpose on any subject you will propose. He is truly charitable, his almshouses to the poor are standing testimonies."

These almshouses were built at Tamworth in 1705; two years later he built three new wards to St. Thomas's Hospital, besides being a regular benefactor of £100 a year.

Mr. Roberts says that, according to Maitland, his private acts of charity were many, especially to his poor relations; he frequently accomplished the discharge from prison of insolvent debtors and reinstated them in business. He was constantly ready to advance money without

interest to deserving young men to start in business.

Mr. Roberts also quotes an interesting story from the "Saturday Magazine" of August 2nd, 1834. One day, leaning over one of the bridges looking very despondent and melancholy, a by-stander, thinking he was bent on suicide, implored him not to commit any rash act. Then quickly placing a guinea in his hand, he hastily withdrew. Guy followed the stranger, assured him that he was mistaken, and begged his address. Some years afterwards Guy, seeing the name of his friend in the bankruptcy list, hastened to his house, reminded him of the incident of the bridge, arranged with his creditors, and finally re-established him in his business, which prospered in his hands and those of his children's children for many years in Newgate Street, London.

He held Government securities to the amount of many thousands, and subscribed the same into the South Sea Company at 6 per cent. interest. During the subsequent ten years, being a fundholder at this moderate rate of interest, he made large benefactions to the Stationers' Company and Christ's Hospital.

In 1720, when he was seventy-six years old, came the culminating point of his prosperity. Parliament had sanctioned an increase of South Sea capital—at that time Guy held £45,500 of stock. No sooner was this increase of capital granted than there came a great run on the stock; and Mr. Guy, wisely considering that the great rise of the stock was owing to the iniquitous management of a few, began to "unload," as the modern phrase is; at first he sold at about three hundred that which cost him about fifty or sixty, and he continued selling till it rose to six hundred, when he disposed of the last of his property in the said Company. This sagacious operation of his on the very brink of the bursting of the Bubble is regarded by his biographers as very legitimate business, and it would be difficult to gainsay it. He had held the stock for ten years previously, and he only took advantage of a rise in the market; but, after all, the money he so easily made came out of the pockets of the many hundreds of families who were completely ruined when the crash came. Indeed, it may almost be argued that Guy, under Providence, was the means of rescuing from the disaster over a quarter of a million of money for

the sole purpose of building and endowing a great hospital for the benefit of the poor and distressed.

He got more money in three months of this eventful year than was needed for the erecting, furnishing, and endowing his hospital.

The building cost nearly £19,000, and the endowment by him amounted to £220,000; and he had the satisfaction of knowing that his gains had been worthily applied, when he saw his hospital roofed in before he died in 1724.

Thomas Guy's will, dated September 4th, 1724, bequeaths lands and tenements in Staffordshire, Warwickshire, and Derbyshire to grandchildren of his deceased sister; about £75,000 4 per cent. annuities, mostly in sums of £1,000 each, to about ninety cousins in various degrees and others not relatives, and annuities varying from £10 to £200 a year, mostly to older relatives, being interest on £22,000 of stock; £1,000 was left to discharged poor debtors in sums not exceeding £5 each—600 persons were thus relieved. An annuity of £400 was left to Christ's Hospital for board and education of four poor children annually.

His death took place December 17th, 1724, in his eighty-first year.

He was buried with great pomp after lying in state at the Mercers' Chapel.

In the centre of the square of Guy's Hospital is a bronze statue of Guy in his livery gown by Scheemakers; on the west side, in basso-relievo, is represented the parable of the Good Shepherd, and on the east Christ healing the impotent man.

JOHN DUNTON, 1659-1733.

III. JOHN DUNTON, 1659-1733.

UNLIKE the two ancient shadows of whom I have endeavoured to give glimpses, both of whom, beginning life in poor circumstances, took the tide at flood which led them on to fortune, John Dunton began his business career in fairly affluent circumstances, but, omitting to catch the tide, the voyage of his life was bound "in shallows and in miseries," and ended in the Fleet prison. He was a bookseller who wrote many books instead of selling them, and he came to be looked upon as a sort of *lusus naturæ* by the great literary people of his time, and as an intruder; and so he was called a "lunatick" by his contemporaries. Warburton described him as "an auction bookseller and

an abusive scribbler"; and the elder Disraeli notices him as "a crack-brained scribbling bookseller, who boasted he had a thousand projects, fancied he had methodized six hundred, and was ruined by the fifty he executed."

Among the many books which he wrote, the most curious and interesting was "The Life and Errors of John Dunton, written by himself, in solitude, in which is included the lives and characters of a thousand persons now living in London."[1]

It is from this work that the main facts of John Dunton's life have been gathered by those who have written about him. Charles Knight says that he had waded for the third or fourth time through a volume of 700 pages, vilely printed upon the most wretched paper. It was published by S. Malthus in 1705, and was reprinted by Mr. John Bowyer Nichols in 1817.

[1] The full title is "The Life and Errors of John Dunton, late Citizen of London, written by himself in solitude. With an Idea of a new Life; wherein is shown how he'd think, speak, and act, might he live over his days again; intermixed with the new Discoveries the Author has made in his Travels abroad, and in his private Conversation at home. Together with the Lives and Characters of a Thousand Persons now living in London. Digested into Seven Stages with their respective Ideas. London, printed for S. Malthus. 1705."

I presume the first edition is the one referred to by Mr. Knight.

John Dunton was born May 4, 1659. His father, grandfather, and great-grandfather were all named John, and all had been clergymen. At the time of our hero's birth, his father was rector of Graffham, Huntingdonshire. Losing his wife when his only child was an infant, the father, in a fit of despondency, went away to Ireland, where he spent some years as chaplain to Sir Henry Ingoldsby, having resolved not to marry again for seven years.

Meanwhile, by his own account, the little boy was left to strangers. He had been sent to school with Mr. William Readings at Dungrove, near Chesham, but seems to have learnt little, and to have led an idle life, playing on the pleasant banks of the Chess, and rambling among the Chiltern Hills. His father on his return to England in 1668 became rector of Aston Clinton, Bucks, and married again. During childhood and youth he had several narrow escapes from death; on one occasion from slipping headlong into a river; on another, while playing with a bullet, it slipped down his throat to his breast, and, when nearly past hope, it suddenly bolted up.

John was now taken home to his father, who educated him with a view to making him fourth clergyman of his line and a faithful preacher of the doctrine of the old Puritans, but he was disappointed.

Young John, describing himself at the age of fourteen, says he was "wounded by a silent passion for a virgin in my father's house." "My father," he says, "tried all the methods with me that could be thought of, in order to reconcile my mind to the love of learning, but all of them proved useless and ineffectual; my thoughts were all unbent and dissolved in the affairs of love." His father's hopes that he should become a clergyman were destroyed by what he calls his "unsettled mercurial humour." He learnt Latin, but the difficulties of Greek quite broke all his resolutions. So the father, not finding his son inclined to learning, thought to make it his interest "to be a friend to learning and the muses."

At the age of fourteen, in the year 1673, he was apprenticed to Thomas Parkhurst, a bookseller, in London, "a religious and just man," and of whom he subsequently wrote as "my honoured master, the most eminent Presby-

terian bookseller in the three Kingdoms, and now chosen Master of the Stationers' Company." From that time, says he, "I began to love books to the same excess that I had hated them before." His father died in 1676, giving young John his dying counsels, "to know, fear, love, obey, and serve God, your Creator and Deliverer, as He hath revealed Himself through His Son, by the Spirit, in His Holy Word."

During his apprenticeship he was again smitten by the charms of a certain young virgin, then lodging with Parkhurst. "This romantic courtship," says he, "gave both of us a real passion; but my master, making a timely discovery of it, sent the lady into the country; and absence cooled our passion for us, and by little and little we both of us regained our liberty."

There is a very curious old book which I have just seen called "Three Hundred and Fifty Years' Retrospection of an Old Bookseller," published in 1835, in which I find many of the anecdotes about Dunton which are to be found in subsequent books. He says: "He made himself conspicuous in a political dispute between the Tories and the Whigs, being a

prime mover on the part of the Whig apprentices. The Tories to the number of 5,000 presented an address to the King against the petitioning for Parliaments. The Dissenting party, with Dunton as their leader, made a counter-address, which they presented to Sir Patience Ward, then Lord Mayor, who promised he would acquaint the King; and then ordered them to return home, and mind the business of their respective masters."

When his apprenticeship was just expiring he "invited a hundred apprentices to celebrate a funeral for it, though it was no more than a youthful piece of vanity."

He immediately started in business on his own account, occupying "half a shop, warehouse, and a fashionable chamber." His good father had advised him to use all possible prudence in the choice of a wife, and very wisely exhorted him to keep something more solid than investments in publishing speculations. "Sell not," said he, "any part of your estate in land, if either your wife's portion or your borrowing of money upon interest may conveniently serve to set up your trade. "Even," said the cautious father, "if you shall,

by some remarkable providence, meet with a wife of a considerable estate, you may by her portion set up your trade without mortgaging your land."

It is evident that John Dunton had some capital at his disposal, and he soon made the acquaintance of what he calls "hackney authors, who began to ply me with *specimens* as earnestly and with as much passion and concern as the watermen do passengers with oars and scullers." His first venture was a work by the Rev. Thomas Doolittle, entitled "The Sufferings of Christ." "This book," he says, "fully answered my end; for, exchanging through the whole trade, it furnished my shop with all sorts of books saleable at the time." This method of exchange and barter must have been a very convenient method for a beginner not overburdened with capital. The success of this work and one or two others gave him "an ungovernable hitch for similar speculations."

It was now urged upon John that he should marry, and many desirable young ladies were suggested to him. One was Miss Sarah Doolittle, in addition to whose personal charms and endowments there would be the chance of getting

her father's "copies" for nothing ; "his book on the Sacraments you know has sold to the twentieth edition." "At last," as Mr. Roberts says, "he met with Dr. Annesley's daughter, by whom he was "almost charmed dead" when he saw her in her father's meeting-place." But this young lady was already engaged, so he was advised to make an experiment upon her elder sister, Elizabeth, and the result was marriage. By this marriage he became brother-in-law of the Rev. Samuel Wesley, the father of John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, who appears to have married Anne, the young lady who had almost "charmed him dead." It is supposed that Daniel Defoe, author of "Robinson Crusoe," married a third daughter.

His excellent wife became bookseller and cash-keeper, at the shop called "The Black Raven," in Gracechurch Street, and, as Dunton admits, "she managed all my affairs for me, and left me entirely to my own rambling and scribbling humour." Here, in 1685, he published "Maggots; or, Poems on several subjects never before handled by a Scholar." This work is said to have been written (at the age of nineteen) by Mr. Samuel Wesley.

Owing to the defeat of Monmouth at Sedgmoor, July 5th, 1685, there came a great depression in trade in general and publishing did not flourish. John had a debt of £500 owing to him in New England; he decided to make a trip to Boston, taking a cargo of books with him. He procured storage for his venture in two ships; the one in which he himself took passage was the "Susannah and Thomas," and after a terrible passage of four months and many adventures on board he at length reached Boston, but whether the other ship ever reached her destination is not quite clear; at all events, poor Dunton seems to have lost half his cargo, valued at £500, which appears to have been cast away in the Downs. On his arrival at Boston "he consoled his dear Iris" (his wife) "by sending her sixty letters in one ship."

He was absent from home nearly a year endeavouring to sell the remainder of his stock, but he found dealing with the four booksellers of Boston not very profitable, for, says he, "he that trades with the inhabitants of Boston may get promises enough, but their payments come late," and he found himself "as welcome as sour ale in summer."

He had taken with him a steady apprentice, Samuel Palmer, to whom he intrusted the whole charge of his business; which left him at leisure to make many excursions into the country. He visited Harvard College, and opened a warehouse in the town of Salem and other places.

On his return to England he found his affairs in a bad condition. "He had become security for his brother and sister-in-law" (presumably Mr. and Mrs. S. Wesley) "for about £1,200, which caused him much trouble; he had to keep within doors for ten months." "My confinement," says Dunton, "growing very uneasy to me, especially on Lord's days, I was extremely desirous to hear Dr. Annesley preach, and immediately the contrivance was started in my head that dear Iris should dress me in woman's cloaths." Accordingly he went, and heard the doctor, but on his return he was discovered—"I'll be hanged if that ben't a man in woman's cloaths!" He bolted, and twenty or thirty roughs gave chase, but he eventually eluded them, and "came off with honour."

His confinement had now become so irksome that he slipped away and rambled through Hol-

land, Flanders, Germany, etc., and stayed four months at Amsterdam. After an absence of some months he returned to London, November 15th, 1688, and having now settled with his creditors he started afresh as a bookseller: on the day the Prince of Orange came to London he opened a shop at "The Black Raven" in the Poultry. One of his projects, says Mr. Knight, was a decided success. He started the "Athenian Gazette" (afterwards changed to "Mercury") the first number of which appeared March 17th, 1690, and he kept on this penny tract of a single leaf till February, 1696, when he proposed to publish the "Mercuries" in quarterly volumes, and of these, according to Mr. Knight, he seems to have issued nineteen volumes,[1] which Mr. Knight regarded as "the precursors of a revolution in the entire system of our lighter literature, which turned pamphlets and broadsides into magazines and miscellanies." The associates in the conduct of this publication, who called themselves the Athenian Society, were Richard Sault,

[1] Mr. Dunton says: "Our 'Athenian Mercuries' were continued till they swelled, at least to twenty volumes folio: and then we took up to give ourselves a little ease and refreshment."

a Cambridge theologian, Samuel Wesley, and the Rev. Dr. John Norris. The aim of the Athenian Society, which had, says Dunton, "their first meeting in my brain," was "to advance all knowledge and diffuse a general learning through the many, and by that civilise more now in a few years than Athens itself did of old during the ages it flourished."

Samuel Wesley was connected with him in several of his trade speculations; though they afterwards parted with irreconcilable hatred. "I could," says John, "be very *maggotty* on the character of this conforming dissenter; but, except he further provokes me, I bid him farewell till we meet in heaven; and then I hope we shall renew our friendship, for human frailties excepted, I believe Sam Wesley a pious man."

The original agreement between Dunton, Sault, and Wesley, for writing their paper, dated April 10th, 1691, is in the Rawlinson MSS. in the Bodleian (D.N.B.). Mr. Knight says that Dunton was naturally proud of the success of his little periodical. "Poems in its honour were written by the chief wits of the age." The Marquis of Halifax perused it, and Mr. Swift, "a young country gentleman, the haughtiest of mankind,"

bowed down to it. He wrote a poem, of which the following are the first two lines:

> "Pardon, ye great and far exalted men,
> The wild excursion of a youthful pen."

"These old Athenian volumes growing quite out of print, a choice collection of the most valuable questions and answers, in three volumes, have been reprinted under the title of 'The Athenian Oracle.' Two of these volumes I dedicated to the most illustrious and most magnanimous Prince, James, Duke of Ormond. These two volumes I presented to his Grace with my own hand; and if any thing could make me vain of the Athenian project it would be the generous reception his Grace gave to each of the volumes."

During the progress of this work, in 1692, he inherited an estate on the death of his cousin Carter. "The World," he says, "now smiled upon me; I sailed with wind and tide, and had humble servants enough among the booksellers, printers, and binders. Now the master and assistants of the Company of Stationers began to think me sufficient to wear a livery." He paid his livery fine of twenty pounds.

One of Dunton's *projects*—and one would think his maddest—was what Nichols calls his

"greatest *project*," viz., "The Night Walker; or Evening Rambles in search of Lewd Women." It was intended for the extirpation of lewdness from London, a scheme highly creditable to the schemer, had it been practicable. Armed with a constable's staff, and accompanied by a clerical companion, he sallied forth in the evening, and followed the wretched prostitutes home, where every effort was made to win the erring fair to the paths of virtue; "but these," he observes, "were perilous adventures, as the Cyprians exerted every art to lead him astray, in the height of his spiritual exhortation."

The licensing system was in vogue in those days, and Dunton gives a quaint account of "the several licensers with whom I have had concerns." The first on his list is Sir Roger L'Estrange,[1] and he is thus characterized: "a man that betrays his religion and country in pretending to defend it; that was made sur-

[1] In August, 1663, Roger L'Estrange, Esq. (after more than twenty years spent in serving the royal cause, near six of them in gaols, and almost four under sentence of death in Newgate) had interest sufficient to obtain an appointment to a new created office under the title of Surveyor of the Imprimery and Printing Offices, together with the sole licensing of books, etc.

veyor of the press, and would wink at unlicensed books if the printer's wife would but smile on him."[1]

On the other hand, he says of a Mr. Fraser, that "no man was better skilled in the mystery of winning upon the hearts of booksellers, nor were the Company of Stationers ever blessed with an honester licenser." Of Mr. Robert Stephens, a messenger to the press, he says, "I must say he never did me the least injury, for if I printed a book that had no license, I took such care to dazzle his eyes that he could not see it."

Mr. Knight says of this licensing system, "with all its tyranny and corruption it had one advantage; it did something to protect the copyright in books from piracy. The licensing acts and proclamations prohibited the printing of any books without the consent of the author, as also without a license."

In the interval between the period when licenses of the press had ceased and the passing of the Copyright Act of 8th Queen Anne, there

[1] In 1662 THE LICENSING ACT was passed, and repealed in 1691. The Act of Queen Anne was passed in 1709; in the interim *perpetual* copyright ruled, but chaos reigned.

was no protection for literary property—a period of twenty years—and of course piracy was rampant.

Dunton mentions one Mr. Lee in Lombard Street, "such a pirate, such a cormorant was never before known, copies, books, men, ships, all was one; he held no propriety, right or wrong, good or bad, till at last he began to be known; and the booksellers, not enduring so ill a man among them, to disgrace them, spewed him out, and off he marched to Ireland, where he acted as *felonious Lee* as he did in London." There he might safely pirate. That Irish trade flourished more or less till the Union, 1801, put an end to it.

Among the "Thousand Friends" described in his book, he gives the name probably of every bookseller in London with a few lines of laudation to each one of them. Thus (modestly referring to himself) "Mr. D—ton. He is happy in a very beautiful wife, and she in a kind husband; they have lived so happily since their marriage, that, sure enough, the banns of their matrimony were asked in heaven. Mr. D—ton may value himself upon his beautiful choice."

If his description of them individually and collectively was not tinged with a liberal degree of exaggeration and flattery, London and provincial booksellers of to-day may well be proud of their predecessors of the latter part of the seventeenth and the first half of the eighteenth century. "Never, certainly," writes Mr. G. L. Craik, referring to Mr. Dunton's book, "before or since were all the graces, both of mind and body, so generally diffused among any class of men as among these old London booksellers." One is a man "of very quick parts;" of another it is affirmed that "for sense, wit, and good humour, there are but few can equal, and none can exceed him." One is "very much conversant with the sacred writings." Another "speaks French and Latin with a great deal of fluency and ease." Another "is familiarly acquainted with all the books that are extant in any language." As to their persons, "many of them are remarkable for their beauty," their "eyes brisk and sparkling," "of a graceful aspect," and "of a lovely proportion, exceedingly well made."

As to the provincial booksellers of his time, he describes only a few of them individually,

but with a sweeping commendation which, it may be hoped, is deserved by their successors, now multiplied twenty-fold. "Of three hundred booksellers now trading in country towns, I know not of one knave or blockhead among them all."

Book auctioneers are also noticed by Mr. Dunton: "The famous Mr. Edward Millington was one of them; he had a quick wit and a wonderful fluency of speech. 'Where,' said Mr. Millington, 'is your generous flame for learning? Who but a sot or a blockhead would have money in his pockets and starve his brains?' Dr. Cave was once bidding too leisurely for a book. 'Where,' said Mr. Millington, 'is your Primitive Christianity?' alluding to a book the honest doctor had just published under that title."

In 1697 Dunton lost his wife, whose death he bitterly lamented; though, in the same year, he consoled himself by another marriage, with Sarah, daughter of Mrs. Nicholas, of St. Albans. With this lady he does not seem to have added much to his comforts or his fortune. The mother-in-law was a woman of property, who left some money to the poor of St. Albans; she

quarrelled with Dunton, who complained because she refused to pay his debts. He left his wife soon after the marriage; he turned from publishing to book-auctioneering, and in 1698 was busy in Dublin with a cargo of books. He was in Ireland about six months, and during that time he had many quarrels with the booksellers, the story of which he related in a tract, called "The Dublin Scuffle; being a Challenge sent by John Dunton, Citizen of London, to Patrick Campbell, Bookseller in Dublin." In his "Farewell to his acquaintances in Dublin, friends and enemies," says Mr. Roberts, he has the satisfaction of announcing the disposal of the "Venture of books I brought into this country, maugre all opposition." His receipts were about £1,500.

"A worthy member of the House of Commons," says John, "did me the honour to say that I had been, by this undertaking, a great benefactor of this country, and other gentlemen said that I had 'done more service to learning by my three auctions than any one single man that had come to Ireland these hundred years.'"

Dunton said that during a short period he

published no less than 600 books, and of this great number he only repented of seven.

The "Life and Errors," from which most of the information about Dunton has been obtained, was published in 1705. "It is," says Mr. Roberts, "the maddest of all mad books . . . but its value to all students of the literary history of the eighteenth century can hardly be over-estimated." He also gives a brief description of an immense number of books and pamphlets written by Dunton, even the titles of which my space does not permit me to quote. He had given up publishing a short time before he wrote his "Life."

One of his latest projects is "An Appeal to George I.," which he considered in some sense his "Dying Groans from the Fleet Prison, or a last shift for Life." He claims to have had a most distinguished share in bringing about the Hanoverian succession, "the Pretender," he says, "having sworn that John Dunton is the first man he will hang at Tyburn if ever he ascends the British Throne."

"Dunton," says Nichols, "was a most voluminous writer, as he seems to have had his pen always ready, and never to have been

at a loss for a subject to exercise it upon. Though he generally put his name to what he wrote, it would be a difficult task to get together a complete collection of his various publications. As containing notices of many persons and things not to be found elsewhere, they certainly have their use; and his accounts are often entertaining."

The last halfscore years or more of his life were spent in great misery. He died in 1733, in the 75th year of his age, but where and under what circumstances is not now known. The "Old Bookseller," says that Dunton "certainly threw more light upon the periodical publications of his day than any other writer. He appears to have laid the foundation of the plan upon which Mr. Nichols has so much improved."

IV. SAMUEL RICHARDSON, 1689-1761

NE of Mr. Richardson's biographers says that he was "the most eminent man who ever stood behind a bookseller's counter." I do not think he ever did so stand. He should more properly be called a *printer*. He was brought up as a printer; he became a printer of books, and doubtless his name appears on the title-page of many books. His first book of "Familiar Letters"[1] having been suggested to

[1] This volume of "Familiar Letters" seems to have been published at first anonymously, and it was not till after the author's death that his name appears on the title-page. It is not included in the Bibliography given by Mrs. Thomson at the end of her work, but she mentions it as preceding "Pamela."

him by Rivington and Osborne, probably bears their imprint. His other books would doubtless bear his own name; indeed, his own name on a title-page as the publisher came to be regarded as a great honour. Thus Dr. Edward Young, who was an enthusiastic admirer, wrote: "Suppose on the title-page of 'The Night Thoughts' you should say, 'Published by the Author of 'Clarissa.'"

The term "publisher" was rarely used in those days—the word "bookseller" being generally adopted—and in that sense Richardson was one.

There has been so much written by and about Richardson that it is difficult to compress into a short sketch the material available from which to glean. Mrs. Barbauld wrote a biography of him as an introduction to his correspondence. This biography and the correspondence form the basis from which all subsequent writers have obtained their information. The last and most interesting work was published only a few months ago, entitled "Samuel Richardson: a Biographical and Critical Study," by Clara Linklater Thomson.

Samuel Richardson was born in a Derbyshire village in the year 1689, but for some reason he

always avoided mentioning the name of the town or village, and, to this day, Derbyshire may as a county claim the honour of owning his birthplace, but it cannot identify the spot where the author of "Clarissa" first saw the light of day. His father was a joiner by trade, with some knowledge of architecture. He settled in London and married a lady whose parents had died within half-an-hour of each other in the time of the great plague, 1665. He had been employed by the Duke of Monmouth and the first Earl of Shaftesbury, and was probably concerned in Monmouth's rebellion; on this account, at the time of Monmouth's fall, suspicion of his loyalty fell upon him; he closed his business in London, and retired to this mysterious village in Derbyshire, "though to his great detriment," says Samuel, "and there I and three other children out of nine were born." It was no joke in Chief Justice Jeffreys's days of authority to come under suspicion; for he might have been sent to the gallows, or to the plantations across the Atlantic. This possibly explains Richardson's reticence about his native village.

Samuel, one of nine children, was intended for the Church, but heavy losses obliged his

father to abandon his thought of making his ingenious son a parson, and he had him bound apprentice to a printer instead. He is said to have been for a time at Christ's Hospital, but his name does not appear in the school registers. In any case he never attained more than a smattering of the learned languages.

Mrs. Barbauld states that when Richardson was an old man (1753) he received a letter from a Dutch clergyman, the Rev. Mr. Stinstra, who had translated "Clarissa," as follows: "May I ask you (although I am too bold, my letter blushes not) in what kind of life you have been conversant in your youth? Have you, as fame reports, been constantly employed in bookselling? Whence did you attain so accurate a knowledge of the various dispositions of nature and of the manners of mankind? By what means have you compiled your immortal works?" etc., etc.

To these flattering inquiries the author replies without reserve as to the facts of his early life. "I was not eleven years old," he says, "when I wrote spontaneously a letter to a widow of nearly fifty, who, pretending to a zeal for religion, and being a constant frequenter of Church ordi-

nances, was continually fomenting quarrels and disturbances, by backbiting and scandal among all her acquaintances. I collected, from Scripture, texts that made against her. Assuming the style and address of a person in years, I exhorted her, I expostulated with her. But my handwriting was known; I was challenged with it, and owned the boldness, for she complained to my mother with tears. . . . My mother, however, commended my principles, though she censured the liberty I had taken."

It was at the ripe age of thirteen that he became a writer of love-letters for the girls in his neighbourhood. "A bashful and not forward boy," he says, "I was an early favourite with all the young women of taste and reading in the neighbourhood. Half a dozen of them, when met together with their needles, used, when they got a book they liked, to borrow me to read to them. . . . I was not more than thirteen when three of these young women, unknown to each other, having a high opinion of my taciturnity, revealed to me their love secrets, in order to induce me to give them copies to write after, or correct, for answers to their lovers' letters; nor did any of them ever know that I was the secre-

tary to the others. . . . One, highly gratified with her lover's fervour and vows of everlasting love, has said when I have asked her directions: 'I cannot tell you what to write, but' (her heart on her lips) 'you cannot write too kindly.'"

Thus it was in those early days that he laid the foundation for that intimate knowledge of the intricacies of the feminine side of human nature, which is so abundantly displayed in his three great works of fiction.

Like Dunton he was intended for the Church, but the Fates ordained that he should be a publisher and printer. When he was seventeen years old, in 1706, he was bound apprentice to Mr. John Wilde, a printer of some eminence in his day, who, according to Dunton, had "a very noble printing house in Aldersgate Street." Referring to this period of his life, Richardson writes: "I served a diligent seven years to it; to a master who grudged every hour to me that tended to his profit; even of those times of leisure and diversion which the refractoriness of my fellow-apprentices obliged him to allow them, and were usually allowed by other masters to their apprentices. I stole from the hours of rest and relaxation my reading times for the im-

provement of my mind. I took care that even the candle was of my own purchasing, that I might not, in the most trifling instance, make my master a sufferer."

After the expiration of his apprenticeship with this hard task-master, he worked for some years as a compositor, a reader, and as overseer. In 1719 he took up his freedom, and became a master printer in a small way in a court off Fleet Street, and filled up his leisure hours by compiling indexes for the booksellers, and writing prefaces, and what he calls *honest dedications*. He afterwards removed to Salisbury Square. It was in 1724 that another future literary celebrity came to work with him as a compositor. Thomas Gent, in the "Story of his Life,"[1] says: "Mr. Woodfall was so kind to recommend me to the ingenious Mr. Richardson, in Salisbury Court, with whom I staid to finish his part of the Dictionary, which he had from the booksellers—composed of English, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew."

"His knowledge of the heart of man was pro-

[1] "The Life of Mr. Thomas Gent, Printer, of York," written by himself. London: Thomas Thorpe, 38, Bedford Street. 1832.

bably extended," says Mr. Knight, "by his acquaintance with the clever and profligate Duke of Wharton, for whom he printed the "True Briton," but he withdrew from it after the publication of the sixth number, and so escaped prosecution."

Two years after he started business he married —in 1726—Martha, daughter of Allington Wilde, of Aldersgate Street—so says Mrs. Barbauld (quoting Nichols), "whom," says the D.N.B., "she confuses with his master, John Wilde," but in this instance the D.N.B. seems to be mistaken, for I notice that Clara L. Thomson, in the very interesting work she has just published, shows pretty clearly that Richardson, after all, did "carry out his resemblance to the industrious apprentice, by marrying his master's daughter." She found in the registers of Charterhouse Chapel, under date 1692, that John Wilde, widower, of the parish of St. Bartholomew the Great, married Martha A. Allington, spinster; and under date November 23, 1721, Samuel Richardson (*cœlebs*) married Martha Wilde (*soluta*) of the parish of St. Botolph's, Aldersgate. It seems likely that this Martha was the daughter of the John and Martha

above named; and as, from Richardson's will, we know that he had a brother-in-law, Allington Wilde, Nichols probably confused the son, who was named after his mother's family, with the father, John, who died in 1728, and who had "a very noble printing house in Aldersgate."

Through the influence of the Right Honourable Arthur Onslow, who became Speaker of the House of Commons in 1728, he was entrusted with printing the Journals of the House of Commons. Of these he printed twenty-six volumes, and incurred thereby a debt owing to him by the Government of £3,000, which he had great difficulty in getting paid, "owing," says Mr. Knight, "to every sort of jobbery and fraud during most part of the eighteenth century . . . of under-secretaries and auditors of accounts."

In 1736 he printed the "Daily Journal," and in 1738 the "Daily Gazetteer." Some noblemen and authors founded, in 1736, "A Society for the Encouragement of Learning," and appointed him to be one of the printers. The Society was *intended to make authors independent of publishers*. It soon collapsed.

"These years," says Mrs. Thomson, "were

for Richardson a period of much domestic trouble. His first wife, overwhelmed by grief at the loss of all her children, died in 1731. He did not long remain a widower, and the next year he married Elizabeth Leake, the daughter of a bookseller at Bath. Their eldest child, Elizabeth, born in 1733, lived only a few months, but Mary, born in 1734, Martha, in 1736, Anne, in 1737, and Sarah, in 1740, all survived their father. There was also a son, Samuel, born in 1739, and buried in 1740. Richardson felt his bereavements deeply."

Thus Samuel Richardson pursued the even tenour of his way till 1740, when two members of the trade—Mr. Rivington and Mr. Osborne—proposed to him to undertake for them a literary work rather more interesting than "indexes and dedications." Here is his own account of the affair: "Two booksellers, my particular friends, entreated me to write for them a little volume entitled, 'Familiar Letters to and from Persons in Business and other Subjects," in a common style on such subjects as might be of use to those country readers who were unable to write for themselves. 'Will it be any harm,' said I, 'in a piece you want to

be written so low, if we should instruct them how they should think and act in common cases as well as indite?" They were the more urgent with me to begin the little volume for this hint. I set about it, and in the progress of it wrote two or three letters to instruct handsome girls, who were obliged to go out to service, as we phrase it, how to avoid the snares that might be laid against their virtue. And hence sprung "Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded,"[1] which appears to have been written in three months.

Evidently "Pamela" "sprung" from the "*two or three letters*," and not from the volume suggested by R. and O., which was a separate work.

Fielding ridiculed "Pamela" in his "Joseph Andrews," and Richardson ever afterwards spoke very bitterly of his rival. It is curious that neither of these two admired writers (of totally different schools) could discover the least merit in the other's works. Fielding laughed at the "puny Cockney bookseller pouring out endless volumes of sentimental twaddle," and held him up to scorn as "a moll-coddle and a milksop."

[1] See Footnote *ante*, page 50.

Richardson said that "had he not known Fielding, he should have believed the author of 'Joseph Andrews' to have been an ostler."

Highly as his reputation as an author was raised by "Pamela," he acquired, and justly, still higher fame by "Clarissa Harlowe," "the first four volumes of which, with a preface by Warburton, appeared in 1747, and the last four by the end of 1748. This work soon won for him a European reputation."—D.N.B. Mrs. Barbauld says she "very well remembers a Frenchman who paid a visit to Hampstead for the sole purpose of finding out the house in the Flask Walk[1] where Clarissa lodged, and was surprised at the ignorance or indifference of the inhabitants on that subject. The Flask Walk was to him as much classic ground as the rocks of Meillerie to the admirers of Rousseau."

His next and last great work was "Sir Charles Grandison," which was received with great en-

[1] Mr. George Stevens lived in a house just on the rise of Hampstead Heath. It was paled in, and had, immediately before it, a verdant lawn skirted with a variety of picturesque trees—formerly a tavern, known by the name of 'The Upper Flask,' and which my fair readers will recollect to have been the same to which Richardson sends Clarissa in one of her escapes from Lovelace." ("Nichols' Literary Anecdotes.")

thusiasm. Mr. Knight, with prophetic vision, says: "I fear there will never be a revival of *three-volume novels in large type*, of the devotion which rarely wearied of a story told in some three or four hundred epistles. I lately asked at a country circulating library for 'Clarissa' and 'Sir Charles Grandison,' and the worthy caterer of literary novelties told me he had never heard of these books." "Clarissa" was originally published in eight volumes, and has frequently been reprinted since Mr. Knight's time in the same number of volumes and in other forms. As to "three-volume novels," they have had a tremendous vogue since he wrote in 1865, but now in 1901 it can truly be said, as he said then, "*there will never be a revival of them.*"

Richardson, like John Dunton, had cause to complain of the want of copyright in Ireland. He had hurried forward the printing of "Sir Charles Grandison," in order to be the first in that market, but he was beaten. The sheets were stolen from his printing office, and three Irish booksellers (Dunton's "Felonious Lee" may have been mixed up with them) each published cheap editions of nearly half the work,

before a volume appeared in England. He had heard an Irish bookseller boast that he could procure from any printing office in London sheets of any books printed in it, and while it was going on. "This occurrence," says Mr. Knight, "excited naturally the indignant denunciation of the English Press." "The Gray's Inn Journal" observed that "*a greater degree of probity might be expected from booksellers, on account of their occupation in life and connections with the learned.* What then should be said of Messrs. Eckshaw, Wilson, and Saunders, booksellers in Dublin, and perpetrators of the vile act of piracy? They should be expelled from the Republic of Letters, as literary Goths and Vandals who are ready to invade the property of every man of genius."[1]

Dr. Johnson wrote of Richardson, who had contributed one or two papers to the "Rambler," as "an author who had enlarged the knowledge

[1] Nichols gives in full a long letter "From the Courts of Parnassus," addressed to "The Students of Trinity College in Dublin." In it he writes: "We do hereby enjoin our young collegians, in a collective body, to march to the respective houses of the said Peter Wilson, John Eckshaw, and Henry Saunders, their bodies to seize, and in solemn procession to proceed with the same

of human nature, and taught the passions to move at the command of virtue."

In 1754 he was chosen Master of the Stationers' Company, all the duties of which he was well fitted to perform, says Mrs. Thomson, except that of hearty participation in the banquets. "I cannot but figure to myself," said Thomas Edwards, "the miserable example you will set at the head of the loaded tables, unless you have two stout jaw-workers for your wardens, and a good hungry Court of Assistants. Yours indeed is an example which, were the Company to follow, your cook's place would be in effect a sinecure." The new Master's weak health had for some time necessitated a vegetarian and water diet.

An imprisoned debtor wrote to him in praise of "Sir Charles Grandison," which he said had in a few hours "done for him what five years' imprisonment, with all the want and in-

to the place where William Wood, hardwareman, was executed in effigy, and then and there the said persons in a blanket to toss, but not till they are dead." . . "Given on Parnassus, the 10th of October, in the year of the Homeric æra two thousand seven hundred and fifty-three. By order of Apollo. JONATHAN SWIFT, Secretary."

digence imaginable annexed to it, could not do." Another correspondent, one Eusebius Sylvester, wrote to him in a similar strain, praising his books, flattering his vanity, and begging for a loan. Richardson replied to this latter in a long letter, sent him £25, and apologised for the smallness of the loan on the score of many calls upon his purse.

Mrs. Piozzi, in "Johnsoniana," says: "We were talking of Richardson, who wrote 'Clarissa.'" "You think I love flattery," says Dr. Johnson, "and so I do; but a little too much always disgusts me; that fellow Richardson, on the contrary, could not be contented to sail quietly down the stream of reputation without longing to taste the froth from every stroke of the oar."

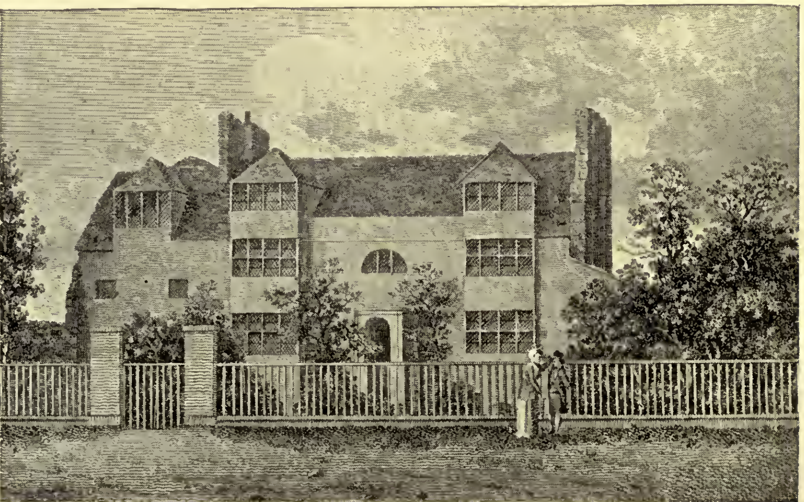
As a proof of Richardson's good nature, Dr. Johnson gives a curious instance. "I remember writing to him from a sponging house, and was so sure of my deliverance through his kindness and liberality that, before his reply was brought, I knew I could afford to joke with the rascal who had me in custody, and did so over a pint of adulterated wine for which, at that instant, I had no money to pay."

Mr. Nichols quotes from a MS. of Mr. Whiston, a bookseller of the period, in which he says that Richardson, "being very liable to passion, he directed all his men, it is said, by letter, not trusting himself to reprove by words which threw him into a passion and hurt him, who had always a tremor in his nerves." Nichols says this was not the reason, though the fact was certainly true—it was rather for convenience, and because his principal assistant, Mr. Tewley, was deaf.

Richardson never allowed his immense popularity as a writer to interfere with his business occupation as a printer. He regularly attended his office in Salisbury Court, and he was evidently in very prosperous circumstances. He purchased a moiety of the Patent of Law Printer, at Midsummer, 1760, and carried on that department of business in partnership with Miss Catherine Lintot.

He often regretted that he had only females to whom to transfer his business, but he had taken in to assist him a nephew, who relieved him from the more burdensome cares of it, and who eventually succeeded him. (Nichols.)

He had lived in a country house at North



THE HOUSE IN WHICH RICHARDSON WROTE "CLARISSA."

From an old engraving by J. P. Malcolm, 1799.

End, Hammersmith, for many years. In 1754 he removed to Parson's Green, Fulham.

His house was generally filled with his friends of both sexes. He was regularly there from Saturday to Monday, and frequently at other times, but never so happy as when he made others so, being himself, in his narrower sphere, the *Grandison* he drew; his heart and hand were ever open to distress. (Nichols.)

The accompanying picture of this house is from an old engraving in my possession dated 1799. It bears the inscription which is now underneath it. But as "Clarissa" was published in 1747-48, it could not have been written in 1754—I cannot vouch for its authenticity.

In 1757 his eldest daughter, Polly, was married to Mr. Philip Ditcher, a Bath surgeon; she died a widow in 1783; Patty, who acted as his amanuensis, was married after her father's death in 1762 to a Mr. Bridgen; and Sarah, the youngest, to Mr. Crowther, surgeon of Boswell Court. Nancy, the third daughter, died unmarried in 1803, the last survivor of the family.

"I have a very good wife," said Richardson to Edwards, "I am sure you think I have. But the man who has passed all his days single is

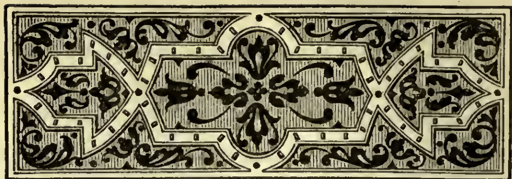
not always a loser." In another letter he writes, half playfully: "Many who think they know us well (God help them, or rather God help me!) imagine I carry every point, so meek my wife Be quiet, standers by, you don't *always* see more than those who play. Let me warn you to doubt your own judgments when you take upon you to decide in favour of the yielding qualities of a meek wife, *not obstinacy itself is more persevering!*"

It need not be inferred from this that Richardson was not an affectionate husband; there may have been occasional exhibition on both sides of incompatibility of temper, that is all. "His esteem for his wife," says Mrs. Thomson, "is further proved by the fact that he appointed her one of the executors of his will, which he made in 1757. His increasing infirmities can scarcely have improved a temper naturally irritable and exacting."

He was seized on a Sunday evening with a most severe paralytic stroke, and after lingering unconscious for two days he died on July 4th, 1761. He was buried beside his first wife in the middle aisle of St. Bride's Church, which had witnessed the baptism of all his children.

I may properly conclude this rapid sketch by quoting his own portrait of himself:

"Short, rather plump, about five feet five inches, fair wig, one hand generally in his bosom, the other a cane in it, which he leans upon under the skirt of his coat that it may imperceptibly serve him as a support when attacked by sudden tremors or dizziness which too frequently attack him, but not, thank God! so often as formerly; looking directly foreright, as passers by would imagine, but observing all that stirs on either hand of him without moving his short thick neck; hardly ever turning back; of a light-brown complexion, teeth not yet failing him, smooth-faced and ruddy-cheeked; at some times looking to be about sixty-five, at other times much younger; a regular even pace, stealing away the ground rather than seeming to rid it; a grey eye too often overclouded by mistiness from the head; by chance lively, very lively it will be if he have hope of seeing a lady whom he loves and honours."



V. THOMAS GENT, PRINTER, OF YORK, 1691-1778

NOTHING was known of Thomas Gent's early history beyond what could be incidentally gathered from his own publications, until many years after his death, when a manuscript was discovered in his own handwriting by Mr. Thorpe, bookseller in Bedford Street, Covent Garden. The title was, "The Life of Mr. Thomas Gent, Printer, of York, written by himself." It was written in 1746, when he was fifty-three years old, so that presumably he was born in 1693.[1] The volume was published by Mr. Thorpe in

[1] At the end of the book it is stated that he died May 19th, 1778, in his eighty-seventh year. In that case he must have been born in 1691 or 1692.

THOMAS GENT, 1691-1778,
Printer of York.

From a mezzotinto engraving by Valentine Green, after Nathan Drake.

1832. It is to this volume that I am chiefly indebted for the matter which forms this sketch.

It is a story of hardships bravely borne, described sometimes with quaint unconscious humour—of success sometimes within his grasp, but never really attained, and of a disastrous ending. Southey, mentioning him in "The Doctor," says the volume "contains much information relating to the state of the press in his days, and the trade of literature." It would be quite impossible, and I think uninteresting, to go into dry details of this description.

Gent was a native of Ireland. It so happened, however, when Mr. Thorpe came to print the book, three closely printed folios were missing, the first, the third, and the ninth. Doubtless the first contained an account of his parentage and his childhood. His parents were resident in Ireland, and when the story begins he was apprenticed to a printer in Dublin, who by his own account treated him so badly that, after having served from the age of twelve or thirteen to sixteen or seventeen, he ran away, and it is at this point the MS. begins. He got a shilling from his mother, gave her and his father a farewell kiss, and, without a hint as to where he was

going, he started with three small loaves of bread and seventeen pence in his pocket. He managed to creep unperceived into the hold of Captain Wharton's ship just starting for England, and there was hidden when his father and master came aboard in search of him, but he was not discovered.

On the fourth day, after a very rough passage, the ship reached England. Knowing that his stock of cash would not pay for his passage, he tremblingly approached Captain Wharton and offered him his waistcoat.

"'Pretty lad,' said the captain, 'why, if I were to strip you of your rayment you might happen to be starved to death; had my sailors told me you were hid in my ship, upon my word, you should have been delivered up to your friends. What will your parents think? Here, young lad, take this sixpence, endeavour to get employment, and take to good ways.'"

Gent, with tears, thanked the good old captain, and told him that if ever he met him again he would recompense him.

He landed and set off on foot for Chester, but there was no printing office in Chester in those days, so he started at once for London, and on the way was near being kidnapped by a company

of recruiting soldiers, and after other adventures, footsore, weary, and famishing, he reached St. Albans; there a good landlord and his wife took pity on him, gave him a good supper and sent him to bed.

At this point the narrative is interrupted by the second missing leaf, and when it resumes we find our hero in London, in the employ of a Mr. Midwinter, a printer, who carried on his trade at Pie Corner. There he made the acquaintance of a Dublin schoolfellow, son of Sir Richard Levintz, who took him about London to see the sights; he was a very handsome young fellow, of good character, about to start on his travels in the East, and Mrs. Midwinter, seeing that her apprentice had such an honourable acquaintance, began to treat him with greater respect than before.

He was now about twenty years old, and had been seven years at the trade, including his Dublin time; his master had usually treated him with great cruelty, and had recently given him a thrashing because he had told him that he was sadly in want of a pair of breeches, but he now, to his surprise, began "to show a glorious spirit of generosity" towards him. Gent had with great

pains taken down a sermon by Dr. Sacheverel after his suspension, by the printing of which his master made near £30 in one week. Midwinter sent for him, presented him with a crown piece, and told him that as he had now been seven years at the business he might have his freedom and work with whom he pleased.

"Upon their asking me what money I had I told them my poor stock amounted to a tester; that indeed I had a shilling, but sixpence of it went to pay for a letter that my dear mother hapily sent me, wherein, considering my condition, she had ordered me forty shillings and half a dozen shirts, to be received from Mr. Gunnell, in Throgmorton Street."

He then engaged with Mrs. Bradford, a Quaker and widow in Fetter Lane, who treated him kindly, and before the week was out he had earned 17*s*., and having £3 in the bank and a new suit of clothes of £3 price which Mr. Midwinter had given him, he thought himself very well off in the world; with this money he bought a new composing stick, a pair of scissors, a sliding box to contain them, a galley, and other appurtenances.

Not knowing when he was well off, he left the widow, and engaged with a Mr. Mears, in Black-

friars. In his office he was called upon to pay Ben-money, and was initiated into some of the mysteries of the trade. He was obliged to submit to what he says was the immemorial custom.

"'I was dubbed,' says he, 'as great a cuz as the famous Don Quixote. It commenced by walking round the chapel singing an alphabetical anthem, tuned literally to the vowels; striking me, kneeling, with a broad sword; and pouring ale upon my head. My titles were exhibited much to this effect: "Thomas Gent, Baron of College Green, Earl of Fingal, . . . and Lord High Admiral of all the boys in Ireland, etc."'"

After this initiation it was a matter of surprise to him to find that he was still regarded as a "foreigner," and in a fortnight's time he was discharged, not having as yet taken up his freedom. "This," says he, "was like a javelin to my soul, especially when I thought I had left Mrs. Bradford, in whose house I had lived without envy or danger."

After this he became a "smoulter," that is, he jobbed about from one office to another, and this kind of work afforded him a tolerable subsistence, and made him just a little proud, so that when he met Mears he did not show him "the least respect but scorn."

After some months had passed he heard of a Mr. White, of York, who wanted a journeyman at the business. Mr. White offered him £18 a year, besides board, washing, and lodging. He agreed, and, on Aprll 12th, 1714, he set off on foot from London for York. On his arrival he says:

"The first house I entered to inquire for my new master was in a printer's at Petergate—the very dwelling that is now my own, by purchase; but not finding Mr. White therein, a child brought me to his door, which was opened by the head maiden, that is now my dear spouse. She ushered me into the chamber where Mrs. White lay something ill in bed, but the old gentleman was at his dinner by the fireside, sitting in a noble armchair with a good large pie before him, and made me partake heartily with him. I had a guinea in my shoe lining, which I pulled out to ease my foot; at which the old gentleman smiled and pleasantly said it was more than he had ever seen a journeyman save before. I could not but smile too, because that my trunk, with my clothes and eight guineas, was sent about a month before to Ireland, where I was resolved to go and see my friends, had his place not offered to me as it did."

Mr. White had plenty of business to employ several persons, there being few printers in England at that time except in London. He was King's printer for York and five counties, which

appointment he obtained through having printed the Prince of Orange's declaration when it had been refused by all the printers in London. The death of Queen Anne at Kensington, on July 29th, occasioned the proclamation of King George I. on August 3rd following, at York, and "it was," says Gent, "on the steps of the magnificent cathedral that I perceived the comely, tall presence of the most illustrious prelate Sir William Dawes, the Archbishop, in company with the Lord Mayor and chief citizens by whom the ceremony was performed."

He made himself as comfortable as possible with Mr. White till his year was out, but he would not agree to stay with him any longer till he had seen his friends in Ireland. Meanwhile "he vented the diversity of his flowing passions" in a long poem of thirty-six stanzas, in which he tells the story of his early days and his various adventures down to the time of writing. I will quote the first two verses and the last but one. The first verse presents the kingdom of Ireland in the eighteenth century as in a more happy state of peace and contentment than that in which it has been customary to regard it during the nineteenth century.

"In fair Hibernia first I sucked in breath,
A pleasant isle, where spreading plenty flows,
A kingdom which, of all the realms on earth,
Is sure most happy, free from mortal foes,
Where wars and animosities do cease,
And, 'midst of war, enjoys a silent peace.

"Of meek and gentle parents dear I came,
Whose great delight was once in me their son;
Who though for greatness they bore not a name,
Yet for proximic virtue, bright have shown;
Were rich in grace, though not in glittering ore,—
They had enough, and who need value more?"

He goes on to tell of his apprenticeship in his thirteenth year, and "three years with a tyrant, strove to live," and then he bolted, as has been already told. In the thirty-fifth verse (the last but one) he writes:

"And now to ancient Ebor's city come,
Perchance I may some time recline my head,
Till future years shall make me spring in bloom,
Or I, through fate, or all my foes, be dead;
Which way it will, I trust that God will be
My guardian here and in eternity."

Miss Alice Guy, the young woman who "opened the door to him," was the daughter of a schoolmaster at Ingleton; she seems to have been a girl of considerable attractions. He was evidently smitten by her charms, but he never told his love, because he had no desire for

matrimony till he could afford to give his wife a handsome maintenance. His master's grandson, Mr. Charles Bourne, a deserving young fellow, was also one of her admirers. Being now on the point of starting for Ireland, he told Miss Guy that he should respect her as one of his dearest friends; she presented him with a little dog as a companion on the road. His rival, young Bourne, and several of his late companions accompanied him as far as Bramham Moor on May 15, and after numerous adventures at sea, and having been cast away on the Isle of Man, where he remained some weeks, he eventually arrived in Dublin.

During his stay at Douglas he came in contact one rainy evening in a public-house with an atheistical exciseman, and when he was innocently praising God for His preservation of his ship's company, he deridingly mocked, and hinted as if Almighty God had no hand in human concerns that way. "No, no," said he, "think not that your preservation was any concern of His." On this subject they had a long discussion:

"Though I was but young," said he, "to engage with a man of his age and capacity, with

a sort of mathematical genius, yet I argued as well as I could from the Holy Scriptures. . . . He called me a poor, pious philosopher. The company round seemed mightily pleased with what I said, called him an atheistical foolish unmannerly fellow, and told him that he had now met with his match—upon this he flung away in a huff."

The company were very well pleased at his absence, and they treated our orator willingly.

"'When I reached my father's house, as our dutiful custom is there, I fell on my knees to ask his blessing. The good old man took me up with tears in his eyes, blessed me, saying, 'Tommy, I hardly knew thee.' My mother being at my sister Standish's, I went thither, and found her in the parlour, and she as little knew me, till, falling in the same position, I discovered her wandering son. The children, my nephews and nieces, ran out of the pleasant garden to behold their uncle, and, in short, I was as much made of as my heart could desire; but the most fond of me was my dear niece, Ann Standish, a perfect beauty."

Gent soon engaged himself with Mr. Thomas Hume, a printer, but he had not been there long before he met with "a sad persecution" from his old master, Powell,[1] who employed

[1] Dunton says of this man: "His person is handsome, and his mind has many charms. He is the very life and

officers to seize him for running away from his apprenticeship. This, he says, "was a cutting stroke, and with extreme sorrow pierced me, even, I may say, to the very marrow of my soul." His father and his brother-in-law offered Powell a certain sum for his releasement.

"But this made him insist the more; so that, upon due consideration, finding there was no other, indeed no better remedy, that the best of men have their troubles, that King George himself just then had an unnatural rebellion raised in his kingdom, that nothing could be worse to me than Powell's tyranny, . . . I determined to leave my native country once more. About that time I received a letter from my dearest, at York, that I was expected thither, and thither too, purely again to enjoy her company, was I resolved to direct my course."

On July 8 he took leave of his friends. On the 13th he reached Liverpool.

[At this point there is another break in the narrative, and when it is resumed he is on his way to London, having apparently spent some time in York in the years 1715 and 1716.]

Now we find him again employed by his old

spirit where he comes, and it is impossible to be sad if he sets upon it; he is a man of a great wit and sense, and I hope as much honesty. . . . He is a good man, and a good printer, as well as a good companion."

friend, Midwinter, and fighting Henry Lingard, one of his fellow apprentices.

"Lingard swore he would fight me whether I would or no. I gave him all the good words I could to be quiet, but in vain. . . . 'I wish,' said I, 'they that put you on, like a dog, to worry me, would appear as open as you do!' 'Dog!' said he. With that he lets drive the first stroke, which obliged me to return his salutation. I beat him heartily in the case room, and then we tumbled like fighting cats, downstairs amongst the presses. The lye-trough standing at the bottom, he happened to fall with his head therein, when that unholy liquid smeared him to some purpose; we descended down another pair of grades, where the paper-bank tumbled after us for company into the back-kitchen, and, notwithstanding his great strength, it was my happy fortune, through God's good providence, to give him that just, though severe correction, that he ran howling like a dog indeed that had lost his ears to complain of me to his indulgent parents. . . . Afterwards never young persons proved better friends than he and I together."

Shortly after this he received a letter from "his dear" at York, referring clearly to something mentioned in the missing pages telling him that "the poor condemned persons had been hanged for stealing three halfpence!" which after all it appears they did not steal. The story told is rambling and confused, but

a very touching one, though too long for quotation.

It appears that Mrs. White, the widow of his old employer in York, was so touched by the speeches of the two men, Barron and Bourne, before they were hanged at Tyburn, York, that she determined to print their speeches, in which two men who were the means of bringing them to the gallows, named Jackson and King, were characterized as perjurers. These men prosecuted poor Mrs. White, judgment went against her, and she lost "near fourscore pounds." Mr. Gent says:

"I should not have mentioned this shocking digression if I had not ascertained how much Mrs. White was affected by my absence. Often would she say to my dearest, "Alas! had poor Gent been with me! Though young, he was adorned with prudence, and I am sure would not have done anything whereby I could have been hurt in this barbarous manner. How does he do? Does he never write to you? I wonder what's the reason he never lets me know so much as how he lives."

After this Mrs. White continued for some time in a languishing condition, "attended carefully by my dear." Her death was universally lamented.

In the year 1717 he had the great happiness of being made freeman of the Company of Stationers, and on October 9th commenced citizen of London at Guildhall. Shortly after this his parents informed him that his first master, Powell, had accepted £5 for his discharge, with a willing heart, wishing him all manner of happiness. Thus he was absolutely free both in England and Ireland, which made him "give sincere thanks to the Almighty from the inmost recesses of his soul."

Now finding himself free, though not quite sufficiently furnished for marriage, he decided to make another trip to York. On telling Midwinter that he was going to leave him, he called him a jesuitical dog, and bade him go at once. "Sir," said he, "have you no copies of mine in your trunk which you may think to get printed in another place?" "Well, master," answered I, "this wounds me more than the worst action you could have done by me; here's the key—open it, take them if you find such, and seize everything I have." Mrs. Midwinter interposed, and eventually things were made pleasant.

He did not then go to York, but he kept up correspondence with his "dear." After various

employments in London, and after urgent request from his parents, he once more found his way to Ireland. There for some time he was employed with Mr. Hume, and although he could but obtain common subsistence, his affection for his dear parents took all thoughts of further advantages away,

> "till Mr. Alexander Campbell, a Scotchman in the same printing office, getting me in liquour, made me promise to accompany him to England, where there was greater likelihood of prosperity."

Accordingly he agreed to go, to the great grief of his parents. "What, Tommy," said his mother, "this English damsel of yours, I suppose, is the chiefest reason why you slight us and your native country. . . . Whether I live to see you again or no I shall pray God to be your defender and preserver."

He and his friend embarked for England, reached Holyhead, climbed over Penmaenmawr, and eventually arrived at Chester, where he left his friend. On arriving at London he found employment with Mr. Watts. Mr. Knight reminds us that this Mr. John Watts was the partner of Jacob Tonson. He carried on his business in Lincoln's Inn Fields; it was in this

office that a youth of nineteen, who turned out to be a far greater man than Gent, worked for some time, viz., Benjamin Franklin. He was called the *Water American*, and in his "Autobiography" he states that he drank only water, whilst his companion at the press drank every day a *pint* of ale before breakfast, a *pint* at his breakfast, a *pint* between breakfast and dinner, a *pint* at dinner, a *pint* in the afternoon, and another when he finished work—his own example caused many of his companions to give up this muddling beer and drink hot water gruel sprinkled with pepper.

He was enticed away from this highly respectable establishment by a Mr. Clifton, a Roman Catholic, who employed him in a variety of ways for some time and with whom he got into much trouble. Clifton had found it necessary to move his goods into the Liberty of the Fleet, and there became entered as a prisoner.

"He paid me honestly almost every week, as my constancy and my labour deserved. Sometimes in extreme weather have I worked under a mean shed adjoining the prison wall, when snow and rain have fallen alternately on the cases. Yet the number of wide-mouthed stentorian hawkers, brisk trade, and very often a

glass of good ale nerved the drooping spirits of me and other workmen. . . . I remember once a piece of work came from a reverend Bishop vindicating the reputation of a clergyman who had been committed to the King's Bench through an action of *scandalum magnatum*, . . . and though I composed the letters, I was not allowed to know who was the author. The same night these were packed, my master and I hiring a coach were driven to Westminster, where we entered a large monastic building."

They were soon ushered into a spacious hall, where they found on a table a bottle of wine placed for their entertainment. They were visited by a grave man in black. He told them to be secret, "for," said he, "the imprisoned divine does not know who is his defender." "You need not fear me," said my master; and "I, good sir," added I, "you may be less afraid of; for I protest I do not know where I am, much less your person. . . . I shall forget I ever did the job to-morrow and I shall drink to your health with this brimful glass." This set them both a laughing, and truly I was got merrily tipsy, so merry that I hardly know how I was driven home afterwards."

Happening afterwards to behold a state prisoner in a coach, guarded from Westminster to

the Tower, "God bless me, thought I, it was no less than the Bishop of Rochester, Dr. Atterbury,[1] by whom my master and I had been treated."

Madam Midwinter now did all she could to get him back, but without avail; he continued to work with the seemingly disreputable Clifton, and a few months afterwards Mrs. Midwinter died, Feb. 10, 1719-20, and was buried in Islington churchyard near the steeple. He attended the funeral, and wrote an epitaph, of which this is the first verse:

> "Lo! underneath this heap of mould
> My mistress dear is laid;
> A wife none better could be loved,
> None chaster when a maid."

On one occasion he was sent by Midwinter to write a description of the assizes at Kingston, and he gives an account of the various trials. One of them was that of a wretched sexton for stealing dead bodies out of their graves and selling them, as represented in "The Beggar's Opera," "to those fleaing rascals, the surgeons"; the sexton was cleared of the new indictment because

[1] Bishop Atterbury, regarded as indisputably the best preacher of his day, was sent to the Tower for treason, deprived of all his offices, and banished for ever from the realm.

he had already suffered a year's imprisonment for a similar misdemeanour.

Eventually Gent left Midwinter and purchased some old type and a fount of new pica of Mrs. Bodingham, resolving to venture on the world anew with his "dearest." Shortly afterwards he was taken ill and went to bed, but about two o'clock in the morning he was roused up, and, in dreadful pain as he was, dragged out of bed by a King's messenger, and carried off to prison, because he was suspected of writing something about the Bishop of Rochester. Midwinter and Clifton were also imprisoned with him. Nothing, however, was proved against him, and he was discharged. Then, his stock of goods growing larger by careful industry, he set up his press near the Fleet Prison, and there he wrote and published some things relating to the Bishop that made amends for what he had suffered through wrong information on his account; and now he began to imagine that after some little time he should have occasion to invite his "dear" to London; but, alas! the course of true love never did run smoothly with him. A Mr. John Hoyle called on him:

"'Mr. Gent,' said he, 'I have been to York

to see my parents, and am but just returned to London. I am heartily glad to see you, but sorry to tell you that you have lost your old sweetheart, for I assure you that she is really married to your rival, Mr. Bourne.' I was so thunderstruck that I could scarcely return an answer. . . . The consideration of spending my substance on a business I would not have engaged in but for her sake; my own remissness occasioned this, and after all she could not be much blamed for mending her fortune."

This disaster, brought about by his own dilatoriness, caused his "old vein of poetry to flow in upon him," and so he obtained some vent for his passion. The poem comprises eight verses of eight lines, entitled "The Forsaken Lover's Letter to his Former Sweetheart." The first two lines are a fair sample of the whole:

> "What means my dearest, my sweet lovely creature,
> Thus for to leave me to languish alone?"

He got a neighbouring printer, Mr. Dodd, to print the poem, who sold thousands of them, for which he offered to pay him, "but," says he, "as it was my own proper concern, I scorned to accept of anything, except a glass of comfort or so. I became so gracious with him and his spouse that if I did not often visit them they would be offended. Yet here I perceived some-

thing in matrimony that might have weaned me from affection that way; for this couple often jarred for very trifling occasions. . . . Once he threw a thing at her which hit me in the head and set me bleeding, at which they were mightily concerned, and craved pardon, which I readily granted, though I came not so frequently afterwards."

This outpouring of his soul in poetry greatly relieved his mind and he set to work again.

He again found employment with Mr. Watts for some time, but left him, owing apparently to his mania for writing. Mr. Woodfall recommended him to

"the ingenious Mr. Richardson, in Salisbury Court, with whom I stayed to finish his part of the Dictionary which he had from the Booksellers', composed of English, Greek, and Hebrew."

Afterwards he wrought in the house of Mrs. Susannah Collins, where he lived for some time in great felicity—but trouble with her son caused him to leave—and then it happened that the widow of the late Mr. Dodd, who had desired on his death-bed, to get him to assist her whenever opportunity served, wanted a person to manage her printing business.

As he was disappointed of his first love he had formed the intention of disposing of his materials, and was therefore the more willing to enter into the employment of this gentlewoman, and he soon found that her conversation and fine education "almost wounded him with love," particularly as he must never expect to see his first love again.

"But see the wonderful effects of Divine Providence in all things! . . . One Sunday morning Mr. Philip Wood entering my chambers, where I sometimes used to employ him too, when slack of business in other places, 'Tommy,' said he, 'all these fine materials of yours must be removed to York,' at which, wondering, 'What mean you?' said I. 'Aye,' said he, 'and you must go too, without it's your own fault; for your first sweetheart is now at liberty, and left in good circumstances by her dear spouse, who deceased but of late.' 'I pray heaven,' said I, 'that his precious soul may be happy, and, for aught I know, it may be as you say, for indeed I think I may not trifle with a widow as I have formerly done with a maid.'"

He told his mistress that he had business in Ireland, as an excuse for starting off at once for York, promising her that he would be back in a month; if not, he had left everything in order, so that she might carry on the business with any

other person ; but she said she would not have anyone in the business but him, and she should expect him to return. Respectfully taking leave of her, he never beheld her again, but he heard that she was very indifferently married.

He took leave of his friends at the Black Swan, in Holborn, and started in the stage-coach, which landed him safely in York in four days. There he found his "dearest" once more, though much altered from what she was ten years ago, when he saw her last. "There was no need for new courtship," he writes, but decency suspended the ceremony of marriage for some months. Even now things did not go quite smoothly: his dearest's uncle, Mr. White, at Newcastle, was very much against them, though his own parents sent him their blessing. His goods arrived from London, adding greatly to the former printing office, and notwithstanding all opposition from the uncle the nuptials were performed by the Rev. Mr. Knight, on the 10th of December, 1724, in the stately cathedral dedicated to St. Peter.

Thus ends the first part of Gent's career. We now find him established at York, changed from the late condition of a servant to be a master, from a citizen of London to the like at York.

His first trouble was in the management of his servants, who for a time proved to be as insubordinate to him as they had previously been to their too kind mistress, the widow; but what concerned him most was that he found the widow, his wife, not altogether as angelic as his fond fancy had painted her.

"'I found her temper,' says he, 'much altered from that sweet natural softness and most tender affection that rendered her so amiable to me while I was more juvenile and she a maiden. Not less sincere, I must own, but with that presumptive air and conceited opinion . . that made me imagine an epidemical distemper reigned among the good women.'"

However, he wisely remembered that he was but a novice in the ways of matrimony, so he resolved to accept with a sort of stoical resolution some very harsh rules, that otherwise would have grated on his human understanding, and likewise in a Christian sense, to make his yoke as easy as possible, thereby to give no offence to custom or law of any kind.

Then his dear wife's uncle, White, who had a printing office in Newcastle-on-Tyne, gave him much anxiety. He had done all he could to prevent their marriage, and now he vowed that he

would oppose him to the very utmost of his power; the servants too, who were most ungovernable before his marriage, proved very little better; they loitered away their time and were quite idle in his absence, so that, says he, "I became sorry almost to death that I was ever placed over such incorrigible wretches."

His parents, who had approved of his marriage, growing very ancient, desired once more to see him, and to pay over to him certain moneys he had intrusted them with; so with the consent of his "spouse, who was then pretty far gone with child," he yielded to their desire and set forth. He was very nearly shipwrecked, but eventually arrived safely in Dublin, where he found his mother languishing upon her death-bed, and his poor father in a weak condition. He continued with them about a fortnight, but whilst occupied in their behalf he received

"a letter from my spouse: that her villainous uncle, being come again from Newcastle, was setting up, against us, a printing office, with one Robert Ward, and therefore she desired my quick return."

Accordingly he took shipping as early as possible and after a pleasant voyage reached Liverpool; thence he hired a brave, strong horse and

rode home at pleasure. He had not rode, so he says, more than a few miles, but overtaking a good-looking countryman and falling into discourse with him,

"I asked him what news was stirring? who answered, 'Sir, I know of nothing more or greater than that this day (November 3rd, 1725) is to be hanged the greatest rogue in England, called *Jonathan Wild.*' I had seen that thief-catcher several times about the Old Bailey, and particularly took notice of him when he rode triumphantly, with pistols before the criminals, whilst conveying them to the place of execution."

The next day he continued his journey and about midnight, to the great joy of his spouse (since matrimony the "dear" has dropped out), who told him that her barbarous uncle had dined with her in his absence, which "showed the fellow was a perfect compound of nonsense, villainy, hypocrisy, and impudence." The uncle published a newspaper in conjunction with Ward, who had been his father's footboy but who had married a wife with a fortune and set up as a master printer.

"They cried up their newspaper almost in the same breath they ran down mine, with that eager bitterness of spirit which they had instilled into them. . . . His business was to go to the houses

of my customers, and substituting his papers in the room of what I sent, and the prices were lowered by one-third; supposing their riches in Newcastle would support through all expenses whilst they endeavoured to ruin me at York. . . . What a vast disparity was now from my former condition in London, enjoying plenty of business and beloved by the best; oppressed in York, and, as it were, prosecuted by a tyrannical villain. . . . But it was not long before his partner, Ward, failed for debt, and was glad to become my journeyman, whom I screened, though he had threatened my ruin."

In October, 1725, his dear spouse was brought to bed with a son, who died in the following year. It was a most beautiful child.

"I wished for its life," says he, "but I was not very sorry to think of its death, considering what it might have been exposed to through oppression of its woful parents by the villain aforesaid, who was plotting our ruin to the utmost of his power."

It was in the year 1726 that he got in trouble through the issue of some copies of his newspaper without their being stamped, for which he was liable to a penalty of *fifty pounds*. He was able to prove, however, that this had been done by a servant of his, who had been corrupted to print an unstamped copy: one that had been

stamped was taken from a customer's house and the spurious one put in its place; information was made to a magistrate, and he was sent for, and was able to prove his innocence.

In 1726 he printed some books learnedly translated into English by Mr. John Clarke, schoolmaster in Hull.

In 1728, his unmerciful uncle continued to plot against him, so he felt himself obliged to contrive some business rather than go back in the world; and in 1729 he issued proposals for the publication of a work relating to the antiquities of York. To his astonishment, old Hildyard, a neighbouring bookseller, sent his son John to tell him that if he printed anything relating to the city he would sue him in an action of two thousand pounds damages. The father had printed a book of the mayors and sheriffs of York already, and would have no other to be done.

"This put me on viewing the book. I found that his production was mere theft from a lawyer's copy. . . . I returned word by the said coxcomb to the old fellow, that if I copied after such a wretched threadbare piece he might arrest me if he pleased, so turned the blockhead out of my house."

In 1730 the great work was published, under the title "The Ancient and Modern History of the famous City of York, and in a particular manner of its magnificent Cathedral, commonly called York Minster, and the whole diligently collected by T. G., York, 1730," and his joy was inexpressible to be told what a kind reception it met with, and he returned thanks to Heaven that he had written what was thought worthy to be read.

"I had several admirers, who were surprised to think a person so obscure as I was generally deemed should have the courage to venture on so noble and pious a design; nor was I free from the sarcastic scoffs of others, whose envy was far superior to their judgments; at a perambulation one Mr. Wiseacre reported, in ridicule, what a parcel of stuff I had collected, 'such as old illegible monuments and inscriptions in churches, before the days of their ancient grannams.' 'Aye,' said the Rev. Mr. Knight, 'has he done so? . . . I will buy one of them for my serious perusal,' which he did, and was pleased to tell me that what I had collected deserved a larger volume and a better price. Mr. Hildyard, from an enemy, turned my friend, and bought and sold many."

Thenceforward for some years he brought out many books of his own writing and others.

Of these I can only quote some of the titles and dates.

In 1731 he printed a translation of "Oppian's Cynegeticks" for Dr. Mawer, and the supplement for the Polyglott Bible.

In 1732 he printed for Mr. Thomas Baxter, a schoolmaster, "The Circle Squared," "but as it never proved of any effect, it was converted to waste paper."

In 1773 he opened a printing office at Scarborough; and at York he also published his "History of Ripon, with the Antiquities of the Most Noted Towns in the County."

In 1734 he printed "Miscellanea Curiosa" for Mr. Thomas Turner, "a work which got credit both to the author and to me for the beautiful performance thereof."

In 1736 he published his "History of Hull." There was also published in the same year a work by Mr. Francis Drake, entitled "Eboracum," in two vols. In this work the author patronisingly says that:

"he has nothing to say to Mr. Gent's work, but only to assure my contemporary historian that I have stolen nothing from his laborious performance. Whereas, Mr. T. G., as author, printer, and publisher of the work himself, endeavouring

to get a livelihood for his family, deserves commendation for his industry."

To this Gent replies at some length, "As to his stealing anything of mine, that expression, so exceedingly vulgar, might well have been spared in a polite doctor, since such are seldom charged with theft, except stealing people out of their graves."

In 1737 he studied music on the harp, flute, and other instruments.

In 1738 he wrote and printed a pastoral dialogue on the death of the Right Hon. and illustrious Charles Howard, Earl of Carlisle, who died at Bath, May 1st, "which poem was universally received with kindness and approbation."

In January, 1739, the frost being extremely intense, the rivers became so frozen that he printed names on the ice. He set up a new kind of press, only a roller wrapped about with blankets. He was reading the verses he had made to follow the names, wherein King George was most loyally inserted—the ice suddenly cracked and all ran away, but not hearing he remained—but nothing happened.

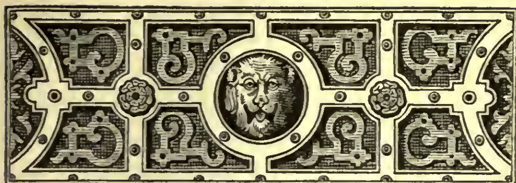
In 1741, having printed the "News" for

several years, for want of encouragement he was obliged to give it up.

In the two following years he seems to have been engaged in litigation about his premises, and in 1744, when his affairs were beginning to decline, his narrative closes, and it does not appear that he ever continued the story. "It would," says the editor of the volume, "it is to be feared, have been but a narrative of a course of life which was bound in shallows and in miseries. . . . New and more enterprising printers arose in that northern metropolis, till at length Gent's press became in little request. His topographical resources were exhausted in his three works on York, Ripon, and Hull, and when he wrote his work on "The History of the East Window in York Minster," which he published in 1762, he was sinking under age and necessity."

A portrait was painted of him by one of the Drakes, a family who were particularly attentive to him in his old age, and was exhibited for his benefit.

He died at his house in York on May 19th, 1778, in the eighty-seventh year of his age, and was interred in the church of St. Mary-le-Belfrey.



VI. ALICE GUY.

THE subject of this sketch does not properly belong to that of "Booksellers of Other Days," but it has somewhat to do with an old bookseller's wife. It will be remembered that *Alice Guy* was the young person who "opened the door" to *Thomas Gent* and subsequently became his spouse; it will also be remembered that she was the daughter of *Richard Guy*, a schoolmaster of Ingleton in Yorkshire, and it is on his account mainly that I have written this sketch. Since writing about *Thomas Gent*, I have been looking through "The Doctor," by Robert Southey, and I find that therein he has given a sketch of Gent taken from the same volume as that from which my story sprang: he

has told the same story in another and of course a better way, but he connects Richard Guy not only with Gent, who printed for him the old poem of "Flodden Field," but also with "The Doctor" himself, and the account of this connection is so curious and amusing that I have been unable to resist the temptation of endeavouring to tell a consecutive story out of material which really runs through nearly 200 pages of "The Doctor." Of course everybody knows that "The Doctor" occupies seven octavo volumes, compressed subsequently into one, a volume of about 700 pages of closely printed double-column matter and treats *de omnibus rebus et quibusdam aliis*, but I have limited myself to "The Doctor" and the schoolmaster.

In order to come to a proper understanding it is necessary to begin our sketch at the beginning. Who was "The Doctor"? "The Doctor" was Doctor Daniel Dove—Daniel, the son of Daniel Dove and of Dinah his wife, was born near Ingleton, in the West Riding of Yorkshire, on the 22nd of April, old style, 1723, nine minutes and three seconds after three in the afternoon. Daniel, the father, was one of a

race of men who unhappily are now almost extinct. He was commonly called "Flossofer" Daniel by his neighbours. He lived on an estate of six-and-twenty acres which his fathers possessed before him, all Doves and Daniels in uninterrupted succession from time immemorial, farther than registers or title-deeds could ascend. Their dwelling was a bowshot to the east of the church called Chapel-le-Dale, and the intervening fields belonged to the family. Happily for Daniel, he lived before the age of magazines, reviews, cyclopædias, and literary newspapers. His books were few in number but they were all weighty in matter or in size. He had looked into all these books, had read most of them, and believed all he read, except "Rabelais," which he could not tell what to make of. Having nothing to desire for himself, Daniel's ambition had taken a natural direction, and was fixed upon his son. He resolved that his son should be made a scholar.

Richard Guy, in the decline of life, came to settle at Ingleton, in the humble capacity of schoolmaster. He was the person to whom the lovers of Old Rhyme are indebted for the preservation of the old poem of "Flodden Field,"

which he transcribed from an old manuscript, and which was printed from his transcript by *Thomas Gent, of York*. In his way through the world, which had not been along the king's high Dunstable road, he had picked up a competent share of Latin, and a little Greek, some theoretical and practical knowledge of physic, of astrology enough to cast a nativity, and he had some acquaintance with alchemy. Five and fifty years of life had taught him none of the world's wisdom, but he had a wise heart worth all other wisdom. As a schoolmaster he never consumed birch enough to have made a besom. Young Daniel was committed to his tuition when he was approaching his seventh year.

Daniel, and his son and Richard Guy, were walking together one day when young Daniel, looking up in his father's face, proposed this question: "Will it be any harm, father, if I steal five beans when next I go into John Dowthwaite's, if I can do it without anyone seeing me?"

"And what wouldst thou steal beans for," was the reply, "when anybody would give them to thee, and when thou knowest there are plenty at home?"

"But it won't do to have them given, father," replied the boy; "they are to charm away my warts. Uncle William says I must steal five beans, a bean for every wart, and tie them carefully up in paper, and carry them to a place where two roads cross, and then drop them, and then walk away without ever once looking behind me, and then the warts will go away from me, and come upon the hands of the person that picks up the beans."

"My boy," the father made answer, "if thy warts are a trouble to thee, they would be a trouble to anyone else. . . . Have nothing to do with charms like that!"

"May I steal a piece of raw beef, then," said the boy, "and rub the warts with it and bury it? For uncle says that will do, and as the beef rots the warts will die away."

"Daniel," said the father, "there can be no lawful charms that begin with stealing. I could tell thee how to cure thy warts in a better manner; there is an infallible way, which is by washing thy hands in moonshine, but then the moonshine must be caught in a bright silver basin. You wash, and wash in the basin, and a cold moisture will be felt upon

the hands, proceeding from the cold rays of the moon."

"But what shall we do for a silver basin?" said little Daniel. The father answered: "A pewter dish may be tried if it were made very bright, but it is not deep enough; the brass kettle may do better."

"Nay!" said Richard Guy, who had now begun to attend with some interest, "the shape of the kettle is not suitable." So they borrowed John Wilson the barber's brass basin, "for," said Guy, "nobody comes to be shaved by moonlight. If you come in this evening at six o'clock, I will have the basin as bright and shining as a good scouring can make it. The experiment is curious, and I shall like to see it tried. Where, Daniel, didst thou learn it?" "I read it," replied Daniel, "in 'Sir Kenelm Digby's Discourses,' and he says it never fails."

Accordingly the parties met at the appointed time. Schoolmaster, father, and son retired to a place of observation by the side of the river. On a stone sate Daniel the elder, holding the basin in such an inclination towards the moon that there should be no shadow in it. Guy directed the boy where to place himself, and

stood looking complacently on while young Daniel revolved his hands one within the other as if washing them. "I feel them cold and clammy, father," said the boy. "Ay," replied the father, "that 's the cold moisture of the moon!" "Ay," echoed the schoolmaster, and nodded his head in confirmation. The experiment was repeated on the two following nights. In spite of the patient's belief that the warts would waste away no alteration could be perceived in them at a fortnight's end.

Daniel was of opinion that the experiment had failed because it had not been repeated sufficiently often or continued long enough. The schoolmaster was of opinion that the cause was in the basin, for that silver, being the lunar metal, would by affinity assist the influential virtues of the moonlight, which, finding no such affinity in a mixed metal of baser compounds, might contrariwise have its potential qualities weakened or even destroyed when received in a brazen vessel and reflected from it. "Flossofer" Daniel assented to this theory. Nevertheless the child got rid of his excrescences in the course of three or four months, then all parties agreed that the experiment had been effectual,

and Sir Kenelm Digby, had he been living, might have procured the solemn attestation of men more veracious than himself that *moonshine* was an infallible cure for warts.

From this time the two "Flossofers" were friends. Daniel seldom went to Ingleton without looking in upon Guy, and Guy, on his part, would walk as far with him on his way back as the tether of his own time allowed.

Young Daniel was from his childhood fond of books; his uncle William used to say he was a chip of the old block, and this hereditary disposition was regarded with much satisfaction by both parents, whilst Guy observed his progress with as much delight as Daniel himself; he had from the first conceived a liking for the boy, both because of the right principle which was evinced by the manner in which he proposed the question concerning stealing the beans, and of the profound gravity with which he behaved in the affair of the moonshine. The boy had indeed a kind master, as well as a happy home, and was never subject to brutal treatment, nor was any of that inhuman injustice ever exercised upon him to break his spirit, "for which," says our author, "it is to be hoped Dean Colet has

paid in purgatory; to be hoped, I say, because if there be no purgatory the Dean may have gone farther and fared worse."

The intellectual education which Daniel received at home was as much out of the ordinary course as the books in which he studied at school. "Robinson Crusoe" had not yet reached Ingleton; the only book within his reach was "The Pilgrim's Progress," and this he read at first without a suspicion of its allegorical import.

"Oh! what blockheads," exclaims our author, "are those wise persons who think it necessary that a child should comprehend everything it reads!"

"What, sir," exclaims a lady, who is bluer than ever one of her naked and woad-stained ancestors appeared at a public festival in full dye. "What, sir, do you tell us that children are not to be made to understand what they are taught? Are we to make our children learn things by rote like parrots?" "Yes, madam, in very many cases."

"I should like, sir, to be instructed why?" "What I say is, do not feed them with meat till they have teeth to masticate it. There is a great

deal which they ought to learn, and must learn, before they can or ought to understand it. Let me tell you a story which the Jesuit Manuel de Vergara used to tell of himself. When he was a little boy he asked a Dominican friar what was the meaning of the seventh commandment, for he said he could not tell what committing adultery was. The friar, not knowing how to answer, cast a perplexed look round the room, and, thinking he had found a safe reply, pointed to a kettle on the fire, and said the commandment meant that he must never put his hand in the pot while it was boiling. The very next day a loud scream alarmed the family, and, behold, there was little Manuel running about the room, holding up his scalded finger, and exclaiming, 'Oh, dear, oh, dear, I've committed adultery! I've committed adultery! I've committed adultery!'

"That," said the author, "though I say it who shouldn't, is a good story well applied."

I had no thought of introducing Daniel Dove and young Daniel his son, excepting so far as the boy's boyhood had some connection with Alice Guy's father, Richard Guy, the schoolmaster; so I will start young Daniel on his

great career, by stating that it was in the year of our Lord 1739, having then entered upon his seventeenth year, accompanied by his father, he first entered Doncaster, and was there delivered up by that excellent man to the care of Peter Hopkins. Father and son loved each other so dearly that this, which was the first day of their separation, was to both the unhappiest of their lives.

There I, tóo, must part with Daniel, and leave him to study medicine with Dr. Hopkins, and so become, as he afterwards did, and as everybody knows, "The Doctor" of world-wide fame. As says the author, "My Dove, my Daniel, my Doctor Daniel Dove—everybody's Doctor—yea, the World's Doctor, the World's Doctor Daniel Dove!"

Richard Guy did not live to see the progress of his pupil, he died a few months after the lad had been placed at Doncaster, and the delight of Daniel's first return to his home was overclouded by this loss. It was a severe one too for the elder Daniel, who lost in the schoolmaster "his only intellectual companion." The person whom the "Doctor" employed in collecting certain books for him, and whom Peter

Hopkins also employed in the same way, was Thomas Gent, the son-in-law of the schoolmaster, for whom, as aforesaid, he printed "Flodden Field."

WILLIAM HUTTON, F.A.S.S., 1723-1815.
At the age of eighty.

VII. WILLIAM HUTTON, F.A.S.S.,

OF BIRMINGHAM, 1723-1815

IT was a fashion among many of the old booksellers to write and publish an account of their own lives; if they had not done so there would probably have been very little known about them by their representatives of to-day.

One wonders whether there was really a compensating sale for these quaint and curious "Autobiographies," but to us at least a glimpse of their doings, their manner of life, their successes and their failures, must, I think, possess some degree of interest.

William Hutton wrote the story of his life from memory when he was seventy-five years

old: it forms an 8vo. volume of nearly *four hundred pages*. The title is:

THE

LIFE OF WILLIAM HUTTON, F.A.S.S.

INCLUDING

A PARTICULAR ACCOUNT OF

THE RIOTS AT BIRMINGHAM IN 1791,

TO WHICH IS SUBJOINED

THE HISTORY OF HIS FAMILY.

WRITTEN BY HIMSELF

AND PUBLISHED BY HIS DAUGHTER,

CATHERINE HUTTON.

London: BALDWIN & CRADOCK & JOY,
Birmingham: BEILBY & KNOTTS,
1816.

There have been other editions published since,[1] but the material which forms this sketch is taken from this edition of 1816.

Hutton's early career was not unlike that of Thomas Gent. Both were cruelly treated in their early days, and both were runaway appren-

[1] There was a third edition, with additional notes by his daughter, published in 1841 in "Knight's English Miscellanies," and a *fourth edition*—"William Hutton and the Hutton Family"—edited by Llewellynn Jewitt, 12mo., was published in 1872 by Warne & Co.

tices—*Gent*, with 1*s*. 5*d*. in his pocket and three loaves in his wallet; *Hutton* had 2*s*. in his pocket, which he had stolen from his uncle.

Hutton, Gent, and Dunton were all poets in their way: they wrote a quantity of matter in rhyme, but as far as I can pretend to judge there was not a spark of the "divine afflatus" in either of them. Between Dunton and Hutton there was this difference as regards their birth; Hutton's mother said of him that he was the largest child she ever had, but so very ordinary (a soft word for ugly) she was afraid she should never love him. Dunton, on the other hand, says of himself that he was so diminutive a baby that a quart pot could contain the whole of him, but he was called "a pretty child." As a baby, Dunton swallowed a bullet, which was all but the death of him: in like manner Hutton when he was about the same age managed to swallow a large hollow brass drop, which caused the utmost consternation in his family, but eventually the brazen bolus "did no injury."

William Hutton was born Sept. 30, 1723, at the bottom of Full Street, Derby, on the banks of the Derwent. In 1725, when he was two years old, he began to rely wholly on his own

memory for his facts: thenceforward he tells the story of his life year by year very circumstantially. "At which," he says, "those who know me are not surprised. There is not a statement either false or coloured." This year he was nearly drowned by tumbling into the Derwent, just as Dunton had been before him.

The most remarkable event in 1726 was that he tumbled downstairs from top to bottom and was surprised that he escaped with life. In 1727 he was put into breeches and was taken to visit one of his aunts who told him that he was "an ugly lad, like his father." In 1728 he was sent to school to Mr. Thomas West, who often beat his head against a wall, holding it by the hair, "but never could beat any learning into it."

In 1730 his play days came to an end, and he was placed in a silk mill. He had now to rise at five every morning for seven years, submit to the cane whenever convenient to the master, and be the constant companion of the most rude and vulgar of the human race.

The next year, while still working at the mill, he saw the wonderful feats performed by one Cadman, in flying from the top of All Saints

Steeple to the bottom of St. Michael's. The only other event was that his father broke his walking stick while thrashing him for losing a halfpenny. In 1733 his mother died and he had to live among strangers. At one time he fasted from breakfast one day till noon the next, and then dined on hasty pudding; he had now completed the first ten years of his life, and the following year he was engaged in the manufacture of a gown and petticoat for Queen Charlotte; "thus," says he, "an insignificant animal, nearly naked himself, assisted in cloathing a queen."

The year 1737 was the last of his servitude at the silk mill. He had served seven years there, and now he is sent to his uncle at Nottingham to serve another seven years at stocking weaving; his uncle was a seriously religious man, but his aunt was as serious a hypocrite. Now that food was more plentiful she begrudged every meal he tasted.

The year 1740 ushered in the greatest frost ever remembered in those times, it lasted from New Year's Day to March;[1] in the severest

[1] Gent mentions that it was in January, 1739, that the rivers were frozen and he set up his press on the ice at

part of it Hutton's wearing apparel was a thin waistcoat, without lining, and no coat. In 1741 things went on prosperously for a time; he made shift somehow to obtain a genteel suit of clothes and "the girls eyed him with some attention." But he detested the frame, and an unhappy quarrel with his uncle caused him to run away, blasted his views of happiness, sunk him in the dust, and placed him in a degraded position from which he did not recover for five years. He tells the story of this terrible episode in what he calls the "History of a Week"—from this story I can only give a brief summary:

His uncle had promised him a thrashing at night if he failed to perform a certain piece of work; he did fail through idleness—he confessed that he *could* have done it if he would. "Then," says he, "I'll make you." He took a birch broom handle and continued his blows so heavily and so long that the poor boy "thought he would have broken him to pieces." He was now drawing towards eighteen, and had become exceedingly sensitive to female criticism. The news of his thrashing had gone abroad, and a

York. The great frost of 1740 mentioned by Hutton is well known.

female acquaintance passing him next morning said, sneeringly, "You were licked last night!" a remark which "stung him to the quick." He put on his hat as if going to meeting, slipped upstairs till the family were gone, he found ten shillings in a *beaufet*, pocketed two shillings and seemed rather to pride himself on his honesty in not taking the whole.

"Figure to yourself, says he, "a lad of seventeen, not elegantly dressed, near five feet high, rather Dutch built, with a long narrow bag of brown leather that would hold a bushel in which was neatly packed up a new suit of clothes; also a white linen bag containing a sixpenny loaf of coarse blencorn bread, a bit of butter wrapped in the leaves of an old copy-book; a new Bible value 3*s*., one shirt, a pair of stockings, a sun dial, my best wig carefully folded and laid at top that it might not be crushed. The ends of the two bags being slung together over my left shoulder, my best hat hung to the button of my coat. I had only two shillings in my pocket, a spacious world before me, and no plan of operation."

He cast back many a melancholy look, thinking he was taking an everlasting farewell of Nottingham: he had a heavy heart and a heavy load, and there was nothing light about him but the sun in the heavens and the money in his pocket. By ten o'clock he arrived at Derby, the inhabi-

tants had gone to bed; he passed his father's door, which was open, he heard his father's footsteps not three yards away, and he retreated with precipitation. "I was running," he says, "from the last hand that could have saved me!"

He took up his abode in an adjoining field on the cold grass with the sky overhead and the bags by his side. He rose at four, July 13th, starved, sore, and started for Burton, where he arrived the same morning, having travelled twenty-eight miles and spent nothing. "I was an economist," says he, "from my cradle, and the character never forsook me." He took a view of the town and spent one penny. The same evening he arrived near Lichfield and prepared to lodge in a barn, but finding it closed he left his things and went on to another barn a stone's throw off which he found open, and returned after an absence of only a few minutes—what was his surprise! his bags had disappeared. He shouted, he roared after the rascal, but, says he, "I might have been silent, for thieves seldom come at a call." He ran raving about the road, told his loss to all he met, found pity from all, but redress from none! At eleven o'clock at night he found himself in the open street, "left to tell his mournful tale to the

silent night." "It is not easy," he writes, "to place a human being in a more distressed situation. My finances were nothing, a stranger to the world and the world to me; no employ, no food to eat or place to rest, I sought repose in the street upon a butcher's block."

Next day he found himself at Walsall. There were no frames there. His feet were sorely blistered; he begged some fat from a butcher to rub on them, and found immediate relief, and then set off for Birmingham. There were three stocking-weavers there. One was an old Quaker named Evans, whom he asked to employ him. His reply was: "'You are a run-away apprentice; go about your business.' I retreated, sincerely wishing I had business to go about." He next waited upon Holmes in Dale End, who gave him a penny to get rid of him. The next was Francis Grace, whose niece he married many years afterwards; but on this visit he was so closely questioned that he told three or four lies to patch up a lame tale, and he left the shop with the severe reflection that his lying brought him no advantage, for he was dismissed without any assistance.

"It was now about seven in the evening, July 14th, 1741, I sat to rest upon the north side of

the old cross—the poorest of all the poor belonging to that great parish, of which twenty-seven years after I should be the overseer."

Two men in aprons noticed his forlorn condition, took him to the Bell Inn, gave him bread, cheese, and beer, and found him a lodging, where he slept for three-halfpence. He walked on next day to Coventry, then to Nuneaton and Hinckley. Everywhere the word '*Prentice* rang in his ears; they called him a boy and refused to employ him. One man named Millward did employ him one afternoon, when he earned *twopence*, and his employer told him he would give him a bed if he would promise to return to his uncle in the morning. On the 18th he turned homewards woefully; he reached Ashby-de-la-Zouch with eightpence left out of his 2*s*. "Extreme frugality," he repeats, "composes a part of my character."

On the 19th he reached home; his father gladly received him and dropped tears for his misfortunes.

This unhappy ramble damped his rising spirit; he did not recover his balance for two years; it also ruined him in point of dress, for he was not able to reassume his former appearance for five years. "It ran me in debt," he says, "out of

which I have never been to this day, November 21, 1779."

During the next two or three years nothing happened except that he became for a time infatuated with music,[1] it became his study and delight. He had purchased a bell-harp whose sounds he thought seraphic, but he had no books and no instruction, nor the least hint as to putting his instrument in tune. For six months he made every effort to get a tune out of it; he succeeded at last. Then he borrowed a dulcimer and soon learned to play on it. He made one like it out of the boards of an old trunk, his only tools being a pocket knife and a fork with one limb—with this he discoursed such lovely music that a young baker's apprentice offered him 16*s.* for it, which he accepted, and bought a coat with the money; his friend practised vigorously for some time till he could play part of "Over the Hills and Far Away," and then grew tired of it. The next time he saw him he asked how he was progressing. "O damn the music, I couldn't make it do. I took a broomstick and whacked the strings and burned the body in the oven."

[1] Curiously enough, it was much about this time that Thomas Gent, then in business at York, spent a year in studying music. See Sketch No. V., *ante.*

At Christmas 1744 his servitude expired: he had served two seven years to two trades, by neither of which he could subsist. He continued as a journeyman with his uncle. In 1746 his inclination for books began to expand, but money to buy them was wanting. His first purchase was three volumes of the "Gentleman's Magazine," 1742-4. He could not afford to pay for binding, so he cobbled them together as best he could. He could buy only shabby books, and in this way he became acquainted with "a shabby bookseller," who was also a binder, and watched him at work: he never saw him perform one act but he could do it himself, so strong was his desire to acquire the art of bookbinding. With the assistance of this bookseller, he soon became a fair adept in binding. The first work work he bound was Shakespeare's "Venus and Adonis"; so well was it done that the bookseller was surprised. Charles Knight says: "Ah! William Hutton, if you had known the value of those twenty-seven leaves! All the separate editions of 'Venus and Adonis' are of great rarity." He then bought from the same man, for *2s.*, an old worn-out press which had been destined for the fire. He studied its construction, and, with the

aid of a hammer and a pin, he perfectly cured the machine. "This," he says, "proved for forty-two years my best binding-press." Now he bought a tolerably genteel suit of clothes and was so careful of it that it continued his best for five years. It was in that year, 1747, that his good uncle died.

In 1747 the desire and pride of his life was to wear a watch; he bought a silver one for 35*s.*; it went ill, he gave it and a guinea for another one, which was quite as bad. Then he bought another brass one which he soon sold for 5*s.* which he gave away in charity; after that he went without a watch for thirty years. This year he began to "drop into rhime."

In 1749 he took to bookbinding as his chief business, but he had no tools, and they were only to be got in London, so to London he decided to go, but he had no money; his good sister raised three guineas and stitched them in his collar, being certain that he would be robbed. She also put 11*s.* in his pocket. With this slender provision he started on Monday, April 8th. After a walk of ten miles he became so footsore that he could only walk with difficulty. His first stop was Leicester, where he left a pocket-knife,

the loss of which he deplored because it was the gift of a friend and so worth to him ten times its money value. His next stop was at Brixworth, having walked fifty-one miles and spent fivepence. The following day he reached Dunstable, and on the third day, weary and worn out, he arrived at "The Horns" in Smithfield. He called for a chop and porter, but was so jaded that he could scarcely touch it. This was the only meal he tasted under a roof during the whole time of his stay in London. The next morning he breakfasted on furmity at a wheel-barrow; sometimes he had a halfpenny worth of soup and another of bread, at other times bread and cheese. "I ate to live," he says.

"If a man goes to *receive* money it may take him a long time to transact business; if to *pay* money it will take him less, and if he has but little to *pay* it will take him still less. My errand fell under the third class. I only wanted three alphabets of letters, a set of figures and some ornamental tools for gilding books with leather and boards for binding."

He soon obtained these things, and then he determined to see all the sights of London that were to be seen without pay; but he did spend one penny to see Bedlam. He was in London

three days: he had walked 125 miles to London, and was on his feet all the time he was there. On Saturday evening, April 13th, he set out for Nottingham, having four shillings left out of the eleven shillings he had started with. On the 16th he reached Leicester—the landlady had carefully preserved the precious knife. He reached Nottingham the same evening, having walked forty miles. He had been away nine days—three in going, which cost 3*s.* 8*d.*, three in London, which cost the same, and three in returning, which cost a trifle less. He brought back 4*d.* out of the eleven shillings he started with. Surely a youth who could walk 250 miles in six days (that is an average of nearly 43 miles a day) and spend three days in perambulating London at a total cost of *ten shillings and eightpence* was no ordinary adventurer. He had an admirable capacity for telling everything he had seen, so this singular journey "furnished vast matter for detail among his friends."

It was now time to look out for a future place of residence. His plan was to fix upon some market town within a stage of Nottingham and open a shop there on market days. He fixed on Southwell as his "first step to elevation." It was

fourteen miles away and the town as despicable as the road to it. He took a shop there at the rate of 20*s.* a year, sent a few boards for shelves, a few tools, and about 2 cwt. of trash worth perhaps a year's rent of the shop; he was his own joiner, put up the shelves, and in one day "became the most eminent bookseller in the place."

During that rainy winter he set out at five every Saturday morning, carried a bundle of books sometimes thirty pounds in weight, opened shop at ten, starved in it all day upon bread, cheese, and half a pint of ale, took from one to six shillings, shut up at four and trudged back, arriving at Nottingham at nine, where a mess of milk and porridge always awaited him. Nothing short of surprising resolution could have carried him through such fruitless toil as this.

In the month of February, 1750, he took a journey to Birmingham to pass a judgment on the probability of future success there. He found there "three eminent booksellers, Aris, Warren,[1] and Wollaston," and as he considered the town crowded with inhabitants he thought he might

[1] Mr. Knight mentions this Mr. Warren as having been associated with the early literary efforts of Samuel Johnson.

"mingle in that crowd unnoticed by the three great men, for an ant is not worth destroying."

On his return he fell into trouble through losing himself in Charnwood Forest, but eventually got back to Nottingham. He then gave notice to quit Southwell and "prepared for a total change of life." On April 10th he entered Birmingham for the third time to try if he could be accommodated with a small shop, and the next day agreed with Mrs. Dix for the lesser half of her shop, No. 6 Bull Street, at *one shilling a week*, and returned to Nottingham.

On May 13th a Mr. Rudsdall, a Dissenting minister of Gainsborough, let him have the refuse of his library at his own price. Mr. Rudsdall gave him a corn-chest in which the books, about 2 cwt., were packed, and for payment drew out the following note:

"I promise to pay to Ambrose Rudsdall one pound seven shillings when I am able." Mr. Rudsdall added: "You need never pay this note if you only say you are not able." The books made a better show and were more valuable than all he possessed besides. On May 23rd, he had a hard parting from his friends and arrived at Birmingham on the 25th.

In a few weeks he was able to tell his brother who came to see him that his trade supported him. Five shillings a week covered every expense as food, rent, lodging, washing. "Thus," he says, "a year rolled round, when a few young men of elevated character and sense took notice of me, I had saved £20, and was become more reconciled to my situation." In this beginning of his prosperity something happened which 'threatened totally to eclipse the small prospect before me." The overseers, fearing that he may become chargeable to the parish, ordered him to procure a *certificate* or they would remove him. He wrote to his father to get one, and the reply came, "that All Saints in Derby never granted certificates." He was hunted by this ill nature for two years. He offered to pay the levies, which they refused. A new overseer, however, from whom he had bought two suits of clothes for £10, consented to take them.

The next year, 1751, he took the house adjoining that of Mr. Grace, the hosier, who had refused to employ him when he applied for work during his runaway week, and to whom he had "told several lies, and without the least advantage." He was frightened at the rent, which was

£8 a year. Here he pursued business in a more elevated style, and with more success. His new clothes introduced him to new acquaintances; it was at this time that he became acquainted with Mr. William Ryland, "one of the worthiest of men," he writes, "with whom I contracted a close and intimate friendship which has continued forty-six years, and is only to be broken by death."

In 1752 he had a smiling trade to which he closely attended. He *hired out books*, and "the fair sex did not neglect the shop." This hiring out of books was really the beginning of a *Circulating Library*, the first that had ever been established out of London.[1] As capital increased he opened a shop on market days at Bromsgrove, but found it did not pay and soon dropped it. He also took a female servant who was still less profitable, for during his absence she sold his books for what they would fetch, left the shop, "and got drunk with the money." This year his neighbour Mr. Grace, being a widower

[1] The first *Circulating Library* in London was established in the Strand by a bookseller of the name of Bathoe in 1740. "Cunningham's Handbook of London." The first *Circulating Library* in Cambridge was established by Robert Watts in 1745.

took his niece, Miss Sarah Cock, to keep his house.

The following year Mr. Hutton cultivated acquaintance with Miss Cock, and in 1755, June 23rd, he says: "I awoke before seven and ruminating on the first object of my life I thought to myself, 'What am I waiting for? I have nothing to expect, no end to answer by delay; that which *must* be done may as well be done now. I will rise and tell my love she must be no longer single.'" Mr. Grace interposed no obstacle, Miss Cock was "willin," so the marriage ceremony took place at St. Philip's Church. "Thus," says he, "I experienced another important change, and one I never wished to unchange. . . . I found in my wife more than ever I expected to find in woman."

In 1756 his wife brought him a little daughter, who proved to be the pleasure of his life. And now occurred an event which proved an advantageous change in his career. Mr. Robert Bage, a paper-maker, proposed that he should sell paper for him either on commission or on his own account. He found that he could spare about £200, so he chose to buy. He appropriated a room and hung out a sign, "The Paper Ware-

house." "From this small hint," says he, "I followed the stroke for forty years, and acquired an ample fortune."

Mr. Grace died in 1757 and left him his residuary legatee, and his wife brought him a son. He now occupied Mr. Grace's house, and kept his own as a warehouse.

Prosperous times were now opening up for him, and in July, 1758, his wife presented him with another son. I quote the following passage in full because it contains words of wisdom applicable to all times and seasons:

"I perceived more profit would arise from the new trade than the old; *that blank paper would speak in fairer language than printed; that one could only furnish the head, but the other would furnish the pocket;* and that the fat kine would in time devour the lean. . . . Few men can bear prosperity. It requires a considerable share of knowledge to know when we are well; for it often happens that he who is well, in attempting to be better, becomes worse."

He concluded that, as there was a profit to the *seller* of paper, there must be to the maker, and so on this erroneous principle he longed for a *paper-mill*, and by degrees he became, as he says, "mill mad." In 1759, on taking stock, he had saved in the past year £137, exclusive of all

expenses. By this time his property, exclusive of his furniture, was £777. But 1760 proved on the whole a melancholy year. His wife was afflicted with jaundice, one of his sons died, then he himself was brought low with the jaundice, and was for a long time between life and death.

The next year he was worried about his *paper-mill.* He had purchased two acres of waste land at Handsworth, and there he began to build; his workmen saw his ignorance, and "bit me as they pleased." They said, and acted up to the principle: "Let us fleece Hutton; he has money." He discharged them all, let the work stand, and left himself some rest. He was persuaded to convert what was never finished as a paper-mill into a corn-mill. He found that, as a miller, he was cheated on all sides. He sold it for eighty guineas, and found he had lost in cash £229. He was so provoked with his folly that he followed up his business with redoubled spirit, and soon he prospered; he had no rival, and, as he says, he struck the nail that would drive. "I never could bear," says he, "the thought of living to the extent of my income; I never omitted to

take stock or regulate my annual expenses so as to meet casualties and misfortunes."

So far I have followed Hutton's progress almost year by year, but now that we find him fairly launched in a prosperous business it is unnecessary to do more than glance at him now and then till he reaches the final goal, and that is a long way ahead, for we have now accompanied him down to the year 1763, when he was only about forty, and he lived a vigorous life till he was ninety-two.

No sooner did he find himself on the high road to fortune by perseverance in his own trade, than he must needs become discontented: he had always a fondness for land, and wished to call some his own. "This ardent desire for dirt," says he, "never forsook me." In the course of the next few years he bought and sold several small estates; sometimes he made large profits by these transactions, and not unfrequently considerable losses.

In 1768 he was chosen overseer of the parish of Birmingham, and thought himself "elevated above his ancestors," for "none of them within the reach of tradition had equalled it; they had rather been the *poor* than the *overseers* of the

poor." His property by this time had reached £2,000.

As an overseer he soon became very popular, especially among his brethren at the Castle—for by active conduct he did not only his own duty, but a considerable part of theirs. He also acquired an amiable character among the dependent class, and his successor told him that he was "the favourite of all the old women."

In 1769 he bought land at Bennett's Hill, near Washwood Heath, and there he built a residence for himself; he quitted the office of overseer, but his friend, William Ryland, dreading the office, gave him twenty guineas to serve for him, and so he had another year of the office, but he did not find this second year so pleasant as the first, so he took "the tail end of an overseer no more."

Ambition and the idea of being useful now spurred him on to enter public life. In the year 1773 he was chosen a Commissioner of the Lamp and Street Act, a position which he relished. His plan was to execute the Act with *firmness*, but with *mildness*, but he soon found there were clashing interests among the Commissioners: some wished to retain their own

nuisances; others to protect those of their friends—a rich man was also favoured beyond a poor one. He was blamed for some removals because he was a speaker, an advocate for impartial reform, and was not supported by his brother Commissioners; he lost some friends, and so declined attendance.

The year 1779 was one of a series of misfortunes: the carpenter who was building his house cheated him heavily; a paper-maker compelled him to pay £30 for paper never received; many customers failed in his debt; one of his tenants broke, by which he lost several hundred pounds; the indisposition of his wife began which lasted seventeen years; his daughter was taken ill of a nervous complaint; he had an abscess in his throat, and at length he broke out in boils.

In 1780 he says he was distressed in the midst of plenty. For nine months he was mostly employed in writing the "History of Birmingham." On showing it to Dr. Withering he pronounced it "the best topographical history he had ever seen." In the next year a new duty was put on paper, consequently an advance in price.

In 1782 he writes:

"A man may live half a century and not be acquainted with his own character. I did not know I was an antiquary till the world informed me, from having read my history; but when told I could see it myself. The Antiquarian Society of Edinburgh chose me a member, and sent me an authority to splice to my name F.A.S.S."

In 1784 he lost his mother as the age of 87, and in 1786 he lost his sister, "a woman of an extraordinary character, and as amiable as extraordinary. Her age was 67."

In 1787, being Master of the Rules in the Court of Requests, he wrote a full history of the process in octavo, being his *third* publication. This year he took his wife to Aberystwith, and on his return he walked from Aberystwith to Shrewsbury with his coat on his arm in two days and a half, the weather being extremely hot and the roads dusty; this laid him up for a month.

We now reach 1791; the year began prosperously, but terminated in disaster. He writes:

"My family loved me: were in harmony. I enjoyed the amusements of the pen, the court, and had no pressure on the mind, but the declining health of her I loved. But a calamity

awaited me I little suspected. The *Riots* in 1791, which hurt my fortune, destroyed my peace, nearly overwhelmed me and my family, and not only deprived us of every means of restoring to health the best of women, but shortened her days. I wrote a history of that most savage event at the time, with a view to publication, but my family would not suffer it to see the light. I shall now transcribe with exactness the MS. copy."

And now follows "A Narrative of the Riots in Birmingham, July 14, 1791, particularly as they affected the author."

This narrative of the Riots occupies sixty-one pages of the book, and presents an interesting account of the Riots and the cause of them. One of the causes thereof seems to have arisen from the members of a certain public library desiring to introduce Dr. Priestley's polemical works, to which the clergy were averse; this produced *two parties*, and its natural consequence, animosity in both. From this small beginning arose a general proscription of the Dissenters. A furious mob arose, calling itself champion of *Church and King*, which, as Hutton remarks, was composed of people "who would have sold their King for a jug of ale, and demolished the Church for a bottle

of gin." Hutton was always of a peace-loving nature, and said that he was "a firm friend to our present Establishment, notwithstanding her blemishes." He had taken no part in these religious disputes, but he was known as a Dissenter and a friend of Priestley, and not a few of the rioters remembered him as Chairman of the Court of Requests who fined them or otherwise punished them for their misdeeds. They now seized the opportunity of revenging themselves. They attacked his business house in the High Street, threw his furniture and extensive stock into the street, and reduced the house to a skeleton. And, not satisfied with this diabolical deed, they went next day to his country home at Bennett's Hill, and burnt down the house and all its contents. What was not consumed in the fire was carried off by the rioters.

"The fatal 14th of July was by far the most important era of my life. . . . A black cloud was raised over my head which the sun of prosperity can never disperse. I entered Birmingham July 14th, 1741, as a runaway apprentice, without money, friend, or home. And that day fifty years began those outrages which drove me from it, and left me in a more deplorable state of mind than at the former period."

Many of his friends, Churchmen as well as Dissenters, offered him the use of their houses after the riots. It does not appear, however, that this cruel destruction of his property brought such absolute ruin upon him as he has described. His actual claim for loss and damages amounted to £8,243, and of this he eventually received £5,390. Besides he was in possession of a considerable amount of landed property.

In 1795 he purchased an estate in Herefordshire, and in 1796, January 23rd, his beloved wife died. Her loss was a very real and sore trial to him, but for this loss his later days would have been ideally happy. He now transferred his business to his son, and during the next few years he occupied his time partly in writing poems and in travelling about with his daughter. He concluded the writing of the story of his own life in May 1798, when he was seventy-five, and then he began to write the history of his family. He performed most of his journeys afoot. One day he walked forty-six miles, the next ten miles and forty-two the third—and then he fell lame, having injured the tendon of Achilles—and so "limped out of this year and limped into the next." In 1800 he lost his elder brother aged

seventy-eight, and 1801 his brother Samuel died at the age of sixty-seven.

"My years run round like a boy who beats his hoop round a circle, and with nearly the same effect, that of a little exercise. I rise at six in summer and seven in winter—march to Birmingham, two and a half miles, where my son receives me with open arms. I return at four or five when my daughter receives me with a smile. I then amuse myself with reading, conversation, or study, without any pressure on my mind, except the melancholy remembrance of her I loved."

This year he took his daughter to the Lakes and left her there whilst he took a walking tour to explore the famous *Roman Wall*. He crossed the kingdom twice in one week and six hours melted in a July sun. When he rejoined his daughter near Lancaster, he had walked 601 miles in thirty-five days—an average of over eighteen miles a day. In June 1802 the "History of the Roman Wall" was published.

Mr. Hutton dedicated his work on "The Roman Wall" to Mr. John Nichols (of *Literary Anecdotes*) who also published it for him. Mr. Nichols quotes a letter from him in which he says :

"BIRMINGHAM,
"*October 6th*, 1801.

"DEAR FRIEND,

"I enclose for your perusal 'The History of the Roman Wall.' If approved you are welcome to the work *gratis*. I wish it printed in octavo, upon the best paper, and with the best letter. . . . A bold type and open words best suit antiquarian eyes. As plates ornament and promote the sale of the work I could furnish you with five octavo drawings from Warburton's 'History of the Wall.' . . . *You* will excuse the liberty I have taken in the Dedication. I am certain the public will *excuse you* and I think *both*.

"W. HUTTON."

In closing the dedication Hutton says: "You will also pardon the errors of the work, for you know I was not bred to letters; but that the Battledore, at an age not exceeding six, was the last book I used at school."

Mr. Hutton ends his *Introduction* by saying: "Perhaps I am the first man that ever travelled the whole length of this Wall, and probably the last that ever will attempt it. Who then will say he has, like me, travelled it twice? Old people are much inclined to accuse youth of their follies; but on this head silence will become me, lest I should be asked 'What can exceed the folly of that man, who at *seventy-eight* walked six

hundred miles to see a shattered wall!' W. H—."

He was now in his old age apparently as happy as could be. "What is a happy life," he says: "Suppose a man endeavours after health, and, by a proper use of his animal powers, can at fourscore walk thirty miles a day. Suppose him, by assiduity and temperance, to have obtained a complete independence, that he can reside in a house to his wish, is blessed with a son and daughter of the most affectionate kind . . . would you pronounce this a *happy man?* That man is myself. Though my morning was lowering, my evening is sunshine."

He was never more than twice in London on his own concerns: the first was in April 1749, to make purchase of materials for his trade amounting to £3. The last was in April 1806, fifty-seven years after, to ratify the purchase of an estate which cost £11,500.[1] One laid a foundation for the other and both answered expectation.

In 1807 "The Monthly Review," in reviewing

[1] In a letter to Nichols, April 13, 1813, on the subject of *Bosworth Field* he concludes by saying "I purchased the hill, with other contiguous lands for £11,500." This is doubtless the estate above referred to.

one of his works, "A Tour through Wales," spoke of him as having "at length taken a longer journey, the important details of which he will not transmit to us poor wanderers here below." In reply to this he sent the editor a poem "From my shades at Bennet's Hill, August 13th, 1807." I may quote a verse as a sample:

> "Your work for July tells the world that I'm dead,
> And have ceased to become an inditer.
> But by praising my book, it will rather be said,
> That you keep me alive as as writer."

In 1808 he supplies a list of all the books he had written in thirty years, viz., "The History of Birmingham," 1781; "Journey to London," 1784; "Court of Requests," 1787; "The Hundred Court," 1788; "History of Blackpool," 1788; "History of Bosworth Field," 1789; "History of Derby," 1790; "The Barber, a Poem," 1793; "Edgar and Elfreda, a Poem," 1793; "The Roman Wall," 1801; "Tour to Scarborough," 1803; "Poems, chiefly Tales," 1804; "Trip to Coatham," 1808 (all published by Nichols); "Life written by Himself," 1815 (published by Baldwin).

At the age of eighty-two he considered himself a young man, and could walk forty miles a day,

but during the succeeding six years he began to feel a sensible decay; nevertheless, on November 17th, 1812, when he was eighty-nine, he walked twelve miles with ease, and on his ninetieth birthday he walked ten miles.

His daughter[1] wrote a very interesting and touching account of his last days. He died September 20th, 1815, aged ninety-two.

His daughter closes her account with the following description of him:

"My father was nearly five feet six inches in height, well made, strong and active; a little inclined to corpulence, . . . his countenance wore an expression of sense, resolution, and calmness, though when irritated or animated he had a very keen eye. Such was the happy disposition of his mind, and such the firm texture of his body, that ninety-two years had scarcely the power to alter his features or make a wrinkle on his face."

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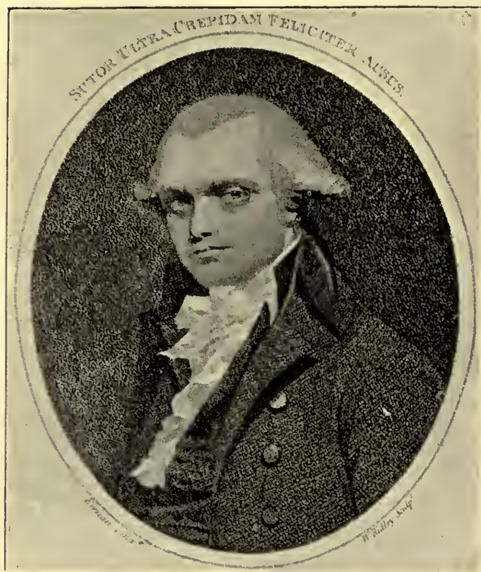
[1] Miss Catherine Hutton was a lady of great literary ability. She was a voluminous letter writer and the author of several novels—a full account of her, under the title "Catherine Hutton and Her Friends," edited by her cousin, Miss Catherine Hutton Beale, was published by Cornish Brothers, Birmingham, 1895.



JAMES LACKINGTON, 1746-1815.

VIII. JAMES LACKINGTON.

1746—1815

AMES LACKINGTON wrote an account of the first forty-five years of his life in 1791, a second edition of which was published in 1794. It is from this edition that I have gathered matter for the present sketch. The title is as follows:

MEMOIRS OF
THE FORTY-FIVE FIRST YEARS OF
THE LIFE OF
JAMES LACKINGTON

THE PRESENT BOOKSELLER IN CHISWELL STREET,
MOORFIELDS, LONDON.
WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.
IN FORTY-SEVEN LETTERS TO A FRIEND,
WITH A TRIPLE DEDICATION.

1. To the Public.
2. To Respectable } Booksellers.
3. To Sordid } Booksellers.

A new edition, corrected and enlarged; interspersed with many *original humorous* stories, and *droll* anecdotes, not in former editions.

James Lackington writes with great facility, and with no want of vigour, but more than half of his bulky volume is made up of flippant attacks on Methodism, of "humorous stories" which are not particularly humorous, and of *droll* anecdotes, the drollness of which consists mainly in their indecency.[1] Apart from these distinct blemishes, however, there is a great deal of matter in the book which may be regarded as both interesting and instructive.

His earliest days were very much like those of his contemporary William Hutton (see Sketch No. VII.); the one was starved and shivered in a silk mill, his father was a sottish stocking-weaver, the other was the son of a drunken shoemaker.

Lackington was born at Wellington, in Somersetshire, August 31st (old style), 1746. Like many other human beings, he was inclined to boast of the antiquity of his family, for, although his father was a journeyman shoemaker, one of his ancestors gave the name of *White Lackington* to a village in Somersetshire where the family

[1] The original humorous stories and droll anecdotes are said to have been furnished by the pen of *Peter Pindar*. (D.N.B.)

had settled. His grandfather was a gentleman farmer, at Longford, near Wellington; he was a man of considerable property. He bound his son apprentice to a Mr. Hordley, a master shoemaker in Wellington, with the intention of setting him up in that business, but when he had worked a year or two after his apprenticeship as a journeyman, he greatly displeased his father by marrying Jane Trott, a young woman of "a mean family," and without a shilling.

Our hero, James, the first-born and hope of the family, was born in the house of his grandmother Trott. Jane proved to be an excellent wife and a most admirable mother, and by the time she had borne her husband three or four children the grandfather so far relented that he supplied his son with money to open a shop for himself; but no sooner did he find himself more at ease than he contracted the fatal habit of drinking, and, although his father made several fruitless attempts to keep him in trade, his habitual drunkenness soon reduced him to his old state of journeyman shoemaker, from which he never emerged, and he and his large family were involved in the extremest poverty.

To their worthless father the children, now

increased to eleven, owed no debt of gratitude, while to their good mother they were indebted for everything. For many years together she worked nineteen hours out of the twenty-four to feed her children and supply her miserable husband with drink. His drunkenness shortened his days, and when he died his family were thankful that the source of their poverty was taken out of the way.

For the first few years the father had been a careful hard-working man, and James, being the eldest son, was put for two or three years to a day school, and used to astonish several ancient dames by his wonderful memory which enabled him to learn chapters of the Bible on hearing them read and repeat them perfectly though he never learnt to read; but it soon came to pass that the poor mother could afford no longer to pay *twopence* a week for his schooling, and he had to take the place of nurse to the younger children. He soon forgot the little he had learnt, and instead of learning to read it became his chief delight to excel in all kinds of mischief.

When he was about ten years old, a man began to cry *apple pies* about the streets, and he thought he could do it much better; he was

accordingly sent to live with a baker, and he cried *pies* for him so vigorously that the old pie-man had soon to shut up his shop, and he was the means of extricating his master from embarrassing circumstances through the immense number of pies he sold for him; but he soon began to play such tricks among the old women that the baker had to discharge him. He then had to sit down and work at his father's trade.

At the age of fourteen-and-a-half he was bound apprentice to Mr. George Bowden and Mrs. Mary Bowden, shoemakers, of Taunton, "as honest and worthy a couple as ever carried on trade." They carefully attended their shop six days of the week, and on the seventh they went with their family to an Anabaptist meeting, where excellent morality was taught, but little attention was paid to speculative doctrine.

During his apprenticeship he had as his companions two of his master's sons; the eldest, about seventeen, had heard and was converted by one of John Wesley's itinerant preachers. He set about to convert his parents and his brother, and eventually James himself became a member of the Wesleyan body—from which he eventually broke away for a long time, and

henceforth at least one half of his book is filled with sneering, contemptuous, and, as it seems to me, vulgar and contemptible attacks on that most respectable body of Christians, and especially on John Wesley himself. More than once during his career was he reconverted only to relapse, and it was during these relapses that he indulges in his offensive sarcasms, which only show much crass ignorance, abounding self-conceit, and an assumption of superior knowledge, which he boastingly regarded as "broadminded philosophy."

These dreary and needless discussions are certainly a great blot on his book, and in his latter days he was utterly ashamed of them. I wholly object to him as a teacher of "broad-minded philosophy." He only learnt to read during his apprenticeship, and to write some time afterwards. When he could read he became a great reader; he read every book he could get hold of. He had an excellent memory, and whilst he remained a member of the Wesleyan body he accumulated books suitable to his profession, and soon considered himself quite master of the various arguments made use of by polemical divines; but gradually getting rid of

these leading strings, he studied Plato and Seneca, and Plutarch and Epicurus, and other of the old pagan philosophers, and all the modern ones, such as Voltaire, Tom Paine, etc., and so he soon found himself fully equipped as against what he now looked upon as the narrow-minded teaching of John Wesley.

It does not seem, however, to have been his study of philosophy that first caused him to break away from Methodism. It happened that just about the time when he had reached his twenty-first year, and near the end of his apprenticeship, the election occurred of two Members of Parliament for Taunton, and he, having obtained his freedom from his mistress, was soon launched into the midst of scenes of riot and dissipation. He had a vote, and being as he says "possessed of a few ideas above those of my rank and station, my company was courted by some who were in a much higher sphere," and "here," he says, "I had nearly sunk for ever into meanness, obscurity, and vice, for when the election was over I had no longer open houses to eat and drink at free of cost."

It was this dissipated life that first caused his backsliding, and doubtless the "superior" learn-

ing he got from his philosophical books led to his final emancipation.

I can find no admiration for him as a philosopher, as he was pleased to call himself. His book, which contains over 500 pages of text, as I have said, only brings down the story of his life for forty-five years. It is so largely made up of scornful abuse of Methodism and of long irrelevant stories, many of them vulgar and indecent, that it is not easy to follow the thread of his life therein. The volume is also brimful of poetical quotations. He seems to have had, or thought he had, the art of finding an apt quotation for every incident of life. I will attempt to dig out from the great mass of matter he has written sufficient to give an intelligent sketch of him as a bookseller. In this capacity he assuredly exhibited very great ability; he was honest, fearless, straightforward, and clear headed. Starting as a bookseller, in utter ignorance of all the old rules and customs, and in defiance of them, he invented an entirely new system of his own, and in this he persevered, always honestly and honourably till it led him on to fortune. His success was of course greatly due to his own perseverance, but more perhaps to the fact that

he had, accidentally as it were, hit upon a new line of operation, and success followed because it was new.

After some years of wandering about the country as a journeyman shoemaker he married an old sweetheart of his boyish days—one Nancy Smith, a dairymaid. They were married at St. Peter's, Bristol, in the year 1770-1: on searching their pockets after the marriage ceremony was over and the necessary expenses paid, they had just *one halfpenny* between them wherewith to begin the world. He laboured hard at his trade as a worker in stuff shoes and she earned a few shillings weekly in binding them. They worked together bravely and were very happy on a combined income of 10*s*. or 12*s*. a week. Soon, however, the wife fell ill and so continued for many months; she suffered excruciating agonies, with none of the comforts of life to aid her.

These sad times of sickness and starvation continued for more than two years. At last, with a view to getting a better price for his work, Lackington resolved to visit London. He reached the metropolis in August, 1773, with the traditional half-crown in his pocket, and

eventually found work with Mr. Heath in Fore Street. Notwithstanding his previous backsliding, his first inquiry was for Mr. Wesley's "Gospel shops," and on producing his class and band tickets he was duly admitted. In a month he saved money enough to bring his wife up to town, and it happened just about the same time he received intelligence of the death of his grandfather, who left him £10. He started off to Somersetshire to receive the money. On returning he lost about 16*s*., seemingly through a hole in his pocket, for he first discovered, while travelling on the coach, some of the silver dribbling through the basket on to the ground—he bore the loss with the equanimity of a philosopher, reasoning with Epictetus that he could not have lost it if he had never had it, and that as he had lost it, why, it was all the same as if it had never been in his possession.

But a sadder misfortune befell him on that cold coach journey; to keep out the bitter cold, he drank some purl and gin, which made him so drunk that the coachman put him inside the coach for fear of his falling off the roof. He there met a jovial set who also drank to keep out the cold; they were in high glee, and asked

him to sing them a song; he at once complied, forgetting, as he says, that he was "one of the holy brethren."

By the time he reached home he had become sober, though in great perturbation of mind for what he had done—so ashamed was he that he concealed the affair from his wife "that he might not grieve her righteous soul with the knowledge of so dreadful a fall"; fortunately, before mounting the coach on his homeward journey, he had sewn the bulk of his fortune in his clothes. His good wife ripped open his clothes which contained the treasure, and with a heart full of gratitude piously thanked Providence for the supply.

With this store of cash they purchased household goods, and they worked hard and lived still harder, so that in a short time they had a room nicely furnished with their own goods, but it fell out that on Christmas Eve they had only half-a-crown left to purchase their Christmas dinner. Lackington says that he often spent in books money which should have gone in buying food to eat. On this Christmas Eve his wife sent him out to buy their Christmas dinner. On passing a bookseller's shop he

espied a copy of "Young's Night Thoughts," he forgot his dinner, down went the half-crown, and he hastened home vastly elated with his acquisition. When his wife asked him for the Christmas dinner, he told her it was in his pocket. "How could you think of stuffing a joint of meat into your pocket?" He then began to harangue on the superiority of intellectual pleasures over sensual gratifications. It took him considerable time and much eloquence to convince his wife that it was far better to feast on "Young's Night Thoughts" than on beef and pudding,

"And sacrifice your dinner to your books."

It was in June, 1774, that Mr. Boyd, one of Mr. Wesley's people, told him of a little shop and parlour behind it to be let in Featherstone Street, where he might get some work as a master. He decided at once to take the place, and told Mr. Boyd that he would sell books there also. For several months he had observed a great increase in a certain old-book shop, and he felt persuaded that he knew as much about old books as the person who kept it. He considered that, being a lover of books, if he could but be a bookseller he should then

have plenty of books to read, which was the greatest motive for him to make the attempt. His friend promised to get the shop for him, and added: "When you are Lord Mayor, you shall use all your interest to get me made an alderman."

The shop was taken and opened on Midsummer Day, 1774, with a stock worth *five pounds*, in Featherstone Street, St. Luke's. He was as well pleased to see his name over the door as was Nebuchadnezzar when he said: "Is not this great Babylon that I have built?" and his wife piously cautioned him against setting his mind too much on the riches of the world, and assured him that all was vanity.

Notwithstanding the obscurity of the street, and the mean appearance of the shop, he soon found customers for what few books he had, and laid out the money in other "old trash." He borrowed five pounds from a fund which Wesley's people kept on purpose to lend out to such of their society whose characters were good—for three months without interest. This sum enabled him to increase his stock.

In this new establishment he and his wife

lived very frugally ; they dined on potatoes, and quenched their thirst with water.

They lived in this street for six months; by that time his stock had increased from £5 to £25. This immense stock he deemed too valuable to be buried in Featherstone Street, so he took a shop and parlour at No. 46 Chiswell Street; here he bade a final adieu to the *gentle craft*, and converted his little stock of leather into old books; his stock consisted chiefly of old divinity, and he had a great sale of such books as he approved of—for says he, "such was my ignorance, bigotry, superstition (or what you please), that I conscientiously destroyed such books as fell into my hands which were written by free-thinkers."

He went on prosperously till September, 1775, when he was suddenly taken ill of a dreadful fever, and his wife was seized ten days after with the same disorder, and she died on the 9th of November. He says, "she was in reality one of the best of women, but enthusiastical in the extreme, and of course very superstitious, but as I was very far gone myself I did not think that a fault in her."

He continued in the fever for many weeks,

and his life was despaired of; his wife died and was buried without his once having a sight of her: the nurses who were hired to attend to him and his wife robbed him of linen, etc., and kept themselves drunk with gin while he lay in bed ready to perish owing to want of proper care.

When he was well enough to look after his affairs he found that two of his friends had saved him from ruin by locking up his shop which contained his *all*.

Soon after he returned to his shop he made the acquaintance of Miss Dorcas Turton, a young lady of good family who in days gone by had shown their goodness by dissipating large fortunes and estates, and Dorcas was reduced to keeping a school to support her father, who had gambled away a large fortune of his own and £20,000 of his wife's.

This young lady was immoderately fond of books; who then could be better suited for a bookseller's wife? Lackington proposed, was accepted, and they were married January 30, 1776, or little more than two months after the death of his first wife! To most people this would surely be regarded as indecent haste,

but he only remarks quite coolly: "Thus I repaired the loss of one very valuable woman by the acquisition of another still more valuable."

Shortly after this he took up the "Life of John Buncle"; and "I know not," says he, "of any work more proper to be put into the hands of a poor ignorant superstitious Methodist." The study of this valuable work formed the groundwork for a fresh attack on Methodism, which occupies above a hundred continuous pages of scurrilous abuse mixed up with nasty anecdotes.

His new wife's extreme love of books (novels chiefly) made her delight to be in the shop, so that she soon became perfectly acquainted with every part of it, and was a most valuable help in taking care of it during his absence. He now began to buy parcels of books, and found his trade so rapidly increasing in this direction that he was several times so hard pushed for cash to pay for them that he more than once pawned his watch and a suit of clothes, and sometimes he even pawned books to pay for others.

Early in 1778 Mr. John Denis became his partner, who found money to increase largely

the stock of books, and the first catalogue of 12,000 volumes was issued by J. Lackington and Co. in 1779. After going on very pleasantly together for more than two years, Mr. Denis hinted that he thought Lackington was making purchases too fast—this led to considerable warmth on both sides, and consequently they dissolved partnership in May, 1780. They parted in great friendship, and at his death soon afterwards Mr. Denis left behind him the best collection of scarce, valuable, mystical, and alchemical books that was ever collected by one person.

It was in this year 1780 that he resolved *to give no person whatever any credit*, an innovation on the ordinary custom of the trade which for the time caused him to be much laughed at and ridiculed; he was told that he might as well attempt to build the Tower of Babel as to establish a large business without giving credit; but he determined to make the experiment; he began by plain marking in every book facing the title the lowest price he would take for it; which being much lower than the common market prices, he not only retained his former customers, but soon increased their numbers;

but he had innumerable difficulties to encounter, as he would make no *exception whatever*, all his customers, "even the nobility," were treated alike—cash down, no credit. "There were not wanting," says he, "among the booksellers some who were mean enough to assert that all my books were bound in sheep, and many other unmanly artifices were practised, all of which, so far from injuring me, as basely intended, turned to my account."

He says, with perhaps some truth, and certainly with his usual conceit:

"In this branch of trade it is next to impossible for me ever to have any formidable rivals, as it requires an uncommon exertion as well as very uncommon success for many years together to rise to any degree of eminence in that particular line. This success must be attained, too, without the aid of *novelty*, which I find of very great service to me."

In the first three years after he began the cash system his business increased, and the whole of his profit was expended in buying books, so that his Catalogue in 1784 was largely increased; it now contained 30,000 books, mostly of a much superior character to those of his first Catalogue. He now found a difficulty which he had not fore-

seen. Many of his customers were always ready to *buy* from him, but were not equally inclined to *sell* to him such books as they had for sale; they said, "Lackington sells very cheap; he therefore will not give much for what is offered him," he had difficulty in controverting this heresy, but he at length adopted the following plan to put the matter beyond a doubt:

"When I am called upon to purchase any library or parcel of books either myself or my assistants carefully examine them and if desired to fix a price I mention at a word the highest I will give for them, which I always take care is as much as any bookseller can afford to give, but if the seller entertains any doubts respecting the price offered and chooses to try other booksellers he pays me *five per cent.* for valuing the books, and as he knows what I valued them at he tries among the trade, and when he finds he cannot get any greater sum offered, on returning to me he not only receives the price I at first offered, but also return of the *five per cent.* paid me for the valuation."

When he was first initiated into the various manœuvres practised by booksellers he found it customary among them, when any books had not gone off so rapidly as expected, to put what remained of such articles into private sales where only booksellers were admitted, and of these only

such as were invited by having a catalogue sent them. At one of these sales he had frequently seen seventy or eighty thousand books sold after dinner.

He was very much surprised to learn on his first attending these sales that it was common for such as purchased remainders to *destroy* half or *three-fourths*, and to charge the full publication price, or nearly that, for such as they kept on hand; and "*there was a kind of standing order amongst the trade, that in case any one was known to sell articles under the publication price, such a person was to be excluded from trade sales; so blind were copyright holders to their own interest.*"

He adhered to this rule for a time, but he soon discovered that books that would not sell for six shillings may still be sold for three or two shillings, and so in proportion. He adopted this plan instead of destroying stock, and so disposed of many hundreds of thousands of books. "This part of my conduct," he says, "though evidently highly beneficial to the community, and even to booksellers, created me many enemies among the trade, some of whom . . . by a variety of pitiful insinuations and dark innuendos strained every nerve to injure the reputation I had already ac-

quired with the public, determined to effect my ruin, which indeed they daily prognosticated, with a demon-like spirit, must inevitably very speedily follow."

In Letter XXXVI. Lackington furnishes some curious information about the relations of authors and publishers. "Nothing is more common," he says, "than to hear authors complaining against publishers for want of liberality in purchasing their manuscripts." He seldom purchased manuscripts or published new books himself. He felt himself on that account quite impartial in expressing the opinion that publishers possessed more liberality than any other set of tradesmen as relates to purchasing manuscripts and copyrights, in confirmation of which he quotes Dr. Johnson: "Sir, I always said, the booksellers were a generous set of men." [1]

[1] Nichols, in "The Literary Anecdotes," gives the whole account thus: "Johnson has dignified the Booksellers as the 'Patrons of Literature.' In the case of his 'Lives of the Poets,' which drew forth that encomium, he had bargained for 200 guineas; and the Booksellers spontaneously added a third hundred. On this occasion the great moralist observed to the writer of this article; 'Sir, I always said the Booksellers were a generous set of men. Nor, in the present instance, have I reason to complain. The fact is, not that they have paid me too

We are in the habit of boasting in our own days of the very large sums paid by publishers to authors, but it may surprise some of our friends to learn that the same spirit of large liberality was not wanting more than a hundred years ago. Lackington quotes a few of the authors of those days who were not badly paid by their publishers. "Mr. Elliott, bookseller, Edinburgh" (presumably a forbear of the present respected Andrew), "gave Mr. Smallie a thousand pounds for his 'Philosophy of Natural History' when only the heads of the chapters were written. Dr. Robertson received £600 for his 'History of Scotland,' but for his 'Charles V.' he received £4,500. Hume received £5,200 for his 'History of Britain.' Dr. Hawksworth received £6,000 for his 'Compilation of Voyages,' and I leave it to any considerate person to judge whether in paying so enormous a price the publisher did not run a great risk when it is considered how great the expenses of bringing forward such a work must have been." He quotes an instance, not by

little, but that I have written too much.' The 'Lives' were soon published in a separate edition, when, for a very few corrections, the Doctor was presented with another hundred guineas."

any means without parallel in our own days, of a Mr. R. who was paid £1,600 to do work which he died without performing, having spent the money, which was not recoverable.

Here is an astounding fact! "Many novels have been offered to booksellers; indeed, many have been actually published *that were not worth the expense of paper and printing;* so that *the copyright was dear at any price.*"

Ah! prophetic Lackington, you must have been thinking of the *Twentieth*, not the Eighteenth Century!

Lackington was now in the full swim of his prosperity, he bought books by the thousand, and even tens of thousands — and, reflecting thereon, he says that he often looked back with astonishment at his own courage in purchasing, and his wonderful success in taking money enough to pay the extensive demands made upon him. "There is not," says he, "another instance of success so rapid and constant under such circumstances."

As was customary in the eighteenth century, Lackington issued immense quantities of Halfpenny Tokens. The following is a description of one of them:

Obv. Bust to left, LACKINGTON, 1795.
Rev. Fame blowing a trumpet, Halfpenny of Lackington, Allen, & Co., cheapest booksellers in the world.
Edge. Payable at the *Temple of the Muses.*

"Among all the schools where the knowledge of mankind is to be acquired I know of none equal to that of a *bookseller's shop*," says Lackington. "A bookseller who has any taste in literature may, in some measure, be said to feed his mind as cooks and butchers' wives get fat by the smell of meat." And thus it was that he himself "grew fat and kicked" like Jeshurun. He kicked against the pricks of his early training in Methodism, and held himself to be free of all narrow creeds and dogmas. "Mr. Wesley," he says, "told his society in Broadmead, Bristol, in my hearing, that he could never keep a bookseller six months in his flock."

Now that we have landed him on the full stage of prosperity, we can but briefly trace the remainder of his course. I will quote here one or two of his maxims. "I was obliged to be pretty well informed of the state of politics in Europe, as I have always found *bookselling is*

much affected by the political state of affairs . . . if there is anything in the newspapers of consequence, that draws many to the coffee-house, where they chat away the evenings instead of visiting the shops of booksellers (*as they ought to do, no doubt*) or *reading* at home. The best time for *bookselling* is when there is *no kind of news stirring*." "As I never had any part of the *miser* in my composition, I always proportioned my expenses according to my profits; that is, I have for many years expended two-thirds of the profits of my trade, which proportion of expenditure I never exceeded."

His progressive steps from poverty to prosperity he thus describes: "In the beginning I opened and shut my own shop," a year after "I beckoned across the way for a pot of good porter," a few years later "I sometimes invited my friends to dinner off roast veal," next in due progress "ham was introduced, and a pudding was the next addition," then for some time "a glass of brandy and water was a luxury," succeeded by a glass of Mr. Beaufoy's *raisin wine*; as soon as his two-third profits enabled him, "good red port immediately appeared." *Lodging* in the country in due time gave place to a *country*

house, in another year the inconveniences of a *stage coach* were remedied by a *chariot*.

> "My precious rib has ventured to declare
> 'Tis vulgar on one's legs to take the air."

"For four years Upper Holloway was to me an elysium, then *Surry* appeared unquestionably the most beautiful county in England, and *Upper Merton* the most rural village in Surry. So now Merton is selected as the seat of occasional philosophical retirement."

By his doctor's advice he bought a horse and saved his life by the exercise it afforded him. "The old adage," he says, "'Set a beggar on horseback and he'll ride to the devil,' was deemed to be fully verified, but when Mrs. Lackington mounted another horse people were very sorry to see people so young in business run on at so great a rate."

"It seems that at last people have discovered the secret springs from whence I drew my wealth—some can tell you the very *number* of my fortunate lottery ticket, others are as positive that I found bank-notes in an old book to the value of many thousand pounds. . . . But I assure you upon my honour that *I found the whole of what I am possessed of in*

small profits, bound by Industry and clasped by Economy."

For some years he had contemplated going out of business on account of his and Mrs. Lackington's bad state of health, but although he had no family of his own, his friends reminded him that he had about fifty poor relations, some old and helpless and many who had justly formed some expectations from him, so he regarded the giving up of such a trade as he was in possession of before he was absolutely obliged as a kind of injustice to those whose ties of blood he felt bound to relieve and protect. These sentiments are very creditable to him, and he seems to have carried them out.

For the next few years he spent much of his time in travelling about the country with Mrs. Lackington, and enjoyed life; amongst many other places visited by him was his native town of Wellington, where he was honoured with the ringing of the bells during the whole of the day after his arrival; and with a cordial reception from the most respectable people of the vicinity, who were pleased to see that he did not assume the character of a rich upstart, but noticed his poor relations and friends. In Bristol, Exbridge,

Bridgewater, Taunton and other places, he amused himself in calling on some of his old masters, with whom he had twenty years before worked as a journeyman shoemaker. He addressed each with, "Pray, sir, have you got any occasion?" the term used when seeking employment. "Most of those honest men had quite forgot my person, as many of them had not seen me since I worked for them, so that it is not easy for you to conceive with what astonishment they gazed upon me. For you must know that I had the vanity (I call it humour) to do this in my chariot, attended by my servants; and on telling them who I was, all appeared very happy to see me." Some of his old friends declared they had known him for fifty years (he being then forty-five). One old chap distinctly remembered seeing him many times on the top of a six-and-twenty round ladder, balanced on the chin of a merryandrew! but he says the old man was egregiously mistaken.

The second edition of "The Life" ends with the year 1794, when he was about forty-eight years old. In 1793 he sold a fourth share of his business to Mr. Robert Allen, who had been brought up in the shop. He does not himself

mention the removal of the business from Chiswell Street to Finsbury Square, which seems to have occurred about the year 1794. The shop occupied a large block at one of the corners of the square.

I learn from Mr. Davenport's "Life of Lackington," in a volume entitled "Lives of Individuals" (Tegg, 1841), that Lackington "purchased extensive premises in Moorfields at the south-west corner of Finsbury Square, and fitted them up in such a manner as was never seen before or since. The shop was so capacious that a mail-coach and four was easily driven round the counters when it was opened. From the shop to the roof, four or five stories high, ran a wide cylindrical aperture surmounted by a glazed dome and flagstaff. Every corner of the vast edifice was crowded with books. Its owner proudly called it 'The Temple of the Muses.' It has recently been destroyed by fire."

Charles Knight, who visited the "Temple of the Muses" in 1801, when he was ten years old, gives an interesting description of the building —the broad staircases, the "lounging rooms," and the circular galleries, etc.

I find the following in a footnote in Nichols's "Literary Anecdotes," vol. iii. (1812):

"The Bibliomaniacs (if any such survive) who recollect the contents of Mr. Lackington's first catalogue in Chiswell Street, and the dimensions of his shop, would be astonished when they first visited the 'Temple of the Muses' in Finsbury Square; but, as Mr. Lackington observed in the motto on his first carriage: 'Small gains do great things,' and in him was exemplified the quotation very aptly selected for him in more than one of his catalogues: '*Sutor ultra crepidam feliciter ausus.*' As he is still living, and has favoured the world with his own memoirs, I shall only say that he is particularly fortunate in having for his successor in business a well-educated, gentlemanly nephew[1] and partners of considerable talent and equal industry."

Lackington's second wife, Dorcas, died February 27th, 1795, and on June 11th, with his usual promptness, he married a relative of hers.

In 1798 he gave up his interest in the business to his cousin[1] George Lackington (referred to in the above quotation).

In 1804 he published a volume called "Con-

[1] Davenport says "he made over the whole of his business to George, one of his *cousins* by the father's side, to Mr. Allen, and other parties."

fessions." This work I have only just seen; in it he expresses great regret at having in his "Life" cast so much ridicule upon the Wesleyans.

Of his preface to this work it may certainly be said that the oddity and self-sufficiency are frequently much more apparent than the modesty or good sense; he says:

"Several of my friends have thought that if the following letters were made public, they might prove useful as a warning to others not to fall into those errors which had nearly proved fatal to me; and also as an alarm to some of those who are already fallen into that dreadful state of infidelity from which, by the great mercy of God, I am happily escaped."

He mentions his good wife Dorcas very ungenerously and slightingly as having misled him into reading "gay, frothy narratives."

"I had no sooner married this young woman," says he, "than Mr. Wesley's people began to prophecy that I should soon lose all my religion. This prophecy I must confess was too soon fulfilled. I was often prevailed upon to hear her read those gay frothy narratives, and I began to lose my relish for more important things."

He retired first to Thornbury and next to Alveston, in Gloucestershire, where he erected

a small chapel. He soon became a preacher himself in the neighbouring villages, and spent his time chiefly in visiting the sick, relieving the poor, distributing tracts, and expounding the Scriptures. In 1806 he removed to Taunton, the town in which he served his apprenticeship, and built another chapel at a cost of £3,000, and endowed it with £150 a year for the minister. In front of this building appears the following inscription:

"*This Temple is erected as a monument of God's mercy, in convincing an Infidel of the important Truths of Christianity.*"

He subsequently became involved in a dispute with the Conference, and he sold the chapel to them for £1,000. He removed to Budleigh Salterton, where he built another chapel at a cost of £2,000, and allowed £150 a year to the minister. He died from apoplexy, in the odour of sanctity, November 22nd, 1815, aged seventy. His remains rest in Budleigh churchyard.

At the date of Lackington's death in 1815 my late partner, Sampson Low, was a youth of twenty, in the house of Messrs. Longman. I have often heard him speak of the "Temple of

the Muses," and he had seen Lackington himself. He seemed to have shared a pretty common opinion among the members of the regular trade that Lackington was looked upon as somewhat of a black sheep, but this of course had reference only to his vigorous innovations — there was never a question about his sterling honesty.

I find that this death of a man known to my late partner, and who died within a few years of my own birth, brings the story of "Booksellers of Other Days" too nearly down to the present day. If I am to continue these "sketches" I must hark back for a century or two.

Since writing the foregoing, my attention has been drawn to the fact that the late Adam Black, founder of the great Edinburgh House, passed a part of his early career in the house of Lackington, Allen and Co. When he first landed in London, in the year 1804, a youth of twenty, he had many letters of introduction to London houses, among others to Lackington, but he had so little desire to be employed there that he called there last, and was told to call again. He was not favourably impressed, but after calling there two or three times he at last got employment at

18*s.* a week, and remained there at an increasing salary for nearly three years, of itself a satisfactory proof that the house of Lackington was of a far more sterling and reputable character than was sometimes represented by its competitors in trade. He gives an interesting description of "The Temple of the Muses," very much as given above. James Lackington had retired from business before Adam Black entered the house. *See* "Memoirs of Adam Black," edited by Alexander Nicholson, LL.D.

The above is taken from a Lackington Token, kindly lent to me by a descendant of one of the Lackingtons, Mr. R. A. Lackington, who is now engaged in business in the house of William Dawson and Sons, Bream's Buildings. *See page* 172.

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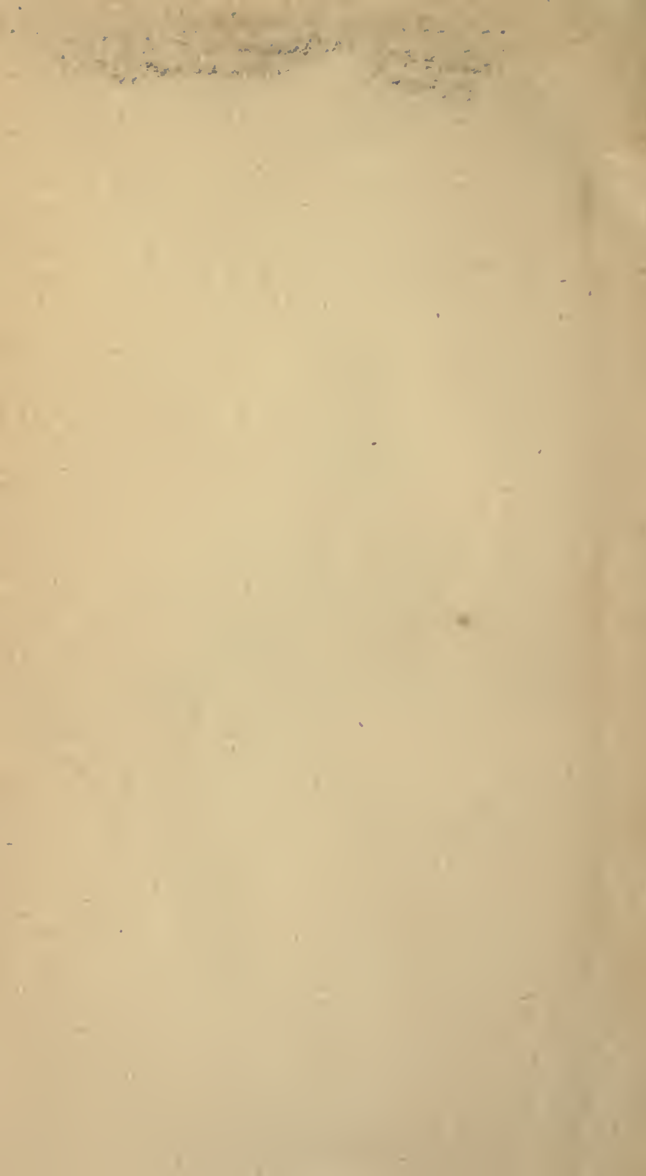

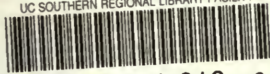
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