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*William Harrison Ainsworth*  
*as a youth.*

*from the miniature by Peart  
in the possession of Captain Swanson*



WILLIAM HARRISON  
AINSWORTH  
AND HIS FRIENDS

BY S. M. ELLIS    ❧   ❧   ❧   ❧

WITH 4 PHOTOGRAVURE PLATES  
AND 52 OTHER ILLUSTRATIONS  
TWO VOLUMES—VOLUME I

THE BODLEY HEAD  
OXFORD

LONDON : JOHN LANE THE BODLEY HEAD  
NEW YORK : JOHN LANE COMPANY MCMXI

71664

WILLIAM BRENDON AND SON, LTD.,  
PRINTERS, PLYMOUTH

F. B. 4003  
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## PREFACE

**I**T is certainly remarkable that, during the twenty-eight years which have elapsed since the death of William Harrison Ainsworth, no full record has been published of the exceptionally eventful career of one of the most picturesque personalities of the nineteenth century. Quite apart from the merits of his popular and admirable romances, their author's life was of singular interest, for he was intimately associated with all his most famous literary contemporaries.

Ainsworth was pre-eminently a *littérateur*—particularly in the sense of his knowledge of books and their production, and of bookish men. He was, like Disraeli, bred in a library, and took to writing himself as soon as he could use a pen in early childhood. His all-absorbing and life-long passion for his congenital craft, and the various episodes of his career as a magazine contributor, a publisher, a leading author, the owner and editor of three powerful magazines, and as a host whose entertaining was on a large scale, made him acquainted with practically every contemporary literary and artistic man of note. The mere list of some of his friends sums up the literature of his period: Walter Scott, Charles Lamb, Lockhart, John Wilson, Mrs. Shelley, Thomas Campbell, Barry Cornwall, Tom Moore, Leigh Hunt, Coleridge,

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Ainsworth

Engd. E. B. M. 126

Maginn, Miss Landon, Tom Hood, Mrs. Norton, Samuel Rogers, "Father Prout," Count D'Orsay, Lady Blessington, Wordsworth, Thackeray, Browning, Dickens, Forster, Dyce, Disraeli, Bulwer-Lytton, Samuel Lover, Barham ("Ingoldsby"), T. Noon Talfourd, Horace Smith, Charles Lever, Marryat, G. P. R. James, Douglas Jerrold, M. F. Tupper, Shirley Brooks, Dr. Kenealy, Edmund Yates, Mrs. Henry Wood, "Ouida," Macready, Maclise, Landseer, Leech, "Phiz," and Cruikshank. A man with such friends can be no ordinary individual, and the record of his life must necessarily possess a great and storied interest from so unique an acquaintanceship. No apology, therefore, is needed for a biography of Ainsworth, belated though it be.

The only attempts, hitherto, to present an account of Ainsworth's life have been in the form of very brief memoirs. Several of these, inaccurate and incomplete, appeared during the lifetime of the subject. The best was that written by Laman Blanchard for *The Mirror*, 1842 (and subsequently prefixed to various editions of *Rookwood*), for it was sympathetic, and picturesque in diction; but, of necessity, it only dealt with half of Ainsworth's career—for he lived until 1882. Since the novelist's death, Mr. W. E. A. Axon has written an excellent Memoir of Ainsworth for *The Dictionary of National Biography* (which has also been issued separately, in pamphlet form, with some additions and portraits): this Memoir, however, is simply a succinct account of the subject's lengthy life and literary output, and leaves untouched the mass of Ainsworth's correspondence still extant.

At the period following Ainsworth's death various

reasons operated to prevent the production of his biography. The man originally most fitted for the task, his life-long friend, James Crossley (to whom he addressed a voluminous correspondence), was now too old to undertake it ; and a like cause deterred his talented cousin, William Francis Ainsworth. In addition, it was considered that it would be difficult to deal, in print, with certain delicate matters without giving pain to persons then living. Time and Death have since combined to remove this difficulty to a great extent ; and when I decided to undertake the long-delayed biography it was with the full consent of Ainsworth's daughter and representative, Mrs. Swanson, who assisted me in every way possible. To this lady I was indebted for many valuable particulars of her father's life ; her own interesting recollections of Dickens, Thackeray, and others who frequented her early home ; and for the privilege of reproducing many family portraits in this work, which, to my great regret, Mrs. Swanson did not live to see published. Captain William Ainsworth and Mr. W. Gowland Harrison, cousins of the novelist, who both gave me their kind aid, also passed away while the book was in progress.

One of the most noteworthy features of a very pleasant task has been the courteous and readily-given assistance of all those whom it was necessary for me to approach, both friend and stranger ; but, indeed, the widespread interest in my work has been remarkable, and I take this opportunity of warmly acknowledging it.

In the first place, my sincerest thanks are due to Mr. Adrian H. Joline, of New York, who placed unreservedly at my service, without restriction of time, his voluminous

collection of Ainsworth's letters and MSS., and letters addressed to Ainsworth by Dickens, Forster, Cruikshank, and Thackeray.

Next, I have to thank Mr. Charles W. Sutton, Chief Librarian of the Manchester Public Free Libraries, for the exceptional facilities he gave me for examining the extensive series of Ainsworth letters (addressed to James Crossley) preserved in the King Street Library, and which comprise one of the most important features of this biography.

Concerning other Ainsworth letters which appear in this book, I am indebted to Miss Mabel Harrison and Mr. Howard J. Harrison for those addressed to their father, Dr. James Bower Harrison; to Miss Jennett Humphreys and Mr. James Penderel-Brodhurst for letters written to them by the novelist; to Mr. Peter Keary for several of Ainsworth's letters to Macrone (particularly those which refer to Dickens's quarrel with that publisher); to the Misses Henrietta and Arabella Kenealy for extracts from their father's correspondence with Ainsworth; and to Mr. Walter T. Spencer for a long series of letters (including most of those addressed to Charles Kent) and certain of the illustrations which are reproduced in this work. Mr. Audley H. Ainsworth most kindly assisted me with the loan of many books, and in other ways.

The letters from Charles Dickens are published in this biography by kind permission of his executrix, Miss Georgina Hogarth, to whom I am also indebted for some interesting details relating to Ainsworth's friendship with Dickens and herself.

The letters from Thackeray are quoted by permission

of Lady Ritchie and Messrs. Smith, Elder, and Co., the owners of the copyright.

For assistance in various ways I wish to express my gratitude to Messrs. J. Allen and Sons; Mr. Ernest Axon; Mr. W. E. A. Axon; Mr. Bamford; Miss Ada Beaver; Mr. Charles Biddiscombe; Mr. E. Binstead; Mr. C. A. Bleckly; Mr. W. H. Bleckly; Lady Bond; Mr. L. Breitmeyer; Mr. A. M. Broadley; Mr. H. W. Bruton; Mr. Frederic Chapman; Mr. Frank E. Chennell; Mr. F. Churcher; Rev. C. H. Conybeare; Dr. W. A. Copinger, F.S.A.; Mr. Dillon Croker; the Misses Crosbie; Mr. W. V. Daniell; Mr. Austin Dobson; Mr. Percy Fitzgerald, F.S.A.; Mrs. Garrett; Mr. Frederick Harrison, M.A.; Mr. Francis Harvey; Mr. H. Hatt-Cook; Mr. Richard Howard; Mr. Herbert Salusbury-Hughes; Mrs. Thomas Hughes; Mr. H. Hulme; Mr. Francis Jones; Rev. H. D. Lockett, M.A.; Mr. E. V. Lucas; Mrs. Mackenzie; Mrs. Matthews; Mr. Edmund Mercer; Mr. L. V. Paton; Mr. W. C. Poulten; Mr. K. Reeve; Messrs. G. Routledge and Sons; Mr. F. Sabin; Captain C. Sergison; Mr. Joseph Shaylor; Mr. C. K. Shorter; Rev. K. H. Smith; Messrs. Sotheby; Mr. J. H. Swann; Captain J. Swanson; Mr. Hugh Thomson; and Mr. Hastings Worrin.

And, finally, for their kind interest in my work and help, either with the illustrations or in elucidating various doubtful points that have arisen, I wish specially to thank my friends Miss Mary Arthur; Mr. Richard Bentley; Sir George Birdwood, K.C.I.E.; Dr. J. S. Crone, J.P.; Captain R. Douglas, R.M.L.I.; Dr. Havelock Ellis; Mr. Allan Fea; Mr. D. R. Gooding; Mr. H. H. Grubbe; Mr. W. J. Grubbe; Mr. George Jennings; Mr. Walter Jerrold; Mr. Lewis Melville; Mr. C. R.

Rivington ; Mr. Thomas Seccombe ; Miss S. E. Stewart ; and Mr. G. A. Storey, A.R.A.

As I have already indicated, the letters and documentary matter which appear in this book are almost entirely new and published for the first time. Although Ainsworth left no autobiographical papers and only kept a Journal for one brief period, the amount of material, of all kinds, I was enabled to collect for this work during three years' research was immense : the only difficulty has been what to eliminate.

In writing this biography I have throughout always endeavoured, wherever possible, to follow the formula laid down by the greatest biographer, Boswell, for writing a man's life—" Not only relating all the most important events of it in their order, but interweaving what he privately wrote, and said, and thought." On the other hand, whatever faults and errors it contains must be set down to the fact that it was, unfortunately, written in defiance of Johnson's dictum, that " No man can write the life of a man but one who has eat, and drunk, and lived in social intercourse with him."

S. M. ELLIS.

HILL HOUSE, SOUTHWOLD,

*October, 1910.*



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WILLIAM HARRISON  
**AINSWORTH**  
AND HIS FRIENDS. VOL. I



# WILLIAM HARRISON AINSWORTH AND HIS FRIENDS

## INTRODUCTORY ACCOUNT OF THE NOVELIST'S GENEALOGY

**A**T the first stage of our itinerary, in the green valleys of the County Palatine, we are confronted with a vision of dry bones, which—if not over-estimating our prophetic powers—we will hope to clothe with the semblance of flesh and blood.

Those who are not partial to an ell of genealogy had better skip the proposed—but problematical—miracle, and pass on at once to Chapter One: but for those who believe that heredity is the predominant influence in the life of a man, the following details may prove of interest—in tracing the far-away sources whence flowed traits and tendencies which culminated in the temperamental imaginative and descriptive powers possessed by William Harrison Ainsworth.

. . . . .  
In the history of English nomenclature the name of Ainsworth makes a very early appearance, for it became a

family cognomen from the time when surnames were first adopted. From the outset, the Ainsworths have always been associated with the County Palatine, as it was from the hamlet of Ainsworth, in the parish of Middleton, Lancashire, that a certain medieval family took its name. The Ainsworths of Ainsworth flourished until the time of the Civil War, when the last member, Robert Ainsworth, died without leaving legitimate heirs. He had, however, a natural son, known as Robert "Ainsworth,"<sup>1</sup> with whom, according to an ancient pedigree<sup>2</sup> of the Ainsworths of Ainsworth, the Ainsworths of Pleasington were connected. An ancestor (probably of Ainsworth hamlet) of this latter family had married the heiress of the Wyncleys, and thus acquired the estate of Pleasington, near Blackburn. His descendants, the Ainsworths of Pleasington, at the time of the heralds' visitations, were evidently of some importance, for their pedigree was entered in 1567.

The statement that William Harrison Ainsworth was descended from the Pleasington Ainsworths cannot be substantiated;<sup>3</sup> but in all probability his branch of the family was an earlier offshoot from the original stock at

<sup>1</sup> Robert "Ainsworth's" younger son, William, was educated at Valadolid, in Spain, where he entered the priesthood. On his return to England, he acted as chaplain in the family of Mr. Massey, of Puddington, Cheshire. In 1679 he was indicted for high treason, for exercising the functions of a priest, and was executed at Chester in July, 1679, a victim of "The Popish Plot" agitation.

<sup>2</sup> Shown by Mr. William Radcliffe, Rouge Croix Pursuivant, to W. Francis Ainsworth, cousin of the novelist.

<sup>3</sup> This statement was made by Laman Blanchard in his *Memoir of William Harrison Ainsworth*, first published in 1842. He was also incorrect in saying that Henry Ainsworth (1571-1622), the Brownist theologian and Hebrew scholar, and Robert Ainsworth (1660-1743), the compiler of the famous Latin Dictionary, were paternal ancestors of the novelist: such was not the case.



Ainsworth hamlet. Both branches, however, bore the same arms—Gu., three battle-axes, arg.

It was at Tottington, in the parish of Bury—about two miles from Ainsworth—that the authenticated direct ancestors of the novelist flourished.<sup>1</sup> As early as 1443, one, Thomas Aynsworth, was a copyhold tenant of the Manor of Tottington, in the Honour of Clitheroe. Passing over several generations, we come to

JEREMIAH AINSWORTH, of Tottington, the owner of a copyhold estate called Blacklow, and an active man in the Manorial Courts. He died in 1657, leaving a large family. His sixth child was also named Jeremiah, but to distinguish him he was generally called

JEREMY AINSWORTH. He was born in 1622. He served the office of Chapel Warden of Holcombe, and was estate steward to the Chethams of Turton Tower.<sup>2</sup> Jeremy Ainsworth's connection with this family involved him in a curious case of breach of privilege. In 1678 the Earl of Derby appointed as Governor of the Isle of Man<sup>3</sup> Robert Heywood, a gentleman of old family but broken fortunes. This Heywood was in debt to James Chetham, of Turton, who con-

<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to Mr. Ernest Axon, of Manchester, for details of the Ainsworths of Blacklow. A paper on the Ainsworth family history, read by Mr. Axon in 1907, will shortly be printed by the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society. Mr. Axon has also written papers on the maternal ancestry of Harrison Ainsworth for the same Society and for the Chetham Society.

<sup>2</sup> One of the oldest halls in England; Turton Tower is said to have been built in 1101.

<sup>3</sup> The Stanleys were Sovereigns and Lords of the Isle of Man. Henry IV. granted the island to Sir John Stanley in 1406, on condition that he and his descendants should present a cast of falcons to the Kings of England at their coronation. The Lordship of the Island eventually passed, by marriage, to the Atholl family, who, in 1765, sold the Manx Sovereignty to the British Government for £70,000.

sequently dispatched a number of "armed persons, or bailiffs" under the command of Jeremiah Ainsworth, with orders to arrest Governor Heywood and convey him to Lancaster Gaol. The faithful servants obeyed their master's behests with alacrity, and Chetham had his debtor in strict custody. The Earl of Derby, however, instead of ransoming his nominee, claimed Heywood's release, on the plea that servants of peers were free from arrest. Mr. Chetham "uttered contemptuous words" concerning the privileges of the Lords, whereupon the Earl petitioned the House of Lords to deal with the offender. The petition was read on June 14th, 1678, and the House promptly ordered the Serjeant-at-Arms to attach the bodies of Chetham, Ainsworth, and the other delinquents, and to bring them in safe custody to the Bar of the House to answer for their offences. However, the great-great-great-grandfather of the author of *The Tower of London* never occupied the dungeons so picturesquely described by his descendant. Indeed, he never appeared at the Bar of the House of Lords, for Chetham and Ainsworth wisely submitted themselves to the clemency of the Earl of Derby, at whose request the House ordered that Chetham and the others "be and are hereby discharged from any further restraint concerning this matter, paying their fees." It is not known if Chetham recovered his money from Governor Heywood. In any case, the noble earl emerged as a magnanimous victor from the fray, although, no doubt, the St. (Lloyd-) Georges of the period fulminated against him and the despotic power and tyrannical privileges of the dragonish House of Lords.

Jeremy Ainsworth had several children; one son,

Edward, born in 1650, was admitted to St. John's College, Cambridge, in 1667, and, entering the Church, became Rector of Dalbury, Derbyshire; but no further records of his life are available. The family pedigree was continued by Jeremy's youngest son,

THOMAS AINSWORTH, of Tottington, born in 1656. He married well, in 1708, his wife being Jane, daughter of Edmund Berry, who through her mother, Jane, *née* Leigh, was heiress in the female line of the yeoman family of Hopwood, of Spotland Gate, in the parish of Rochdale. Some confusion of names as regards Jane Berry has arisen in the records of the family, owing to the previous marriage of her mother with James Eckersall. The latter's son, James Eckersall, the second, dying in 1714, bequeathed part of the Spotland Gate estate to his half-sister, Jane Berry, who married Thomas Ainsworth; and it has remained in the possession of her descendants until the present day.

[The Spotland Gate property included an interesting old sixteenth-century house,<sup>1</sup> and although the Ainsworths do not appear ever to have resided there, the estate gave them a certain territorial status. In course of time, the house and lands were inherited by William Harrison Ainsworth, and it was as "Ainsworth of Spotland, Co. Lancaster," that the novelist figured in the pages of Burke's *Landed Gentry*. He, however, sold the property, in 1878, to his cousin, Dr. Ralph Ainsworth. The latter bequeathed it to Captain William Ainsworth, the late head of the family, who died in 1908, leaving three sons.]

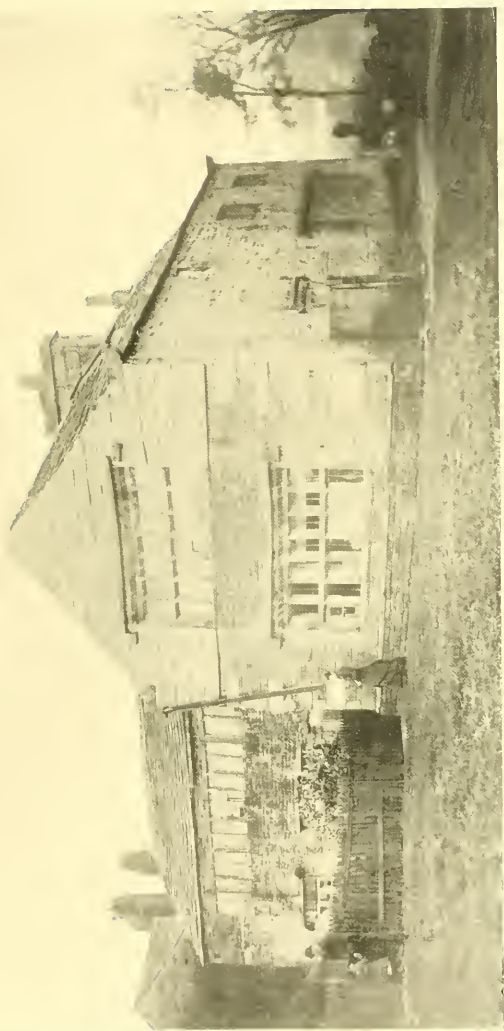
<sup>1</sup> It was pulled down about 1902, when the estate was developed for building purposes.

Jane Ainsworth, the heiress who brought Spotland Gate into the family in 1714, died in 1726, at the age of fifty-two, many years before her elderly husband, Thomas. She was buried in the churchyard of Holcombe, near Tottington, and her tomb bears the quaint epitaph—"Her price above rubies." When Thomas Ainsworth died, at the age of eighty-four, in 1741, he was laid to rest beside his wife, and his tombstone records that he was a scholarly man, and a professor of the arts of sculpture, arithmetic, penmanship, and accounts.<sup>1</sup>

JAMES AINSWORTH, of Mottram, the son and heir of Thomas, was born in 1712, and in 1733 he married Apphia, daughter of Joseph Holland. Of his family of six children, the third son was

JEREMIAH AINSWORTH, the Mathematician, and the most remarkable member of the family before the advent of his grandson, the novelist. Jeremiah was born in 1743, and, although the place of his birth is not definitely known, he was baptized at Mottram-in-Longdendale. He is said to have been educated at the Manchester Grammar School, but his name does not appear in the School Register, which was rather carelessly kept about his time. Jeremiah Ainsworth, at a very early age, displayed a marked proficiency in mathematics, and at seventeen he was answering and propounding mathematical problems in the *Imperial* and *Mathematical Magazines*. His skill in this science continued to increase until he became, it is related, "one of the most eminent mathematicians of his

<sup>1</sup> Both tombstones, which are situated a few yards west of the old sundial in Holcombe churchyard, have brass plates inserted, but the inscriptions are much obliterated from long exposure on the bleak hill-side.



SPOTLAND GATE, ROCHDALE.



time, and indeed may be styled one of the founders of the Lancashire School of Geometry."

Jeremiah Ainsworth settled in Manchester about 1763, and in 1768 he opened a writing and mathematical school in what was then called Long Miln-gate—close to the Grammar School.<sup>1</sup> His residence here gave the name of "Ainsworth's Court" to a neighbouring passage or court, which was situated opposite that interesting relic of old Manchester now known as "The Poets' Corner." In January of the same year—1768—Jeremiah Ainsworth married Ann, daughter of Thomas Shuttleworth, of Rostherne, a picturesque Cheshire village, situated near a large mere, some twelve miles south of Manchester. Mrs. Ainsworth spent much of her time in her native village, and several of her children were born there. Her grandchildren, also, were often at Rostherne in later years, and Harrison Ainsworth's

<sup>1</sup> The following announcement appeared in a Manchester journal, dated 10th May, 1768 :—

"Jeremiah Ainsworth will open a school, on Friday, June 24th, in a large commodious Room, near the Free Grammar School, Manchester; where will be taught, Writing in all the various Hands now in Practice, Geography, and the Use of the Globes, and other Mathematical Instruments, Book-keeping, Geometry, Mensuration, Land-surveying, Gauging, Trigonometry, Conic Sections, Astronomy, Navigation, Algebra, Annuities for Lives, Fluxions, Mechanics, etc., and every Branch of Newtonian Philosophy. Those who shall be pleased to Favour Mr. Ainsworth with the Care of the Education of their Youth, may depend upon his strict Attention to make each of them perfect and compleat in the particular Branch, which shall be more immediately allotted them by their Parents; and also to give such general Rudiments and Instruction as will be the best Qualification for Trade and Business, or for a more liberal Education at the University; and hopes when he shall be entrusted with the Charge, that he shall be able to lead through a regular Course, and make proficient in the higher and more sublime parts of Mathematical Knowledge.

"N.B.—Youths may be commendably boarded on reasonable Terms."

boyish reminiscences of the village will be mentioned in due course.

Jeremiah Ainsworth, after sixteen years of active work in his profession, died prematurely at the age of forty-one, on 13th November, 1784.<sup>1</sup> Of his family of seven children, the two daughters, Mary and Elizabeth, died unmarried. Three of his sons reached manhood, and as they entered the professions, it may be assumed that Jeremiah, their father, had been successful in his calling, and amassed a comfortable competence from instructing the youth of Manchester in "Writing . . . and every Branch of Newtonian Philosophy."

His eldest son, John Ainsworth (1771-1849), entered the Army, and attained the rank of Captain. He resided for a time in, or near, his father's former house at Manchester.<sup>2</sup> Captain John Ainsworth had two sons in the Army; a third—the Rev. Thomas Ainsworth—after serving in the Navy, took Holy Orders, and became Rector of Hartford, Cheshire; and the youngest son was William Francis Ainsworth (1807-96), F.S.A., F.R.G.S., who added much to the family fame. He was a distinguished surgeon, geologist, geographer, and traveller. He produced many able literary works relating to his

<sup>1</sup> Jeremiah Ainsworth was buried at the quaint Augustan Church of St. Ann's, Manchester, and his widow survived until 1810. She remarried in 1786, her second husband being Isaac Clarke (1744-1816), a well-known bookseller of 10, Market Place, Manchester. Their son, Joseph Clarke (1793-1822), practised as a solicitor in Manchester, and possessed a valuable library.

<sup>2</sup> In the *Manchester Directory* for 1804 is the entry: "Captain Ainsworth, Ainsworth's Court, Long Millgate." The house is seen in the old views of the north side of Chetham's College, looking from Walker's Croft. It was eventually sold to the trustees of the College, and pulled down to enlarge the playground. Curiously enough, an earlier John Ainsworth had occupied the house about 1641.



scientific researches and travels, and also assisted his first cousin, Harrison Ainsworth, in the management of the magazines owned by the novelist.<sup>1</sup> Jeremiah Ainsworth's third son was James Ainsworth, F.R.C.S. (1783-1853), who became famous as a surgeon in Manchester, where he practised for many years. He also took a prominent part in the social life of his native city, and was one of the first promoters of the Natural History Museum, and the Botanic Gardens at Old Trafford. His only son, Ralph Fawcett Ainsworth, M.D. (1813-90), was also a well-known Manchester doctor, and became senior physician to the Infirmary. He resided at Cliff Point, Lower Broughton, where he possessed a fine library. He was also a successful cultivator of orchids, and a variety, first grown by him, bears his name.<sup>2</sup>

Jeremiah Ainsworth's second son was

THOMAS AINSWORTH, the father of the novelist. He was born on 19th June, 1778, at his mother's native village, Rostherne—a place he was ever much attached to, and where, finally, he was buried in June, 1824. His active life, however, was passed in Manchester, where he practised as a very successful solicitor, being a partner in the firm of Halstead and Ainsworth, of Essex Street. Thomas Ainsworth took a prominent part in the promo-

<sup>1</sup> W. Francis Ainsworth's eldest son was Captain William Ainsworth (1838-1908), father of Captain William John Ainsworth, who won the D.S.O. at Sanna's Post, and who is the present head of the Ainsworth family of Spotland, Co. Lancaster.

<sup>2</sup> "Nor unrewarded is the patient care  
That gives to Flora's realms a beauty rare.  
The grateful plant that bears the Ainsworth name  
Its cultivator's praise shall long proclaim ;  
When many a loftier name is lost or gone  
*Dendrobium Ainsworthii* shall live on."

*James Crossley.*

tion of public improvements in Manchester, and it was largely owing to his exertions that Market Street, one of the principal arteries in the city, was widened and rebuilt. He also acted as Lieutenant in the Manchester Volunteers, during the wave of patriotism which overspread England in 1803. Thomas Ainsworth had a taste for art and literature; he possessed a good knowledge of the classics and science, and devoted considerable study to botany. If of rather an irritable and hasty temperament, his character was remarkable for liberality and generosity. Most of Thomas Ainsworth's characteristics were transmitted to his famous son, but the latter did not inherit his father's business perspicacity and caution; while, on the other hand, the romantic and imaginative gifts and the artistic temperament which distinguished the son, were wholly lacking in the father. These particular characteristics the novelist inherited, no doubt, largely through his mother. She, though herself a woman of rather an austere and unimaginative disposition, was the descendant of many remarkable people, who, it may be assumed, in the wondrous scheme of heredity, transmitted traits of mind and temperament to their remote offspring, Harrison Ainsworth.

The novelist's mother was ANN HARRISON (1778-1842), the only surviving daughter of the Rev. Ralph Harrison (1748-1810), who was appointed minister of the Unitarian Chapel, in Cross Street, Manchester, in 1771. Mr. Harrison was a scholar of some note, and on the establishment of the Manchester Academy, in 1786, he became "professor of the Greek and Latin languages and of polite literature."<sup>1</sup> So great was his fame as a

<sup>1</sup> The Manchester Academy, after several changes in location, was



THOMAS AINSWORTH, FATHER OF THE NOVELIST



private tutor that many pupils of distinction—such as the second Marquis of Waterford and his brothers—were sent from distant parts to study under him. Mr. Harrison was the author of many able works of an educational nature, and published a volume of sermons in 1813. Like many other members of the family, he was a gifted musician; he composed many well-known hymn tunes—one named “Warrington” attained great popularity, and is still in use. He also published a collection of psalmody, entitled *Sacred Harmony*, and he attended at Windsor Castle, by special command of George III, to present a copy of this work to the King.

Mr. Harrison was a man of keen business instincts, and, foreseeing the future growth of Manchester, by judicious speculations in land eventually realized a fortune of over £60,000. He came of the Lancashire family of Harrison, of Bankfield, in the parish of Kirkham, which produced several remarkable nonconformist ministers. One of these, the Rev. Cuthbert Harrison (1627–81)—Ainsworth’s great-great-great-grandfather—was a stalwart divine ejected from the Church, in 1662, under the Act of Uniformity.<sup>1</sup> He had preached at Elswick Lees, according to the doctrines of “the persuasion called Congregational”; but Parliament declaring these meetings illegal, he preached in his own house at Bankfield, “very privately in the night, to such as would venture to hear him.” He suffered much persecution from his own

moved to Oxford in 1889, and the new buildings—opened in 1893—are now known as Manchester College, Oxford. A Memorial Window, by Burne-Jones, was erected in the College Chapel to the memory of the Rev. Ralph Harrison by four of his great-grandsons.

<sup>1</sup> Cuthbert Harrison is mentioned in Dr. Edmund Calamy’s account of the ejected ministers.

vicar at Kirkham, the Rev. Richard Clegg, who procured his excommunication. Harrison then attended a service at Kirkham Church, but his presence so disconcerted his enemy, the vicar, that the latter, while preaching, lost the thread of his discourse. So annoyed was he, that he requested his churchwardens, and finally a Justice of the Peace, to remove the objectionable Harrison from the church—but he could not be induced to move. At last, the vicar, in desperation, left the pulpit, and going up to Harrison, took him by the sleeve, and desired him to leave the church. Thereupon the valiant Cuthbert departed, crying with a loud voice, "It's time to go when the devil drives!" Shortly after, the vindictive vicar sued Harrison at common law for not attending church; but the jury found for the defendant, and all "the costs were thrown on Mr. Clegg, with many affronting scoffs."

Ainsworth's maternal grandfather, the Rev. Ralph Harrison, was the seventh son of the Rev. William Harrison (1708-83), M.A., of Chinley, Derbyshire, by his wife, Ann, daughter of the Rev. John Cooper, who married Ann Angier, daughter of the Rev. Samuel Angier<sup>1</sup> of Dukinfield, by his wife, Ann Mosley.

This Ann Mosley was of the ancient Lancashire family of the Mosleys of Ancoats, who were settled at Hough End as far back as 1465. The Mosleys were Lords of the Manor of Manchester for 250 years,<sup>2</sup> so it was singularly appropriate that their descendant, Harrison Ainsworth, should be a native of that city—whose traditions and

<sup>1</sup> The Angiers claim to be descended from the Dukes of Brittany; the Earls of Longford (of the first creation) and the Barons Coleraine had a descent from this family.

<sup>2</sup> The Mosley family sold their manorial rights to the Manchester Corporation for £200,000 in 1845.



THE REV. RALPH HARRISON. AINSWORTH'S MATERNAL GRANDFATHER.





historic features he so picturesquely described in many a romance—and, perhaps, its most famous son.

The Rev. Ralph Harrison<sup>1</sup> married, in 1775, Ann Touchet, daughter of John Touchet, of Eccles House, Lancs.

The Touchets were one of the oldest and most interesting families in Lancashire. Sir John Touchet, whose name and shield figure in the Roll of Battle Abbey, was of the same family as Orme Touchet, legendary harper to William the Conqueror, and the progenitor of Harrison Ainsworth. Orme Touchet's descendant, Sir Robert Tucket (1275-1337), had two sons—Robert Tucket, Lord of Buglawton and Nether Whitley, and Sir Thomas Tucket, ancestor of Sir John Tucket who, by his marriage with the heiress of the Audleys, acquired the ancient Barony of Audley for his descendants. This title dated from 1297, but the Audley Touchets obtaining the higher dignity of Earl of Castlehaven, the barony was merged from 1616 to 1777. In the latter year, on the death of John Talbot Touchet, the 8th earl, the earldom became extinct, but the Audley barony passed to the female line, and existed till 1872, when it fell into abeyance.

The novelist, Ainsworth, descended from the elder son, Robert Tucket, mentioned above. After being seated for about five hundred years at Nether Whitley, the

<sup>1</sup> In addition to his daughter Ann (Mrs. Ainsworth), Mr. Harrison had three sons who reached manhood:—

- I. The Rev. William Harrison (1779-1860), minister of Blackley Chapel, Lancs. His youngest son was the late James Bower Harrison, M.D., of Manchester.
- II. John Harrison (1786-1853), a merchant of Manchester and London, and a proficient musician.
- III. James Harrison (1791-1867), a cotton spinner of Manchester. He subsequently settled in the Isle of Wight.

The Rev. Ralph Harrison's second wife was Rebecca Hinde, who died without issue.

elder branch of the Touchets eventually removed to Manchester, where they became prosperous merchants.

Thomas Touchet (1679-1745), the grandfather of Mrs. Ralph Harrison (Ainsworth's grandmother), lived in a fine old house in Deansgate.<sup>1</sup> His son, John Touchet, of Eccles House, Lancs, married Sarah, daughter of James Bayley, of Manchester, and it was their daughter, Ann, who became Mrs. Ralph Harrison<sup>2</sup> and the grandmother of Ainsworth. John Touchet's grandson, John Touchet, of Broome House, Eccles, who died in 1837, was the last male representative of the family. He was offered the revival in his favour of the title of Earl of Castlehaven, which, as narrated above, was held by another branch of the family from 1616 to 1777; but he declined the honour, having no male heir to succeed him.<sup>3</sup>

The Bayleys, from whom John Touchet, of Eccles, took his wife, were another notable family. James Bayley (1673-1753)—Ainsworth's great-great-grandfather—was one of the wealthiest and most influential merchants of Manchester. When the town was occupied by the army of Prince Charles Stuart, in 1745, the Prince and his council demanded a subsidy of £5000 from the inhabitants, and detained Mr. Bayley as a hostage till the

<sup>1</sup> A view of Touchet's house in Deansgate will be found in Casson's and Berry's *Plan of the Towns of Manchester and Salford*, 1751.

<sup>2</sup> Mrs. Harrison's sister, Mary Touchet, married William Rigby, of Oldfield Hall, Altrincham. Their granddaughter, Mary Rigby, became the wife of John, Lord Murray, and Lord Advocate of Scotland—the friend of Sir Walter Scott, and a member of *The Edinburgh Review* circle.

<sup>3</sup> His only son, James, died as a child, so John Touchet's fortune was inherited by his two daughters: Sarah married James Nowell ffarington, of Worden Hall, Lancs; and Frances was united to the Rev. Nicholas Ridley, of Hollington House, Woodhay, Hants, a cousin of the first Viscount Ridley.

money should be forthcoming. Bayley, however, induced the Prince to lower the demand to £2500, and he was released on the condition that he would return in two hours—either to bring the money or to surrender himself a prisoner. Thereupon a meeting of the principal inhabitants of Manchester was held at the Bull's Head Inn, where the required sum was subscribed after James Bayley and his friend, Mr. Dickenson, had given their Promissory Notes for £2500 and become personally responsible for the amount.<sup>1</sup>

It will have been seen that the mother of Ainsworth—by her descent from the Harrisons, Mosleys, Bayleys, and Touchets—bestowed a remarkable lineage upon her gifted son; while upon the father's side he descended from a good yeoman stock which, in his immediate ancestors, developed very considerable scientific and mental qualities. Such, then, were the hereditary influences in the making of the novelist.

THOMAS AINSWORTH married ANN HARRISON on 23rd June, 1802,<sup>2</sup> and by her had two sons:—

I. WILLIAM HARRISON AINSWORTH.

<sup>1</sup> Ainsworth introduced these experiences of his ancestor in his book, *The Manchester Rebels*. James Bayley's eldest son, Daniel Bayley, resided at Hope Hall, Eccles; he married Miss Gaskell, whose sister was the wife of Richard Clive, M.P., and mother of Robert, Lord Clive of Plassey, the Conqueror of India. Lord Clive (1725-74), as a boy, spent a great deal of his time at Hope Hall with his uncle, Daniel Bayley, and wrote from India, at the height of his fame, to tell how his "dearest wish was to be again at Hope." Daniel Bayley's second wife was Ann Butterworth, and their descendants numbered many eminent men in the Indian and consular services.

<sup>2</sup> Entry in *Register of Collegiate Church, Manchester*.

II. THOMAS GILBERT AINSWORTH, who was born 4th October, 1806, about twenty months after his brother. At first he appeared to rival William in intellectual power as well as good looks. His early promise, however, was never fulfilled, and Fate bestowed on him a sad destiny—very different from that apportioned to his elder brother. As a boy, Gilbert sustained a severe fall, causing fracture of the skull, and from this accident resulted his subsequent troubles. Educated at the Manchester Grammar School, where he was a favourite pupil of Dr. Smith, the High Master,<sup>1</sup> he won a scholarship, and proceeded as an exhibitor to St. John's College, Cambridge. There he devoted himself to study, but being attacked by brain fever, his University career abruptly terminated. Although he recovered his mental powers for a time, a second and aggravated attack of brain fever extinguished all hope. For the remainder of his life—and he lived to be seventy—his intellect was

<sup>1</sup> On leaving school, Gilbert Ainsworth presented Dr. Smith with some valedictory verses, which the High Master admired and preserved. The following is an extract :—

*Vale to the Manchester Free Grammar School.*

“ To you I look, dear walls, as one who leaves  
His Home, and hopeless of returning, grieves,  
And vainly strives the bitter pain to quell,  
That wrings his heart while bidding home farewell !

Farewell ! a long farewell ! to all behind  
Fond thoughts I leave, and wishes ever kind ;  
But chief to him my grateful thanks are due,  
Who gave my powers assistance as they grew ;  
Whose kindness cherished, and whose care supplied  
'Mid learning's paths a never-failing guide,  
Whose word encouraged, and whose smile approved—  
Whom all have honoured, and whom all have loved.”

THOMAS GILBERT AINSWORTH.

clouded, and the long years passed by leaving him ever in mental darkness.

Gilbert Ainsworth was originally destined for the Church, but probably he would have devoted himself to literature, like his brother, had his health permitted. William described the personal appearance of his brother, Gilbert, as "eminently prepossessing, and a peculiar interest was imparted to his features by the melancholy expression of his fine dark eyes. His manner was reserved and somewhat haughty, but he was easy enough with those he liked."<sup>1</sup>

Gilbert Ainsworth died in 1876.

<sup>1</sup> *Manchester School Register*, Vol. III, p. 131.

## CHAPTER I

### BIRTH, CHILDHOOD, AND SCHOOLDAYS IN MANCHESTER.

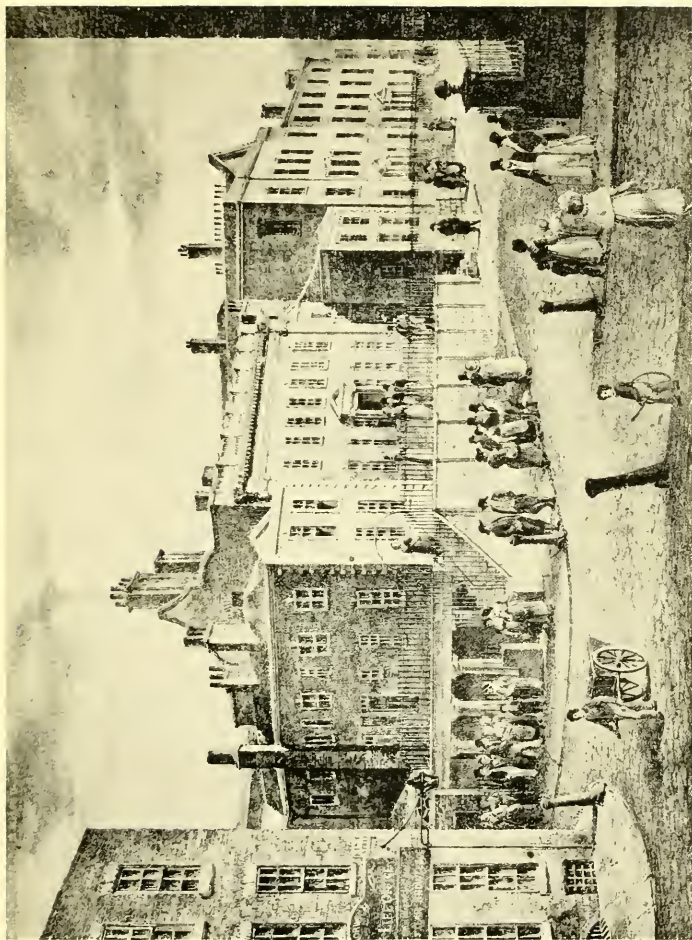
**W**ILLIAM HARRISON AINSWORTH was born on 4th February, 1805, at his father's house, No. 21, King Street, Manchester.<sup>1</sup> This house, long since pulled down, was a substantial, red-brick building of three stories, with tall, narrow windows set in heavy frames—a typical town residence of a prosperous lawyer in the eighteenth century.<sup>2</sup>

King Street a hundred years ago presented a very different appearance to what it bears to-day. Composed now of banks and offices, and wholly devoted to business purposes, it was, in 1805, a select, residential street of fine old Georgian houses, where many rich and influential citizens of Manchester still resided. Next door but one to the Ainsworths' was the large, picturesque mansion of Dr. Charles White,<sup>3</sup> whose anatomical museum De

<sup>1</sup> He was christened on 28th February following by his maternal grandfather, the Rev. Ralph Harrison. *Register of Collegiate Church (now Manchester Cathedral)*.

<sup>2</sup> The site of the house is occupied by the offices of the Liverpool and London Chambers, now known as No. 57, King Street.

<sup>3</sup> It stood at the corner of Cross Street, and the Reference Library now covers the site. Other members of the future novelist's family also resided in King Street: his uncle, Dr. James Ainsworth, lived across the way (on the site of what is now No. 104); his mother's uncle, James Touchet, in the adjoining house; and Thomas Touchet, a cousin, occupied a fine old mansion, at the top of the street, which afterwards passed to John Touchet, the last male of the family.



KING STREET, MANCHESTER, IN 1823.  
AINSWORTH WAS BORN IN THE LAST HOUSE FULLY SEEN, TO THE RIGHT.  
*From the drawing by J. Radston.*





Quincey described. In front of these particular houses was a curious upper walk, or raised pavement, with flights of steps leading down to the roadway. The flavour of the eighteenth century still hung about the street, and it had an old-world air.

Manchester in those days was a very picturesque town and full of romantic associations—before “Utility” ravaged the first, and Commerce crushed the latter with its iron paw. It abounded with whole streets of elaborately carved black-and-white timber houses, with quaintly-pointed gables and lattice-windows. In the outskirts of the town stood the ancient Halls of Hulme, Ordsall, Garrett, Irlam, and many another, reminiscent of the historic past; and not far from King Street was the beautiful Gothic Collegiate Church and the adjoining Chetham’s College—that most fascinating of medieval buildings, with its quaint cloisters, monastic cells, baronial kitchen; its wealth of old oak furniture and panelling, and ancient books.

Undoubtedly these early surroundings of Ainsworth’s boyhood had a marked influence on his impressionable temperament and mental bent, fostering an innate taste for history and romance. The force of this influence is evidenced by the fact that in the literary work of his manhood he returned again and again to old Manchester for the scenes of his books, and never wearied of describing its ancient buildings and circumjacent country.

From a very early age Ainsworth had an insatiable taste for romantic narrative, and, long before he could read or write himself, delighted in listening to stories of adventure and the supernatural. His particular fancy was for tales of highwaymen—an hereditary taste appa-

rently, for his father, the lawyer, was much interested in the subject and had a vast store of criminal history. The child would sit for hours on his father's knee, absorbed in hearing the exploits of the "Gentlemen of the Road"—for choice, those of Dick Turpin, who had haunted Hough, near Rostherne, where the Ainsworths spent much of their time. As he himself records: "Turpin was the hero of my boyhood. . . . When a boy, I have often lingered by the side of the deep old road where this robbery (at Hough) was committed, to cast wistful glances into its mysterious windings; and when night deepened the shadows of the trees, have urged my horse on his journey, from a vague apprehension of a visit from the ghostly highwayman."

Thus, even as a young boy, the bent of his mind was towards the mysterious and the supernatural—the trait which was the keystone of his success as a romance writer in after years.

As the boy is ever the father of the man, so from earliest youth Ainsworth was an ardent Jacobite and an enthusiast for the most romantic of lost causes; but what high-spirited and imaginative lad, who has read of Prince Charlie and "The Forty-Five," is not? Ainsworth, however, had a more personal interest in this subject from the fact that his ancestors had played their parts in the events connected with the Prince's coming in 1745, albeit they do not appear to have joined his standard.<sup>1</sup> As detailed in the Introduction to this work,

<sup>1</sup> It may, however, be stated here that when Prince Charles was staying in France, in 1744, preparing for his ill-fated expedition, rumours were current that he made secret visits to England; and the story goes that he was the guest of Ainsworth's connection, Sir Oswald Mosley, Bart., at Ancoats Hall, Lancs. An old woman, who died in

Ainsworth's great-great-grandfather, James Bayley, was detained by the Prince, when occupying Manchester, as a hostage for the payment by the inhabitants of a subsidy, which was subsequently raised by Bayley and his friend, Mr. Dickenson. The latter's house was occupied by Prince Charles himself during his stay in Manchester ; and the residence in Deansgate of Thomas Touchet (who was also Ainsworth's great-great-grandfather) was assigned to Lord Elcho, commanding the Prince's Life Guards.

Ainsworth, too, like Walter Scott, had the privilege of knowing in youth ancient people whose memories reached back to the last Jacobite rising. Certain old friends of his family used to relate to the boy stories of Lancashire's share in "The Forty-Five," and the recital of the stirring events in which they had participated made a lasting impression upon the retentive mind of their youthful and spellbound auditor, who, sixty years later, incorporated these Jacobite reminiscences he had heard

Manchester in 1815, at the age of eighty-four, stated that when she was a girl of thirteen she lived with her father, who kept the principal inn at Manchester. His house was the only one where the London newspapers were regularly received ; and the woman said that for some time in 1744 a handsome young gentleman used to ride over from Ancoats Hall every post day, and anxiously peruse the London news. The girl saw him frequently, and on one occasion the youth gave her half a crown, and this circumstance made an impression upon her mind and caused her to take a still more attentive survey of the donor. In the following year, 1745, when Prince Charles Stuart marched into Manchester at the head of his troops, she immediately recognized him as the handsome visitor at Ancoats Hall of the previous year, and told her father so. The latter was much alarmed, and advised her never to allude to the circumstance again ; but in after years, when Hanoverian vindictiveness had slackened, her father frequently admitted that the visitor from Ancoats Hall and the Prince were one and the same person. The story is given at some length in Sir Oswald Mosley's *Family Memoirs*.

as a child within the pages of his book, *The Manchester Rebels of the Fatal '45*. He was thus a living link between our own day and 1745—one who had been brought into actual contact with that rare and wonderful sentiment of loyalty which the Stuarts, far more than any other royal race, inspired in their adherents, a loyalty which neither time nor misfortune could dim. Ainsworth's early initiation into the glamour of history, and his personal associations with it in boyhood, were main factors in the making of the historical novelist who was to develop a few years later.<sup>1</sup>

Ainsworth's adoption of Jacobite and Tory principles early in youth presents an interesting example of the power of temperamental over personal influences, for the boy was brought up in a strict atmosphere of Whiggism and Nonconformity.<sup>2</sup> His father was a Churchman

<sup>1</sup> Among Ainsworth's old Jacobite friends were some descendants of the Byrom family, of Kersal Cell, Manchester, who were well-known partisans of the Stuarts, and Miss Hall, of King Street. This Miss Hall was associated with a curious incident concerning the Manchester Jacobites of 1745. After the failure of the rising, certain local Jacobites (Tom Syddall, Deacon, and Chadwick) were executed, and their heads affixed on spikes at the Manchester Exchange. Soon after, these heads disappeared, and the town authorities could never discover who removed them. The mystery was not solved till 1840, when Dr. S. L. Bardsley stated that many years ago he had attended Miss Hall, of King Street, until her death at about the age of ninety. During her last illness she told Dr. Bardsley that she had been a great partisan of Prince Charles, that it was her brother who had removed the heads of the Jacobites from the Exchange, and that they were buried in the garden at the back of the house she still resided in. She made the doctor promise to disinter the heads and rebury them in consecrated ground after her death. Her wishes were fulfilled. Three skulls were found buried in the garden of the Halls' house, and the grim relics were reburied in St. Ann's churchyard. Miss Hall's house, with its famous rookery and garden, was just opposite the Ainsworths' in King Street.

<sup>2</sup> In manhood, Ainsworth identified himself with the Church of England, of which he was a staunch supporter, although, like most

originally, but Mrs. Ainsworth, being apparently the predominant partner, caused her husband and sons to attend with her the services at the old Cross Street Chapel, of which her father, the Rev. Ralph Harrison, had been a former minister.<sup>1</sup> This chapel was associated with the first establishment of Nonconformist doctrine in Manchester, and consequently had an eventful history. It was originally built in 1693, but on 10th June, 1715, the birthday of James III, the chapel was attacked by a mob of the High Church and Jacobite party, who burnt and destroyed everything within the building, the ring-leader being Tom Syddall, subsequently executed for his share in "The '15." The chapel was restored, and during the next fifty years became identified with the tenets of Unitarian Presbyterianism. It is to be feared that the youthful Ainsworth, with his Jacobite enthusiasm and admiration for Tom Syddall, was an unwilling and apostate member of the congregation at this austere Whiggian sanctuary, where such views as his were wholly antithetic and anathema.

In his time, Cross Street Chapel was a large, quaint, galleried building, dimly illuminated by candles in brass chandeliers, and its atmosphere was entirely of the eighteenth century. It had a three-decker pulpit, great, square oak pews, and a fine flavour of decaying worthies—for the vaults beneath were crowded with defunct members of the congregation: weird sounds used to be artistic natures, he acknowledged the attraction of the gorgeous ritual and sensuous music of the Roman Church.

<sup>1</sup> A subsequent minister of Cross Street Chapel was the Rev. W. Gaskell, husband of the distinguished novelist who presented such a vivid picture of Manchester life in *Mary Barton*. This chapel was also the place where Richard Cobden first propounded his theories of Free Trade.

heard from below as some old coffin gave way ; but the descendants of the departed were in no wise disconcerted by the odours of mortality—for that generation was oblivious of sanitation and unhaunted by terrors of microbes. Most of the quality of King Street and neighbourhood attended here, and many of the worshippers suggested memories of long bygone days ; hither came ancient Miss Ann Newberry—from No. 50 in “ Our Street ”—in saque and sedan-chair ; here was old Mr. Touchet, in peruke and powder ; and there were the Halls of Jacobite fame. Regular attendants, too, were those admirable merchants, William and Daniel Grant, who little thought that the good-looking boy, in short jacket and frilled collar, seated near their pew, would in the years to come introduce them to the great novelist who was to immortalize them as “ The Cheery-ble Brothers.” This same boy, young Will Ainsworth, was paying but scant attention to the discourse of the minister. Perhaps he was planning some romantic tale, or perhaps gazing in awe at the full-bottomed wig of the famous Dr. Parr, who attended the chapel when visiting his friend, Dr. Holme, at Manchester. This formidable pedagogue, Dr. Parr, was also unaware that the youthful member of the congregation who took stock of him so intently would, forty years later, put him in a book and describe all his peculiarities.<sup>1</sup>

Such, then, were the associations of Harrison Ainsworth’s childhood, which strongly influenced his literary work in the days to come, and played no small part in shaping his career. And the making of books was his

<sup>1</sup> Samuel Parr (1747–1825), schoolmaster, ecclesiastic, scholar, and author. In manner and conversation he much resembled Dr. Johnson. Ainsworth described him as “ Dr. Bray,” in *Mervyn Clitheroe*.

inevitable destiny. From the time he could first use a pen in earliest boyhood, he essayed literary composition. His very first book, however, was not brought to a triumphant conclusion. Many years later Ainsworth detailed the history of this embryonic masterpiece to Mrs. Houston in the following words :—<sup>1</sup>

“ I was a very little chap when I took it into my head to write a book, the subject of which was to be *Natural History*. Even in those days I was not without ambition, and my work must, therefore—I mentally decided—be an illustrated one. To draw a lion appeared to me no difficult task, for when features are strongly marked, the efforts of the painter become comparatively easy. A big, bare head, cat-like eyes, a gigantic mane, and the straightest of tails, such were the leading characteristics of the animal, which I fully intended not only to portray, but to make use of as a frontispiece to my forthcoming work. And I did so portray him, and a fine specimen of his kind I thought he was, especially when I had written beneath him, in good round text, the taking and instructive notification that ‘ *The Lion is the King of the Beasts.*’ But alas ! perseverance being apparently not my *forte*, the work was destined to swell the number of the many great ones which never see the light. Many a year after its spirited commencement, two of my children, who had unearthed it from some hidden receptacle of forgotten things, brought the ‘ picture ’—as they called it—to their mother, and insisted, much to my discomfiture, on having its origin explained. For many a day afterwards their chaffing remarks on the artistic commence-

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Houston's *A Woman's Memories of World-known Men*, 1883.

ment of my work, and their entreaties that I would finish the *story*, proved injurious to my peace of mind."

In 1811 his father purchased a pleasant country house, named "Beech Hill," in Smedley Lane—in the Cheetham Hill district, some two miles north of Manchester. Here the family passed the summer months for many years, but the house in King Street was still retained as a winter residence.

"Beech Hill" was charmingly situated on high ground, and only a distant glimpse of Manchester was presented across the intervening gardens and fields. From the back of the house a really beautiful view extended over Crumpsall and Heaton Park—a rich, well-wooded country of undulating hills. Even now—for the house still stands—the view is attractive, despite the increase of bricks and mortar, and the malign influence of factory chimneys. It is a comfortable, roomy house of the old-fashioned style.<sup>1</sup> A memento of the Ainsworths' residence here is preserved in the form of a vane, surmounted by the family crest—an arm, in armour, grasping a battle-axe.

"Beech Hill" had a large garden, and Thomas Ainsworth being devoted to horticultural pursuits, the grounds were laid out under his own direction. Several trees were planted by his two young sons, and in the thick shrubberies of the garden the boys constructed "caves" and hiding-places for their favourite game of acting high-

<sup>1</sup> In the Ainsworths' time the dining-room was to the right on entering, and Mr. Ainsworth's library on the left. Beyond the latter was the playroom of the two boys, William and Gilbert. The drawing-room was at the back of the house. The house is now occupied as a Church Army Labour Home, and very well kept up.





"BEECH HILL," SMEDLEY LANE, MANCHESTER. (AINSWORTH'S HOME AS A BOY.)  
*From a drawing by C. Blacklock.*



waymen and robbers. Harrison Ainsworth, as the elder, was the leading spirit and originator of this amateur outlawry, and always acted as "The Captain of Banditti"—to use his own words—in these juvenile recreations. It is quite curious how faithfully Ainsworth the boy prefigured Ainsworth the author. The boy delighted in playing at robbers, in hearing tales of highwaymen and the supernatural; and his picturesque imagination from the outset was attracted by anything romantic in history—such as the fate of the Stuarts. And in these very same subjects the author, too, delighted—and attained his fame. It would almost seem as if Ainsworth utilized his subsequent literary powers to consummate and preserve the fancies which had originated in his boyhood. A great deal of the boy, in other respects, remained in the man throughout his life. He always retained the impetuosity, the open-hearted generosity of youth, and the careless, sunny temperament which characterized the lad was never lost in the after years, despite many troubles.<sup>1</sup>

Ainsworth was very fond of his early country home, "Beech Hill," where romance and all the glory of Life and Nature had first dawned upon his young mind. Here he had dreamed of literary fame—dreams which were to be fulfilled beyond his utmost expectations.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Thomas De Quincey said: "I have seen reason to agree with the late Dr. Cooke Taylor in awarding the pre-eminence, as regards energy, power to face suffering, and other high qualities, to the natives of Lancashire."

<sup>2</sup> In later years, when he had attained success, he contemplated eventually returning to "Beech Hill," and ending his days there. Laman Blanchard, writing in 1842, picturesquely phrased this intention of Ainsworth thus:—

"To that house, with which all his younger and pleasanter recollections are connected, he meditates, we believe, a return in mature

Ainsworth commenced his education under the tuition of his uncle and godfather, the Rev. William Harrison. In March, 1817, at the age of twelve, he entered the Manchester Free Grammar School, where his uncles, John and James Ainsworth, had been educated before him.

The Manchester Grammar School was founded in 1515, by Hugh Oldham, Bishop of Exeter, and the long list of the pupils there includes the names of many distinguished men, ranging from John Bradford, the Martyr, to Thomas De Quincey and the late Sir Frank Lockwood.

During the period Ainsworth was at the school, the High Master was Dr. Smith,<sup>1</sup> and from him, and the second master, Elsdale,<sup>2</sup> the future novelist received a sound classical education.

Ainsworth has given an inimitable account of his school and schoolmasters in his semi-autobiographical novel, *Mervyn Clitheroe*, which claims quotation in any biography of the author. This description is of particular interest, for Ainsworth himself has vouched for

life. But the metropolis and its neighbourhood, the pursuit of fame, and the fields in which he has gathered up so many golden sheaves, will long detain him thence: the delay only tending to enrich his memories, and double the sweetness of a late retirement. And when that late day shall come, and the home of his childhood shall again be his, may he find the end like the beginning—with its 'vision splendid' turned to a reality."

The intention, however, was not realized, for, though "Beech Hill" remained in Ainsworth's possession until 1864 (when he sold the property), he never returned there to live.

A subsequent occupant of the house was John Edward Taylor, a noted journalist and founder of *The Manchester Guardian*, who died at "Beech Hill" in 1844.

<sup>1</sup> Jeremiah Smith, D.D. (1771-1854). High Master, 1807-37. Also Rector of St. Ann's Church, Manchester.

<sup>2</sup> Robinson Elsdale, D.D. (1783-1850). Succeeded Dr. Smith as High Master of the Grammar School in 1837.

its authenticity as a record of his own school-days. In a letter, dated December, 1851, at the time he was writing *Mervyn Clitheroe*, he says: "The school-days of 'Mervyn' are a mere transcript of what happened to me at the Free Grammar School at Manchester. Dr. Lonsdale and Mr. Cane are no exaggeration. John Leigh is unchanged even in name. . . ."

[In the following extract from *Mervyn Clitheroe*, the real names of persons and places have been substituted for the fictitious ones Ainsworth, necessarily, adopted in his novel.]

"I cannot say much of the architectural beauty of the school; for, if truth must be spoken, it was exceedingly ugly; and though a very old foundation, the building was comparatively modern, and did not date back, from the period of which I write, more than twenty or thirty years.<sup>1</sup> It was raised on a high sandstone bank overlooking the little river Irk, not far from its confluence with the Irwell; and viewed on this side, in connection with the old and embrowned walls adjoining it, its appearance was not unpicturesque—certainly more pleasing than when viewed from the crowded and noisy thoroughfare by which it was approached. It was a large, dingy, and smoke-begrimed brick building, with copings of stone, and had so many windows that it looked like a lantern. In front, between the angles of the pointed roof, was placed a stone effigy of the bird of wisdom,<sup>2</sup> which seemed to gaze down at us with its great goggle eyes as we passed by, as if muttering, 'Enter this academic

<sup>1</sup> The school buildings of Ainsworth's time were built in 1776.

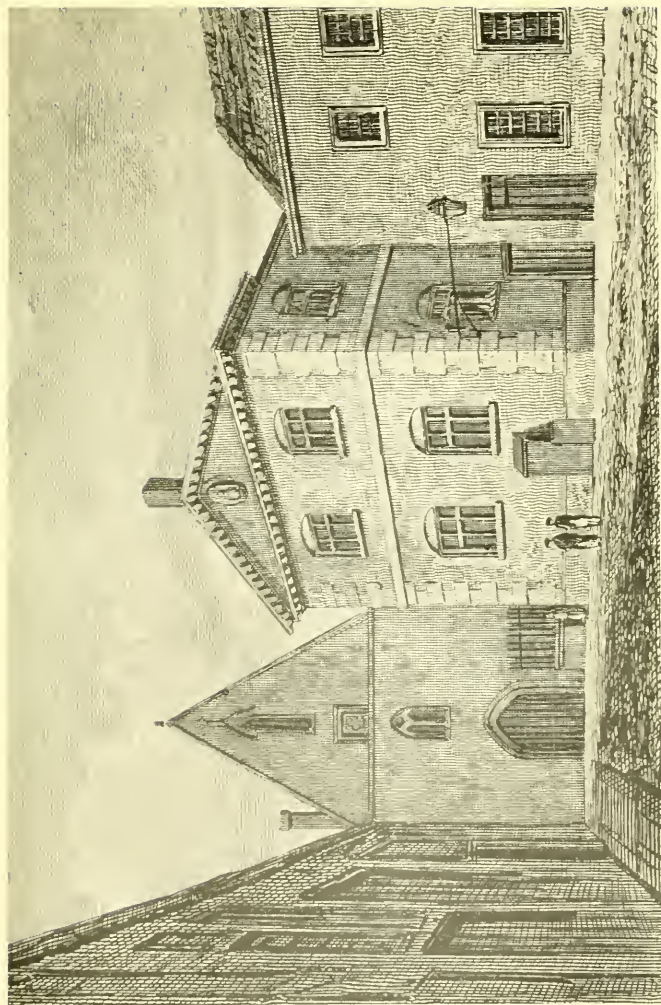
<sup>2</sup> The owl figured in the armorial bearings of the founder of the school, Hugh Oldham. The stone effigy in question is now preserved inside the new Grammar School buildings.

abode over which I preside, and welcome, but you'll never come out as clever as I.' What the school wanted in antiquity was supplied by a venerable pile contiguous to it, which in remote times had been part of the collegiate establishment of the Old Church of Manchester; but, in the reign of James I, falling into the hands of a wealthy and munificent merchant<sup>1</sup> of the place, it was by him devoted to the foundation of a hospital for the maintenance and education of a certain number of poor lads, and to the creation, for public use and benefit, of a large and admirable library within its walls. . . .

“ Adjoining our modern iron rails was a venerable stone gateway, with an arched entrance opening upon the broad playground of the Blue-Coat Hospital, which so far surpassed anything we possessed as its college-like halls and refectories exceeded our formal school in beauty; while the blank, black walls of another part of the structure . . . formed a little court in front of our door of entrance, and the flight of stone steps conducting to it. The school was divided into two rooms, each occupying a whole floor, and the lower school—in those days a very confined, dirty-looking place, utterly unworthy of such an establishment—was reached by a flight of steps descending from the little court I have described.<sup>2</sup> But, happily, I knew nothing from personal experience of this dark and dismal hole, being introduced at once to the upper school, which, if it had no other merit, was airy and spacious enough. There were four fireplaces and four tables, those at either extremity being assigned to the

<sup>1</sup> Humphrey Chetham.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas De Quincey gives a somewhat similar description in his interesting reminiscences of Manchester Grammar School in *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*.



MANCHESTER GRAMMAR SCHOOL, 1824.  
*Buildings described by Thomas De Quincy and Alinsworth, who both were scholars here.*





head master and the second master, and the others to the two ushers. Each master had two classes, so that there were eight in all. The walls were whitewashed, and, like the flat roof, without any decoration whatever, unless the oak wainscoting at the back of the boys' benches, which surrounded the whole schoolroom, can be so considered. These benches, the desks in front of them, and the panels behind, were of the hardest oak; and it was well they were so, for they had to resist the ravages of a thousand knives. In some places they were further secured with clamps of iron. Everybody cut his name on the desks or wainscot, like the captives in state prisons in the olden time; and amongst these mementoes I suppose I have somewhere left mine. I know that while once carving it on the leads of the Collegiate Church I nearly carved off my forefinger. The place was not so light as might be conceived from the multitude of windows, for they were never cleaned, and the panes of glass were yellow and almost tawny from the reeky atmosphere.

“On entering the school, the buzz of so many tongues was prodigious, and almost took away the power of thought or study; but after a while one got used to it, and the noise did not affect you in the least. When the din rose to too high a pitch, loud cries of ‘Silence, you boys!’ would be heard, accompanied by the rapping of a cane on the table, or the dreadful sound of a punishment would produce a partial lull; and then might be heard the deep, sonorous voice of the *archi-didasculus*, Dr. Smith, mouthing out a passage from Æschylus or Aristophanes, rumbling away like distant thunder, or the sharp, high-pitched voice of the *hypo-didasculus*,

Mr. Elsdale. We began the day's work betimes, and prayers were read both at morn and eventide. On winter evenings, when the school was lighted up by tapers,<sup>1</sup> the twinkling light of which fell upon the boys as they knelt at prayer, while no sound was heard but that proceeding from the reader of the devotional exercises, I used to think the scene striking enough. But it was gone in a moment. No sooner were prayers over, than everybody seized his hat and books; boxes were hastily clapped to; tapers extinguished; the hurried trampling of departing footsteps succeeded—and all vanished like a dream.

“The Rev. Robinson Elsdale, under whose care I was first placed, was a sound classical scholar, but a severe disciplinarian. He was one of those who believe that a knowledge of Latin and Greek can be driven into a boy, and that his capacity may be sharpened by frequent punishment. Under this impression he was constantly thrashing us.<sup>2</sup> In his drawer he had several canes of various lengths, and of various degrees of thickness, tied with tatching-end to prevent them from splitting; and for all these he found employment. While calling us round for punishment he got as red in the gills as a turkey-cock, and occasionally rose up to give greater effect to the blows. Some boys were so frightened that they couldn't learn their tasks at all, and others so reckless of the punishment which they knew must ensue, whether or not, that they intentionally neglected them. I have seen boys with ‘blood-blisters,’ as they called them, on

<sup>1</sup> The boys had to bring their own candles—a curious custom.

<sup>2</sup> The Rev. W. Falconer, Rector of Bushey, who was a contemporary of Ainsworth at the school, stated that “Elsdale was always knocking the dust out of the boys' jackets.”



MANCHESTER GRAMMAR SCHOOL, 1766-1877

*Copied by Mr. George Jennings from a drawing belonging to Mr. Francis Jones.*



their hands, and others with weals on their backs, but I do not recollect that the castigation did them any good, but the very reverse. But our preceptor had other ingenious modes of torture. He would make us stand in the middle of the school for a whole day, and even longer—sometimes on one leg ; and the effect of balancing in this posture, with a heavy dictionary in hand, and a Virgil under the arm, was ludicrous enough, though rather perplexing. It must not be imagined that I escaped the cane. I had enough of it, and to spare, both on shoulders and hands.<sup>1</sup> Notwithstanding our dread of him, we used to play Mr. Elsdale a great many tricks. We notched his canes so that they split when he used them ; put gravel into the keyhole of his drawer ; mingled soot with his ink ; threw fulminating-balls under his feet ; and even meditated blowing him up with gunpowder. An adventurous youth essayed the effect of a burning-glass on his ear, but was instantly detected, and called round for punishment. Another tried to throw the rays from a bit of looking-glass into his eye, and shared the same fate. With all his discipline, if our dreaded master were called out of the school for a few minutes, the greatest row would commence. The boys sitting at either end of the form would place their feet against the edge of the desks, and squeeze up those between them so unmercifully that they roared again. Books, volleys of peas from tin-cases, and other missiles

<sup>1</sup> Elsdale's treatment of the boys seems to have been an innovation, for Thomas De Quincey, who was a pupil some years earlier (1800-2), under Charles Lawson, High Master, has recorded : " In that school, during my knowledge of it . . . all punishments, that appealed to the sense of bodily pain, had fallen into disuse." (*Confessions of an English Opium-Eater.*)

were discharged at the occupants of the opposite forms ; and the miserable fellows in the middle of the school became marks for their comrades, and returned the aggression in the best way they could. These disturbances were, of course, witnessed by the ushers, but they rarely mentioned them ; and Dr. Smith was too far off to hear what was going on ; and I don't think he altogether approved of the second master's severity. To a new boy, it was dreadful to hear Mr. Elsdale cry out to some offender, '*Come round, you stoo-oo-pid ass-s-s!*' hissing like a serpent as he uttered the final word of scorn ; dreadful to witness the writhings of the victim as he underwent castigation ; still more dreadful to hear the words addressed to himself, intensified as they were by the furious looks that accompanied them. In some cases, Mr. Elsdale drove all the capacity they possessed out of the boys' heads. There was one poor little fellow, Devereux Frogg, whose wits could never be stimulated. Poor Devereux ! how I pitied him, and tried to help him, and crammed him—but it was of no use. When he went up he was so frightened that all went out of his head, and the daily drubbing ensued. And there were others like him.

“Mr. Elsdale was a fresh-complexioned man, with good features, and a handsome aquiline nose ; he was scrupulously neat in his attire, and wore a long gold watch-chain, which he twirled about when walking, or when excited ; and he had a habit of thinking aloud. What strange contradictions of character some persons offer. Out of school, Mr. Elsdale was very amiable and good-tempered, fond of music, and cultivated a taste for poetry. I hated him cordially then ; but I learnt to

like him afterwards, and now I lament in him the lost friend.<sup>1</sup>

“ Dr. Smith’s plan of tuition was very different from that of Mr. Elsdale. His was the *suaviter in modo* rather than the *fortiter in re*. He aspired to make his pupils gentlemen as well as good scholars. He never used the cane, but his rebuke was greatly dreaded, and his quiet, sarcastic remarks on a mispronunciation or a vulgarism effectually prevented their repetition. Dignified in manner and deportment, and ever preserving an air of grave courtesy, it would have been impossible to take a liberty with him, and it was never attempted. Dr. Smith was a spare man, with large, thoughtful features, and a fine expansive forehead, powdered at the top. He looked like a bishop, and ought to have been one. His voice was peculiarly solemn, and it was quite a treat to hear him read prayers. Under him the boys began to give themselves the airs of young men, wore well-cut coats and well-fitting boots, were very particular about their neck-cloths and about the fashion of their hair, and, above all, wore gloves—refinements never dreamed of in the lower forms, where, sooth to say, we were sad slovens. . . .

“ Opposite the school was a shop much frequented by us all. Its owner was an odd character, by name John Leigh. He had served in the early American War, and had lost his right arm at the famous battle of Bunker’s Hill. John was a gruff old fellow, not over civil or obliging, but there were peculiarities about him that made us like him, in spite of his crustiness. He had large,

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Elsdale died in 1850, about a year previous to the time Ainsworth penned this passage.

heavy features, and a bulky person. He dressed in a pepper-and-salt coat, of ancient make, which looked as if there were more salt than pepper in the mixture, knee-breeches, not unfrequently besprinkled with flour, and wore buckles in his shoes. His right sleeve was fastened to his breast. His grey hair was taken back from his face and tied in a thick, clubbed pigtail behind. . . . John's sweetmeats were excellent, at least we thought so, and we devoured far too many of his macaroons, queen's cakes, and jumbals, to say nothing of tarts, when fruit was in season, and the daily consumption of hot rolls and butter. John Leigh's shop was our constant resort. We lounged about it, sat upon the counter or the potato bins (for John was a general dealer), or the corner of the flour or meal chests, or in the great pair of scales, or wherever we could find a seat, and discussed the politics of the school, and other matters. Even during school-hours we would run across there, and rumours of our goings-on would reach the master's ears, and search would occasionally be made for us. I recollect an incident of this sort, which occurred while I was under Mr. Elsdale. Some half-dozen of us were comfortably seated on John's counter, munching away at a pound of macaroons before us, when we perceived Elsdale come from the gate,<sup>1</sup> evidently marching in the direction of the shop. In an instant we all disappeared, some of us diving under the counter, and others hiding where they could. Shortly after, when Elsdale entered,

<sup>1</sup> It would seem from this description of the situation of John Leigh's shop that it was located in, or adjoining, the quaint old black-and-white timber house in Long Mill Gate, still (1907) fortunately standing. It is now known as the "Poets' Corner," and is one of the very few remaining ancient houses in Manchester.



no one was to be seen except John, close beside whose bulky legs I and two others were lying *perdus*.

“ ‘ I thought some of the boys were here, John ? ’ said Mr. Elsdale, sharply, and glancing round the place.

“ ‘ I see none on ’em, sir,’ replied John, in a somewhat surly tone.

“ ‘ That’s not a direct answer, John,’ rejoined the pedagogue, peremptorily. ‘ There are six of my boys out of school . . . has any one of them, or have they all, been here ? ’

“ ‘ I never answers no questions about the young gentlemen as frequents my shop,’ said John, doggedly.

“ ‘ Then I conclude they have been here,’ observed Mr. Elsdale.

“ Upon this we pinched John’s fat legs rather severely, for we thought he might have done something better than this to get us out of the scrape. The pain made him roar out most lustily.

“ ‘ What’s the matter, John ? ’ asked Mr. Elsdale, who was going out of the shop.

“ ‘ A sudden seizure, sir, that’s all,’ returned John ; ‘ but you mustn’t go for to imagine, from anything I’ve said, that the young gentlemen has been here, sir. It’s my rule never to speak about ’em, and I should have given you the same answer whether or no.’

“ ‘ Equivocation, you fancy, is not falsehood, I see, John ; but give me leave to observe that your standard of morality is rather low. I shall draw my own conclusions,’ said Mr. Elsdale, turning away, and muttering to himself, ‘ I am sure they have been here.’ Upon which we pinched John’s great calves again, and the veteran angrily ejaculated :

“ ‘Come, I shan’t stand this any longer.’

“ ‘Ha! What’s that? Did I hear aright?’ demanded Mr. Elsdale, stopping short. ‘The man has been drinking,’ he muttered.

“ ‘Be quiet, I say, or I’ll bundle you out o’ th’ shop,’ roared John.

“ ‘You’ll do WHAT?’ almost screamed Mr. Elsdale, coming up to him with a countenance full of fury, and twirling his watch-chain as if he would fling it at John’s head. ‘Did you address those disrespectful—those impertinent observations to me, man?’

“ ‘We were so delighted at this mistake, that we nearly betrayed ourselves, and with difficulty stifled our laughter.

“ ‘They warn’t addressed to you, sir,’ returned John.

“ ‘Then to whom were they addressed?’ pursued Mr. Elsdale. ‘You affirm no one else is here. I see no one. John—John, I am afraid you are fuddled.’

“ ‘Fuddled—I fuddled! I’d have you to know, Mr. Elsdale, that I never touches a drop in the morning; and the young gentlemen will bear witness to my sobriety.’

“ ‘What young gentlemen?’ demanded Elsdale. Here we slightly admonished John again.

“ ‘The young rascals, I mean,’ he roared, stamping with rage and pain. ‘I wish they were all at the devil—and you at their back,’ he added, to Mr. Elsdale, forgetting himself in the blindness of his wrath.

“ ‘It is evident you are not yourself, John,’ said the preceptor; ‘that is the only excuse I can make for you. At some more fitting moment I shall endeavour to reason you out of the sinful and pernicious course

you are pursuing. Drink in the morning. Faugh! John.'

"With this he departed, muttering to himself, and was scarcely out of hearing than we jumped up, and saluted John with a roar of laughter worthy of Homer's heroes. But the hero of Bunker's Hill did not join in the Homeric merriment. . . . We then ran back to school, and our morning's amusement was concluded with a sound caning. . . .

"But we were not John's only customers, though his best. He also had dealings, in a small way, with the Bluecoat boys, and when they couldn't get out, they would summon him by thumping against their iron-studded doors, and screaming out, 'John Leigh! a penn'orth o' barley-sugar!' until the article required was put under the gate to them. With these lads we had repeated quarrels, and they would sometimes issue forth in a swarm from the wicket in their gateway, and take by surprise a party of our lesser boys, who were playing at marbles or other games, and give them a drubbing before they could be rescued by their bigger and stronger comrades. On the approach of danger, the Bluecoat boys would retreat through the sally-port, and close it against the superior force. Well was it, on these occasions, for our little fellows, if there were any loungers in John Leigh's to respond to their cries for aid. Now and then we prevented the wicket from being closed, and pursuing the invaders into their own territories, a general conflict would take place upon the broad playground, reinforcements continually arriving on both sides, until the battle was decided, which it generally was in our favour. These fights presented a curious spectacle, owing

to the strange costume of our antagonists, who were sturdy little rogues, and exhibited a good deal of pluck." <sup>1</sup>

The chapter of *Mervyn Clitheroe*, from which the foregoing extract is taken, concludes with the account of the death of one of the Grammar School boys, whose real name was Oswald Streynsham Master. He was drowned when bathing in the Irwell, and his loss was much felt by Ainsworth, who had been his great friend.<sup>2</sup>

Ainsworth's contemporaries at the school included J. H. Marsden, who became a Canon of Manchester Cathedral; J. P. Westhead, subsequently M.P. for York, and one of the original promoters of the London and North Western Railway; and Sir Humphrey De Trafford.<sup>3</sup> His most intimate school friends were Joseph Rayner Stephens, who subsequently had an erratic career as a Wesleyan minister, a political agitator, and an eloquent leader in the Factory movement; John Wheeler; J. P. Aston—of whom more anon; R. Ford North, who, later, had some success as an author; and Solomon Smith, who became a clergyman and minor canon of Ely. Mr. Smith's son, the Rev. Kenelm H.

<sup>1</sup> These youthful frays remind one of the similar battles Sir Walter Scott participated in as a boy in the streets of Edinburgh, and which he so amusingly described in the General Preface to the *Waverley Novels*. As boys, Scott and Ainsworth must have been very alike in temperament. Both delighted in adventure, and in wild and romantic tales. It is interesting to note how these youthful traits dominated the literary work of their manhood.

<sup>2</sup> Ainsworth also alludes to his school-days in a little sketch entitled *The Church-Yard*, which was included in *December Tales*, 1823. He describes the cutting down of an old tree which grew by the school, and how the boys made a bonfire of the branches, and had a feast round the fire.

<sup>3</sup> 2nd Baronet. Born 1808; died 1886.

Smith, states to me that his father often spoke of his early friendship with Ainsworth—to whom he was much attached—describing him as “ a most affectionate boy ; very refined ; always neat, well dressed, and well groomed ; and a good scholar.” Ainsworth was a great favourite with all his school-fellows, for he was of a singularly bright and happy temperament, high-spirited and merry. Generous in disposition, if a little hasty in resenting offence, he was quick to forgive, and wholly destitute of malice. He was a handsome boy, too, with dark brown hair, fine eyes, and a brilliant complexion.

At the annual speech-days of the school, he used to win great applause for the excellent elocution and perfect self-possession he displayed in his recitations. On one occasion, he declaimed Seneca's *Quis vere Rex?*, followed by a translation of his own.<sup>1</sup> This was in 1821, and in the previous year he rendered a lengthy speech from Cicero.

He distinguished himself at school, reached the top form, and received many flattering testimonials from his instructors. Ainsworth was always a favourite pupil of the High Master, who recognized from the first that he was no ordinary boy ; Dr. Smith observed his imaginative powers, and particularly directed his studies in classical lore. Of Dr. Elsdale, the second master, though Ainsworth, as a boy, disliked him for his severity, he, in after years, became a very good friend ; and, as will be seen later, the ex-preceptor and his former pupil were associated in an interesting piece of literary

<sup>1</sup> This will be found in *Artiss's Pocket Magazine* for 1821 (Vol. VIII, p. 354), and also in *Constable's Edinburgh Magazine* for January, 1822 (Vol. X, p. 33).

history—the origin of *The Privateersman*, by Captain Marryat.

Ainsworth's school-days came to an end in 1822, and on leaving school he wrote the two following poetical effusions, which, if the sentiment be somewhat inflated, at least betray a remarkable power of expression in one so young :—

*Lines on leaving Manchester School.*

When ripening years demand no more  
The gentle aid instruction yields,  
When first we hasten to explore  
The world's unknown, untrodden fields,  
With varied thought the heart looks back,  
On boyish days delights to dwell,  
With fear surveys life's dubious track,  
And trembles, as it sighs "farewell!"

So I to thee, beloved pile,  
Look back, while memory yet can trace  
The scenes which time and care and toil  
Perchance hereafter may efface ;  
But still, though they may dim the force  
Of recollection's vivid glow,  
They cannot quench the fruitful source  
From which my grateful feelings flow.

Farewell! the gentle ties, which fast  
Have bound my heart to thee and thine,  
Must sever ; we must part at last ;  
No more thy friendly band I join.  
Around thy dear and hallowed walls,  
O ! long may sport that joyous band,  
By turns obeying pleasure's calls  
And stricter wisdom's mild command.

For me, where'er my steps may go,  
Whate'er my future fate may be,  
The current of my thoughts shall flow  
With undiminished warmth to thee.

If noisy cares my hours employ,  
 Or mine be peaceful solitude,  
 Alike my heart shall yield with joy  
 The tribute of its gratitude.

21st September, 1822.

*O domus antiqua ! Quam bono  
 dominaris domino.*

I stand and gaze upon thee, ancient pile,  
 Thou first friend of my youth, thou best of friends !  
 Thou kind instructor—scene of early joys !  
 Is it then come to this, to say—Farewell !  
 Must I no more seek my well-known recess  
 Familiar as a brother, where I sate  
 Upon the carvéd oak bench, notched with names  
 Of inmates who like me have passed away,  
 But left their fond memento here behind ?  
 Dear characters ! some hands that traced ye may be cold  
 And dead, but those who live would not  
 Erase ye from the world. And must I hear  
 No more the sounding hum, the half-suppressed,  
 Half-uttered voices of the busy crowd ?  
 And shall I see no more thy whitened walls—  
 Thy panels dim with age—the hundred things  
 On which my eye now rests, speaking as 'twere  
 With eloquent silence to me ?  
 I sought thee young, and thou didst pour into  
 My careless, heedless ear the bitter sweet  
 Of knowledge, which I relished not ; it passed  
 Then by me like a summer's dream, forgot,  
 Unthought of on the morn :—but time staid not  
 Even for me, and so he rolled on.  
 And as I grew, I grasped at more, my mind  
 Was changed, and I did love thee and thy precepts.  
 And there was one, whose mild and gentle sway,  
 Whose kind attention, and whose manner bland  
 Endeared all to him,—his deep mind was stored  
 With erudition and with ancient lore—  
 And with him I did cull the honeyed sweets  
 Of gone antiquity—and he *was* loved  
 With chastened reverence, for his grateful flock  
 Forgot the master while they found the friend.

I turn me back unto those happy days  
 When life's young flowers were opening, purest, fairest,<sup>1</sup>  
 And pleasure beamed in hope's entwining rays  
 With soft reflected lustre. The bright sun  
 Of happiness shone on me, and the hand,  
 The fairy hand of joy strewed the gay path  
 With flowers. Now I turn me forward, and  
 Disjointed, wrenched from thee, my peaceful home,  
 My haven, where my hopes and cares all centred,  
 I seem a desolate, solitary thing  
 Moving amid the mighty stream of life.

Farewell, then, lovéd spot! Farewell to thee,  
 Protector of my youth! I sorrowing part  
 With the dear scene my heart has loved so well.  
 And when in after times I look on thee  
 And find the faces changed, the tenants gone,  
 Be thou the same as when thou didst of erst  
 Shield me beneath thy fond and covering wing,  
 I'll think of what thou wast to me.  
 Farewell, old friend of youth! a last farewell!  
 When I forget thee may I be forgotten.<sup>2</sup>

*13th August, 1822.*

Ainsworth's boyhood was passed during a very exciting and disturbed period of Manchester's history. The working classes, suffering from low wages and the high price of corn, were in almost open revolt—clamouring for Reform, and Repeal of the Corn Laws. Many alarming street frays culminated in the sanguinary tragedy of Peterloo, in 1819. On this occasion, a great open-air meeting of thousands of operatives was held, the chief orator being the well-known agitator, Henry Hunt. The magistrates caused the densely packed crowd to be dispersed by the charge of a large force of

<sup>1</sup> This aged retrospect of life, at seventeen years of age, is amusing.

<sup>2</sup> Ainsworth was much attached to his school, and his interest in it continued through life. He attended several of the Anniversary Dinners of the old scholars.



cavalry, with drawn swords, with the result that several persons were killed and hundreds injured. The scene of this terrible affair was St. Peter's Field, an open space close to Ainsworth's home in King Street. No doubt, the boy saw something of this tragic episode, known as Peterloo—a name which combined the site of the affray with a bitter parody of Wellington's great victory.<sup>1</sup>

When a schoolboy, Ainsworth passed most of his holidays at Rostherne, in Cheshire, at the house of his grand-uncle, John Shuttleworth. He has described his life and boyish adventures there in the pages of *Mervyn Clitheroe*; and, as will be seen later, most of the incidents in the book—such as the escapade on the ice and the Twelfth Night merrymakings—were all founded on his own experiences and recollections of Rostherne and its inhabitants. Like his father before him, Ainsworth was much attached to this picturesque village and its beautiful mere. He described his visits there as “. . . the happiest period of my life. I liked the old farm-house; I liked the life I led. . . . I was constantly out in the open air, constantly engaged in exercise . . . at one time I was a great angler. . . . I acquired a love of Nature. I beheld her beauties under many a varied aspect—at morn and eve, amid showers as well as sunshine. I noted the pursuits of the feathered creation with interest, and listened attentively to their different songs and cries. To raise the wild duck . . . from among the water-flags and bulrushes fringing the banks of the mere—to watch the heron, with outstretched legs, and head between the shoulders, wing his slow and heavy

<sup>1</sup> Two of Ainsworth's uncles, William and John Harrison, were among those who signed the Protest against the Peterloo affair.

flight across the water . . . to hear the bittern's booming cry—to see the long-billed curlew or the plover . . . and, above all, the kingfisher—these were delights and studies to me then. . . .”

In time, however, these pleasant days came to an end. His old uncle, John Shuttleworth, died when the boy was sixteen, and in the following year, 1822, having left school, Ainsworth had to commence the more serious business of training for the law.

## CHAPTER II

EARLY PURSUITS. FRIENDSHIP WITH JAMES CROSSLEY.  
THEATRICALS. THE LITERARY WORK OF A PRECOCIOUS  
BOY. CONVIVIAL NIGHTS.

**A**INSWORTH being an impulsive boy of abundant energies, his forces naturally sought expression in the form of various hobbies. His first passion seems to have been the making of fireworks, and true success in life was only to be attained by the production of a sky-rocket—a symbol, certainly, of ambition! Crackers, Roman candles, and fiery serpents were successfully manufactured; the rocket proved more difficult. At last, however, success was achieved, but in the glory and blaze of the ascending king of pyrotechnics the desire for firework-making was satisfied, and—like the falling rocket's stick—extinguished. It was succeeded by histrionic ambition—and then the master-passion of literary composition.

The time had now arrived when the boy's innate taste for literature and the kindred arts was to be drawn out, fostered, and encouraged to develop on its own natural lines. The factor which played so prominent a part in shaping the future novelist's career was a friend of congenial tastes, but some years older, and already very competent to give good advice in literary matters.

In 1817 there arrived in Manchester from Halifax a youth of seventeen years of age, who came to take up the position of articled clerk in the legal firm of which Thomas Ainsworth was the senior partner. This was James Crossley,<sup>1</sup> who at once formed an intimate friendship with his principal's precocious twelve-year-old son, William Harrison Ainsworth. Their remarkable friendship was destined to last for sixty-five years, and was only terminated, finally, by death. Throughout that long period Crossley was ever ready to advise and help his brilliant friend.

Crossley, from childhood, was an omnivorous reader, and before reaching the age of twenty had become a frequent contributor to *Blackwood's Magazine* and the *Reviews*. He was an ardent book-collector—his ever-increasing library being particularly rich in antiquarian, historical, and archæological works, and in the Elizabethan and Jacobean poets and dramatists. In all these subjects Crossley was deeply versed, even as a youth.

Here then, indeed, was a friend after the youthful Ainsworth's own heart, a friend of like tastes and aspirations; one who, by his wider reading and experience, could render material aid in consummating those fantasies and romantic ideas thronging in the fertile mind of the younger boy. One can imagine the vista of delights that opened before the eager lads—the books they read and discussed; the stories and dramas they

<sup>1</sup> James Crossley, F.S.A. He was born at The Mount, Halifax, 31st March, 1800. He became a partner in the firm of Ainsworth, Crossley, and Sudlow, solicitors, of Manchester, 1823. He retired in 1860. President of the Chetham Society, 1848. Died at Stocks House, Manchester, 31st August, 1883, and buried at Kersal Church.

planned; their dreams of success and literary fame in the days to come. Yes! the Golden Future more than fulfilled the utmost desire, but it may be doubted if realization equalled the glories of anticipation. The prize obtained: "The glory fades in possession—the beautiful has vanished and returns not."

Ainsworth's first literary compositions of note were of an histrionic nature, for at this period he was possessed likewise of a passion for the Stage and all things theatrical. It was principally as a dramatist, therefore, that the youthful author of fifteen first appeared in print. But before that desirable consummation, having written the plays—he proceeded to produce them. He constructed a theatre in the cellars of his father's house in King Street; put together the machinery required, and the apparatus for working the drop-curtain; made the properties and dresses; and painted the scenery. In the mounting and acting of his plays, Ainsworth was assisted by his brother and school friends—boys like himself.

The opening play at this subterranean Temple of Thespis was entitled *The Brothers*; and of the second production, the play-bill has fortunately been preserved. By recalling the costumes of the period, 1820, it is easy to picture, in a moment, the scene in the great basement room—brick-paved and with rather a damp, musty odour, no doubt—illuminated by candles, whose rays are reflected in the copper warming-pans and pewter utensils ranged against the walls. Hither troop in the audience—Ainsworths, Harrisons, Touchets, Bayleys, and relatives of the other youthful actors—old ladies in high-waisted gowns, huge lace caps, and mittens,

and carrying snuff-boxes; younger belles, also with high waists and mittens, but with low-cut dresses, fans, and hair in ringlets; men in skirted, quilted coats, stiff stocks, and tight trousers; and in the background are whispering clerks from the office, and domestics all agog. Behind the scenes there is great excitement, commotion, and peeping; the young actor-manager gives his final directions; the bell rings, and the curtain rises on the first item in the following bill of the play:—

## PRIVATE THEATRE

KING STREET

This present MONDAY, OCTOBER 1st, will be presented  
for the first time

A new MELO-DRAMATIC SPECTACLE,

By W. H. AINSWORTH,

called

GIOTTO;

or

THE FATAL REVENGE.

KING .....	MR. HALL.
GIOTTO .....	MR. W. AINSWORTH.
MANFRED .....	MR. G. AINSWORTH.
ORSINO { Banditti bribed }	. MR. FAINWELL.
HUGO { by Giotto }	. MR. WHEELER.

The PROLOGUE composed, and to be spoken in Character  
by MR. FAINWELL.

The EPILOGUE by MR. G. AINSWORTH.

In the course of the evening a comic song by  
MR. W. AINSWORTH.

After which the admired burletta of

BOMBASTES FURIOSO.

KING ARTAXOMINOUS ..	MR. WHEELER.
FUSBUS .....	MR. FAINWELL.
GEN. BOMBASTES .....	MR. W. AINSWORTH.
DISTAFINA .....	MR. HALL.

The whole to conclude with, the last time here, the

GRAND PANTOMIME OF

DON JUAN;

OR, LIBERTINE DESTROYED.

DON JUAN .....	MR. WHEELER.
DON GUZMAN, the Com- mandant .....	MR. WALTER.
DON LOPEZ .....	MR. G. AINSWORTH.
FISHERMAN .....	MR. FAINWELL.
ALGUAZILS .....	MESSRS. JACKSON, TAY- LOR, etc.
SCARAMOUCHE, for this night only .....	MR. W. AINSWORTH.
DONNA ANNA .....	MISS SMITH.

Performance to begin at half-past Five precisely.

Nearly fifty-six years afterwards, this old play-bill was sent by Crossley to Ainsworth, who supplemented its details with the following interesting reminiscences :—

“ MY DEAR CROSSLEY,

“ 22nd May, 1876.

“ The copy of the old bill of our boyish performance in King Street which you have just sent me, quite took me by surprise. I have not seen the original for many years, but I believe I have a copy somewhere, which had been preserved by my dear and careful mother. The bill was never printed, but was written out—and extremely well written—on cardboard by Thomas Hall, one of the performers. This Thomas Hall was the son of a dyer in Salford, and afterwards went out to the Cape of Good Hope, where I believe he died, for I have never heard of him since. I cannot tell how I made his acquaintance, for his name does not appear in *The Manchester School Register*; but I liked him very much, and he was very useful to me. I adopted his name when I sent some communications to *Arliss's Pocket Magazine*. I cannot recollect the exact date of the performance, but fancy it must have been 1st October, 1820.

“ Thomas Hall, of whom I have just spoken, appeared in three pieces, playing Donna Anna in *Don Juan*. Mr. Fainwell was the Rev. Joseph Rayner Stephens, Wesleyan Methodist minister, of whom you will find some account in *The Manchester School Register*. He was a clever fellow, and you will see that he wrote the Prologue. He played in all three pieces. Fancy a future Wesleyan Minister acting a Bandit, Fusbus, and a Fisherman! The Wheeler mentioned in the bill, I believe, was John Wheeler,<sup>1</sup> not the Serjeant. Mr. Walter was a groom.

“ I believe it was on that occasion that the present

<sup>1</sup> John Wheeler (1806–54), son of John Wheeler, of *The Manchester Chronicle*, and resident in King Street. He became a journalist.



Dr. Ralph Ainsworth,<sup>1</sup> then a little boy, seated on the edge of a copper—for the performance took place in the lower regions of the house—fell backwards into the water. The audience, as you may suppose, was select rather than numerous, and consisted of my immediate relations. My uncle, John Harrison, was our sole musician, and played an overture on the violin; but the curtain being drawn up rather suddenly, he was discovered on the stage, and after a hasty bow, beat a precipitate retreat. Poor Gilbert took a great interest in the performance, and you will see that he spoke the epilogue—though I doubt whether he wrote it. On looking back, I almost think this was the happiest period of his life. . . . I should like to keep this copy of the old play-bill, but will send it back if you desire it. . . .”

(In a second letter to Crossley, he continues :)

“ 27th May, 1876.

“ I have found a bill of the Private Performance in King Street, which was evidently presented to my mother, as her name is written at the bottom of it. It also bears the monogram *T. H. scripsit*. But this bill refers to Saturday, 30th September, proving that there must have been two performances. There are no changes in the actors, except that Donna Anna is played by Mr. Hall, not Miss Smith as in your bill. I wish I could remember the year in which these performances took place. I think it must have been 1819.<sup>2</sup> If you could get any old almanacks, you would see when 30th Sept. fell on Saturday, but then this would make 1st Oct. a Sunday. . . . I cannot conceive how the mistake in the date (if it is a mistake) can have arisen.

“ I return you your bill.

“ Always yours,

“ W. HARRISON AINSWORTH.”

<sup>1</sup> W. H. Ainsworth's first cousin, then seven years old.

<sup>2</sup> The year was evidently 1820.

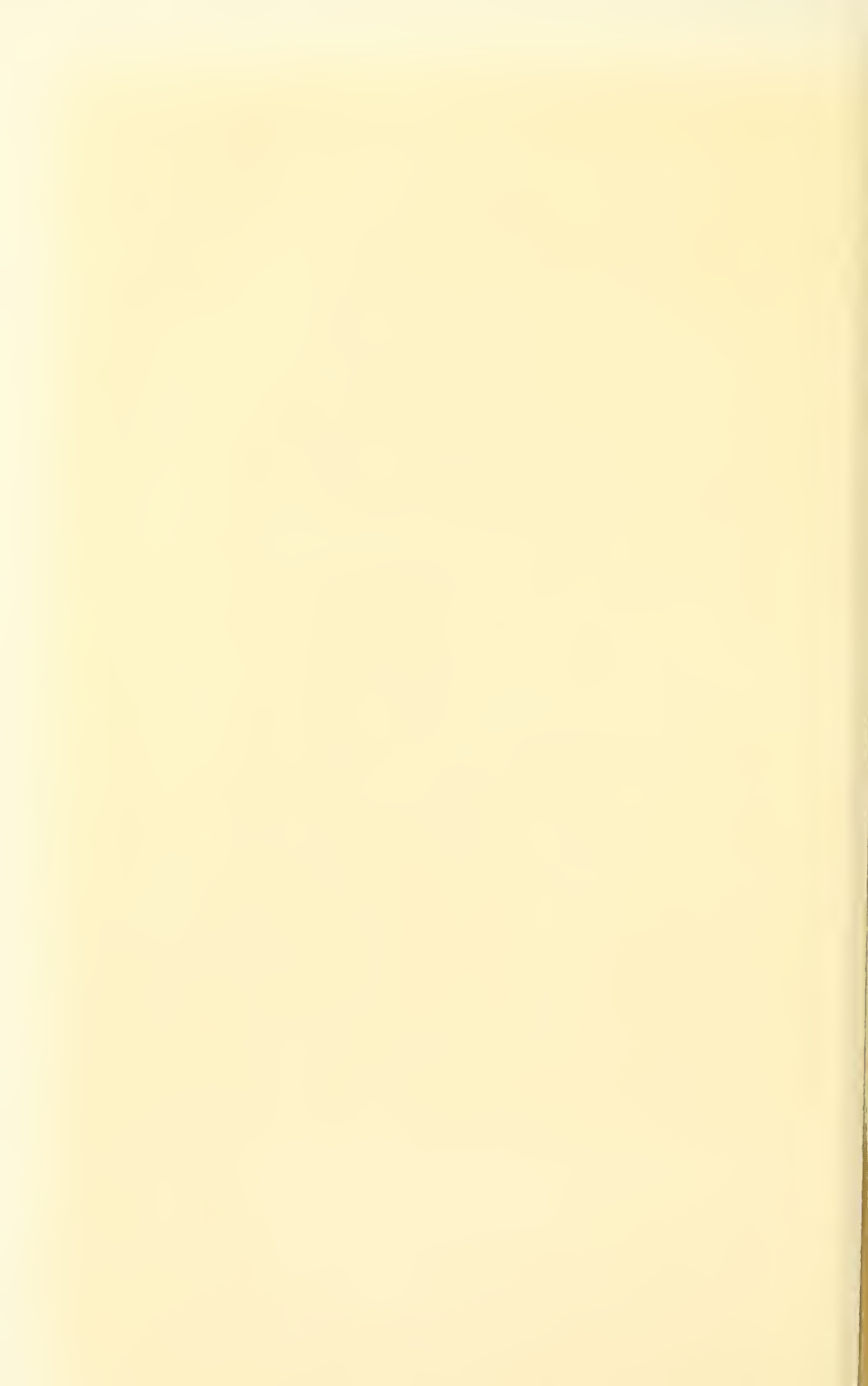
James Crossley then contributed his reminiscences of Ainsworth's little theatre in the days of long ago.<sup>1</sup> He wrote :—

“ I well remember two performances at this theatre, which was constructed in the lower regions of Mr. Thomas Ainsworth's house in King Street, which were sufficiently spacious to meet the necessary requirements. The architect, manager, and what-not was William Harrison Ainsworth, then a fine handsome youth of fifteen, full of literary and dramatic ambition, and who possessed the power of infusing his own spirit into others. He was assisted by his brother, Thomas Gilbert Ainsworth. . . . The play performed was *The Brothers*. I am not certain as to the day, but the period of the performance would be the latter end of the year 1820. The second play brought out, and which would not be long afterwards, was *Giotto ; or the Fatal Revenge*.

“ One or both of these dramas will, I believe, be found in *Arliss's Magazine*, the author, of course, being William Harrison Ainsworth. The extemporized theatre on these two play days was attended by the beauty and fashion of King Street and its neighbourhood, for Manchester had not then gone out of doors. The youthful manager performed his parts excellently, and was well supported by his companions. . . . The applause of the select company of spectators was, as might be expected, enthusiastic. . . . The prologue spoken at the opening of the theatre, to the authorship of which I must plead guilty, was afterwards printed in *Blackwood's Magazine* (December, 1820).”

<sup>1</sup> See *Manchester Guardian* : “ Local Notes and Queries,” 5th June, 1876.





Ainsworth, having read the above account, wrote to Crossley as follows :—

“ 8th June, 1876.

“ Your description of the Private Theatricals in King Street, in 1820, is very pleasantly written, and, I think, will be read with some interest by contemporaries, if there are any left. I am very glad you have mentioned poor Gilbert, and I am also pleased to find he is alluded to by another correspondent, who signs himself ‘ Ignoto ’ (‘ Ignoto ’ must, I think, have known him).

“ I perfectly remember delivering your excellent Prologue, but I had quite forgotten the play-bill was printed. I have no number of *Arliss’s Magazine*, nor have I a little weekly theatrical Journal which I brought out about 1822. Do you recollect it? It was the speculation of a printer named, I think, John Lee,<sup>1</sup> and was published by B. Wheeler, in St. Ann’s Square, but naturally failed, as it was sure to do, since I never saw the performances which I pretended to criticise.

“ Always yours,

“ W. HARRISON AINSWORTH.”

These dramatic performances in King Street seem to have been of frequent occurrence about 1820–1, and the programme always included one of the youthful manager’s own plays.

[By the kindness of Mr. Hugh Beaver, I reproduce here in facsimile the original play-bill in Ainsworth’s autograph of his drama entitled *Ximenez ; or, the Desolate Island*. Mr. Beaver’s grandfather—Mr. Hugh Beaver, of Manchester—was one of the audience at this performance, and carefully preserved the play-bill. It will be seen that the company of players included most of those who had taken part in *Giotto*.]

<sup>1</sup> John Leigh, a Manchester bookseller.

Ainsworth's second play, *Giotto ; or the Fatal Revenge*, was afterwards printed in *Arliss's Magazine* under the title of *Ghiotto ; or Treason Discovered*.<sup>1</sup> It is an excellent little melodrama, and, as the work of a boy of fifteen, a very remarkable production—both in command of language and vivid imagery. For example, *Ghiotto*, during a thunderstorm, apostrophizes the warring elements :—

Rave on, ye elements ! Ye thunders roll !  
 Flash on, strange fire, ethereal visitant, . . .  
 Thy blaze breaks on the startled eye, and vanishes,  
 Like the false visions of the meteor Hope,  
 And, like them, bare and desolate leaves the spot  
 Which it hath blasted with destructive force !  
 . . . The loud peals  
 Now burst anigh, now murmur from afar,  
 As if the viewless spirits that control  
 The elements, and on the lightnings ride,  
 Held their high carnival, in joyance wild,  
 O'er the destruction of a sentenced world.  
 It suiteth well my nature ! Some there are  
 (And men esteemed of worth and valour high)  
 Men who in the cannon's mouth would storm the breach,  
 And where death widest waves his fleshless hand,  
 Would strive to stand the foremost ; and where'er,  
 In all his horrid forms, gaunt Danger stalks  
 Over the bloody field, still follow on,  
 Nor heed the sweeping ball, the hissing shot,  
 Nor the death scattering shell ; yet fear to cope  
 With such a night as this ; and fear to see  
 Nature's sublimest workings. But, to *me*  
 More pleasing is the sound of the hoarse thunder  
 Than strains of sweetest music ; far more lovely  
 To watch the blaze of quivering lightning play,  
 Than all the pomp and splendour that adorns  
 The glittering festival. . . .

And, again, at the end of the drama, when *Ghiotto*

<sup>1</sup> *Arliss's Pocket Magazine* for 1821, Vol. VIII.

baulks his captors by suicide, he raves in true melodramatic vein :—

Ha ! am I caught ; and shall the goaded lion,  
Fast in the hunters' toils, derided die ? . . .  
Shall this racked form be stretched upon a wheel,  
Which once I thought to plant upon a throne ?  
This head, which nature for a crown designed,  
Be severed from this body by the axe,  
The agonizing axe ? Never ! oh, never !  
While I possess this friend ! A friend more dear  
Than India's mines of gold.

(*Stabs himself with a dagger.*)

And as for thee, thou loathed object, Manfred !  
Cause of my hate, and fountain of my crimes,  
This legacy I leave thee—Hate ! hate ! hate !  
May curses everlasting be thy meed !  
But, ha ! hell drags me down ! I come ! Oh ! oh !<sup>1</sup>

(*Dies.*)

*Manfred.* There lies ambition and desire of greatness ;  
That was his fault. . . .  
Let us avoid the rocks  
On which was shattered this majestic ship.

The simile contained in these two last lines is admirable.

The death of Ghiotto savours of *Rookwood* and *The Tower of London*, and it is particularly interesting to note how, even at this early age, Ainsworth introduced the description of a storm, for later on he excelled in vivid pen-pictures of elemental warfare. Indeed, this boyish drama of 1820, and most of his other early productions about the same date, may be said to prefigure the author's subsequent literary work. In these, as in the well-known romances of a later date, the terrible, the mysterious, and the supernatural, combined with

<sup>1</sup> In this passage the youthful author evidently essayed the style of his favourite dramatist, Marlowe, in the terrible final scene of *Doctor Faustus*.

a minute description of scenery, buildings, and costume, were always the most prominent characteristics. In some of his juvenile work, however, there was a pronounced strain of sly humour, and a freakish love of mystification concerning the authorship of his productions—as we shall see presently.

Ainsworth commenced his literary career long before he left school. Probably his earliest compositions, that still exist, were some poems written about 1819–20, one being an Ode on the Coronation of George IV. These, no doubt, were school essays, as the MSS. were preserved by Dr. Smith, the High Master; they are now in the Manchester Reference Library.

From 1820 to 1824 young Ainsworth was a most prolific writer—original work in the form of tales, dramas, poems, and essays, and translations from the classics, poured from his juvenile pen.<sup>1</sup> As little, if any, of this early work appeared under his own name, it is impossible to trace and identify all of it.

In his numerous contributions to the Magazines he preferred to use pseudonyms—and he adopted many. The first was “Thomas Hall”—the name of a boy-friend, which he borrowed for his contributions to *Arliss's Pocket Magazine*, as he mentioned in the letter to Crossley previously quoted.<sup>2</sup>

Apparently the earliest work of Ainsworth to appear in the glory of print was an amusing little *jeu d'esprit*, in rhymed couplets, entitled *The Rivals: a Serio-Comic Tragedy*. It is signed “T. Hall. Manchester, March 5th, 1821,” and will be found in *Arliss's Pocket Magazine*

<sup>1</sup> This precocity, no doubt, was inherited from his grandfather, Jeremiah Ainsworth, “the veteran geometer of seventeen.”

<sup>2</sup> See *ante*, p. 54.



(Vol. VII) for that year. The author was just sixteen years old.

The editor of *Arliss's* evidently appreciated the merits of his new coadjutor, for in the next volume of the Magazine—which appeared in the latter part of 1821—"Thomas Hall, Esq.," was the principal contributor, and furnished no less than seventeen pieces.<sup>1</sup> They comprised literary work of all descriptions—dramas, tales, essays, and poems. Here appeared, in addition to *Ghiotto*, the tragedy which the author and his friends had acted in the cellar-theatre in King Street, a *Farewell Address* spoken at the same cavernous Temple of Drama. Another item was the translation of Seneca's *Quis vere Rex?* which Ainsworth had declaimed at the Grammar School Speech-day on 2nd October of the same year. Here also appeared the first part of *Recollections of a Veteran*—subsequently to be extended and reprinted, as will be described later on. But Ainsworth's most interesting contribution to this volume of *Arliss's Magazine* was a series of papers entitled *Horæ Dramaticæ*. In these, emulating Chatterton, he professed to have "discovered" a seventeenth-century dramatist, named William Aynesworthe, and proceeded to give examples of the plays of that defunct and forgotten genius, who, needless to say, was none other than the sixteen-year-old schoolboy, William Harrison Ainsworth.

The *Horæ Dramaticæ* were introduced thus:—

"Of all the dramatic writers, one who has met with the least attention, and perhaps deserved the most, is William Aynesworthe. The chaste simplicity of his

<sup>1</sup> Thirteen were signed "Thomas Hall"; three with the initials "H. A."; and one "W. A."

style, divested of all the ridiculous bombast which characterizes our modern writers; the elegant and richness of his verse, combine to render him a writer worthy to be ranked among the first of our early dramatists. His plots are simple, and without intricacy, and the feelings of the reader are kept up with an intensity which does not quit them at the bare perusal.

“ . . . I purchased a copy of the works of this extraordinary man some years ago . . . the bookseller from whom I purchased them, assured me it was the only copy now existing, at least that he had ever heard of, a few copies only having been printed for private distribution. His plays are six in number: *Venice, or the Fall of the Foscari*; *Ximenez*; <sup>1</sup> *Chosroes*; *The Fathers*; *Elvira*; and *Ghiotto, or Treason Defeated*; <sup>2</sup> and I purpose, if it be suitable to the nature of *The Pocket Magazine*, to give a specimen of each.”

(After giving an act of *Venice, or the Fall of the Foscari*, the “commentator” observed):—

“ This is poetry, and excellent poetry, or I am much mistaken; indeed, the lovers of the true drama will find that it has been excelled by few, except the writers contemporary with our immortal bard. If the puny writers of the present age could produce anything equal to this excellent play, we should read their compositions with much higher satisfaction than we have hitherto done; and I have no doubt that if it is compared with the writings of Mr. Richard Clitheroe, a dramatist who flourished about the same time, it will be found infinitely superior to them.

“ T. H., *Manchester.*”

<sup>1</sup> See *ante*, p. 57.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

The editor of the magazine took exception to an allusion to the Upas tree, in *Venice*, and inquired in a footnote: "How came Mr. Aynesworthe to be acquainted with the Upas tree? Is not this a little anachronism? We have no doubt, however, that the plays of Aynesworthe are *as ancient as those of Clitheroe.*"

Whereupon "Mr. Hall" replied:—

"DEAR EDITOR,

"A thousand thanks to thee for thy good sense. I knew that thou wouldst easily perceive that the line about the Upas tree was not of the same date as the others. Didst thou not (confess frankly) know that the Upas Tree was of mine own invention, and not of that sublime poet's, William Aynesworthe, of whom we may say, with truth and *sans* flattery, that 'we ne'er shall see his like again'? In fact, I only wanted to give thee an opportunity to catch *The New Monthly* napping, which thou most assuredly didst, and very cleverly. I may liken thee, I perceive, unto a cat which closes its eyes, that the mice may draw nigh without fear. But, lest your readers should imagine that you or I (quite impossible) dealt in the marvellous when we affirmed that the aforesaid William Aynesworthe really existed, and was not the offspring of our brains, we challenge such disputants of our veracity to write anything equal to him, either in language or in purity. There is only one tragedy which has approached anything near to it since 'Shakespeare,' and that is *Mirandola*; but that is as far inferior as the moon to the sun. 'But comparisons are odorous'; and we will leave the world to judge, contenting ourselves with our own opinion. Such being my sentiments, I have the honour to be,

"Your firm friend and coadjutor,

"THOMAS HALL."

. . . . .

The allusion to the plays of "Richard Clitheroe," and *The New Monthly Magazine*, furnishes the clue to a similar hoax the volatile Ainsworth played upon the readers of that staid periodical, then edited by Thomas Campbell, the poet. Accordingly in *The New Monthly Magazine*<sup>1</sup> for this same year—1821—we find the following letter to Campbell:—

*"On the writings of Richard Clitheroe.*

"MR. EDITOR,

"Among the singular events which have happened in the history of literature, I know none more curious than that which has condemned to so long a period of oblivion the name and writings of Richard Clitheroe, one of the best dramatic writers of the reign of James I. I was fortunate enough, some months ago, to purchase for a trifling price the plays of this writer in two quarto volumes; and this copy, as I am assured, is the only one at present extant. The Tragedies of Clitheroe are six in number: *Crichton*; *Julius Cæsar*; *Fortune's Fool*; *The Unlucky Marriage*; *Julian, the Apostate*; and *Virginia, or Honour's Sacrifice*. To these tragedies is prefixed a history of the early part of the author's life, which is curious for the quaint simplicity with which it is written, and the interesting anecdotes which it contains of contemporary poets. The following extracts from the first of these plays, the hero of which is the Admirable Crichton, may enable your readers to form some opinion of the style and talents of this writer. . . . The best criterion by which we could form a judgment of the merits of Clitheroe's tragedies, would be to compare these extracts with Mr. Lamb's specimens of the dramatic writers contemporary with Shakespeare. I am much mistaken if there be any passages among them

<sup>1</sup> Vol. I, p. 123.

all to be compared in poetic beauty to those which I have just quoted ; with the exception, indeed, of those exquisitely beautiful passages from Ford, which compared with the general level of the tragedies from which they are extracted may be said to shine like jewels in an Ethiop's ear. . . . I purpose shortly to send you extracts from each of the other five tragedies, and what may perhaps be still more curious, from the author's own memoirs."

It would be interesting to know what the author of *The Pleasures of Hope* thought of his unknown correspondent, who, no doubt, was indulging in pleasurable hopes of literary success ; but did either editor or contributor dream that the latter would be owner and editor of this same magazine in days to come ?

This episode of "Richard Clitheroe" is remarkable for two things : first, the choice of the name *Clitheroe*, which, many years later, Ainsworth again used, to designate himself, in his semi-autobiographical novel, *Mervyn Clitheroe* ; and secondly, that he should have written an earlier work concerning *Crichton*.

It will be remembered that one of "William Aynsworth's" dramas was entitled *Venice, or the Fall of the Foscari*. Curiously enough, later on in the same year, Byron's well-known tragedy on the same subject—*The Two Foscari*—was announced for publication. Before the latter appeared, taking advantage of the public interest in the matter, Ainsworth sent *his* tragedy to *The Edinburgh Magazine* (formerly called *The Scots' Magazine*), published by Constable. Great results ensued. In the number for December, 1821, the aspiring young dramatist occupied a prominent position and soared to

lofty heights. First, appeared this amusing letter from him :—

“ TO THE EDITOR.<sup>1</sup>

“ SIR,

“ I consider myself very much like Lord Byron.<sup>2</sup> You may stare, my good sir, at this unexpected declaration ; but, I can assure you, it is the fact. Letting alone all peculiarities of mind, in person I am his exact counterpart. . . . I have been several times mistaken for his lordship, and have once been even horse-whipped for him. I can hardly go into a party without becoming the subject of many a whisper among the female end of the room. ‘ Lord ! what a poetical face !—how like Lord Byron ! ’ In short, Mr. Editor, I am like his lordship, a very interesting young man, and the modestest creature in nature. Seeing in the papers his lordship’s new tragedy of *Foscari* announced, I bethought myself of a piece of that name, which I myself had formerly written (for I am one of the ‘ *genus irritabile* ’) on that subject, and which I intend sometime to dazzle the world with in print. I have sent it to you, in order that you may review it, as I am unwilling to publish the whole tragedy at present. I need not ask you what is your opinion of my work—there can be but one opinion of its merits. My friend, Mr. Erasmus Webster (a very clever man !), thinks as I do, that there cannot exist two opinions on the subject. I once showed it to Jack Scruensnip !—Would you believe it ?—he advised me to put it in the fire ! Sheer envy ! He once told a certain person that I was little better than—what do you think, my dear sir,—little better than—*an ass* ! Oh ! the idiot (*sic*). But I must give up scrawling at present—am engaged to a

<sup>1</sup> Constable’s *Edinburgh Magazine*, Vol. IX, pp. 589–97.

<sup>2</sup> Saunders’ portrait of Byron, at the age of nineteen, much resembles the miniature of Ainsworth, by Stump, when he was about the same age.

ball—dance with Miss Leuisetta I.—charming girl, likes me—very just opinion of my qualities—when I talk to her, Lord! You'd wonder how I delight her—she smiles and smiles, and smiles till she almost laughs. There's for you. Via!

“Yours truly,  
“Θήτα.”

*The Edinburgh Magazine* made no comment on this flippant epistle, and—apparently taking young Ainsworth quite *au sérieux*—proceeded to devote no less than seven pages to extracts from his tragedy.

The following excerpts will give an idea of the style of *Venice, or the Fall of the Foscari* :—

*Leonino.* My Lord,

Think of revenge.

*Sforza.* Ha! ha! By that sole word

Thou brokest me from a reverie which held  
My coward soul. What! shall a maiden's tear  
Blot out our hopes of vengeance? Oh, ye gods!  
Grant me but instant thunder to rive down  
That hated tree, which hath so long o'er hung,  
O'er shadowed me . . .

The path is plain before me. Yes! revenge  
Stands with her bloody finger to direct  
My doubtful steps. See how her fretful front  
Is crowned with venom'd scorpions! Lead me, my  
guide,

I'll follow thee, though Hell should bar my course,  
And plunge through Styx's black and murky streams,  
(Surrounding seven times the infernal king's  
Drear, vast, and noisome territory,) to gain  
Thy gory empire, where the tyrant Death  
Holds ministry supreme! . . .

. . . What is death,

That I should fear it? it is but a sleep—  
A sweet eternal sleep . . . 'tis to rot—to lie  
In cold inanimation, and to feed

The meanest reptiles—Man, oh,—mighty man!

Thou rank'st thyself first in the scale immense  
 Of being—wonder of the universe !  
 Lord of Creation ! Is this, then, thy doom,  
 The last stage of thy being ?—do thy triumphs,  
 Thy glory, and thy power, all end in this ?  
 Utter annihilation ! . . .<sup>1</sup>

And, of course, another thunderstorm looms on the horizon :—

*Sforza.* But what was that ?  
 The rolling thunder from the distant north  
 Methought I heard—Ha ! see the vivid flash  
 Of lightning plays upon the air !  
 Again the solemn peal reverberates  
 Upon my ear ; the plashing rain descends  
 In sweeping torrent from the sky and falls  
 Upon the fated earth.

And here is an example of the love scenes :—

*Julia.* How still is all the scene ! See, where the moon  
 Illumes, with paly lustre, the bright sheen  
 Of verdant leaf and rosy blossoming,  
 Shedding a flood of day. Cynthia, hail !  
 Oh ! how I love to view thy halcyon light !

*Gonzaga.* . . . Health to thee, my sweet Julia ! Never bent  
 A Persian to his God with more devotion,  
 When he, new-born, ascends the firmament,  
 Than I to thee ; nor did there ever come,  
 A Dervise with more sanctity of love  
 To Mecca or Medina's holy shrine,  
 Than now comes thy Gonzaga. . . .

<sup>1</sup> This seems to be a paraphrase—perhaps unconsciously—of Shakspeare :—

“ Death is a fearful thing

. . . to die, and go we know not where ;  
 To lie in cold obstruction and to rot. . . .”

*Measure for Measure*, Act III, Sc. 1.

“ Are all thy conquests, glories, triumphs, spoils  
 Shrunk to this little measure ? . . .”

*Julius Cæsar*, Act III, Sc. 1.



Oh, for that hour, when holy marriage rites  
Shall give a husband's title to my love !

(The gallant persuades the lady to elope, and then)

*Julia.* . . . Julia is thine ! her tender heart would burst  
To see thy wretchedness. All must give way to love,  
He is a powerful tyrant, who possesses  
Dreadful supremacy o'er all our hearts.

*Gonzaga.* Thanks, love, ten thousand thanks, for thy kind speech ;

. . . . .  
When the white mists arising from the ground,  
And the first golden beams of Phœbus' ray  
Announce approaching morn, and when the lark  
Sings his gay carol to the pale blue sky,  
Expect Gonzaga, and a faithful friend,  
With two fleet steeds, to bear you hence away.  
. . . Sweet, by the gray mantle of the morning shrouded,  
We'll quit Milan—Do you consent ?

*Julia.* I do.

. . . . .  
In conclusion, the reviewer, in *The Edinburgh Magazine*, of Ainsworth's tragedy, said :—

“ Our readers will concur with us in thinking favourably of its merits. It certainly is not without faults, but they are spots of the sun, unnoticed in the blaze of lustre which overpowers them. We cannot say what kind of production will issue from the pen of Lord Byron ; but if he excels the one of which we have here given a few specimens, we will allow that he has done wonders. The love scenes in this play are beautiful and simple, and abound in the most touching pathos. The speech of the doge in the fourth act is equal almost to anything of the kind we have ever seen. We hope the author will publish this tragedy. . . .”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Apparently this was never done *in extenso*. The whole of the first act of *Venice* appeared in *The European Magazine* for August, 1822, but nothing further of the tragedy was given there.

Here, then, was a signal triumph for the schoolboy of sixteen—his work extensively quoted and very favourably reviewed in a prominent magazine, and his tragedy on the Foscari coupled with that of Byron, the most famous poet of the time, who, it was suggested, could scarcely surpass the achievements of his juvenile rival! This is one of the most remarkable incidents in the annals of literary precocity; and precocity, Lombroso says, is one of the characteristics of genius. There was certainly a touch of genius in this Foscari tragedy, and its success confirmed Ainsworth's resolution to devote himself to a literary career. So, with renewed ardour, he proceeded to pour forth a continuous stream of miscellaneous work of all kinds for the periodical publications of the day. How he found time to produce so much composition in the intervals of school work is a mystery—these effusions must have been literal lucubrations.

He now added *The European Magazine* to the list of periodicals he was contributing to; in the number for December, 1821, appeared a tale entitled *The Baron's Bridal*, and signed "W. H. A." On the principle, apparently, that one cannot have too much of a good thing, this story was reprinted a few months later in *Arless's Pocket Magazine*, under the more distinctive title of *The Spectre Bride*—a legend, as its name suggests, in the style of "Monk" Lewis.

M. G. Lewis, Mrs. Radcliffe (who, as he said, "had always inexpressible charms for me"), Byron, Marlowe, and Walter Scott, were the writers who most strongly influenced Ainsworth's early work—for all youthful literary efforts are, of necessity, somewhat imitative.

Ainsworth was again the predominant contributor

to *Arliss's Magazine* (Vol. IX, 1822). A second tale in "Monk" Lewisian vein was entitled *The Pirate*, and a third, *An Adventure in the South Seas*.<sup>1</sup> From internal evidence it is probable that Ainsworth also wrote, wholly or in part, several series of clever, humorous papers entitled respectively, *Gothamburg Transactions*, *The Pokerian Controversy*, and *The Scrap Book*, where the author appears under a variety of pseudonyms. In the last named we read that "Thomas Hall, Esq., is a frequent visitor at my house . . . it would give me much pleasure to possess the learning and politeness of that gentleman." (!)

Ainsworth's most interesting contribution to this volume of *Arliss's* was a comic-tragedy named *The Cut Finger*. This very amusing little piece might be read as a burlesque of his own *Rookwood*—had it not antedated the latter by over twelve years.

*Scene I* is *A Churchyard*, where enters Boreall, a sexton, much given to chanting sepulchral ballads—like his lineal descendant, Peter Bradley, in *Rookwood*.

*Boreall sings* :—

How merrily lives a sexton old,  
He sings and he shovels away !  
His purse was light, tho' his spade was bright,  
Yet he carolled so loud and gay.

(*He proceeds to dig a grave ; and later defends his subsidiary occupation of body-snatcher thus :*)

Ah ! Egad—here is the coffin in an exquisite state of decay . . . that I'll carefully dry, and sell to my friend the tobacconist ;—'twill scarcely require any grinding to make excellent snuff. . . . But, since the tyranny of the law chooses to consider it as a crime, I'll allow no more bodies to be taken from this ground, although I consider them a part of my lawful income. . . . I'll desist for the

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted as *The Mutiny*, in *December Tales*, 1823.

future from my patriotic exertions. . . . Yes, patriotic. How could the surgeons study anatomy if they could not dissect . . . and if they could not study anatomy, how could they perform operations on the living ?

*The Cut Finger* introduces the well-known incident of the burial of a person who, in reality, is in a death-like trance. Boreall digs up the body, and to obtain the rings worn by the supposed corpse, cuts off a finger of "the late" Mrs. Botherem. The flow of blood restores animation to the lady, who rises from her coffin, and runs from the churchyard.

*Boreall, in despair, shrieks :—*

The body's gone. I shall be ruined ! . . . If the other bodies should learn this trick, and walk off too, what shall we do ?—We shall never have any more business. But I'll be hanged if I'll be bilked in this manner. I'll after her, and claim her wherever I find her. I'll get a search warrant, an officer. . . . Stop, ghost ! stop, ghost !—Stop, body ! stop, ghost !—watch ! watch ! watch !

I say you are my property. I am natural guardian of the churchyard ; so come back, and be buried in peace like an honest Christian, or I'll get a warrant—Watch ! watch ! watch !

In the meantime, Mrs. Botherem returns to her home—only to find her faithless husband (whose distracted lamentations for the loss of his spouse had been recorded in an earlier scene of the play) in the act of consoling himself with another fair one. Like the Lady Rohesia, of *Ingoldsby* fame, Mrs. Botherem's vengeance on the guilty pair is swift and terrible. In a short time, the six characters of the play are lying dead. It is an excellent burlesque of tragic melodrama, and well repays perusal.

Throughout 1822, Ainsworth contributed frequently to *The Edinburgh Magazine*; here appeared *What shall I write?*—a clever paper that was subsequently reprinted, with some additions, as *The Theatre* (in *December Tales*); and three-parts of the *Horæ Seniles*, signed “Crito”—a series of papers better known as *Recollections* (when reprinted and extended in *December Tales*). In this remarkable dissertation on ancient books—which, as will be shown later, won the approbation of Charles Lamb—Ainsworth probably received some considerable assistance from James Crossley. *The European Magazine*, for 1822, contained many contributions from Ainsworth’s pen. Three stories, *A December Tale* (afterwards entitled *The Englisher’s Story*); *The Imperishable One* (renamed *The Wanderings of an Immortal*)—a powerful piece; and *The Test of Affection*, were reprinted in *December Tales* later on. For some of his productions, including an amusing paper on *Snoring*, he used the pseudonym of “Cinna.” In the same magazine, for 1823, he re-issued *The Half Hangit*, which had previously appeared in *The Manchester Iris*, September, 1822. This is a remarkable story, such as E. A. Poe wrote some years after, and deals with a man who is arrested, under compromising circumstances, for a murder of which he is innocent. He is tried, condemned, and hung—but a reprieve arrives at the last moment. The death agonies and the sensation of returning animation are dramatically and impressively described.

It is now necessary to give some account of Ainsworth’s life at this period—apart from literature. After leaving school in 1822, although he continued to read classics with Dr. Smith on two days of the week, he

immediately commenced training for the law, more particularly in conveyancing, the branch of the legal profession his father intended him to practise. For this purpose the boy was placed as an articled clerk with Mr. Alexander Kay, a leading solicitor and conveyancer of Manchester, and afterwards Mayor of that city.

Mr. Kay was an able lawyer, but he had no sympathy with the Arts. His temperament was the very antithesis of that of his brilliant pupil, and the latter's theatrical and literary predilections were regarded with the greatest repugnance by the austere man of law. Friction was therefore frequent, and, as Ainsworth said in after years, "Mr. Alexander Kay was anything but an idle man, and became disgusted with his idle clerk." Thomas Ainsworth, also, was by no means satisfied with his son's legal progress and mode of life in general. "He's an idle dog—he never will work," was the father's frequent remark—but erroneous prophecy, for, later on, no writer ever worked harder, or was more industrious, than William Harrison Ainsworth.

But the fact was, the two seniors did not understand the boy, nor did they realize his great ability in his natural *métier*—Literature. Naturally, young Ainsworth had no taste for the law. The artistic temperament has many vagaries, and may lead a man into strange situations, but it seldom gives him an aptitude for the legal profession.

So it was in vain that Thomas Ainsworth remonstrated with his son, who was literally—

"A youth foredoom'd his father's hopes to cross,  
Who penn'd a stanza when he should engross."

Romance-writing and verse-making possessed a charm

that will-drafting and conveyancing could never give. A well-known author was greater than the Lord Chancellor, and better to sit in the editorial chair of a magazine than on the woolsack ! Blackstone and Coke !—Who would read them instead of Scott and Shakspeare and Marlowe ? <sup>1</sup>

Thus it was. When he should have been poring over ponderous legal commentaries and engrossing parchments, the errant law pupil was ransacking every library within reach for the works of the dramatists and romance-writers. After exhausting his father's extensive library, he proceeded to the Old Exchange Library—where Thomas de Quincey had revelled before him—which boasted an excellent collection of varied literature. The presiding deity here was a lady-librarian, Miss Blinkhorn, whose face, we are told, “ bore an acidulated expression, though it never failed to brighten up and smile at the sight of her handsome young visitor.”

But Ainsworth's favourite resort, and unfailing treasure-house, was the famous Chetham Library. Here was an endless store of delights, a grand collection of godly tomes—dramatists, historians, and romancers. And what an ideal Reading Room is that of the Chetham Library ! The cloistered calm of the fifteenth-century building, the oak-panelled chamber, the exquisite Jacobean furniture, the grave portraits of departed worthies that look down from the walls—all speak of the past, conduce to thought, and stimulate the imagination. Its influence on Ainsworth was great, and he loved the place always. His

<sup>1</sup> Leigh Hunt was another admiration. Years later Ainsworth wrote : “ When we were at school and reading *The Indicator* . . . we used to think that if we could ever write essays or verses like Leigh Hunt, we should have reached the utmost height of our ambition.”

favourite nook, as with many another reader, was the famous seat in the recess formed by the oriel window. Here, under the beautiful groined ceiling, stands a remarkable early sixteenth-century table, at which tradition reputes Sir Walter Raleigh to have sat. At this same table Ainsworth penned much of his early literary work, when, as a youth, he frequented the Chetham Library.<sup>1</sup>

It must not be supposed, however, that he was the shy recluse a studious boy often becomes; on the contrary, he was ever a convivialist, and now, when he was about seventeen, he began to play no small part in the social gaieties of Manchester.

The smart young attorney, with his good looks, fine figure, happy disposition, and ability to sing, was a desirable acquisition at any function. His company, therefore, was much sought after, and he was the particular favourite of the fair dames who, at that time, ruled and directed the destinies of Manchester's *haut ton* with an exclusiveness not to be surpassed by the reigning goddesses of more aristocratic spheres. One writer goes so far as to state that young Ainsworth was "petted and spoiled by . . . a bevy of fair ones of the then *élite* of Manchester society." However that may be, his time was not wholly devoted to his feminine admirers, for at this period he, in company with James Crossley, became a constant frequenter of certain convivial meetings held at a hostelry—kept by a widow, Mrs. Fisher—at the top of Smithy Door.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> He fully described the place in Book I, Chapter VIII, of *Mervyn Clitheroe*.

<sup>2</sup> Smithy Door was a small, picturesque street, full of ancient houses, near the Collegiate Church. It has altogether disappeared, owing to street alterations in this part of Manchester, and even the





WINDOW IN THE CHETHAM LIBRARY, MANCHESTER, AINSWORTH'S  
FAVOURITE RESORT AS A BOY, AND THE TABLE ON WHICH HE  
WROTE MUCH OF HIS EARLY WORK.  
*Photographed by Mr. William Ellis, Longsight.*



This inn, the "Unicorn," was the *rendezvous* of a social institution known as "John Shaw's Club." John Shaw (1716-96) had been a trooper in the Wars of Queen Anne, and on retiring from the army he opened a Punch House in Smithy Door, which became a famous resort of the Manchester Jacobites. When, in course of time, "the Cause" ceased to be within the range of practical politics, "John Shaw's" developed into a festive club.<sup>1</sup> Soon after Shaw's death, in 1796, the club migrated to Mrs. Fisher's hostelry in the same street, and it was here that Ainsworth and Crossley spent most of their evenings—by no means insensible, it would appear, to the merits of the widow's excellent port and claret.

In a little sketch entitled *What shall I Write?*<sup>2</sup> which, as previously mentioned, appeared in Constable's *Edinburgh Magazine* for July, 1822, there is some mention of these meetings in Smithy Door, and a characteristic description of Ainsworth and Crossley under the designations of "Will Scarlett" and "C." Mr. John Evans attributed<sup>3</sup> the authorship of this article to J. P. Aston (a school friend of Ainsworth's, and, at the period in question, a clerk in Mr. Thomas Ainsworth's office), but,

old name of Smithy Door exists no longer. The accompanying illustration will give an idea of the quaint appearance of the spot as Ainsworth knew it in his youth. The "Unicorn" is on the left-hand side.

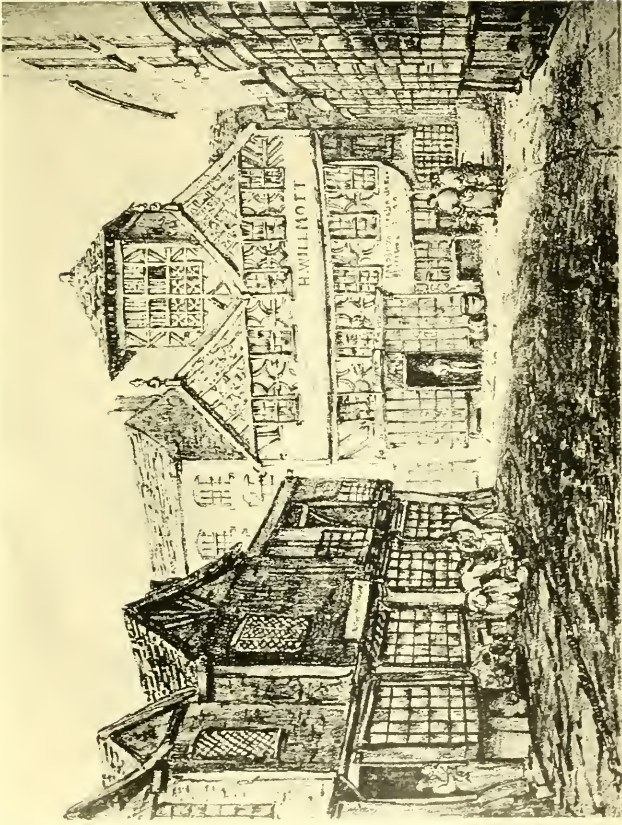
<sup>1</sup> John Shaw was a firm believer in his own "early closing movement." If his loud announcement of "eight o'clock, gentlemen," did not at once produce the desired effect, he would crack his formidable horse-whip in the ears, and near the persons, of his customers. If this failed to move them, he called to "Molly" (an ancient serving-woman who lived with him for fifty-eight years) to bring her pail, and the abigail would thereupon flood the floor with water, compelling the guests to depart quickly, if they wished to avoid wet feet.

<sup>2</sup> Reprinted, with some additions, as *The Theatre*, in *December Tales*, 1823.

<sup>3</sup> *Early Life of W. H. Ainsworth* (*Manchester Quarterly*, April, 1882).

personally, I think it most certainly to be the work of Ainsworth. Although the writer of the sketch professes to describe "Will Scarlett" as a friend, it was only another example of Ainsworth's hoaxing propensity to write of himself from an imaginary third person's point of view. It has been seen how he borrowed the name of his friend, Tom Hall, for literary purposes; and how he discovered those great dramatists, William Aynesworthe and Richard Clitheroe. Bearing in mind this love of literary mystification, the description of "Will Scarlett" is a perfectly intelligible hoax, and, no doubt, puzzled and amused the writer's friends at the time of its appearance. Again, though Aston was a friend of Ainsworth's, he was not on the same intimate terms with Crossley; and it is unlikely, therefore, that he participated in the inner mysteries of the ambrosial nights celebrated by Manchester's Orestes and Pylades at the sign of the "Unicorn." Assuming, then, that Ainsworth wrote the following description, we shall find a picture of Crossley as "C.," and of the author as "Will Scarlett," on the occasion of the latter's first visit to the "Unicorn."

"I dwell with peculiar delight upon the recollection of the dinner I had with C. It was the first time I had been quietly seated in conversation with him; and I had for some time previous enjoyed the anticipation of the feast. . . . The room was an old-fashioned apartment, with carved oak wainscotting, blackened with age; a blazing fire roared up the chimney, forming a pleasant contrast to the howling of the wind without (for it was a dull November night) . . . over the chimney-piece hung a portrait of old Isaak Walton. . . . What real comfortable pleasure it was after dinner, to sit by the



Printed and Published by W. G. & A. S. Smith, 15, Abchurch Lane, London, E.C. 4.

# SMITHY DOOR, MANCHESTER.

AS IN AINSWORTH'S BOYHOOD.



hearth, and while we discoursed, to sip our host's port, while the rich rough flavour of the Falernian was seasoned by the genuine attic of C.'s conversation . . . these are the delightful hours, that like good wine, charm not only in present enjoyment, but leave a flavour behind them ; hours that we recur to again and again, with unalloyed pleasure. It is in reminiscences like these that we feel the full force of the poet's words :—

*Hoc est  
Vivere bis, vitâ posse priore frui.*

“ C. is such a man as one would wish to call a friend. Warm-hearted and cool-headed, the impetuosities of his genius are held in due subjection by the clearness of his judgment. Though somewhat reserved in company, it is only needful to overcome his backwardness to be delighted and surprised by his conversation. To a fund of good sense and correct ideas, called into constant exertion by acute and diligent observation, he adds a facility and aptness of allusion which is astonishing ; the fruit of a deep acquaintance with, and recollection of, the beauties of the best writers in every department of literature . . . clothes his thoughts in colours, which set off their native beauties to still greater advantage. . . . His writings are the conclusions of frequent examination and deep research, and everywhere show the masterly and delicate hand of a scholar and a gentleman.

“ Will Scarlett is a different, not opposite, character ; younger than C., and without so great a command over himself, his inclinations not seldom get the upper hand of his discretion. More formed for society, he possesses far more general attraction than his friend. Naturally gay, he brings mirth and cheerfulness with him, and is

therefore everywhere a welcome visitor. But this is merely the outward ornament that covers the noble stuff within; for his intellectual powers make him no less admired among his studious associates, than his handsome person (of which, by the way, I imagine, Will is by no means insensible) and conversational talents among the ladies, and his lighter acquaintances. . . .”

It is pleasant to picture the two young men, in their late Georgian attire, sitting in converse, over their wine, in that quaint old room—its oak panels, and the tall wine-glasses and silver candlesticks, gleaming in the blaze from the roaring fire on the hearth. Outside, the wind moans around the high gables of Smithy Door, and all the swinging signs creak in chorus. Very pleasant it is, too, to sit by a wood fire, on a stormy night, in the company of a congenial friend, and—over a bottle of old port—talk of ghostly things. As Byron puts it:—

“ ’Twas as the watchmen say, a cloudy night :  
 No moon, no stars, the wind was low or loud  
 By gusts, and many a sparkling hearth was bright  
 With the piled wood. . . .  
 There’s something cheerful in that sort of light. . . .  
 I’m fond of fire, and crickets, and all that,  
 A lobster salad, and champagne, and chat.”

One may be sure that Ainsworth and Crossley, after discussing their literary plans, drew closer to the fire, and let their conversation drift to the subject of the supernatural, and particularly to the wild legends so prevalent in the northern counties. Then, as the hour grew late, reluctantly out into the deserted streets, dimly lit and picturesque, and so home, as Pepys would say.



### CHAPTER III

FIRST BOOK PUBLISHED. CORRESPONDENCE WITH CHARLES LAMB. VISIT TO EDINBURGH, AND BLACKWOOD'S STAFF. "DECEMBER TALES." "THE BŒOTIAN."

**I**N 1822—the year that was so prolific of his work for the periodicals—Ainsworth also became a contributor to *The London Magazine*, his tale, *The Falls of Ohiopyle*,<sup>1</sup> appearing therein. *The London* at that date numbered many famous writers, among them Tom Hood, De Quincey, Bernard Barton, Cary (the translator of Dante), Wainewright, Hazlitt, and—greatest of all—Charles Lamb. *The Essays of Elia* were then making their first appearance in the pages of this magazine, and, from the outset, their graceful fantasy and delicate charm strongly appealed to the imagination of Ainsworth, who conceived the greatest admiration for Lamb and all his works—regarding him as his literary god. Ainsworth wrote to Lamb—in the first instance, probably, on the plea of being a fellow-contributor to *The London Magazine*—and the gentle Elia replying in kindly mood, a correspondence between the two, chiefly on literary matters, was kept up for some time.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted in *December Tales*, 1823.

<sup>2</sup> Ainsworth wrote in *The Theatre* (1822): "Proud am I to call him my friend, Charles Lamb, that sportive child of fancy . . . who has ever read his *Essays* and not rejoiced in . . . the full, ancient, lovely quaintness of his style."

Lamb's earlier letters are not available, and the first we are able to quote relates to a little volume of Ainsworth's poems, which had been sent to Lamb in MS. for his criticism, and with the request that the forthcoming work might be dedicated to him. Lamb replied :—

“ DEAR SIR,

“ I have read your poetry with pleasure. The tales are pretty and prettily told, the language often finely poetical. It is only sometimes a little careless, I mean as to redundancy. I have marked certain passages (in pencil only which will easily obliterate) for your consideration. Excuse this liberty.

“ For the distinction you offer me of a dedication, I feel the honour of it, but I do not think it would advantage the publication. I am hardly on an eminence enough to warrant it. The Reviewers, who are no friends of mine—the two big ones especially who make a point of taking no notice of anything I bring out—may take occasion by it to decry us both. But I leave you to your own judgment. Perhaps, if you wish to give me a kind word, it will be more appropriate *before your republication of Tourneur*.<sup>1</sup> The ‘Specimens’ would give a handle to it, which the poems might seem to want. But I submit it to yourself with the old recollection that ‘beggars should not be chusers,’ and remain with great respect and wishing success to both your publications,

“ Your obed. sert.,

“ C. LAMB.

“ No hurry at all for Tourneur.

“ *Tuesday, 7th May, '22.*

“ W. H. AINSWORTH, ESQ.”

<sup>1</sup> Lamb had lent a copy of the plays of Cyril Tourneur (1575–1626) to Ainsworth, who apparently contemplated editing and publishing a new edition of this dramatist.

In spite of Lamb's modesty, the little book of poems was dedicated to him, when it made its appearance in the summer of 1822 ; and no doubt Elia's annotated suggestions were adopted in the work, which comprised two metrical tales, entitled respectively *The Maid's Revenge* and *A Summer's Evening Tale*, and three shorter Songs. It was a happy chance that Ainsworth's first published book—wholly of his own composition—appeared under such admirable auspices and won so favourable a criticism as Elia's. It proved an omen of the author's future success.

For this production Ainsworth adopted a new *nom de plume*, and accordingly the work was entitled *Poems by Cheviot Ticheburn*. It was published by John Arliss (to whose magazine the young author had so constantly contributed), and the dedication was worded :—

“ To my friend CHARLES LAMB,  
“ As a slight mark of gratitude for his kindness  
and admiration of his character,  
these poems are inscribed.”

There followed this characteristic notice, which seems to indicate that the youthful writer of seventeen was fully conscious of his powers and coming fame :—

“ The reader will immediately perceive that the name in the title-page is assumed. The author has two reasons for wishing to remain concealed. One is, that the faults of this early performance may not be imputed to the reputation of any matured effort he may afterwards be desirous of avowing ; the other, that his friends who will enjoy a private sympathy in his success—if he shall

happily succeed, may be spared a public participation in the shame of failure if he shall unfortunately fail. . . . As he is equally conscious of his own imperfections, and of the splendid and powerful accomplishments of his distinguished contemporaries, he is well content to rest unnoticed in the shade, until the same sun, which now sheds his beams upon them, shall in succession shine upon him."

Appended to this was a poetical address to the *author* ! A few lines only are quoted here :—

"O! thou fair Spirit. . . .  
Smile glad approval on thy nursling now  
Who, tendered by thy kindly cherishing,  
Hath earned a garland for his youthful brow,  
While yet unruffled by Time's withering wing.

O! still his fearful heart's wild fluttering ;  
Light up his downcast eye with thy regard,  
And crown before the world thy young enthusiast bard !"

Ainsworth added : " I have to thank a gentleman, whom I am proud to call my friend, for the above flattering stanzas."

Notwithstanding the nonchalant tone of his introductory note, Ainsworth was keenly interested in the publication of this—his first—book. We get a glimpse of his anxiety for its appearance in his letters to Crossley, who had gone to London, for a time, to complete his legal training. Ainsworth had provided his friend with a letter of introduction to Charles Lamb ; and also commissioned him to expedite the publication of the *Poems of Master Cheviot Ticheburn*.

The following is the first letter of the long series,

extending over sixty years, which Ainsworth addressed to Crossley :—<sup>1</sup>

“ MY DEAR JAMES,

(1822).

“ . . . I hope you arrived in safety. This being the first stage of our epistolary correspondence, I find all the awkwardness, and all the stiffness of cramping myself, in thus writing to so old an acquaintance. It is six o'clock in the evening, and the bell of St. Ann's is ringing forth its accustomed peal to warn all young attorneys to refresh themselves with tea. I have just laid aside my hat, got out some paper, mended my pen, and am now ready to ask and receive answers to all my questions :—

“ W. ‘ How are you, my dear Baron ? ’ <sup>2</sup>

“ J. ‘ Pretty well, thank you—rather tired with my ride.’

“ W. ‘ How do you like London ? ’

“ J. ‘ Oh ! very well, but I've seen nothing yet.’

“ W. ‘ Have you seen Charles Lamb ? ’

“ J. ‘ No, but I intend going to see him to-morrow.’

“ W. ‘ Have you called upon the Olliers,<sup>3</sup> for the Vol. of Poems ? Be sure, when you go, to ask them whether they will print it in a short time, and say that we want nothing for it—*money being no object to us*. . . . Take it to Charles Baldwin.<sup>4</sup> Your influence with Robinson<sup>5</sup> and Charles Lamb will go far. . . . My dear Baron, as soon as you can, set about them, for you know how anxious one is.’

“ J. ‘ You may depend upon me. . . . ’

<sup>1</sup> The collection is in the Manchester Reference Library.

<sup>2</sup> Ainsworth's nickname for Crossley.

<sup>3</sup> Charles and James Ollier, publishers, of Vere Street. They published most of Shelley's works.

<sup>4</sup> Publisher, of the firm of Baldwin, Craddock, and Joy. He founded *The Standard* in 1827.

<sup>5</sup> George Robinson, Editor of *The Retrospective Review*.

“ W. ‘ At your own leisure you will call upon Taylor and Hessey,<sup>1</sup> won’t you ? ’

“ J. ‘ Have you got your *Retrospective*,<sup>2</sup> William ? ’

“ W. ‘ Yes, I got it to-day. . . . Baron, that Review of yours on Sir Philip Sidney’s *Arcadia* is exceedingly good. I never read anything so excellent. I’m quite sure Charles Lamb could not write so good a one.’

“ J. ‘ Had you any wine on Sunday with Sam Shaw ? ’

“ W. ‘ Oh, yes.’

“ J. ‘ Were you tipsy, poor child ? ’

“ W. ‘ No, Baron. . . . When shall I hear from you ? ’

“ J. ‘ Oh, I shall write immediately.’

“ W. ‘ Well, now mind you do.’ ”

In his next letter Ainsworth says :—

“ . . . I am most excessively entertained with the account you give of Bucke.<sup>3</sup> Do you really think he will come down ? If he does, do you think I can manage him well ? Do you think he will care about my age ? . . . We have written two reviews of your *Sir Thomas*<sup>4</sup>—one for Bucke, and another for James Browne<sup>5</sup> . . . Bucke has written to me and calls you a very *modest* young man. (I copy these dashes *more Blackwoodiano* from another description of the same gentleman by James Browne.) . . . How d’ye like Charles Lamb’s last piece in *The London*—isn’t it good ? . . . Your *Sir Thomas* is beautifully printed—shame on you for not giving a longer preface. . . . Will you have the kindness—and I shall esteem it a most particular favour—if you have not yet received your parcel from Ollier’s, just to call

<sup>1</sup> Proprietors of *The London Magazine*.

<sup>2</sup> *The Retrospective Review*, to which Crossley frequently contributed.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas George Bucke, apparently a journalist.

<sup>4</sup> Crossley had edited the works of Sir Thomas Browne (1605–82) for Blackwood.

<sup>5</sup> Editor of Constable’s *Edinburgh Magazine*.

there the first spare moment you have, and send it directly off to me.

“Yours, in a devil of a hurry,

“WILL. H. AINSWORTH.”

From the next two letters, written in August and September, 1822, we find that the printing of the long-expected book of Poems had at last commenced:—

“The poems are now printing by old Arliss, who has undertaken the job. He said he would call upon you—by the way, he has been in Manchester. Tell him, if he does, that you think it will succeed, for he is doing it at his own cost.”

“I wish you would call upon Arliss and stir him up with the long pole—he ought to have been getting on with the poems, but I have only heard from him once. Call and rouze (*sic*) him. Tell him I am very anxious—a beast, he ought to have been ready long since. He is printing them—they are to have the Olliers’ names on the title-page. Call upon him as soon as you can, and you will greatly oblige me. His house is 35, Gutter Lane, Cheapside. Don’t forget this. Make him give you a proof. . . . You shall hear further, by Heaven.”

One can imagine the eager excitement with which the young author of seventeen awaited the coming of his literary first-born, and his delight when he at last handled and scanned the book which was his very own.

“Cheviot Ticheburn’s” *Poems* is now an extremely scarce volume,<sup>1</sup> and but few opportunities occur of

<sup>1</sup> There is a copy in the Manchester Reference Library, but not, apparently, at the British Museum.

acquiring or perusing this first book of an author whose later works are available in numberless editions.

In August, 1822, Ainsworth paid an eventful visit to Edinburgh, where he met many of the remarkable literary men at that time resident in the Northern Athens.

His friend, Crossley, being a frequent contributor to *Blackwood's Magazine*, Ainsworth called upon the proprietor. Mr. Blackwood, in turn, introduced him to the brilliant band of writers who, by their daring and originality, had made the fortune of "Maga" since its commencement in 1817. A very amusing account of this memorable incident in Ainsworth's life is preserved in a letter he wrote to Crossley:—

"MY DEAR BARON,

" . . . I have been to Edinburgh. Of this, I suppose, you would like to hear a very particular account, and I shall endeavour to give you as exact and full one as I can. Well then, James Crossley, Esq., pick up your ears, lift up your hair, which I suppose you now get regularly curled, and attend!! I left Manchester last Saturday fortnight (I like particular dates, as some d— fool says), and took place to Liverpool—from thence I sailed with my mamma to Greenock, and a delightful passage we had. Off we went again without more delay to Glasgow, a beautiful town, where we rested Monday afternoon. At 9 o'clock we drove off to Edinburgh, and at 4 o'clock in the morning we got a glimpse of Old Reekie. . . . 'Well,' whispered my internal monitor, which seldom, as you know by my pious life, whispers in vain, 'Well, my good friend, William, here you are striding down Prince's Street. Why do you not rejoice?' My good friend responded, 'I would certainly rejoice, were I not so confoundedly sleepy, but not-



withstanding that, I will rejoice. Oh! that I had that ancient Baron of mine with me.' Thus ended the dialogue between me and my *better part*.

"After a sleep of about six hours, I sallied into Prince's Street. I had not walked far before I saw in monstrous golden characters, 'NO. 17. BLACKWOOD. NO. 17.' At this I halted. 'Surely,' said I, 'I must have seen or dreamed of that name . . . a name that is familiar to my soul.' I entered, and demanded of a beefy-looking fellow if *Le Sieur* Blackwood were within, to which Beefy responded in the affirmative, and 'pointed with his lean hand' to a door, through which I verged. This door led into a spacious kind of room filled round with 'books of all sorts,' and in the midst was a table covered with pamphlets, and all the late publications and 'odes innumerable' to the King. Blackwood's is a very neat shop, somewhat like Sowler's,<sup>1</sup> only the counter runs all on the left side; there are fewer books visible, and they appear a great deal more busy. Very rusty and beefy fellows keep the shop, which *en vérité* rises above the storm, who is a poor tailor in a cellar below. . . . Well, in the middle of the second chamber, I saw a man advancing to meet me—'his face was deathly pale, but his nose was beaming bright'—this man of the inexpressible visage—for never before saw I such a one, with those funny teeth of his, that queer one eyebrow up and the other down, with gray streaming locks,—it certainly looked very astonishing. This, you will suppose, was Blackwood.<sup>2</sup> After a little dis-

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Sowler, bookseller, of St. Ann's Square, Manchester.

<sup>2</sup> William Blackwood (1776-1834), the founder of the famous firm. Commencing business as a bookseller, he started his Magazine in 1817, and, at the period of Ainsworth's visit, the editorship was practically a commission of three—John Wilson, Lockhart, and the proprietor, Blackwood. Blackwood's shop—17, Prince's Street—was the daily *rendezvous* of the contributors to the Magazine, who met there to arrange their plan of campaign and to hear the latest news. The place was, in fact, a kind of literary club.

course, for I had contrived by sending a short song or so and a small article to give myself an introduction, he shook me by the hand, and led me into his back parlour. Now then for the secret haunt—the recess of Christopher [North]. This was a square, small, cold-looking room, with pale, plastery, unpapered walls. Four or five neat chairs thrown up and down, and a table covered with articles, pens, ink, a writing-desk, and paper. Here we discoursed long and long, and both ended in discovering that you were an extraordinary genius—a *rara avis*. I asked him if he intended to review *Sir T. B.*<sup>1</sup> (thinking to offer my services), but he said they should not; first, because there has been so much said about it, secondly, because it is (a new version, I thought) one of his own books. He is not always so scrupulous, is he, Baron? He does not seem to think much of Charles Wheeler<sup>2</sup>—he thinks him, like we did, rather of the prosy school. Even while we were engaged in this discourse, enters Mr. Wilson,<sup>3</sup> to whom Blackwood introduced me. He is a yellow-haired, good-humoured, pleasant, jocund man, and was very talkative. Then directly comes Lockhart<sup>4</sup>—he is a very fine, precise, dandyish young fellow, with

<sup>1</sup> The Works of Sir Thomas Browne, which Crossley had edited for Blackwood, 1822.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Wheeler (1800–33), of Manchester. He contributed to *Blackwood's Magazine*, for March, 1821, the article entitled *The Rev. Josiah Streamlet*, which was a sketch of a Manchester character, the Rev. Joshua Brookes, who had been a master at the Grammar School.

<sup>3</sup> John Wilson (1785–1854), the principal member of Blackwood's staff. He figured as "Christopher North" in the Magazine, and was the author of most of the famous *Noctes Ambrosianæ*, which attracted much attention to "Maga."

<sup>4</sup> John Gibson Lockhart (1794–1854), the "Scorpion" of *Blackwood's Magazine*, whose trenchant attacks on contemporary writers made "Maga" so notorious in its early days. At the time Ainsworth first met him, in 1822, Lockhart was twenty-eight years old, and two years previously he had married Sophia, eldest daughter of Sir Walter Scott.

black, frizzly hair, and quiet, sharp, black eyes—very shrewd indeed. Next comes my friend, the Rev. G. Croly<sup>1</sup> (who, by the by, is very anxious to see you), and now the room being pretty full, we began to discourse. They think tremendously highly of you, indeed peculiarly so, you are ‘as a god amongst them.’ . . . Blackwood fetched some proof sheets of his Magazine. . . . Do you know that  $\Delta$  is Dale, the author of *Irak and Ada*? . . .

“ Well, in the next place I went to Constable’s, where, after a few calls, I found James Browne.<sup>2</sup> Now for it, Baron, now for it. James Browne is like William Grant<sup>3</sup> must have been in his younger days—rather a fat, good-humoured looking man—wears spectacles, etc. I told him my real name, at which he seemed astonished . . . we got great friends together and marched about. He seemed not a little astonished and puzzled, I assure you, to comprehend how I had written *Horæ Seniles*,<sup>4</sup> which the poor fellow says are the best things he has had in his Magazine. He says that he thinks that part—the description of Marlowe’s *Dr. Faustus*—the finest piece of writing he has seen for some time. Are not you gratified? . . . They (Constables) do not seem to wish that it should be concealed that Sir Walter is the author of the novels. Everybody in the shop

<sup>1</sup> Rev. George Croly (1780–1860), miscellaneous writer; author of a remarkable novel, *Salathiel* (1829). Rector of St. Stephen’s, Walbrook, 1835–47.

<sup>2</sup> James Browne (1793–1841) was the Editor of Constable’s *Edinburgh Magazine*, to which, as has been shown, Ainsworth was a frequent contributor.

<sup>3</sup> William Grant (1769–1842), the elder of the Grant brothers, calico printers, Manchester. Later on, Ainsworth introduced the Grants to Dickens, who described them as the “Cheeryble Brothers” in *Nicholas Nickleby*.

<sup>4</sup> Ainsworth’s remarkable articles which appeared in *The Edinburgh Magazine* for 1822. Reprinted under the title of *Recollections in December Tales*, 1823.

talks about him as such. But to let you know what sort of a fellow James Browne is, I must tell you that Captain Absolute's servant and Ferdinand Mundeze Pinto were fair types of him. I dined out with him amongst some young spreeish fellows, and having to go to the theatre in the evening with some ladies, I left soon. Next morning I met with one of these fellows, and after some little talk he accosted me as the *nephew* of Charles Lamb!! Guess my astonishment when I found that James Browne had told them that I was Charles Lamb's nephew; that Charles had written to him—recommending me—and stated that though I was young in years I was old in understanding. Then he said (i.e. Browne) I was a most dissipated fellow, very rich (for I tell you how I did to make a stir—I hired a gig for one guinea a day, and drove about the town to Constable's, etc., who were somewhat astonished at the splash I cut; for I sported short top-boots, and I wore also a green coat, and looked an astonishing blood, which impressed James Browne and Blackwood with a wonderful idea of my consequence), and that I kept a girl; he also said, for I introduced him to my mamma, that he and she—God help him—had consulted about it (my keeping the girl). . . . Now, is not that good—could not we trim him properly? . . . Another thing, also, I learnt that he said that I and a 'Dr.' Crossley had been hoaxing him . . . poor Beast, he was not far from the truth there.

“And now, my dear Baron, I must remind you of your promise to put a flourishing review of them in *Blackwood*. Do not, I beseech, forget it, for it will be of infinite service. Remember that certain friends did what they could for a certain book. . . . Dr. Hibbert<sup>1</sup> and I had some discourse about you—he says your *Chetham*

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Samuel Hibbert-Ware (1782-1848). Edited *The Foundations of Manchester*.

*Library*<sup>1</sup> is a noble performance. He showed me some curious books: old editions of Sir Thomas Browne (and) old plays. Have you ever seen Warner's *Syrinx*?<sup>2</sup> . . .

"Bucke has been here—what a poor, beefy fellow—milk-sop—long-nosed ass!! Oh! the difference between the reptile and the warm-hearted Edinburgh bloods. By the by, shall I introduce you to my friend, the author of *Cataline*?<sup>3</sup> Have you seen Charles Lamb sober, Hazlitt, Watts,<sup>4</sup> and Co.? . . . Is not Charles Lamb's *Roast Pig*<sup>5</sup> admirable?—it is superb—excellent—noble. I never read anything so good. It is worth a thousand pounds, by Heaven! We are preparing a review of *Sir Thomas Browne* for *The Edinburgh*; you are to see it before it goes. I saw Sir Walter Scott and the King.<sup>6</sup> Isn't this a decent letter, eh! Let me have such a one. . . . Write immediately. I long to hear from you with exceeding great yearning. . . . Good-bye."

During Crossley's absence in London, Ainsworth's particular friend in Manchester was John Partington Aston,<sup>7</sup> a clerk in his father's office. Of the same age,

<sup>1</sup> Crossley's article on the Chetham Library, which appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine*, June, 1821.

<sup>2</sup> *Syrinx; or A Seauwenfold Historie*, by W. Warner, 1597. This book will be mentioned again, later on, in connection with Charles Lamb.

<sup>3</sup> The Rev. G. Croly.

<sup>4</sup> Alaric A. Watts, the journalist.

<sup>5</sup> The *Dissertation on Roast Pig*, which had just appeared in *The London Magazine*.

<sup>6</sup> George IV paid his state visit to Edinburgh in August, 1822.

<sup>7</sup> J. P. Aston (1805-82), the son of a liquor merchant in Manchester, was educated at the Grammar School, where he was contemporary with Ainsworth. Mr. Aston attained success in the legal profession. He became a partner in the firm of Kay, Barlow, and Aston in 1829, which eventually became that of Aston and Son. Mr. J. P. Aston was closely associated with the founding of Owens College, Manchester.

and with similar tastes, the two young men were much in each other's society. They projected many literary schemes, and it was at this period that the two commenced writing, in collaboration, the romance which was published, some years later, under the title of *Sir John Chiverton*. Writing to Crossley on 31st August, 1823, Ainsworth says :—

“ Mr. Aston and myself, being in want of a little ready cash, have, at length, formed the laudable resolution of writing in *The New Monthly Magazine*, and knowing your general benignity of character, intend to apply to you as our *open sesame*. Seriously, I want you to write me a letter to Thomas Campbell, embracing the following heads :—

“ 1. State a Tale is enclosed.

“ 2. More in the same way.

“ 3. Glad to know his terms.

“ 4. Wish to know what kind of article would please him best.

“ 5. Intend to continue writing for him.

“ 6. Early answer would oblige.

“ Now, my dear Baron, you cannot think what an obligation you would confer by letting me have this letter (a letter—let it be—in your first style) immediately. . . . If you will do it, you will sincerely assist me.”

Apparently in communicating with Thomas Campbell, Ainsworth did not remind him of “ Richard Clitheroe, the dramatist,” whose plays had been described in *The New Monthly Magazine* two years before.<sup>1</sup> If he had, possibly the editor might have been glad to avail him-

<sup>1</sup> See *ante*, p. 64.

self again of the services of that versatile genius. But Campbell was a grossly careless and unbusinesslike editor. Cyrus Redding, in his reminiscences of *The New Monthly Magazine*, related<sup>1</sup>: "Campbell . . . was continually losing letters which he received. . . . He would read a letter, and then put it into his coat-pocket . . . and forget all about the matter. . . . Hence, whatever came to him he would put it by, as he intended, for future inspection, and think of it no more. He had no method, no arrangement. . . . I often found a letter or an article placed over his books on the shelves, unopened, sometimes slipped down behind them. He would close a volume upon one, and restore the book to its place. . . ." Some such fate evidently befell Ainsworth's communications, for some weeks later he wrote to Crossley :—

"Thomas Campbell has not answered our letter, and as we are uncommonly anxious to meet with some one who will come down with 'the ready,' I should esteem it most highly if you would do me the favour either to see him, or the sub-editor, and try to make some arrangement for us. Describe me in as laudable terms as your conscience will admit of, and inquire if he has perused *Marian Seaforth of Pine Hollow*—a Tale that was forwarded with your letter. You may enter into any terms you like with him with regard to payment, only don't propose gratuitous writing, for that won't do. . . . We want to become regular and decided contributors, doing a sheet or so a month. . . .

"I was quite certain Croly would not be at all to your taste; he is a sad, positive, superficial fellow, and

<sup>1</sup> *New Monthly Magazine*, 1846.

professes a profound contempt for the Elder Dramatists, without evidently knowing why he condemns them. I know you are quizzing me when you say he praised me.

“ Hervey’s <sup>1</sup> Poems will never do—they are the most flashy and paltry things I ever met with, without one redeeming spark of feeling or token of power. They are as sickly abortion as ever the continual sense of incapacity produced. . . . I never met with anything which I esteemed of such complete littleness as his and Watts’s <sup>2</sup> poetry. Watts is an echo of everybody—pilfering a line here, and then from this and from that—

<sup>1</sup> Thomas K. Hervey (1799–1859), the son of a drysalter at Manchester, was educated at the Grammar School. He was the author of much miscellaneous poetry, such as *The Convict Ship* and *Australia*, etc. He was editor of *The Athenæum*, 1846–53.

<sup>2</sup> Alaric A. Watts (1797–1864) was at this period editor of *The Leeds Intelligencer*. In 1825 he became the first editor of *The Manchester Courier*, and in 1827 assisted in the establishment of *The Standard* in London, of which he was the first sub-editor. Watts seems to have had a special faculty for annoying his literary contemporaries; he was frequently and violently attacked, and he responded in like manner. Watts’s principal antagonist was Maginn, in *Fraser’s Magazine*. Maclise’s fancy portrait of Watts, which appeared in the same magazine, was regarded by its subject as a libellous insinuation that he was a picture stealer, and the result was a *cause célèbre* in the Law Courts in 1835. Watts’s second name was Alexander, but as he always signed himself “Alaric A. Watts,” Lockhart suggested his second name should match the resonant first—and propounded “Attila.” The name stuck, and as Alaric Attila Watts he was henceforth known. Ainsworth was not singular in his abuse of Watts’s poetry; Maginn, for instance, wrote :—

“ I don’t like that Alaric Attila Watts !  
Whose verses are just like the pans and the pots,  
Shining on shelves in a cottager’s kitchen,  
Polish’d and prim. Now a greyhound bitch in  
The corner,—a cat,—and some empty bottles,  
A chubby-faced boy, and the Lord knows *what* else ;  
All taken together’s a picture, which in  
My humble opinion is just as rich in  
Domestic detail, without the ‘ what-nots ’  
That smooth down the verses of Alaric Watts.”



it is quite horrible ; his book, I will venture to say, has not one original letter, and is like Hervey's—the most puling, mawkish, trumpery, beastly thing that ever was spawned, full of the most odious egotism and bald conceits, fine phrases without one spark of idea, strung together like India beads, and forming a chaos of stolen goods, without form and void. May God in His great mercy rid the land from such animals !

“ I must tell you of an excellent thing which has amused me considerably. Frank Astley of this town, or rather of Dukinfield, has been at the Lakes lately, and met John Wilson,<sup>1</sup> *The Isle of Palms* man. Somehow or other (admire and listen), the conversation turned on me, when Wilson declared he knew me very well (he had met me in Blackwood's shop), and told Astley to inform me he was going to review some Poems of mine in *Blackwood's*. Says Astley to me, ‘ He says you are a Man of Promise, and he must introduce you.’ It was Wilson, I believe, who wrote part of the last notes relative to *The Opium Eater*.

“ The other night I made Aston regularly drunk in the country—he drank a bottle and a half of port and half a bottle of claret. . . . I had had quite as much, but was nothing near so bad.<sup>2</sup> During the claret, which was our last bottle, as we began to think—as well as see—double, we had the honour of drinking your health twice. I, too, delivered myself of a speech in your honour. . . . We were in uncommon glee.”

<sup>1</sup> Wilson had a house at Elleray, in the Lake District, where he was intimate with Wordsworth. Wilson's *Isle of Palms* appeared in 1816.

<sup>2</sup> This is a curious sidelight on the hard drinking habits of the period, even among boys.

During this summer Crossley arranged to come and stay with Ainsworth, who, delighted, wrote :—

*“ Thursday evening,  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 9. In the country.  
(10th July, 1823.)*

“ We shall be most rejoiced, all of us, to see you, and as to what you imagine about the inconvenience, I assure you, happens to be quite the reverse; you could not have come at a better season. We have both town and country house open, and therefore, of course, plenty of room. My mamma says she will be most particularly happy to see you, and as for myself, I believe I need not either reassure you or reiterate my welcome. I write this to you almost upon one leg, as James Browne would have said. I am in the country at Cheetham Hill, and a messenger stopping to carry this to the Post; moreover it is raining most cruelly, so you may imagine I shall make this no longer than is absolutely necessary. . . . I will meet you.”

Crossley returned to London, and in the next letter to him Ainsworth writes :—

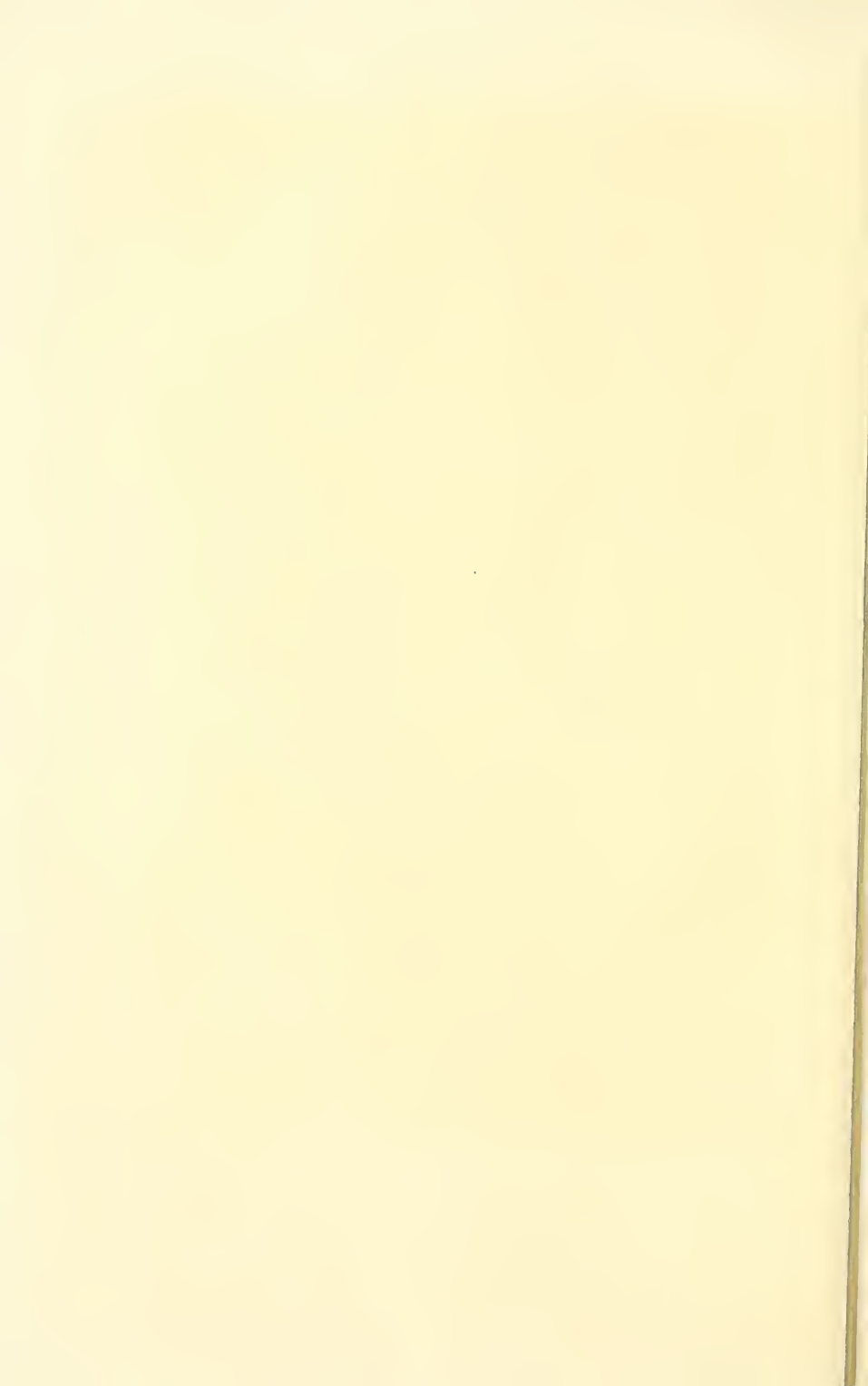
*“ THE COTTAGE, CHEETHAM.*

*“ 28th October, 1823.*

“ I must try in the first place to remind you of what you once said to me: ‘ Never imagine, my dear child, that because I do not write I do not feel the same interest, or have taken pet at anything.’ Now this applies with tenfold energy to me, and believe me you are *still*, as ever, dearer to me than any other friend I possess, and I should feel very much hurt if you, even for a moment, supposed me capable of neglecting the friendship of one whom I so much love and *respect*—yes, respect, in the deepest and fullest sense of the word.



WILLIAM HARRISON AINSWORTH, AT THE AGE OF TWENTY-ONE.  
*From the miniature by Freeman, painted at Bath, October, 1826.*



The plain truth, I am, as you know, the idlest and worst correspondent in the world. But let us shake hands. I am sure you will forgive me, and I promise to write to you more frequently.

“Have you seen my friend, Charles Lamb, lately?—Do let me hear something of him; how do you like his letter to Southey?<sup>1</sup> I think it is a home-thrust that old Sackbut will find it difficult to parry. I suppose you have not seen much of the literary world lately, or I would ask you what Barry Cornwall was about—is he writing a Tragedy or a Tale? How does old Hazlitt like that about Fuseli in *Blackwood*? I should think not much. . . . Have you seen a new publication called *Somerset House*? If not, get it by all means. Can you tell me the best edition of Bion and Moschus,<sup>2</sup> and also whether it would be worth while to translate them. Has anybody given a full translation of them except filthy Fawkes?

“I promised you an account of the Musical Festival at Liverpool. . . . It was a most gay week, and the Fancy Ball, with which it concluded, magnificent. Imagine 1700 people, all in fancy costume, the rooms lighted up and decorated in the most gorgeous manner; in short, a fairy palace—brilliant and splendid to excess. For what I appeared as, I shall refer you to a newspaper paragraph which runs thus—‘Wm. Ainsworth, Esq., correctly dressed as a young Forester of Sherwood.’ Well, what do you think of that? Write to me a long letter of forgiveness, speedily.”

In November, 1823, Ainsworth had the pleasure of welcoming back to Manchester permanently the friend he so much valued. Crossley, on his return,

<sup>1</sup> Elia's *Letter to Southey* had just appeared in *The London Magazine*; it was a reply to an allusion of Southey's, in a review, to Elia's essay on *Witches and other Night Fears*, which Lamb resented.

<sup>2</sup> Greek pastoral poets of the second century B.C.

became a partner in the legal firm of what was now known as Ainsworth, Crossley, and Sudlow. He was becoming, also, a noted bibliophile; and his ever-increasing library of old and curious books was at the service of his congenial comrade, Ainsworth. The bond of sympathy between the two was more firmly cemented than ever, and Literature was the presiding deity of all their thoughts, conversations, and actions.

It is now time to revert to Ainsworth's correspondence with Charles Lamb. It may be recalled that the former mentioned in one of his letters to Crossley a certain curious black-letter book. This was—

*Syrinx, or a Seauwenfold Historie.*

By W. Warner.

at London.

Printed by Thomas Purfoot and are  
to bee sould in Pawle's churchyard  
at the signe of the Bible.

1597

Ainsworth, having borrowed this rare and valuable work from Dr. Hibbert-Ware, sent it to Charles Lamb, hoping, no doubt, by this means, to ingratiate himself further with the learned Elia, for whom he had such an enthusiastic admiration. In addition to Warner's *Syrinx*, Ainsworth sent Lamb copies of *The Edinburgh Magazine* containing his own work, particularly the *Horæ Seniles*, and concluded by giving Elia a warm invitation to visit him at Manchester. To all these compliments Lamb replied with the following interesting letter, in which it will be seen that he was entirely in agreement with the opinions Ainsworth had enunciated (in the

magazine) as to the superiority of Marlowe's presentment of Faust to that of Goethe's :—

“ INDIA HOUSE,

“ DEAR SIR,

“ 9th December, 1823.

“ I should have thanked you for your books and compliments sooner, but I have been waiting for a revise to be sent, which does not come, though I returned the proof on the receipt of your letter. I have read Warner with great pleasure. What an elaborate piece of alliteration and antithesis ! why, it must have been a labour far above the most difficult versification. There is a fine simile or picture of Semiramis arming to repel a siege. I do not mean to keep the book, for I suspect you are forming a curious collection, and I do not pretend to anything of the kind. I have not a black-letter book among mine, old Chaucer excepted, and am not bibliomanist enough to like black-letter. It is painful to read, therefore I must insist on returning it at opportunity, not from contumacy and reluctance to be obliged, but because it must suit you better than me. The loss of a present *from* should never exceed the gain of a present *to*. I hold this maxim infallible in the accepting line. I read your magazines with satisfaction. I thoroughly agree with you as to ‘ The German *Faust*,’<sup>1</sup> so far as I can do justice to it

<sup>1</sup> The remarkable passage in Ainsworth's *Horæ Seniles (Recollections)* to which Lamb refers is as follows :—

“ Passing one vacation in the country with an old maiden lady, a distant relation, when I was yet very young, among the treasures which her library afforded . . . I, by chance, met with an old copy of Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus*. . . . I immediately took possession of it, and carried it with me, for my own private reading, into a small room, which was a kind of *sanctum sanctorum*. . . . This little room, which I remember with feelings of fondness and affection, is still present to my mind's eye. Well do I recollect its antique casements, and the view it presented into the thicket shrubbery or labyrinth, in which I used to construct my fortifications and retreats, when I assumed the

from an English translation. 'Tis a disagreeable canting tale of seduction, which has nothing to do with the spirit of Faustus—curiosity. Was the dark secret to be explored to end in the seducing of a weak girl, which might have been accomplished by earthly agency? When Marlowe gives *his* Faustus a mistress, he flies him at Helen, flower of Greece, to be sure; and not at Miss Betsy, or Miss Sally Thoughtless.

'Cut is the branch that bore the goodly fruit,  
And wither'd is Apollo's laurel tree:  
FAUSTUS IS DEAD!' <sup>1</sup>

part . . . of the *Captain of Banditti*. . . Young as I was, I was able to perceive that the *Faustus* of Marlowe . . . had an undefined and breathless interest attached to it . . . which did not cease with the bare perusal of the work. . . . The continual appearance of the good and bad angels, to exercise their powers of persuasion on the unhappy Faustus; his internal and heartrending struggles, or, as they may be termed, his agony and bloody sweat; the exaltation which he feels, at the consciousness of his own superhuman power, and which but lifts him on high for a while, like the waves of a troubled sea, to sink him to the lowest abyss of misery; and the last scene of agonized and maddened humanity—had so deep an impression upon my feelings, that I have not at this time forgotten their intensity. I have since read the *Faust* of Goethe, but . . . I must say, that it did not operate upon me in anything like the same powerful degree; and I cannot but think the love adventure which is there introduced, has the effect of dissipating the peculiar, strange, and extraordinary interest which the fate of Faustus excites; it throws more the appearance of earthliness upon the doomed and devoted subject of the Prince of Hell. In Marlowe, the mind is kept more closely to the hero of the drama; there is a kind of environing circle around him, which seems to cut off all hope of assistance or escape; the very farcical means themselves have the effect of deepening the horror of the story; the burlesque is like the laugh of a maniac resounding in the Golgotha, or place of skulls (*sic*). His dreadful supremacy is only misery carried to an unnatural pitch, and appears like Luke's iron crown, made to burn the temples on which it reposes. . . ."

Both Ainsworth and Crossley (who advised on the above passage) had a profound admiration for Marlowe's works, which, perhaps, they found in harmony with such a warm friendship as existed between them.

<sup>1</sup> Lamb misquotes Marlowe; the lines should be:—

"Cut is the branch that might have grown full straight,  
And burnèd is Apollo's laurel bough. . . .  
Faustus is gone."



What a noble, natural transition from metaphor to plain speaking, as if the figurative had flagged in description of such a loss, and was reduced to tell the fact simply!

“ I must now thank you for your very kind invitation. It is not out of prospect that I may see Manchester some day, and then I will avail myself of your kindness. But holidays are scarce things with me, and the laws of attendance are getting stronger and stronger at Leadenhall. But I shall bear it in mind. Meanwhile, something may (more probably) bring you to town, where I shall be happy to see you. I am always to be found (alas !) at my desk in the fore part of the day.

“ I wonder why they do not send the revise. I leave late at office, and my abode lies out of the way, or I should have seen about it. If you are impatient, perhaps a line to the printer, directing him to send it me, at Accountant’s Office, may answer. You will see by this scrawl that I only snatch a few minutes from intermitting business.

“ Your obliged servant,

“ C. LAMB.

“ (If I had time I would go over this letter again, and dot all my *i*’s).”

[Lamb’s conception of the meaning of *meum* and *tuum* seems to have been as peculiar as Ainsworth’s ; for, in spite of his declaration that he “ must insist ” on returning Warner’s *Syrinx*, he kept the book ! At Lamb’s death, his library became the property of Moxon, the publisher, who presented this particular copy of *Syrinx* to Alexander Dyce. The book is now in the Dyce Collection, at South Kensington Museum, and contains a MS. note—

“ Mr. Charles Lamb.

“C. O. A. Dyce. This rare book was given to me by Mr. Moxon, after Lamb’s death.”

Thus, Dr. Hibbert-Ware, the unfortunate owner of the book, never saw his property again; young Ainsworth, deservedly, was reprimanded; and the moral of the story is—*Don't lend a literary rarity to a bibliophile.*]

Lamb receiving another pressing invitation from Ainsworth to visit him at Manchester, for a month, replied in characteristic vein:—

“I. H. *December 29th, 1823.*

“MY DEAR SIR,

“You talk of months at a time, and I know not what inducements to visit Manchester, Heaven knows how gratifying! but I have had my little month of 1823 already. It is all over; and without incurring a disagreeable favour I cannot so much as get a single holiday till the season returns with the next year. Even our half-hours’ absences from office are set down in a book! Next year, if I can spare a day or two of it, I will come to Manchester; but I have reasons at home against longer absences.

“I am so ill just at present (an illness of my own procuring last night; who is perfect? <sup>1</sup>) that nothing but your very great kindness could make me write. I will bear in mind the letter to W. W.,<sup>2</sup> and you shall have it quite in time, before the 12th. My aching and confused head warns me to leave off. With a muddled sense of gratefulness, which I shall apprehend more clearly to-morrow, I remain your friend unseen,

“C. L.

<sup>1</sup> Lamb habitually took too much wine; see Ainsworth’s comment, p. 93, *ante*.

<sup>2</sup> A letter of introduction to Wordsworth, which Lamb duly gave Ainsworth. The latter presented it in London, and thus commenced his friendship with Wordsworth.

“ Will your occasions or inclinations bring you to London ?

“ It will give me great pleasure to show you everything that Islington can boast, if you know the meaning of that very Cockney sound. We have the New River ! I am ashamed of this scrawl ; but I beg you to accept it for the present. I am full of qualms.

“ ‘ A fool at fifty is a fool indeed.’ ”

[Ainsworth carefully preserved these letters from Charles Lamb for sixty years, and they were found among his papers after his death.]

In December, 1823, Ainsworth collected various productions from his pen, which had appeared in magazines, and issued them—anonymously—in a little volume entitled *December Tales*. This was published by G. and W. B. Whittaker, of Ave Maria Lane, and inscribed to the Rev. George Croly, “ by his most sincere friend and earnest admirer, THE AUTHOR.” The characteristic introductory note was worded :—

“ A long Preface, like a long grace, which detains the guests unseasonably from the feast, is both impertinent and tedious. I shall not, therefore, in violation of my own maxim, oppose any unnecessary bar to the immediate enjoyment of the reader ; but wishing him a fair appetite, and good entertainment, suffer him to take up his knife, to cut into my pages, and begin.”

The contents comprised :—

1. *Mary Stukeley.*
2. *The Falls of Ohiopyle.*
3. *The Englisher's Story.*
4. *The Mutiny.*

5. *The Churchyard.*
6. *The Test of Affection.*
7. *The Wanderings of an Immortal.*
8. *The Sea Spirit.*
9. *The Theatre.*
10. *Recollections.*

Of these, all but numbers 1, 5, and 8 had previously appeared in the *Edinburgh, London, European, and Arliss's Magazines*. The *Recollections* were an extension of the *Horæ Seniles*, which had won Charles Lamb's approval, and the extract from his letter relative to Goethe's *Faust*<sup>1</sup> was quoted in a footnote.

*December Tales* teem with the pessimism and mournful retrospection which the writer of seventeen generally adopts in his survey of life. Reminiscences of the past and "blighted hopes" are the main themes, and "Ah! those were happy days," is a recurring *motif*. Perhaps the most interesting item in this little book is the reverie entitled *The Churchyard*, which has a strong personal touch, and is a remarkable exposition of the boy-author's trend of thought. The Churchyard, in which the young moralist is seated, is evidently, from the description, that of Rostherne. The surroundings suggest thoughts of the King of Terrors, and the writer observes: "Death is your only sure balance in which to weigh the real worth or importance of individuals . . . the wild steed, that none can manage but those who encounter him undismayed—the infallible touchstone of greatness or power;—he is like the gust, which blows away the thistledown of splendour and vanity, and exposes the nakedness which lies beneath;—he is the best of friends, who re-

<sup>1</sup> See *ante*, p. 102.

lieves us from our cares—our greatest enemy, who bereaves us of that we love best—our life ; in short, he is the most paradoxical of things, who is every day present, but never seen—the most unwelcome of visitors, who, whenever he comes, is an unwished for guest.”

And, later, in the same essay, speaking of church bells, Ainsworth writes : “ I love these eloquent inanimations—these metallic tractors of the soul, whose vibrations call up into view the past, which is fled ; the present, which dies in its existence ; and the future, which will fade away like its predecessors : that simple stroke of two pieces of metal gives me an infinity of ideas—the burst into life, and quick sinking into nothing—the reiteration of the strokes, one succeeding another, in measured intervals—all speak of the mutability of everything earthly, and the rapid succession of beings, which bloom, and perish, and are forgotten.”

From bells, Ainsworth passed to the consideration of the power of association connected with inanimate objects, and before concluding *The Churchyard* indulged in some personal reminiscences :—

“ It was a saying worthy of Pope, that he should not care to have an old stump pulled down which he had known in his childhood. I am deeply imbued, I might say saturated, with such feelings. I have a piece of an oak, which grew by the school where I was educated, and has long since fallen a prey to the axe of the spoiler. I remember, as well as I do anything, the cutting down of the venerable tree ; how we crowded about it, and how each busy *discipulus* was cutting off relics of their old friend. The branches, which were left by the workmen as useless, were gathered up, and, in the evening,

made into a bonfire ; then, too, we had a feast, and we sat round the glowing embers, with every one his apple, his gingerbread, his nuts, and his glass of currant wine. Then tales of school heroism and school mischief were recounted ; and still the wit became brighter as the fire decayed—the ‘ mirth and fun grew fast and furious.’ Ah ! those were happy days. I often visit this scene of my infant years ;—the school is there, with the stone owl, with its goggle eyes, perched above it ; there is the playground ; the dark stone walls, with their soft and solemn brownness . . . my school-days. . . .”

School-days which had come to an end about a year previously ! This senile autobiographer had indeed a long vista of time to pass over before he regained his “ infant years.”

At the end of *December Tales*, Ainsworth appended some valedictory words, and it is plain from these that he took a very deep and affectionate interest in this—his second book. In the course of his remarks he said :—

“. . . I feel a kind of reluctance to leave the volume, trifling and insignificant as it is, without a shake of the hand, and a parting ‘ good-bye.’ The fondness of an author for his works is indeed excessive, and it is not without feelings of regret that he lays down the pen, after adding the finishing stroke to his production. . . . Farewell then to these, the (at least) harmless amusement of my solitary hours. That they amuse his readers, is the highest ambition of the writer. . . .”

In addition to *December Tales*, Ainsworth issued in 1823 a *Monody on the death of John Philip Kemble*, which

was written at the request of Mr. Salter, a local theatre manager, and published at Manchester by John Leigh.

In the spring of 1824, sighing for new worlds to conquer, young Ainsworth determined to bring out a weekly magazine of his own. With his usual impetuosity he forgot that two years previously his little theatrical journal—wherein he criticized plays he had never seen—had proved a failure. If he did remember, he was resolved to try again as a journalist on his own account. Accordingly on 20th March, 1824, a tiny periodical was born, and made its bow to the Manchester public under the title of *The Bæotian*, bearing as its motto, "*Bæotum crasso jurares aëre natum.*"<sup>1</sup> It was published by Thomas Sowler, a well-known bookseller of St. Ann's Square, who, in the following year, founded *The Manchester Courier*. Mr. Sowler's mother was a Miss Mary Ainsworth, so possibly he was a remote connection of the aspiring young journalist, which may account for his indulging in the rather hazardous speculation of bringing out *The Bæotian*. Sad to say, the little periodical was not a success—it only ran to six numbers, the last appearing on 24th April, 1824. Each number consisted of a few sheets of closely printed matter, in small type. In the first number there was an amusing editorial pronouncement, which seems to indicate that Ainsworth was assisted in his undertaking by some collaborator, probably J. P. Aston; or this apparent dual editorship may have been another of his literary hoaxes. The

<sup>1</sup> This allusion from Horace (*Epistles* II. I) may be taken as a playful reference to the atmosphere and practical utilitarian pursuits (predominant to art and literature) of Manchester, the birthplace of *The Bæotian*.

following extracts from this introduction will give some idea of its style :—

“ We have decreed to write on ourselves. We are then . . . WE. Now Kings and Editors are notorious for the use of the monosyllable before the Court. This in itself goes a great way to prove that Kings and Editors are much upon a par. We can, indeed, perceive little difference, except that although kings, it is said, can do no wrong ; an editor can with many people do no right. . . .

“ We are then two Bachelors, neither of us very young—but equally remote from very old. We have both been in love, and both disappointed. . . . We have travelled together. Of course we are men of experience, and have a right to bring forward our own observations as arguments on all subjects whatsoever. . . . We are, though not rich, yet fully able to supply our wants. . . .”

The first number also contained the opening of *A Tale of Mystery*, which followed a common precedent with the statement, “ We are necessitated to break off abruptly here, the remainder will be given in our next number.” The second number contained the opening chapters of Ainsworth’s tale, *Marian Seaforth of Pine Hollow*, which he had sent some months before to Thomas Campbell, with a view to its acceptance for *The New Monthly Magazine*.<sup>1</sup> There were some amusing notices to (imaginary ?) contributors to *The Bæotian* ; for example : “ The author of an *Elegy* had better make another L.E.G.—and retire.” “ *An address to a chimney* has been forwarded.”

The fourth number provided a very entertaining

<sup>1</sup> See *ante*, p. 95.



account of the Ladies' Bazaar at the Exchange, and also some verses on the same subject.

*The Bæotian* is now extremely rare and valuable. The only copy known to exist is in the Manchester Reference Library, which contains the six complete numbers bound together, forming a small volume. This was Ainsworth's own copy; and two years after its publication he presented it to the lady who became his wife. The little book bears his autograph and the inscription, "Fanny Ebers from the author." Its subsequent history was remarkable. In September, 1859, Charles Kent, of *The Sun*, sent an account of the last days and death of Leigh Hunt to Ainsworth, who, in his reply, wrote:—

" . . . That parting scene at Hammersmith, which you so well describe, ought, in my opinion, to be embalmed in your own tender verse. . . . Our lost friend's kindly recollection of me, though only too partial, is indeed precious, and in one respect strictly true, for I never looked upon him except with mingled admiration and regard. Those who knew me as a boy will recollect that Leigh Hunt was one of my idols, and I went so far as to start a little weekly journal entitled *The Bæotian*, in imitation of his *Indicator*, which ran to about six numbers; the only copy of this little paper, written when I was about eighteen, I gave to Leigh Hunt himself. . . ."

After Leigh Hunt's death the book must have been sold, for eventually it was picked up by James Crossley—of all people in the world. He added this MS. note to the little volume which had thus been the property of several notable people:—

“ There were no more numbers of *The Bæotian* published than are collected here. The author was William Harrison Ainsworth, and this is his own copy, which I bought of a Manchester bookseller. The last number, *On the Chetham Library*, is only a reprint of my article in *Blackwood's Magazine* on that subject.

“ JAS. CROSSLEY.”

In any case, *The Bæotian* was doomed to a short career. Even if it had been wholly successful its existence would have terminated abruptly a few weeks later ; for Fate was preparing to hurl a thunderbolt that interrupted all literary enterprise on Ainsworth's part for some time to come, and obliged him to devote himself to the more serious business of life.

On 20th June, 1824, Thomas Ainsworth died, suddenly, at the premature age of forty-six, and his son, William, found himself heir to the senior partnership in the legal firm of Ainsworth, Crossley, and Sudlow—and quite unfitted to take up the duties and responsibilities of that important position. It was a great shock, and a rude awakening from a life of literary dalliance, diletantism, and social pleasure. However, the boy rose to the emergency, put aside all congenial pursuits, and made an honest attempt to recover lost time by a zealous, if belated, application to the study of the technicalities of the law. He was sincere in his resolution—*then*—to fit himself for the position in his late father's firm which was, apparently, to be his destiny in life. Considering his repugnance to the law as a profession, the endeavour was highly creditable. In furtherance of this design, it was arranged that Ainsworth should proceed to London,

and complete his legal training there. Accordingly, in the winter of 1824, he left Manchester for the greater world of London, and, although he little thought it then, his native place was to know him no more as a resident. Only as a visitor did Manchester see her brilliant son in all the long years to come.

## CHAPTER IV

ARRIVAL IN LONDON. TRAINING FOR THE LAW.  
LITERATURE AGAIN. "SIR JOHN CHIVERTON."

**A**RRIVED in London, William Harrison Ainsworth immediately commenced attendance at the chambers of Mr. Jacob Phillips, of No. 10, King's Bench Walk, Temple, a barrister and conveyancer of distinction.<sup>1</sup>

Conveyancing being the branch of the legal profession Ainsworth had to perfect himself in, he, at first, applied himself diligently to copying precedents<sup>2</sup> and studying digests; but this laudable zeal, after a time, suffered eclipse amid the pleasures of life in town.

On his first arrival, Ainsworth lodged at 6, Devereux Court, a narrow passage which winds from the Temple to the Strand, and also into Essex Street. No doubt he appreciated the famous literary associations of this quaint corner of London; still existing in Devereux Court was the renowned "Grecian" coffee-house, which had been the constant resort of Addison, Goldsmith, and Steele (who, in the first number of *The Tatler*, said

<sup>1</sup> Phillips was the author of *A Letter from a Grandfather to a Grandson*, 1818, a book of advice to articulated clerks.

<sup>2</sup> Crossley preserved a folio volume containing MS. notes in Ainsworth's autograph, written during his Temple days. It was sold at Sotheby's in June, 1885.

he should date "all learned articles from the 'Grecian'"). Opposite the "Grecian" had stood the almost equally famous "Tom's" coffee-house, favoured by Pope and Akenside; and in the adjoining Essex Street, Johnson founded his "Sam's" Club. In Essex Street, also, Prince Charles Edward Stuart stayed with Lady Primrose during his secret visit to London in 1750.

At first, Ainsworth naturally felt a little homesick and lonely in this new, strange world of London, and longed for news from Manchester. This desire peeps forth from all his early letters to Crossley, to whom he writes:—

" 6, DEVEREUX COURT,

" TEMPLE.

" I have been anxiously awaiting a letter from you fraught with Manchester intelligence and good tidings. . . . You must write a little more frequently to me. Remember, I have no friend, except yourself, to whom I can unbosom my grievances and relate my peccadillos . . . believe me, dearest Crossley. . . that there is not one person whom I more sincerely like and admire than yourself . . . do therefore write to assure me of your fidelity, and give me a few directions as to the course of study you recommend. . . .

" The town is full of Manchester men, hurried hither, I take it, by the Railway mania. The theatres are wonderfully attended; last night there was a new tragedy called *Masaniello* brought out at Drury Lane—damned without equity. . . . Kean and Miss Foote still continue to attract, and the Pantomimes to torture the half-price men. . . . Do tell me when you write how Watts and Hervey, and old Aston *et hoc genus omne* go on in Manchester. . . . I have called upon your father, and shall dine with him next Sunday. Your brothers

and sister are, I believe, arrived. I have much desire to be introduced to your sister. . . .”<sup>1</sup>

Soon after, he says :—

“ *Sunday Morning*. (1824.)

“ I have not heard from home nigh three weeks . . . however, you have now put all to rights. I am glad to hear you have the same delightful weather in Manchester we have. The sun is laughing in at my windows, and the Temple bells are ringing so merrily that I feel an unusual elasticity of spirits. I am very glad to hear of the additional clients you mention. I have little doubt of our succeeding to our hearts’ content : nothing astonishes me so much as the fondness I am daily acquiring for the profession of the law—the system Jacob (Phillips) goes upon is so different from Kay’s absurd plans. . . . I have little fear that, with moderate application, I shall acquire a respectable knowledge of conveyancing in the given time. I have read more law during my short stay here than I read during four years of my clerkship. I have not, as yet, drawn much ; indeed I am not quite capable. When I do begin, it shall be in earnest. I do not, however, let anything pass through Chambers without perusal, and wade through the most extended abstracts. I am now studying the Doctrine of Home,<sup>2</sup> upon which Jacob is lecturing ; is there any treatise on the subject ? Do you know any book upon Trustees ? . . .

“ You ask me whether we have any characters in Chambers : I answer ‘ none.’ They are, for the most part, dull, dreary, plodding unintellectuals — black-whiskered, grosset-eyed, odiously muddy-cheek’d fellows,

<sup>1</sup> Charlotte Anne Crossley (1799–1831). She married Robert Clough, of Seacombe, Cheshire, and was the mother of Anne Clough, the authoress.

<sup>2</sup> Henry Home, Lord Kames (1696–1782) ; author of *The Principles of Equity*, etc.

blessed with talents of the happiest mediocrity. There is an exception to the rule in a former pupil of Preston's (who was with him at the time your brother was there), a singular fellow and a man of infinite jest. We have a way of discussing at lecture papers passing through Chambers, and to hear him read an abstract, and comment upon it, is very rich—he has something of Luttrell's methodistical quizzication. Poor Jacob listens in much wonder, and Phillipides, his son, looks aghast in speechless trance. . . . Sloan you know; I take great delight in humbugging the little fellow, and always tell him he can draw much better than Jacob, which idea he receives with unbounded complacency. He brings me in every draft in consequence, and were I disposed to work like a mill-horse, would find me plenty of opportunities. He sometimes asks me home to tea, which I endure for good reasons. Young Wat. Milne, who sits in a room with me, is a ditto of his father. . . .

“Perhaps you may wish to know if London has wrought any change in my outward man? Very little. I think I am thinner and taller; but keep my complexion, which you know is proof against all clime, and it commands unusual respect in a place where such things are rare. . . . I have attacked the Common Forms and an uncommon bore I find it. . . . In my next I shall recount a very mysterious love adventure in which I am likely to cut a conspicuous figure. The lady is in high *ton* and very beautiful. I am not vain, but I cannot but wonder what there is in me that attracts the notice of the fair sex.”

The reason of his success with the daughters of Eve was not far to seek, for this young Lancastrian was a perfect Adonis. Tall and well-proportioned, with splendid eyes, he had such a brilliant display of roses emblematic

of his native county in his cheeks, that even his cousin, Edward Harrison, described him as "beautiful as a woman" at this period.

In the next two letters to Crossley he writes :—

"Anything in the shape of intelligence from you is quite delightful—valuable even for its rarity. Your advice is very much to the purpose—the *Opinions* I certainly will copy; the Digest I do not think will be so easily done—but I shall do my best. . . .

"As you appear to like them, I enclose you a few more numbers of *Harriette Wilson's Memoirs*.<sup>1</sup> . . . They are really written by her—she is a very pretty little woman. . . . To-morrow I will write some account of an adventure or two I have had since I came here, which may prove entertaining and instructive. . . .

"Do write—consider who can I hear truth from but yourself. . . .

"The whole of my time is occupied between Chambers and lodgings, and with the perusal of instructive and edifying treatises on the law. . . . The town is, I believe, very full, but I have seen little of it during last week. . . . I dined with Dyson the other day at the Tower (of London). He speaks of you in the highest terms; I rather like him—what an original! Your father<sup>2</sup> has been very kind—I have dined with him two Sundays, at both of which times I was most hospitably entertained. By the way, he has the prettiest servant in London.

<sup>1</sup> A notorious member of the *demi-monde* who published her very scandalous memoirs, 1825, wherein figured the Duke of Wellington and many other distinguished admirers of the frail lady. A new edition appeared in 1909.

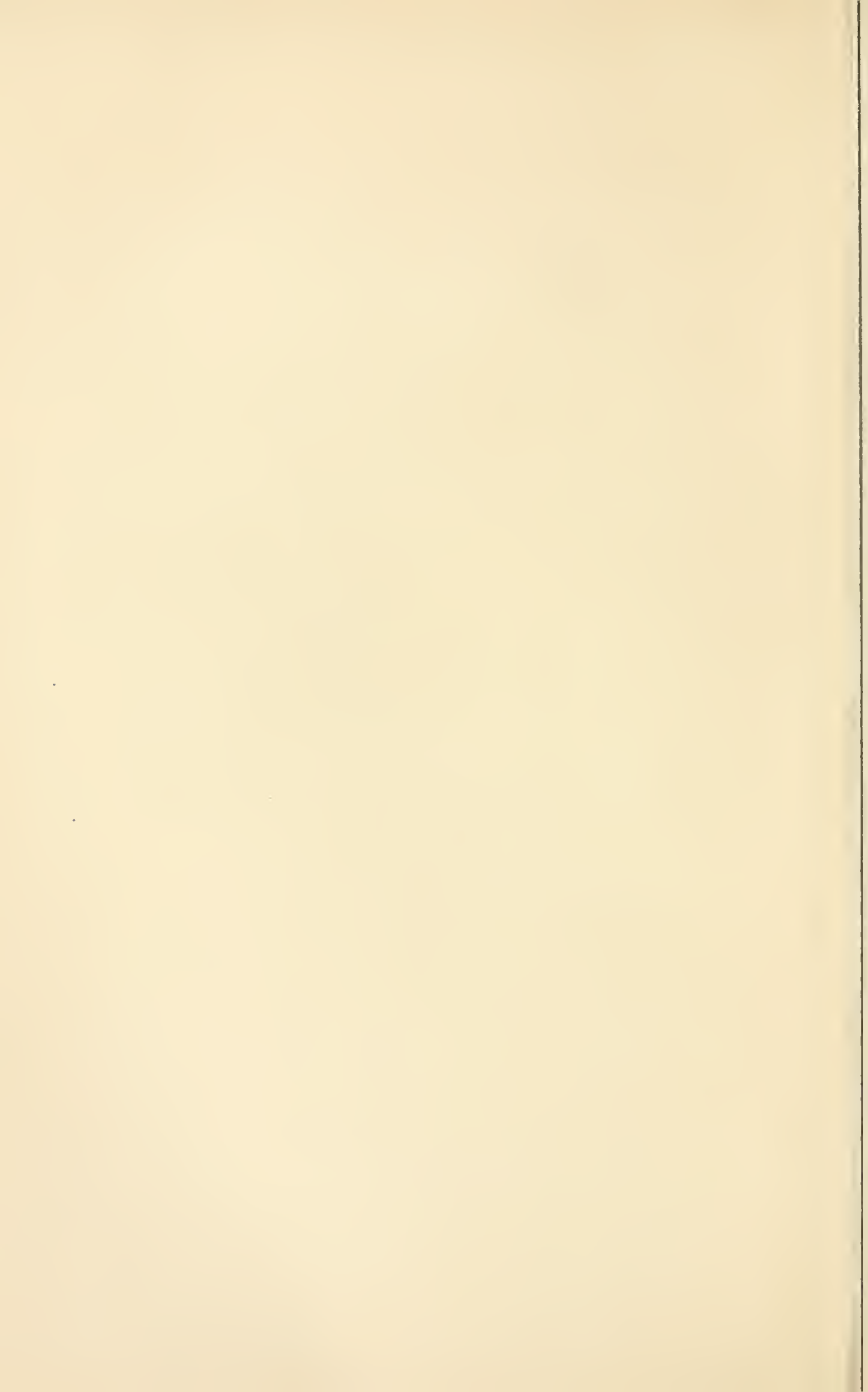
<sup>2</sup> James Crossley (1767–1831) of Burnley, and The Mount, Halifax. He was a merchant.





*William Harrison Answorth,  
at the age of twenty-one.*

*from the sketch by Dr. Macdise, presented to John Forster, and  
now in the Forster Collection, South Kensington Museum*



Will an action lie for loss of service in such a case? Let me have some local intelligence—state in your next how the business of the office goes on. I hope it increases. I am glad you were pleased with the numbers of *Harriette Wilson*. I thought it rather a stupid affair with the exception of Luttrell.”

“ Do you recollect my mentioning in a former letter that your father had a very pretty servant-maid? A lovely girl, short, plump, taper-waisted, and dark-eyed—i’ faith a very goodly appearance. You know dark eyes have always been my bane, and these were truly beautiful for a girl ‘in her line’—bright, large, and laughing, and so full of kindness that, as Elkington says, it were cruel to disappoint them. Well, on Sunday last I slipped out of the room when your father and some more of his old cronies were at their wine, and got hold of this little girl. She promised to meet me the following evening, and kept her word—but now comes the serious part of the joke. In addition to the little frisky one before mentioned, your father has a cursed superannuated old cook, who being too old for any enjoyment herself, has determined to destroy that of others. This damned old bitch by some means got to hear of it, and communicated the pleasing intelligence to your father and Master George,<sup>1</sup> with whom I am at present at issue. I dare not go to the house for fear of being quizzed, for I suppose it will extend no further. If it does, I shall bully. . . . Dyson gives a dinner-party on the 31st in honour of your birthday. Your father, etc., will be there, and I think I shall not

<sup>1</sup> George Crossley (1806–80), the youngest son.

appear before him until that period. What do you think he will say—will he bully? . . . I cannot learn whether the girl has left or not. I have made several ineffectual attempts to see her, and have even written—I don't know whether the letter has not got to your father. There's a go! Tell me all Manchester news, and give me advice as to my conduct in the matter herein mentioned. I am damnably funk'd about your father's servant."

It is permissible and pleasant to imagine that in these early London days Ainsworth and Dickens, then, of course, quite unknown to each other, may have met and passed in the crowded streets. Perhaps, as the smart young attorney, in beaver hat and blue coat with brass buttons, strolled from the Temple along the Strand, he may have noticed a small boy of twelve, dressed in corduroy trousers, a shabby jacket, and an old white hat, hurrying from Warren's blacking-house to what he called "home," in Somers Town. Or, perhaps, somewhere by the Adelphi Arches, the young lawyer may have seen the same pathetic little figure entering one of the old water-side taverns to partake of his frugal lunch and a glass of "the very best ale . . . with a good head to it." Who knows, too, but that Ainsworth, on occasion, formed one of the small crowd that paused to look in at the window of the blacking warehouse in Chandos Street, where the future "Boz" was to be seen tying up blacking pots.<sup>1</sup> It is quite possible; and if they ever did thus meet and notice each other, how little did the lawyer of nineteen and

<sup>1</sup> Book I, Part 2 of Forster's *Life of Dickens*.

the boy-worker of twelve dream that within twelve years Time would bring them together again—to be intimate friends; that both would then be famous, one as the dashing author of *Rookwood*, the other as the author of the immortal *Pickwick*. Such are the chances of life.

Soon after his arrival in London, Ainsworth went to see Charles Lamb, who was then living at Colebrooke Cottage, Islington. Unfortunately, Elia in flesh and blood rather disappointed the enthusiastic Lancastrian admirer of his literary work. Ainsworth, in imagination, had deified Lamb to an impossible extent, and consequently the real man could not fulfil his expectations. Thus, he wrote to Crossley: "A visit which I paid to Charles Lamb the other night has given the death-blow to my admiration of literary men. What a *bona fide* Cockney he is!"

Lamb, however, seems to have taken a fancy to his former correspondent from Manchester; he was very kind to him, and frequently invited him out to Colebrooke Cottage, where Ainsworth met many of the clever people who formed Lamb's circle. There is an interesting reference to one of these visits to Islington in Henry Crabb Robinson's <sup>1</sup> Diary:—

"February 9th, 1825:—Walked to Lamb's. Mr. Dibdin, Jun., there—grandson of the song-maker. Also a forward, talking young man, a Mr. Ainsworth—introduced to Mr. Lamb as a great admirer of his. He will be a pleasant man enough when the obtrusiveness of youth is worn away a little."

<sup>1</sup> Henry Crabb Robinson (1775–1867). Journalist and diarist.

Ainsworth in his next letter to Crossley says :—

“ 25th March, 1825.

“ Little Charles Lamb sends me constant invitations. I met Mrs. Shelley<sup>1</sup> at his house the other evening. She is very handsome; I am going to the theatre with her some evening. I have met Barry Cornwall<sup>2</sup> and others there. . . . What a strange fellow your brother Henry<sup>3</sup> is—so exquisitely conceited—nothing gives me greater pleasure than to torture him upon a favourite topic, of which he has a singular variety. How does business get on? Before I have completed my year I hope to make myself sufficiently useful. . . . I wish I knew more of common law. Yesterday I looked over the P. abstract and displayed considerable skill, and gave Sloan and Jacob the benefit of my instructive observation. . . .”

In the summer of this year Ainsworth paid a visit to Manchester, and his delight and feverish excitement at the prospect of coming home will be seen in the following letter to Crossley :—

“ INNER TEMPLE,

“ 4th August, 1825.

“ I have it in my power to fix the time of my arrival, which will be on Monday evening next, either by the mail or *Enterprize*. . . . Please to let my bed be ready for me against Monday night, and if your landlady be pretty, engage her for the occasion; if not, the maid,

<sup>1</sup> Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin (1797–1851), the authoress of *Frankenstein*, etc., married Shelley, as his second wife, in 1816. At the time Ainsworth met her she had been a widow for three years.

<sup>2</sup> Bryan W. Procter—“ Barry Cornwall ”—(1787–1874). Poet, dramatist, and biographer.

<sup>3</sup> Henry Crossley (1799–1880).

as I shall have fasted 4 and 20 hours.<sup>1</sup> I am quite nervous with the contemplation of the fun we will have and the jollifications we will enjoy together. The old stories—the books—the people—the plans—the bottles—we will discuss, glance over, and crack together. I have a complete budget of intelligence to open. You have not, I trust, announced my arrival yet—not to a soul . . . the papers will announce in good time under the head of Fashionable Departures: ‘Left his rooms in Gt. Ormond Street,<sup>2</sup> William Ainsworth, Esq., sometime of the Inner Temple, for the residence of James Crossley, Esq., in Cooper Street, Manchester,’ which I suppose *The Guardian* will recapitulate. Are all my friends in Manchester? Where is Cririe, where is G. Winter,<sup>3</sup> and where is Mr. James? Where are they, my Crossley? I shall bully astonishingly. . . . I am feverish with the anticipation of seeing you and Manchester again, so you must excuse this hasty, unconnected scrawl, and defer everything till we meet, when you shall have as much chatting as you like. The rain is just setting in, you see, now it should not. What a climate we live in . . . *Vale.*”

The two friends must indeed have had much to talk about after a separation of nearly a year, and experienced much pleasure in being together once more at the old haunt in Smithy Door. His visit to Manchester concluded, Ainsworth went on to the Isle of Man for a few weeks, and sent Crossley a long account of

<sup>1</sup> After Ainsworth went to London, his mother gave up the establishments at “Beech Hill” and King Street, Manchester, and removed to Prestwich, but she frequently stayed with her son in his London lodgings.

<sup>2</sup> Ainsworth, a few weeks earlier, had changed his lodgings from Devereux Court to 25, Great Ormond Street, Bloomsbury.

<sup>3</sup> Cririe and Winter were Manchester lawyers.

his adventures, from which a few extracts are given here :—

“ DIXON’S HOTEL, ISLE OF MAN.

“ Here I am after a most delightful passage . . . on board the *City of Glasgow*. At 11 a.m. we slipped our moorings. . . . The passengers were not very numerous, nor very select—still, some of them were agreeable, and one, an old West India Captain, with a stiff, black neckcloth, and a brown, bilious face and tropical hands, amused me not a little. . . . A little after 8 we landed at Douglas. It was quite dark, and the face of the water was lighted with small boats, with lanthorns, ready to convey passengers . . . a natural phenomena struck me as inexpressibly beautiful—every dash of the sea in the water was followed by a phosphoric light, which glittered along the surface and in the wake of the boat . . . the Mona lighthouse was blazing brightly. Douglas lies in a sort of bay, and is flanked by a lofty hill, on which a huge beacon is erected. On one side stands Castle Mona—the residence of the Duke of Athole. . . . On landing, our luggage was taken to the Custom House.

“ The room in which I am seated looks on to the sea, and forms part of a neat, whitewashed hotel, which stands by itself in the middle of Douglas Bay. . . . I have everything for 30s. a week, and port and sherry are 3s. a bottle. . . . The character of the Manxmen seems very extraordinary—they are huge, sturdy fellows, something like a better sort of Welshman. The richer inhabitants are all half-pay officers, and entitle themselves Esquires, Colonels, and Captains, etc., in a manner truly ludicrous. My military acquaintance is considerably enlarged. Captain Baynes is my *cher ami*, and Colonel Campbell my bathing friend. This land of untaxation affords a *carte-blanche* for all these things.”



Next day he is unwell and remains indoors. He thinks of England, Cooper Street, and Crossley, which, he continues—

“Brings up a vision of a man clothed in blue coat and black trousers, with a soiled yesterday’s cravat under his ear in place of his chin. This being Sunday, his hair is twisted on to the scalp and slightly singed in the bungling attempt of some booby barber . . . a pair of shoes with the heels forced down . . . there is a little lather on his ear from the recent effect of shaving, his eye has a lack-lustre, comical sort of expression, his right hand is stretched over a book, the other contains a cup of coffee just raised from a slopped tea-tray—his mind is full of *Pepys’ Memoirs*<sup>1</sup>—but I forbear:

“ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!

“Oh! Crossley, this is the picture I would draw for you, but what I would not permit your enemy to do. Having mentioned Pepys, I will adopt his plan and record all my proceedings in this Island for your benefit.

“*Friday*. Rose half-past six. Bathed. Walked on the sands for a couple of hours. . . . Took a nag horse . . . and rode to Kirk Braden Church—beautifully situated, embosomed in trees—built of gray stone with a singular antique steeple. . . . Turned off from the main road into the hills . . . ascending the side of Douglas Head, had a good view of the town and bay, and the broad sea stretching to the Cumberland coast. . . .

“*Saturday*. Went to the Pier Head at Douglas to see the people embark for the packet. . . . Walked five miles—frightened by a huge dog. . . . Dined with one

<sup>1</sup> The first edition of *Pepys’ Diary* had just appeared (1825).

of the reporters for *The Morning Herald*—he gets a guinea a day during his stay on the island; went on to the pier with him . . . returned home by the sands for a mile—quite dark, and the sea rolling at my feet—thought of home and grew melancholy. . . .

“ *Monday.* . . . Met Capt. Baynes, who took me to dine with his sister—a Cape lady. Two pretty daughters. Veal for dinner—pity the man who can eat veal. Home—spent a bad night—fancied myself in a high fever—perfectly melancholy—thought of making my will—recollected I had only £5.

“ *Tuesday.* A day of adventure—walked out—rained very hard—took refuge in a cottage—fishermen—strange place—women chatty. Went to Douglas—met the London reporter, who had a design upon a man’s wife—the prettiest woman in the island—asked the husband and her to dine with him and invited me to keep him in tow—excellent dinner—champagne—claret—burgundy—made the old fellow tipsy as an owl—lady retired—the Irishman after her—in about ten minutes husband followed—caught the Irishman coming out of her room—who immediately blew out the candle—waiter called—such a row ! ”

Returning to London, he wrote to Crossley :—

“ . . . I arrived in town very comfortably on Tuesday evening. I found Chambers wonderfully altered. Four additional pupils, amongst whom is Hughes of Chancery celebrity. The rooms are magnificently decorated—crimson curtains and saffron paper ! Business a little

flat. Pray write to me, as I am exceedingly anxious to receive letters. . . . Be good enough to direct Aston to send up my Articles from Kay's. . . ."

For a time Ainsworth now devoted himself assiduously to his legal studies ; and, consequently, it is doubtful if he produced anything in the way of literary composition during his first year at the Temple.

It is true that he issued, in 1825, a collection of thirty-two of his poems, under the title of *The Works of Cheviot Tichburn, with the types of John Leigh MDCCCXX5* ; but as the amusingly defiant prefatory notice explains :—

"The great part of the trifles contained in this book were written in the year 1823. This circumstance is mentioned simply with reference to the date. They have undergone no subsequent correction. No apology is offered for their publication—the few who are likely to meet with them will scarce need any ; and I scorn the opinion of the vulgar too much to cultivate its approbation, or deprecate its censure. *December, 1824.*"

*The Literary Souvenir* for 1825, also, contained two items from his pen—*The Fortress of Saguntum*, a weird story in the style of "Monk" Lewis, illustrated by a steel engraving ; and verses entitled *An Imperfect Portrait* : these were probably sent to the editor, Alaric A. Watts, before Ainsworth left Manchester, in 1824. Concerning these contributions, or some other matter, the two, shortly after, had a violent quarrel, and waged pen-war against each other *à outrance*. Watts was at this time editing *The Manchester Courier*, and his

method of attack seems to have taken the form of inserting in that paper trivial personalities and imaginary "rumours" anent Ainsworth; for example, there is an account of "Mr. A., a young gentleman possessed of a most delicate complexion, who tried to cross to Calais, in female disguise, for a wager." Ainsworth's letters to Crossley at this period breathe fire and fury against his antagonist: "Language cannot express the hatred and abhorrence which I entertain for that kakodemon Watts"; "I am determined to make an example of Watts for the benefit of the public at large"; "I am going to commence an action against him"; "Nothing is left but to horsewhip him soundly, which I shall take the earliest opportunity of doing"; "Blast Watts for his damnable assertions—the slave shall die"; and so on. However, this amusing storm in an ink-pot died down without murder resulting, and, later, the two became on friendly terms again.

And now comes 1826—*annus mirabilis* for Ainsworth, for it witnessed, in turn, his coming of age, his admission as a qualified solicitor, the publication of his first romance, his marriage, and his appearance in the rôle of a professional publisher. Concerning his legal apotheosis he wrote to Crossley:—

" 25, GREAT ORMOND STREET,

" 8th February, 1826.

" This morning has seen me installed in the office of one of His Majesty's Solicitors in the Court of King's Bench, and after divers perils in the shape of Judges, clerks, affidavits, etc., I feel myself comfortable and happy with my admission in my pocket. I went before Old Bailey, who was very civil to me and wished me success.

“ I really take great blame to myself that I have not acknowledged your *very kind* letter . . . but indeed, my dear Crossley, do fancy that I inherit some of the procrastinating qualities which are natural to ourselves and all men of genius. Never imagine, however, for one moment that I forget you. . . . I have been a good deal to the Opera of late—it has a great attraction for me in the person of an opera-dancer, Mdlle. Brocaid—quite the rage. The King is in town; so are cart-loads of surveyors and solicitors for Railroads and Canals.”

A few days after he says :—

“ You will by this time have received a letter from me announcing my admission as an attorney in the King’s Bench. I now drop you a few lines to announce another important event—no less than the attainment of my twenty-first birthday. This event was neither announced by the beating of drums, trumpets, the thunder of cannon, nor the ringing of bells; it passed over my head very gently with not a single friend to dinner, and but a single bottle of wine, in the course of which I did not forget your health and long life; but as conveniences are so bad here, both my mother and I thought it had better be deferred until next year, when *we*—that is you and I—shall be able to do it more justice together. One thing I am mightily indignant at, and that is that I have received no congratulatory odes and addresses, of which I expected an abundant quantity, and certainly one from yourself. . . . I conclude that the ode is coming by the next parcel, and therefore shall wait with most exemplary patience till its arrival. . . .

“As Parliament has taken its seat, London is filling delightfully, and the girls are beginning to show their dear faces; the Opera looks brighter each night under their influence, and I bask myself under its beams as usual. . . .”

The last sentence in the above letter was significant of coming changes, for, as will be seen presently, influences were forming which materially altered the whole tenor of his life, and from the time that he came of age and was admitted as an attorney, his application to the law began to wane. The primary reason for this revolution was that, early in 1826, Ainsworth formed a friendship in London which had very important results; it created new interests and ties, and, finally, caused him to abandon suddenly his legal career, and revert once more to literary pursuits.

This new friend, who so strongly influenced his life, was John Ebers, the publisher and librarian of 27, Old Bond Street, and lessee of the Opera House in the Haymarket.<sup>1</sup>

Ebers, then in the prime of life and a remarkably handsome man, was a Hanoverian by descent—his father having come to England in the suite of Caroline of Brunswick, when that unfortunate princess arrived as the bride of the Prince of Wales (George IV), in 1795.

From constant attendance at the Opera, Ainsworth became on visiting terms with the lessee at his private residence, No. 8, Sussex Place, Regent's Park. Ebers was a widower, with two charming daughters—the

<sup>1</sup> John Ebers was born in 1781; and died about 1851, at 18, Kensington Terrace, Notting Hill.



JOHN EBERS. (FATHER OF MRS. W. H. AINSWORTH.)  
*From the miniature by G. Freeman, 1833.*





younger, Fanny, being well known in London Society as one of the most beautiful girls of the day. Ainsworth fell in love with her at first sight, and a few months later she became his wife. Before this event, however, Ebers, in his publishing capacity, was able to offer Ainsworth some congenial employment, as we find from the latter's next letter to Crossley:—

“ 25, GREAT ORMOND STREET, QUEEN SQUARE,  
“ 23rd March, 1826.

“ A friend of mine, Ebers of Old Bond Street, Book-seller, and proprietor of the Opera House, is about to bring forward, at the close of the present year, a Literary Miscellany on the plan of the German Literary Pocket Books, i.e. rather in the style of the *Souvenir* without so much gaud and decoration—making embellishment secondary to matter. Now, I have undertaken to write an article or two, and to conduct this for a short time—to set it a-going, and gather together a lot of contributors, in which I have been, hitherto, very successful. What I want you to do is to help me with a name—a brilliant, lively, taking name—a name of promise to literary people; if anybody can give me such a name—Thou art the man.

“ Will you be good enough, as a particular favour, to send me by return some advice as to what sort of thing this should be made to give it the greatest certainty of success, and in what manner you would announce it. . . . If you could be induced to contribute yourself, I should be glad to pay you as handsomely as possible, as I have the power of remunerating contributors *ad libitum*. Is there anything by you worth printing—the fragment on *Mummies*, for instance, or the *Essay on Bells*? You would enhance the above obligation if you would send me some motto, or epigraph,

from an old play or poem, to attach to the book. I have enlisted Charles Lamb, his sister, and the whole genius of Cockneydom into my service. . . . If you do not write me a long, gossiping, good-natured letter, I will positively be angry with you. *Mind you write by return, if not, woe be to you!*”

In the next letter he continues on the same subject:—

“Before I received your letter I had issued a circular announcing the work as *The Aurora; a new Literary Annual*—not that I particularly like the title, but it was the best I could muster. It is anything and nothing, which is its sole recommendation. Your names are good, but not precisely what I wanted . . . if anything further strike you, do favour me with it. . . . At all events, give me a second explanatory title to *The Aurora*, such as *The Literary Souvenir* has—*Cabinet of Poetry and Romance*. I mean, absolutely, to exclude essays. But to the gist of my letter. Will you furnish me with a short prospectus for the Magazine—stating the probable contents of the work—that it will be splendidly embellished—assisted by the most illustrious writers of the day—and that it will be of higher literary merit than anything previously offered to the public. Above all, insinuate that the assistance of a number of fashionable and aristocratical wits and crack fellows has been secured.”

In the last sentence we find an early example of a weakness that, later on, brought the writer much abuse and ridicule from reviewers of his magazines; but despite “aristocratical wits” and “the whole genius

of Cockneydom," *The Aurora* seems to have been postponed *sine die*; no copy can be found.

Ainsworth, however, had many other irons in the literary fire which had just been rekindled with increased ardour. In the spring of 1826 Ebers published for him a pamphlet entitled, *Considerations on the best means of affording Immediate Relief to the Operative Classes in the Manufacturing Districts*. This was a new field of literary composition for one who had hitherto written on romantic and dramatic lines. Coming, as he did, from Manchester, Ainsworth had seen much of the suffering prevalent among the operatives in the cotton trade. His essay in political economy showed a warm sympathy for his starving fellow-countymen; and he suggested, as temporary means of raising money for their relief, Church Collections, Charitable Festivals, and Balls—the Government eventually to introduce measures to benefit the operative classes. This pamphlet was addressed:—

“TO THE RIGHT HON. ROBERT PEEL.

“SIR,

“The author of the ensuing observations ventures to inscribe them to you, without the permission which, had the pressure of time allowed, he had been proud to request. To those to whom your character is known, the reasons for prefixing your name to these pages will be obvious.

“I have the honour to remain,

“Sir,

“Your most obedient admirer and servant,

“WILLIAM HARRISON AINSWORTH.

“London, May 6th, 1826.”

As may be supposed, Ainsworth did not pursue his tentative rôle of a writer on political economy; praiseworthy as his intentions were, the subject was not in his line.

In the following month, June, 1826, Ebers published *Letters from Cockney Lands*—a series of amusing descriptions of life in London and Brighton—written in doggerel verse. Ainsworth's name did not appear on the title-page, and he never claimed the work as his subsequently, but reviews of the book on its publication stated that he was the author. It was issued anonymously, the author announced, "lest he should be considered a dangerous character, if known to be connected with it, and thus forfeit his relations with society": but, as *The Literary Gazette* observed, "The book is a very harmless production." It seems to have been successful, as a second edition was published in the following year.

A far more important undertaking was that Ainsworth next engaged in—the publication of the romance he had written, in collaboration with his friend, J. P. Aston, two years previously. The MS. having been perused by Ebers, met with his instant approval, and the publisher at once proceeded to pave the way for the forthcoming work by issuing puffs preliminary concerning its author. Anent these, *The Literary Magnet* remarked: "A young gentleman of Manchester, and a contributor to our pages, is about to favour the world with a Romance entitled, *Sir John Chiverton*. . . . To read Mr. Ebers's announcement of *Sir John*, one would suppose the author was a 'pocket unknown,' or, as Mr. Colburn calls young D'Israeli in his puffs of *Vivian Grey*, a 'new unknown.'"

[The writer of this little thought how well known the two "unknowns" of 1826 would become. The conjunction of Ainsworth's name with Disraeli's at this early date suggests several interesting coincidences concerning them. They were both born in 1805; they were both trained for the law and neglected it for literary pursuits; their first novels—*Sir John Chiverton* and *Vivian Grey*—were published almost simultaneously; a few years after, the two young authors met at Lady Blessington's house and became friends. Ainsworth dedicated one of his books, *The Manchester Rebels*, to Disraeli; and, finally, the two friends died within nine months of each other.]

*Sir John Chiverton* was published in July, 1826, and was very well received. To *The Literary Gazette* may be assigned the credit of discovering in this romance the promise of the author's future fame, for it observed: "This is one of the early works of talent and genius which makes us hope to see many more from the same source . . . a rich picturesque illusion surrounds the whole fiction." *The New Monthly Magazine* highly praised the scenes and characterization of the story, and *The Literary Magnet* said: "This tale, written, as we have already stated, by a young gentleman of Manchester, of the name of Ainsworth, reflects . . . great credit upon its author. . . ."

In the last-quoted contemporary notice of the book it will be seen that Ainsworth alone was credited with the authorship, and that no mention was made of his collaborator in the work—Mr. J. P. Aston. This was a curious omission, but there is much that is inexplicable and mystifying in the history of *Sir John Chiverton*.

In turn, both Ainsworth and Aston regarded it as entirely their own work, and ignored the collaborator; it was very unfortunate that the book was published anonymously, for had the names of the two young authors appeared on the title-page, there would have been no subsequent dispute.

In addition to the contemporary notices, *Sir John Chiverton* was described as the first novel written by Ainsworth in Laman Blanchard's *Memoir of Ainsworth*, issued in 1842 and subsequently reprinted many times, and the statement was repeated frequently in *Men of the Time* and elsewhere; yet Mr. Aston made no protest at the omission of his name, and never claimed any share in the book for forty-eight years. Then, in 1874, the other side of the joint-authorship was brought forward by the publication of *The Manchester School Register*. Before this work appeared, the proofs passed through the hands of James Crossley; he, of course, was well acquainted with the real facts concerning the authorship of *Sir John Chiverton*, and was consequently surprised to read in the memoir of Mr. J. P. Aston: "In early professional life Mr. Aston was not unknown as an anonymous contributor to the popular annuals and periodicals, both in prose and verse. One work, a romance entitled *Sir John Chiverton*, deserves especial mention." Crossley sent this statement, in proof, to Ainsworth, asking him to insert any necessary corrections or remarks. The proof was returned, and after the words, "One work, a romance entitled *Sir John Chiverton*," Ainsworth had inserted the decisive statement, "Written in collaboration with Mr. Harrison Ainsworth." In his letter, accompanying the returned

proof, Ainsworth said, " I have added a line to the Memoir of Aston, which will set the matter right. The interlineation is simply 'written in collaboration with Mr. Harrison Ainsworth'—as is the fact."

The memoir of Mr. Aston duly appeared in *The Manchester School Register*, with Ainsworth's interpolated correction relative to the authorship of *Sir John Chiverton*. Still Mr. Aston remained silent, and he did not attempt to deny that this was the truth about the book. So matters remained till 1877, when, in a private communication to Mr. C. W. Sutton, author of *A List of Lancashire Authhors*, Mr. Aston made the astounding assertion that he was the sole author of *Sir John Chiverton!*

He wrote :—

" I had an opportunity last evening, for the first time, of seeing your interesting *List of Lancashire Authhors*, in which I met with my name mentioned as 'collaborateur with Mr. W. Harrison Ainsworth in the romance of *Sir John Chiverton*.' I have no wish to be held out as an author at all, but if I must be, I desire that it may be done correctly. Mr. Ainsworth never wrote a line of *Sir John Chiverton*, for which I am solely responsible. I am neither anxious to participate in Mr. Ainsworth's celebrity, nor wishful to throw upon him the credit, or discredit, of my juvenile performances, and if any further 'Additions and Corrections' to your *List* be printed, I trust that the correction I now bring under your notice may be attended to. In the meantime, I should be glad to have it notified to the very respectable club under whose auspices the *List* appears. . . ."

This request was complied with, and, for the time being, nothing more was heard of the matter.

It is greatly to be regretted that Mr. Aston did not challenge Ainsworth to substantiate publicly the statement made in the letter to Mr. Sutton, and to repudiate the share in the book he (Ainsworth) had been credited with for over fifty years. Instead of doing so, Mr. Aston proceeded no further with his claim during Ainsworth's lifetime; but after the latter's death, in 1882, when Ainsworth could no longer prove *his* side of the case, Mr. Aston reopened the matter with the following letter to *The Times* :—

“ *The late Mr. Harrison Ainsworth.*

“ *To The Times.*

“ SOUTH KING STREET,

“ MANCHESTER.

“ I shall be obliged by the insertion in *The Times* of the following statement in reference to the obituary article on the above gentleman in your issue of the 4th inst., in which it is said, ‘ While in his teens he wrote and published his romance of *Sir John Chiverton*,’ etc. Ainsworth did not write this book, of which I am the author, nor does his name appear on the title-page as the author.<sup>1</sup> In what is described as the second edition (though, in fact, a mere re-issue) his name appears as publisher and only so; nor does *Sir John Chiverton* appear in the chronological list of Ainsworth's works, printed on the beautifully illustrated card-pamphlet, presented to the guests at the dinner given in September last to Ainsworth by the Mayor of Manchester. My acquaintance with Ainsworth commenced at the Man-

<sup>1</sup> Neither does Mr. Aston's.



chester Free Grammar School, and our intimacy increased when he became a fellow-clerk with me in the office of Mr. Alexander Kay,<sup>1</sup> the solicitor to whom he was articled. We were both fond of literary pursuits, or what we considered such, and our conversation generally turned on literary subjects.

“Hulme Hall, an ancient mansion on the late Duke of Bridgewater’s estate, was a locality in which we took much interest, and, I think, it was Ainsworth who suggested to me the writing of a romance in connection with it. This I did, and hence the production of the work in question, in which the name of Chiverton Hall was substituted for Hulme Hall. I communicated the manuscript, as the work progressed, to Ainsworth, and he attended to its publication. It was originally published by Ebers, but what purports to be the second edition bears Ainsworth’s name as publisher in Old Bond Street, 1827. He had, however, no part in the composition, nor do I know that he ever claimed it, and the celebrity he afterwards attained must have rendered the question (had any such existed) of its authorship of very little importance to him. Our intimacy declined when he established himself in the literary world of London, and I became absorbed in my professional pursuits.”

In reply to all this, one may reasonably ask why Mr. Aston waited for nearly sixty years before publicly claiming the sole authorship of the book? Why did he not contradict *The Literary Magnet*, in 1826, when it stated *Sir John Chiverton* was written by Ainsworth? Why did he not contradict the statement when it was

<sup>1</sup> This proves how unreliable and faulty Mr. Aston’s memory was; he and Ainsworth were never fellow-clerks in Mr. Kay’s office. When Ainsworth was there, Aston was a clerk of Mr. Thomas Ainsworth’s, in Essex Street. Aston joined Mr. Kay’s firm later on.

repeated by Laman Blanchard, and by Lockhart in his *Life of Sir Walter Scott*? Why did he not challenge the account of the joint-authorship in *The Manchester School Register*? And why wait till his former collaborator was dead before stating that he alone wrote the book? It is true he had made the assertion earlier to Mr. C. W. Sutton *privately*, and in connection with this we must hear what James Crossley had to say about it.

On the fly-leaf of the copy of *Sir John Chiverton* in the Chetham Library, Manchester, is the following MS. note:—

“ This work has been generally ascribed to Mr. William Harrison Ainsworth, but in a letter written by Mr. John Partington Aston to Mr. Sutton, author of *A List of Lancashire Authers*, and which was read at the Manchester Literary Club two or three weeks ago, Mr. Aston claims the entire property of the book, for which, he says, he is ‘solely responsible.’ In cases of disputed ownership it is always desirable to be perfectly accurate in making a claim, and in order to be correct to the letter he ought to have excepted the lines placed opposite to the Romance: ‘Eustace, etc.’ which I supplied Mr. W. H. Ainsworth with, at his request, as a Motto for the Tale. Mr. Ainsworth, whether the owner or not, evidently took great interest in the work, of which his father-in-law, Mr. Ebers, was eventually the publisher.

“ JAS. CROSSLEY, 15th March, 1877.”

When Crossley told Ainsworth of Mr. Aston’s extraordinary statement to Mr. Sutton, he merely replied, “ I shall not trouble myself about Aston.” The fact

was, that after he attained fame with *Rookwood* and the long series of novels which followed, Ainsworth attached no importance whatever to his earlier works. But at the time of the publication of *Sir John Chiverton* matters were different, and then, as has been seen, he accepted *full* responsibility for the book; indeed, he regarded himself as sole author of it, for I possess a presentation copy of the first edition of *Sir John Chiverton*, which contains the inscription in Ainsworth's autograph:—

“ MRS. WM. FARRINGTON.

“ WITH THE AUTHOR'S KIND COMPTS.

“ *July 4th, 1826.*”<sup>1</sup>

If additional proof is needed of Ainsworth's predominant share in the authorship, it will be found in the following letter which he preserved among his papers:—

“ *14th October, 1841.*

“ SIR,

“ In the years 1823, 1824, and 1825, I had the privileged honour to be engrossing clerk at Mr. Alexander Kay's at Manchester, and of being at that time useful to you as amanuensis in copying and collecting material for your celebrated novel of *Sir John Chiverton*. When you left Manchester you were kind enough to say that you would do what you could for me in case I should come to London. I shall feel very much obliged by your exerting your powerful interest with any gentleman in the profession in my behalf. . . .

“ WILLIAM HENVILLE.”

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Edmund Mercer, of Manchester, possessed another presentation copy of this book, bearing Ainsworth's autograph inscription: “To Captain Jones, with the author's kind regards.”

Further conclusive evidence is furnished by the Dedicatory Stanzas prefixed to the romance. These were addressed to Fanny Ebers—Ainsworth's future wife—with whom he was deeply in love, and display a power of passionate expression of no mean order. The verses seem to indicate that he still regarded himself as destined for the law, and that his days of romance-writing were over! For example:—

. . . . .

Accept the tribute that to thee I bring . . .  
 The leisure fruit of fancy's wandering :  
 But fancy rules no more—her sway is past,  
 And into other paths my course is cast ;  
 Me now no more shall fiction's dreams beguile ;  
 Their hues like fading rainbows vanish fast ;  
 My feet shall tread in ways of drearier toil,  
 And fiction hide her wreath and poesy her smile.

Yet if to me a loftier lyre were given  
 And round my harp were twined a brighter wreath ;  
 If I could snatch immortal verse from heaven,  
 And pour its melody to souls beneath,  
 It may be that I would not cease to breathe  
 Thy name in accents love should make divine,  
 And round thy beauteous brows a band enwreath,  
 A garland bright, whose flowers should brightly shine,  
 More lovely, and more bright, when sunned by smiles of thine.

My Lady Love ! am I not far from thee ?—  
 Far, far away—but soon again we meet ;  
 Ye moments swift, oh, yet more swiftly flee,  
 Ye slower hours away on wingèd feet ;  
 Waft me, oh, waft me on pinions fleet,  
 Give me again my vows of love to tell,  
 Steal fond approval from her blushes sweet,  
 Adore her glowing cheeks and bosom's swell,  
 And win the silent thoughts that in that bosom dwell.

[These stanzas were originally written, and signed,

by Ainsworth in Fanny Ebers's album. Subsequently they were reprinted in a volume of *Manchester Poetry*, issued by James Wheeler in 1838.]

At Ainsworth's request, James Crossley wrote, as a motto or introduction for *Sir John Chiverton*, some excerpts from an imaginary old play entitled, *Merrie Daies, or Hie Away for Hulme Hall*.

"Chiverton Hall," the scene of the romance, was Hulme Hall, an ancient black-and-white timber mansion, situated on the high, rocky banks of the Irwell, in the outskirts of Manchester. Hulme Hall is no longer in existence,<sup>1</sup> but in Ainsworth's young days it was still standing, in a state of decay, and he was able to describe from personal examination its romantic appearance and remains of former splendours. *Sir John Chiverton* has thus some considerable topographical value, for Hulme Hall had been a great place in its time. It was originally built by the Hulme family in the reign of Henry II, and in Tudor and Stuart days was the seat of the Prestwyches. At the Restoration it became the property of the Mosleys, from whom Ainsworth was descended, a fact which accentuated the deep interest he took in the old Hall; and in *Sir John Chiverton*, the great, rambling mansion, its oak-panelled chambers, elaborate carvings, and mysterious vaults are described with minute detail. The caves in the banks of the river Irwell<sup>2</sup> are effectively utilized in the story, and the surrounding country is well delineated.

<sup>1</sup> The viaduct of the Manchester and Altrincham Railway now covers its former site. Apparently all that survives of Hulme Hall are forty-one grotesquely carved panels, which were removed to Worsley Hall, the seat of Lord Ellesmere.

<sup>2</sup> They were also introduced, later on, in *Guy Fawkes*.

*Sir John Chiverton* is a most picturesque and striking romance. It opens with a vivid description of a hawking expedition; later the scene changes to Rostherne,<sup>1</sup> and then back to the old Hall, where the dramatic *dénouement* is worked out to its gloomy end. The characterization is admirable—two figures, those of Jenkinson, the fat innkeeper, and the old knight, Sir Gamelyn, are limned with infinite humour. It is of particular interest to observe in this book certain early examples of, what may be termed, *Ainsworthisms*—detailed descriptions of costume, furnishings, and the dishes at a banquet in Tudor times. For example: “He wore . . . a doublet of dark satin, slashed with salmon-coloured silk . . . his boots were of blue Spanish leather, and a short cloak of deep purple velvet, richly embroidered, and fastened by a massy golden clasp, hung from his shoulders . . . his closed fist supported a lordly gerfalcon, completely attired with her embossed hood and knotted jesses, on the varvels attached to which was stamped the figure of a mermaid, the armorial bearing of the family. The legs of the hawk were hung with Milan bells. . . .”

This passage, and many another, might have come out of *The Tower of London*, or any of Ainsworth's great novels, and would alone prove that he wrote most of *Sir John Chiverton*.

*Sir John Chiverton* had the honour of winning the approbation of Sir Walter Scott. When John Gibson Lockhart came to reside in London, in December, 1825, to edit *The Quarterly Review*, Ainsworth called upon

<sup>1</sup> This is yet another proof of Ainsworth's hand; the Cheshire village, with its mere, which he knew so well in happy holidays, appears in several of his stories.

him, and renewed the acquaintance which had originated three years previously at Blackwood's shop in Edinburgh. Lockhart liked Ainsworth, and saw much of him. Consequently on the publication of *Sir John Chiverton* Ainsworth gave copies to Lockhart, requesting him to forward one to his distinguished father-in-law, Sir Walter Scott, if he, himself, approved of the work. Lockhart did, and sent the book, as requested, to Scott. Sir Walter was just starting from Edinburgh on a visit to London, so he read *Sir John Chiverton en route*, and wrote in his diary concerning it :—

“ 25, PALL MALL,

“ *October 17th.* (1826.)

“ Here am I in this capital once more. . . . I read with interest, during my journey, *Sir John Chiverton* and *Brambletye House*—novels, in what I may surely claim as the style—

‘ Which I was born to introduce—  
Refined it first, and show'd its use.’

“ They are both clever books—one in imitation of the days of chivalry—the other (by Horace Smith, one of the authors of *Rejected Addresses*) dated in the time of the Civil Wars, and introducing historical characters.”<sup>1</sup>

Scott then proceeded to debate the effect these new rivals might have on his own position with the public, observing: “ The hazard, indeed, remains of being beaten. . . . More of this to-morrow.”

Sir Walter returned to the subject again in his journal

<sup>1</sup> When Scott's *Diary* was published, Lockhart added this note to the above passage: “ *Chiverton* was the first publication (anonymous) of Mr. William Harrison Ainsworth, the author of *Rookwood* and other popular romances.”

the next day, and penned a long rumination on what he termed his "imitators":—

"I am sure I mean the gentlemen no wrong by calling them so, and heartily wish they had followed a better model . . . hard pressed as I am by these imitators, who must put the thing out of fashion at last, I consider . . . there is one way to give novelty—to depend for success on the interest of a well-contrived story. But, wo's me! that requires thought, consideration—the writing out a regular plan or plot—above all, the adhering to one—which I can never do, for the ideas rise as I write. . . . I shall never be able to take the trouble; and yet to make the world stare, and gain a new march ahead of them all! Well, something we still will do. . . ."

As Scott rightly conjectured, *Sir John Chiverton* was begotten of his own romances, which from the first so strongly influenced Ainsworth's literary work. The latter, when a youth, little thought that his own early romance would produce these cogitations and comparisons in the mind of the great Master himself. Here, then, was another triumph, though unknown at the time, for the precocious Ainsworth—and, also, in justice be it said, for his friend and collaborator, Aston. Scott was so interested in *Sir John Chiverton* that he asked that Ainsworth should be invited to meet him. This was done, and the interview, as will be seen later, produced an interesting literary result.



## CHAPTER V

MARRIAGE. THE OPERA. A PUBLISHER. LITERARY SOCIETY. AINSWORTH AND SCOTT. VISIT TO THE RHINE.

**I**N the summer of 1826, Ainsworth was again in Manchester for a short time; London life had made him solicitous for the comforts of the inner man, so, before his arrival, Crossley was notified: "Prepare for your *senior* partner: will you engage lodgings somewhere, where I can have my dinner well cooked . . . let them be nice ones—they *must* be able to cook a dinner in the orthodox fashion."

Soon after, this young sybarite paid his first, of many, visits to Paris, and wrote to Crossley:—

"Would that I could in this short space give you even a faint idea of its numberless delights . . . the stupendous magnificence of those lordly Palaces—Versailles can be equalled by nothing but the dreams you have of Babylon. . . . The Luxembourg is a gorgeous thing. Words cannot do justice to the impression made upon the mind by the first sight of that interminable gallery and galaxy of fine things—the Louvre, and I am equally incompetent to describe the sublime majesty of the Pantheon. The gardens of the Tuilleries are delicious . . . ; the Bridges are more striking than those in London,

from being more numerous, though nothing by the side of our Waterloo. . . . Of the Fête I can form some judgment, having been at St. Cloud during one—where I saw the King and the Duchess D'Angoulême<sup>1</sup>—dancing under the trees in the open air, fountains playing, and tens of thousands wandering happily in every direction. But it is not these things individually that make Paris the most delightful place in the world—it is the extreme lightness of the atmosphere, which produces a brilliancy of spirit unknown in this cloudy clime . . . I was only melancholy once during my stay in Paris, and that was a visit to Père la Chaise, the universal Cemetery; it resembles Vauxhall or, to go nearer home, Potter's Gardens, metamorphosed into a Burying-ground. You have a fine view of Paris from it, with the Seine gliding through the greenest fields like a line of silver. I saw the sepulchre wherein Voltaire and Rousseau were immured.

“ . . . We stayed at Boulogne for a few days previous to our journey to Paris; it is full of *roué* English, which makes it in bad odour. . . . Dover is a fine place, and the Castle striking; so is Canterbury—an antique and respectable town on a par with Chester, which it somewhat resembles. The Cathedral is a noble pile—we were chaperoned through it by my old fellow-pupil, Plummer, who was mightily rejoiced to see me. . . .

“ I thought it advisable to keep my return to London perfectly secret till all should be accomplished, and fancy the tidings sent home must have electrified some of my acquaintance: pray give me an exact account of

<sup>1</sup> This was Charles X and his daughter-in-law and niece, Marie Thérèse; she was the daughter of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, and had shared the trials of her family and witnessed all the horrors of the Revolution.

everything said and done when the news first reached you. . . .”

The last sentence refers to Ainsworth's hasty and romantic marriage with Anne Frances (Fanny) Ebers. With characteristic impetuosity, he decided to be married directly he returned from Paris, and his relations and friends in Manchester were only notified of the event two days before its celebration. On 9th October, 1826, he had written to Crossley :—

“ You will be surprised to learn that my marriage with Fanny Ebers is about to take place on Wednesday morning next. You will perhaps blame me for not disclosing this to you earlier, but really I had so much unhappiness on a former occasion, that I made a resolution, which I have kept, not to divulge it to a creature till the very moment of its celebration. This post only acquaints my mother of the circumstance. . . .”

And directly after the event, he found time to write :—

“ To you, my oldest and dearest friend, the intelligence that I am just married must be interesting. About an hour ago I was united to Fanny Ebers. . . .”<sup>1</sup>

The wedding took place on 11th October, 1826, at Marylebone Parish Church (then newly erected), the ceremony being performed by the Rev. Bryant Burgess ;<sup>2</sup> only the bride's relatives were present. The young couple were both twenty-one years of age. The register was signed on the same vestry table where, just twenty

<sup>1</sup> The remainder of this letter has been torn away.

<sup>2</sup> Curate of Marylebone Church ; afterwards Rector of Latimer, Bucks.

years later, Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett performed a similar act after their even more hasty and private marriage. The witnesses to the signatures of Ainsworth and his bride were the latter's sister, Emily Sarah Ebers ; her first cousin, Emily Sarah Fitch ;<sup>1</sup> and Edward Thomas Allan. The marriage took place, of course, from 8, Sussex Place ; and of the honeymoon we get a glimpse in Ainsworth's letters to Crossley :—

“ BATH HOTEL,  
“ CLIFTON, NEAR BRISTOL,  
“ 30th October, 1826.

“ . . . Our first resting-place, after our marriage had taken place, was Henley-on-the-Thames—the most delightful and picturesque village in England ; and here we remained a week as happy as it was possible for human creatures to be, and far too happy and too busy to communicate any intelligence of that happiness to others. Our whole time was employed in riding out through green lanes ; visiting old abbeys—Medmenham to wit—ancient mansions, of which Hurley Hall or Lady Place, notorious

<sup>1</sup> Emily (known as “ Amelia ”) Fitch was the daughter of John Ebers's sister ; she and one of her brothers (who, later, distinguished himself as a Colonel in the Spanish Army) were adopted by their uncle, and lived with the Ebers family in Sussex Place. “ Amelia ” Fitch, the most intimate friend of her cousin, Fanny Ainsworth, was herself married a few months later (January, 1828) in Marylebone Church, to James Payne Storey. Her children and grandchildren have carried on the artistic and theatrical traditions of the Ebers family in a remarkable manner ; her second son is Mr. G. A. Storey, A.R.A., the distinguished artist, and her daughter, Clara, married Mr. Philip Calderon, R.A. Mr. Fred Storey, the clever actor and scene-painter, and Miss Gladys Storey, who is also well known on the stage, are grandchildren of Mrs. Storey (“ Amelia ” Fitch), and her great-granddaughter, Miss Sylvia Lilian Storey, of the Gaiety Theatre, married Earl Poulett in 1908.

The portrait of Mrs. Storey, painted in 1874, about a year before her death, by her son, Mr. G. A. Storey, A.R.A., was one of the most remarkable and appreciated pictures at the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1910.

for numberless historic recollections, is no mean specimen, and the most ghostly place in the world ; river-parties ; fishing ; and walking amongst the wooded lanes and parks. . . . We then changed the scene to Bath (7, South Parade), which we left this morning. . . . Bath is a second edition of the best parts of London—a transportation of the Regent's Park to the hills of Somerset. . . . Here I read your old friend, Anstey's *Guide*,<sup>1</sup> for the first time : what a charming book ! I like it better than the *Fudge Family*.

“ Freeman, the miniature painter, has been taking my wife's likeness. It was rather singular we should meet with him in Bath. I was determined to put his

<sup>1</sup> Ainsworth was evidently taken with the style of Christopher Anstey's amusing work, *The New Bath Guide* (1766), for he wrote off some nonsense verses in similar metre, and sent them to Amelia Fitch. They are dated *Bath, October 25th, 1826* :—

“ Amelia, dearest, you cannot conceive  
 The pleasure it gave us your note to receive :  
 How exceedingly kind in you thus, love, to write—  
 A letter, you know, couldn't fail to delight.  
 Accept our best thanks for the nice little present,  
 We shall take your advice as to dressing ye pheasant.  
 How good, how considerate, thus to remind,  
 But you always, Amelia, were thoughtful and kind.  
 We're extremely concerned, for we know what the bore is,  
 To hear that they pester you still with their *Stories*—  
 What silly reports—was such stuff ever heard ?  
 We wonder that people can be so absurd—  
 Such reports must your character sadly disparage,  
 As we all of us know your aversion to marriage.  
 Your sentiments, too, you politely reveal  
 By the elegant motto engraved on your seal :  
 The best of all possible mottos, no doubt,  
 (' *Le Devil importe* ') to put lovers to rout.  
 We hear from a letter which reach'd us to-day  
 Sussex Place has become most remarkably gay—  
 That *six* maiden ladies (antique we opine)  
 Came to see you and also consented to dine—  
 This is just as it should be, Amelia, love—  
 Acquaintance of this sort we always approve.  
 We were rather surprised our Amelia should tell us  
 Her name might be apt to make one of us jealous ;

talents in requisition—he appeared vastly pleased with his subject, and has painted her to the life. . . .<sup>1</sup>

“ I must remind you of your promise to write to me fully all particulars of the past—every event that has occurred since my departure from your town, as I am mightily anxious to learn what has happened in my absence. . . . Take care to arrange all your facts chronologically. Tell me what you have been doing yourself, and what the world says of me. Are you still at Chetham’s in your favourite bower? <sup>2</sup>—a bower which after ages will regard with respect as the temporary *séjour* of two of the most illustrious men of their age—the literary Pylades and Orestes. Fancy the future youths of Manchester perambulating the garden near the Cottage,<sup>3</sup> and exclaiming, as they see the unweeded walks—‘ these have been trodden by their feet, when in mutual converse they planned those mighty works which were afterwards to delight and astonish us—here, doubtless, have they discoursed on those astonishing theories of life and death, which being propagated have stamped them as the master spirits of their time, and taught men how to rival Cornaro <sup>4</sup> in longevity.’ But a truce to this. . . .

Not the least, dear Amelia, pray show us the harm in  
Addressing you soon by a title so charming.  
But the post waits—we haven’t a moment to lose—  
And must bring our epistle at once to a close.  
All manner of compliments, tender and true,  
To our nearest and dearest of cousins are due.  
We beg she’ll accept our united regards  
And remember us both to the Maunds and the Wards :  
With best wishes to sister, aunt, Pa, and the rest,  
Politely delivered, and kindly exprest—

We remain, etc.,

“ W. H. A.

“ F. A.”

<sup>1</sup> Freeman also painted a miniature of Ainsworth, at Bath, in 1826. Both portraits are reproduced in this work.

<sup>2</sup> The oriel window in the library.

<sup>3</sup> “ Beech Hill.”

<sup>4</sup> The Venetian author of a treatise on Longevity.



MRS. HARRISON AINSWORTH, AT THE TIME OF HER MARRIAGE.  
*From the portrait by Freeman, painted at Bath, October, 1826.*





“ We are now at Clifton, ‘ the Mont Pelier of England,’ as the Guide-book saith, distant about a mile from Bristol, which I have only seen through the mistiness of gas at even. Pray write, dear Crossley—a letter will be a real favour. . . .”

Married but a fortnight, his thoughts were with earlier ties.

The Ainsworths, on leaving Clifton, proceeded by water to Chepstow; thence they went to Cheltenham, and concluded the honeymoon at Malvern.

On their return to London they resided for a short time with Mr. Ebers at 8, Sussex Place, where a separate suite of rooms was assigned them; the following year, however, the young couple took No. 4, Sussex Place, and had their own establishment.

These houses are some of the most desirable in London; they form part of Nash's great scheme to construct in Marylebone Park a garden—or rather park—city which should communicate with Carlton House by way of Portland Place and Regent Street. Built in graceful crescent shape, Sussex Place forms an imposing pile of buildings, crowned by cupolas; and the outlook from the principal rooms, across the large private garden to Regent's Park beyond, makes it a delightful *rus in urbe*.

Established here, in a fine house adapted for entertaining on a large scale, Ainsworth and his beautiful young wife participated for a few years in all the pleasures and gaieties of London life.

As the lessee's son-in-law, Ainsworth was intimately associated with the affairs of the Opera; and being in constant attendance there, both before and behind the

curtain, some account of the theatre under Mr. Ebers's management may be of interest.

John Ebers, in his capacity of owner of the Library in Old Bond Street, had acted as agent for letting the boxes at the Opera House since 1802. The management of the King's Theatre,<sup>1</sup> as the Opera House was called, falling vacant in 1820, Ebers became the lessee at the earnest solicitation of the Earls of Ailesbury and Mount Edgcumbe, and he held the theatre for seven years—for the seasons of 1821-7.

The speculation proved disastrous; it dissipated Ebers's large fortune and brought him to bankruptcy. He gave his patrons too much for their money; the mounting of the operas was lavish, and the very best talent was secured, regardless of expense. Then, as now, the salaries artistes demanded were enormous: for instance, Ebers paid both Madame Pasta and Velluti £2300 each for a season; and, in 1821, the chief dancers in the ballet, Albert and Mdle. Noblet, received £1785 and £1537 respectively. What wonder, then, that, at the end of his seven years, the manager's losses amounted to about £70,000.

The King's Theatre was a brilliant social institution during Ebers's regime; not only was the house crowded with all the beauty and fashion of London, but the Green Room, behind the scenes, was the resort of all the young bloods and old bucks about town. Though now obsolete, the Green Room of the Opera, eighty years ago, was a recognized, and perhaps the most popular, institution in the "fast" life of London; it was not so much the

<sup>1</sup> The King's Theatre stood in Pall Mall, at the bottom of the Haymarket; the site is, in part, covered by the present "His Majesty's" Theatre

vocalists as the dancers who were the attraction, for those were the palmy days of the ballet.

The peerage of the period took the greatest interest in the ballet—and the *coryphées*, and was intimately concerned in both the business affairs of the house and the pleasures of the fair disciples of Terpsichore. Most conspicuous in these matters was the Earl of Fife,<sup>1</sup> who acted as agent in Paris for engaging artistes for the King's Theatre at home. Lord Fife was a great admirer of the famous ballet dancer, Noblet, and, when in London, he gave a dinner in her honour every Sunday, at the Pulteney Hotel. It was Lord Fife, too, who “discovered” and brought over to London the lovely Spanish dancer, Mercandotti, who was generally believed to be his daughter; she whose charms compelled a *clergyman* to deliver himself of these lines:—

Sweet Mercandotti, if such ladies  
 Could often be invoiced from Cadiz—  
 Such raven locks, such sparkling eyes  
 Were voted in the home supplies;  
 Such fairy feet, such taper fingers—  
 They'd make the fortune of the bringers;  
 E'en I, who dread the name of wife,  
 Might order per the good ship *Fife*.

Mercandotti was an immense success in London; all the *flâneurs* who frequented the Green Room of the Opera were in love with her, and pestered Ebers from morning to night for an introduction to the beautiful Spaniard. Mercandotti, though scarcely sixteen, was astute, and chose the wealthiest of her admirers—Ball Hughes, a

<sup>1</sup> James Duff, 4th Earl of Fife, who distinguished himself in the Peninsular War. He married Maria, daughter of the Countess of Dysart. Lord Fife died in 1857, and was grand-uncle to the 1st Duke of Fife.

handsome Hussar, known as the "Golden Ball," on account of his money. The two were married in the presence of three persons only—the bride's mother, Lord Fife, and Ebers. It suited the manager, however, to have a sensation about this affair ; accordingly, on the evening of 8th March, 1823, when the theatre was crowded with an audience all expectant to see the bright particular star of the ballet, Ebers came forward and announced that Mademoiselle Mercandotti had unaccountably "disappeared." This event was the theme of conversation for some days after, and, according to Captain Gronow,<sup>1</sup> Ainsworth wrote the following epigram upon it :—

" The fair damsel is gone ; and no wonder at all  
That, bred to the dance, she is gone to a *Ball*."

Ebers had his full share of the trials and tribulations of a manager, who has to contend with the caprices and demands of operatic stars ;<sup>2</sup> and, as before stated, his tenancy of the King's Theatre ended in bankruptcy. This also involved Ainsworth in much trouble, for, in addition to losing his wife's expected fortune, he generously borrowed and raised money for Ebers, and embarked upon other schemes for the benefit of his sister-in-law, Miss Ebers.

However, while it lasted, Ainsworth's intimate association with operatic affairs was an interesting episode in his life ; one which gave him good opportunities of studying character and human nature. It was also useful in another way, for in the Green Room he met many influential men who were of service to him in the next

<sup>1</sup> See Gronow's *Celebrities of London and Paris*.

<sup>2</sup> For a full account of John Ebers's management of the Opera House, see his *Seven Years of the King's Theatre*.

stage of his career—that of publishing and bookselling, where his power of creating deadheads at the Opera proved a valuable aid to his business.

It was owing to the advice of John Ebers that Ainsworth abandoned his legal career, and, for a time, became a bookseller and publisher. It was not a wise step. The monetary sacrifice was great; it involved relinquishing his share, as senior partner, in the lucrative law business, founded by his late father, in Manchester; <sup>1</sup> it was exchanging a certainty for a chance. On the other hand, it is true, there was some prospect of success as a publisher; for he was to take over Ebers's extensive business connection, and have the benefit of his father-in-law's advice and experience. Ainsworth was swayed by other reasons, also, to essay publishing. A friend, who knew him well, says of this episode of his life:—

“ His was not the speculation of an ordinary publisher; his aim was to promote the interests of literature, to advance his own reputation as a writer, and to surround himself with such authors as it was alike honourable to serve and to be associated with; he thought that he might bring forward sterling works, rejected, perhaps, as not ‘fashionable,’ and assist writers of a better class than those who aspired to a merely fleeting popularity; in any case he should succeed in showing that such an enterprise might be conducted on liberal and gentleman-like principles. These were his objects; but he mistook the practicability of the scheme. . . . He had great

<sup>1</sup> James Crossley and John Sudlow carried on the business after Harrison Ainsworth seceded from the firm. Crossley retired in 1860. The firm is now represented by Messrs. Milne, Bury, and Lewis, of Manchester.

liberality, a highly cultivated literary taste, ripe scholarship, and popular manners; he was borne up by the spirit of youth, and the love of books for their own sake, to make an experiment, and his entering upon it was the best proof of the sacrifices he could cheerfully incur, and that he thought of no selfish or mercenary bargain . . . but he lacked forethought, deliberation, patience under disappointment, submission to repugnant tasks, and indifference to the trifling circumstance of being always unthanked and generally misapprehended."

However, he entered upon the speculation with all the ardour of youth and his own temperamental enthusiasm. The adoption of this new profession synchronized with his marriage, and he started business on returning from his honeymoon. The new arrangements were, that Ainsworth should take over the publishing business, and that his bookshop should be quite distinct from the old-established circulating library of Ebers. Accordingly, the *depôt* of the latter, at 27, Old Bond Street, was divided into two separate establishments: Ebers retained one half of the house, and his son-in-law, trading as publisher and bookseller, occupied the other. Ainsworth describes his new venture to Crossley thus:—

" 27, OLD BOND STREET,

*" 25th November, 1826.*

" . . . My shop is nearly ready. The partition has been erected, and the Library books removed, and my stock is being transferred to the vacant shelves. The customers stare and marvel at the change, but it has by no means a bad effect. My shop consists of a long, lobby-like room, terminating in a snug room, the shelves

of which are loaded with goodly tomes, and the tables covered with magazines, newspapers, and new publications. When it is entirely completed it will have a very knowing appearance. The lease was executed prior to my marriage—the term thereof is seven years, and the rent, £100 a year.<sup>1</sup> . . . I take the whole of the profits of the business from the 1st of last July, but have not had any of the outstanding debts assigned to me. . . . My name frowns over the door in brazen characters as Bookseller and Publisher. . . . I have been introduced to divers bibliopoles, all of whom are exceedingly astonished at the youthful appearance of ‘Mr. Matthews.’<sup>2</sup> The advice they gave me savoured of the ludicrous, especially in the instance of Master Harry Colburn, who warned me against publishing. All of them, however, think my chances of success very fair. I have this morning been paying a visit to the Countess of Jersey,<sup>3</sup> who has invited me to visit her at her house near Oxford, and arrange her Library, which it will give me infinite pleasure to attend to.”

At first, Ainsworth found his business very successful ; from the outset it brought him in contact with many famous writers, and he enjoyed the life. His letters to Crossley at this period contain frequent mention of his publishing transactions :—

<sup>1</sup> This is interesting in view of present-day rents in Bond Street.

<sup>2</sup> Apparently for a short time at first, Ainsworth used this name for business purposes.

<sup>3</sup> Wife of the 5th Earl of Jersey, of Middleton Park, Oxon. She was the daughter of the 10th Earl of Westmorland ; and heiress of Osterley Park, Middlesex, through her maternal grandfather, Robert Child, the banker. Lady Jersey, at the time Ainsworth met her, was in the height of her beauty and fame as *the* leader of society. She entertained lavishly at 38, Berkeley Square (now occupied by Lord Rosebery), and was one of the exclusive patronesses of “Almacks.” Lady Jersey was the original of “Zenobia,” in Disraeli’s *Endymion* ; and died in 1861, at the age of eighty-two.

“ 27, OLD BOND STREET.

“ 3rd February, 1827.

“ I am quite in the back parlour in literature—not a day passes but I have half a dozen MSS. submitted to me, and were I disposed, could publish for half the people of Letters. You will see I announce a couple of volumes of Tales by Hood. Colburn has a variety of works in the press—he has near thirty ‘Tales of Fashionable Life’ in preparation.<sup>1</sup> My Cookery Book<sup>2</sup> is in active preparation: what would I not give you to write a Meg Dods article about it in *Blackwood*. Heath, the engraver, and I are going to produce in September the most magnificent Annual ever dreamed about. It is to cost a guinea, and contain twenty plates; the literary matter will be first rate. Amongst other things which will please you, are some lively sketches, in the best *Indicator* style, by Leigh Hunt. The name is execrable—Heath baptizes it *The Keepsake*, which to my thinking savours of a gift from Tunbridge Wells. Can you not supply me with something better?—at all events, let me have a second title to correct the first; give me something relating to Fashion, for I intend to enrol all the *littérateurs* of the *Beau Monde* under my banner. By the by, I must beg a favour of you. I could at any time make £500, if I could write one of the fashionable novels before mentioned, for which I have lots of incidental material, but lack a continuous plot. Pray turn over your old fancies and suggest one somewhat relative to society—give me a few characters, and a good *dénouement*, and you shall see what I will make of it. . . . Pray, are we never to see you in town? My wife would be delighted to see you, and I have so much to talk about. My business certainly

<sup>1</sup> According to Mr. W. C. Hazlitt, Colburn was the reputed natural son of Frederick, Duke of York, who supplied him with the means of starting in business. Colburn died in 1855. His widow married John Forster.

<sup>2</sup> *The French Cook*, by L. E. Ude.



improves and I conceive myself quite established. I like it much. . . . Now, by our old friendship, thou lazy fellow, I entreat thee write. . . .”

A few weeks after, he duly published Tom Hood's *National Tales*—one of the earliest productions of that most delightful of writers—and the work was successful, for Ainsworth wrote:—

“12th March, 1827.

“Hood's *Tales* are just what you describe them—pleasing; they have quite answered my purpose—brought me home a hundred pounds or so.<sup>1</sup>

“Will you believe it, I am engaged in writing a novel, in three volumes, which is to be printed and published within six weeks. Never quote Horace Walpole for expedition again. It is to be published by Colburn, and I am to receive £750 for the copyright.<sup>2</sup> This is *entre nous*. My literary acquaintances are become very extensive. Leigh Hunt and I are great friends. As a set-off to him I patronize Dr. Maginn,<sup>3</sup> who is useful in the puffing department. Ollier<sup>4</sup> is another of my cronies—author of *Altham and his Wife*. Croly and I are hand and glove. . . . I am just on the eve of publishing a fashionable *jeu d'esprit* to be called *Mayfair*; it is a very smart affair, and will, no doubt, prove a hit.”

[The lyrical *Mayfair* was a vast success and exhausted two editions.]

<sup>1</sup> The work was sold at a guinea.

<sup>2</sup> Apparently this scheme was not carried out.

<sup>3</sup> William Maginn (1793–1842), the well-known Irish wit and journalist. He was at this period editing *The Standard*, and had just published his remarkable novel, *Whitehall, or the Days of George IV*—a wildly humorous sketch of the leading characters of the day, from the King to the public hangman.

<sup>4</sup> Charles Ollier (1788–1859), who with his brother, James, had published for Shelley and Lamb. He was later the author of *Ferrers*, and a frequent contributor to *Ainsworth's Magazine*.

“ I have the pleasure to send you a copy of a little book I have just published—*Mayfair*, which is causing a great sensation in town. Everybody says it is the best thing of the sort extant, and beats Luttrell hollow . . . it is by a distinguished member of Brooks’s and Crockford’s, and has occasioned much talk and scandal in the *Bleu Coteries*. . . . By the way, Luttrell<sup>1</sup> and I are great friends. I am his publisher elect if he writes again. Lockhart also is a crony of mine ; I think I shall publish a novel for him in the course of next season. Crofton Croker<sup>2</sup> offered me the continuation of *The Fairy Legends of the South of Ireland*. . . . I shall bring out a little romance by him next year. Even as I write, Jerdan<sup>3</sup> and Miss Landon<sup>3</sup> have walked into my room, which is, I assure you, quite a literary *rendezvous*. . . . I am about to reprint Coleridge’s *Wallenstein*, with some new translations by Lord Francis Leveson-Gower. . . . The next book I bring out is a little volume of *Travels in the United States* by de Ros<sup>4</sup>—pleasant and amusing. . . . I, of course, feel much interested about it. . . . ”

<sup>1</sup> Henry Luttrell, a popular wit and member of London society. He was believed to be a natural son of Lord Carhampton. Luttrell was a member of the last Irish Parliament before the Union of 1800, and died at an advanced age in 1851.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Crofton Croker, F.S.A. (1798–1854), who was engaged at the Admiralty. A well-known writer on Irish antiquities and legends.

<sup>3</sup> William Jerdan (1782–1869), the editor of *The Literary Gazette*, was the “discoverer” of the literary talent of Letitia Elizabeth Landon (1802–38)—the admired poetess, “L. E. L.,” of a former generation. Her early work appeared in *The Literary Gazette* ; and Jerdan was her literary adviser and intimate friend. At the period Ainsworth writes of, stories of a more scandalous connection between Jerdan and Miss Landon were current. “L. E. L.” married, in 1838, Mr. George Maclean, Governor of Cape Coast Castle ; and her death by poison, a few months later, presented many mysterious features.

<sup>4</sup> The Hon. Frederick De Ros, born 1804 ; son of the Baroness De Ros and Lord Henry FitzGerald. He was a nephew of the famous Lord Edward FitzGerald, and a Lieutenant in the Navy. He became Rear-Admiral, and died 1861.

He also published another book of travels—*An Autumn in Greece*, by Henry Lytton Bulwer; and about the same time he issued the second edition of his own romance, *Sir John Chiverton*.

The most successful work, however, that Ainsworth published during his first year of business was a new and enlarged edition—the eighth, in fact—of *The French Cook*, by Louis Eustache Ude—the king of Amphitryons, “the Gil Blas of the kitchen.” This unique study of the culinary art brought in a handsome sum to the astute young publisher who had purchased the copyright, and the book was in the hands of every *gourmet* in London. “Have you seen all the jokes about Ude in the newspapers?” Ainsworth wrote to Crossley. Jerdan said, “His (Ainsworth’s) publication of the illustrious Ude’s ‘Culinary Book’ was the source of a hundred entertaining mental and corporeal treats which all the puffs in the English tongue could not over pay. Laughter at Ude’s quaintness and drolleries, and dinners of Ude’s own cooking, were unique in their way, as his ideas and conversations were original.”

Ude<sup>1</sup> had been the *chef* of Louis XVI; of Madame Letitia Buonaparte; and then of the Earl of Sefton, at a salary of three hundred guineas per annum. At another time, he presided over the culinary department of Crockford’s; but his favourite master was Frederick, Duke of York, and when the royal gourmand died, his bereaved *chef* pathetically ejaculated, “*Ah! mon pauvre Duc! how much you will miss me, wherever you are gone to!*”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A quaint portrait of Ude will be found in *The Maclise Portrait Gallery*.

<sup>2</sup> The Duke of York fancied French literature as well as cooking. Some *very* erotic volumes which passed through Ainsworth’s shop were,

Ainsworth had some intention of founding a new club—a temple dedicated to the two gods of literature and perfect gastronomy—and Ude was to be the presiding deity of the cuisine. The literary moiety of this mundane paradise was to be governed by commission, judging from the following details in Tom Moore's Diary :—

“ 19th Feb., 1828. Called at Ebers's in consequence of a note, requesting the honour of a few minutes' conversation ; found it was to get me on the committee of a new club he and his son-in-law were setting up. Said that as the club was to be chiefly literary, it would give an éclat to its commencement . . . said that Mr. Campbell was already an honorary member, etc. Answer . . . I already belonged to the Athenæum : if anything, however, should lead me to quit the Athenæum, I should join them.”

The new club, however, does not appear to have been consummated.

Ainsworth found his influence at the Opera House of great service to his publishing business, for free tickets at the fashionable theatre, presented to journalists, induced highly favourable reviews of books emanating from 27, Old Bond Street. Thus, to Tom Hill—“ the World's acquaintance ”—Ainsworth wrote concerning Jarrin's *Italian Confectioner*, which he had issued : “ I beg to enclose you a copy of a work on Confectionery, the copyright of which I have recently purchased. Can you oblige me with a kind word about it in *The Chronicle*, and add thereby to the multitude of favours which I

as he informed Crossley, “ intended for the perusal of the Duke of York and sent over from France for him ” ; but he died in 1827.

have received at your hands. The work is really a most scientific one—indeed, the only distinct treatise on Confectionery extant. When I can serve you at the Opera, command me.”

And “Barry Cornwall,” too, was converted into a deadhead by Ainsworth, who wrote to Charles Ollier: “I forgot to tell you . . . that it was my wish to place *Mr. Procter's name upon the Free List at the Opera*. Perhaps you would convey him the intelligence with my compliments.” So this astute and smart young publisher of twenty-two was already beginning to wield no small power and influence in the social and literary world of London—the great city to which he had come but two years ago an entire stranger, unknown and without position. His was a character bound to assert itself and attain prominence from sheer force of great abilities coupled with strong self-confidence.

Of Ainsworth's personal appearance in his publishing days—“That Adonis of Booksellers” (as one journal styled him)—we get a glimpse from the pen of Samuel Carter Hall, who records:—

“When I knew him in 1826, not long after he married the daughter of Ebers . . . and ‘condescended’ for a brief time to be a publisher, he was a remarkably handsome young man—tall, graceful in deportment, and in all ways a pleasant person to look upon and talk to. He was, perhaps, as thorough a gentleman his native city of Manchester ever sent forth.”

In the summer of 1827, Ainsworth's first child, a daughter, named Fanny, was born;<sup>1</sup> and in September

<sup>1</sup> Miss Fanny Ainsworth died unmarried in 1908, at the age of eighty-one, and was buried at Frampton Cotterell, Bristol.

of the same year the family were at Brighton for a time. Writing to Crossley, from 73, King's Road, he says: "We are still sojourning at Brighton, which we find very pleasant—sky sunny—air free from the sea, and exquisitely bracing—and ocean itself in a fine swell. . . . Often do I wish for your society. We are full of *The Keepsake*."

It may be recalled that Ainsworth in a former letter alluded to his negotiations with Heath, the engraver, for the publication of this new annual, *The Keepsake*. The first volume duly appeared in 1828; two other firms were associated with Ainsworth in its production, and he acted as editor. The new annual attracted much notice; for it was a great improvement over other books of this description, which had descended in a copious shower upon England since Ackerman introduced, from Germany, the fashion of gift-books, by the publication of the *Forget-me-Not*, in 1822. *The Keepsake*—magnificently bound in red silk and embellished with beautiful engravings—was sold at a guinea, which, considering the proprietors spent nearly twelve thousand pounds upon the production, was not excessive.

Ainsworth himself contributed largely to the first volume of *The Keepsake*. He wrote the clever and amusing introductory paper on *Pocket Books and Keepsakes*, in which he slyly satirized the gorgeous bindings and elaborate embellishments of these souvenir volumes; and he also introduced an allusion to his shop in Bond Street and recent publications in the following parody of a passage in Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*:—

As for those Baldwins, and the men of Long,  
That bought my Walter Scotts and cookery books,  
Here have I pursed their paltry sovereigns.  
Fie, what a trouble 'tis to count such books!

Give me the dealers in the souvenirs,  
 That trade in volumes worth their weight in gold,  
 Myself their chief, that with my princely funds  
 Without control can buy good authors up ;  
 And in my house heap books like jewelry ;  
 Printed with ink with wine in it, and bound  
 By fellows, as at operas, in kid gloves ;  
 Books bound in opal, sapphire, amethyst,  
 With topaz tooling, Eden green morocco,  
 That once was slippers to an emperor ;  
 And full of articles of so great price,  
 As one of them, indifferently written,  
 And not ascribed unto a man of quality,  
 Might serve, in peril of a writ of Middlesex,  
 To ransom great bards from captivity.  
 This is the sort of publishing for me :

. . . . .  
 But now how stands the ledger ?  
 Into what pockets peer my Christmas bills ?  
 . . . . . I hope my men  
 I sent to Grosvenor Place and Hyde Park Corner  
 Are gotten up by Mr. Bootle's house ;  
 My gatherers-in from th' east and Albany,  
 Serious with drafts immense, now under button,  
 Are smoothly gliding down by Saville Row,  
 To Bond Street, through our Hanoverian ways.<sup>1</sup>

For this same volume of *The Keepsake*, 1828, Ainsworth also wrote the Dedicatory Stanzas (which are similar in style and metre to those he prefixed to *Sir John Chiverton*<sup>2</sup>) ; *Opera Reminiscences* for 1827 ; some verses entitled *The Cook and the Doctor*, which were a skilful advertisement of his famous publication, *The French Cook*, by Ude ; and *The Ghost Laid* (with illustration), a reminiscence of the Cheshire village with which so many of his early memories were associated, and

<sup>1</sup> This parody should be compared with the original passage in Marlowe for its humour to be fully appreciated.

<sup>2</sup> See *ante*, p. 142.

which he here describes as the "Sweet village of ROSTHERNE! Gem of my youth's localities! How powerless has been the lapse of years, to erase from among the chronicled regrets of memory, thy soothing and sequestered beauties. . . ."

Although it is the fashion to pour contempt upon the Annuals of seventy years ago, it is a fact that much good literature made its first appearance in their now despised pages (surrounded, certainly, by a great deal of sentimental and ephemeral rubbish). Hood's masterpiece, *The Dream of Eugene Aram*, was first published in *The Gem*; and Thackeray's *Piscator and Piscatrix*, and many of Walter Savage Landor's *Imaginary Conversations* in *The Book of Beauty*; Sir Walter Scott received £500 for *The Tapestry Chamber*,<sup>1</sup> *My Aunt Margaret's Mirror*, *The House of Aspen*, and three other items, which he contributed to *The Keepsake*; and among other contributors of much excellent work to the Annuals were Wordsworth, Coleridge, Tom Moore, Southey, Agnes Strickland, Mrs. Hemans, Disraeli, Edward FitzGerald, Theodore Hook, and Bulwer-Lytton. So Charles Lamb was infamous in good company when he wrote, hyperbolically, "Why, by dabbling in those accursed Annuals, I have become a by-word of infamy all over the kingdom."

Something worth reading can be found in most volumes of *The Keepsake* or *Book of Beauty*, and the engravings well repay examination.

For the year 1828, also, Ainsworth published an Annual of his own, entitled *The Christmas Box*, which was edited by T. Crofton Croker, and dedicated to the

<sup>1</sup> This excellent ghost story was illustrated with an effective drawing by Stephanoffe when it appeared in *The Keepsake*.



Duchess of Kent. In this book was printed for the first time Sir Walter Scott's delightful ballad, *The Bonnets of Bonnie Dundee*, and Ainsworth's acquisition of this treasure forms an interesting piece of literary history.

It will be recalled that owing to Ainsworth's friendship with Lockhart, Scott read *Sir John Chiverton* when travelling to London, in October, 1826. Established at his son-in-law's house, 25, Pall Mall, the great romancer expressed a wish to meet the author of the book that had beguiled his journey so pleasantly; accordingly, Ainsworth was invited, and introduced to his favourite author—the romance writer who most strongly influenced his own literary work. This interview with “the grand old man,” as Ainsworth called him, proved one of the most memorable and enjoyable incidents of his life. Always a brilliant talker, and by no means afflicted with shyness, Ainsworth ingratiated himself with Scott from the outset. Before the evening ended, the young publisher asked Sir Walter to contribute to the Annual which he contemplated producing the following year; Scott at once consented to do so, and shortly after sent Ainsworth the manuscript of *The Bonnets of Bonnie Dundee*, which he had written the previous year.<sup>1</sup> When Sir Walter paid his next visit to London, in April, 1828, Lockhart had removed to No. 24, Sussex Place, a few doors from where Ainsworth was living. The

<sup>1</sup> Scott wrote in his Diary:—

“December 22nd, 1825. . . . The air of *Bonnie Dundee* running in my head to-day, I wrote a few verses to it before dinner, taking the key-note from the story of Clavers leaving the Scottish Convention of Estates in 1688-9. I wonder if they are good . . . can't say what made me take a frisk so uncommon of late years as to write verses of free-will. I suppose the same impulse which makes birds sing when the storm has blown over.”

latter was again invited to meet Scott; and it was at this interview that Ainsworth proffered the author of *Bonnie Dundee* twenty guineas for his contribution to *The Christmas Box*. Scott laughingly accepted payment, but immediately gave the money to his little granddaughter, Charlotte Lockhart,<sup>1</sup> who was in the room at the time. Ainsworth was naturally delighted at securing *Bonnie Dundee* for his *Christmas Box*. Fifty years later he said to Edmund Yates: "I am a Jacobite, and am proud of it. I have read and written so much about that unfortunate party that I have become one of them in spirit. I am not in bad company. Dr. Johnson was a Jacobite at heart, and so was Scott. I think one of the best songs ever written is *Bonnie Dundee*; it has the true anapæstic canter in it—with the rattle of scabbards and the jingling of spurs."<sup>2</sup> That glorious ballad was once in my possession. It was almost the last thing Scott wrote, and I was delighted to produce some of his work. I gave the manuscript to Lord Francis Leveson-Gower,<sup>3</sup> and the oddest part of the whole business is that in *The Christmas Box* the song appeared short of one verse."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Miss Lockhart married, in 1847, James Robert Hope, q.c., and her daughter, Mary Monica (The Hon. Mrs. Maxwell-Scott), is the present owner of Abbotsford, and representative of her great-grandfather, Sir Walter Scott.

<sup>2</sup> Later on, Ainsworth wrote a ballad himself in similar style—*One Foot in the Stirrup*—for *Rookwood*.

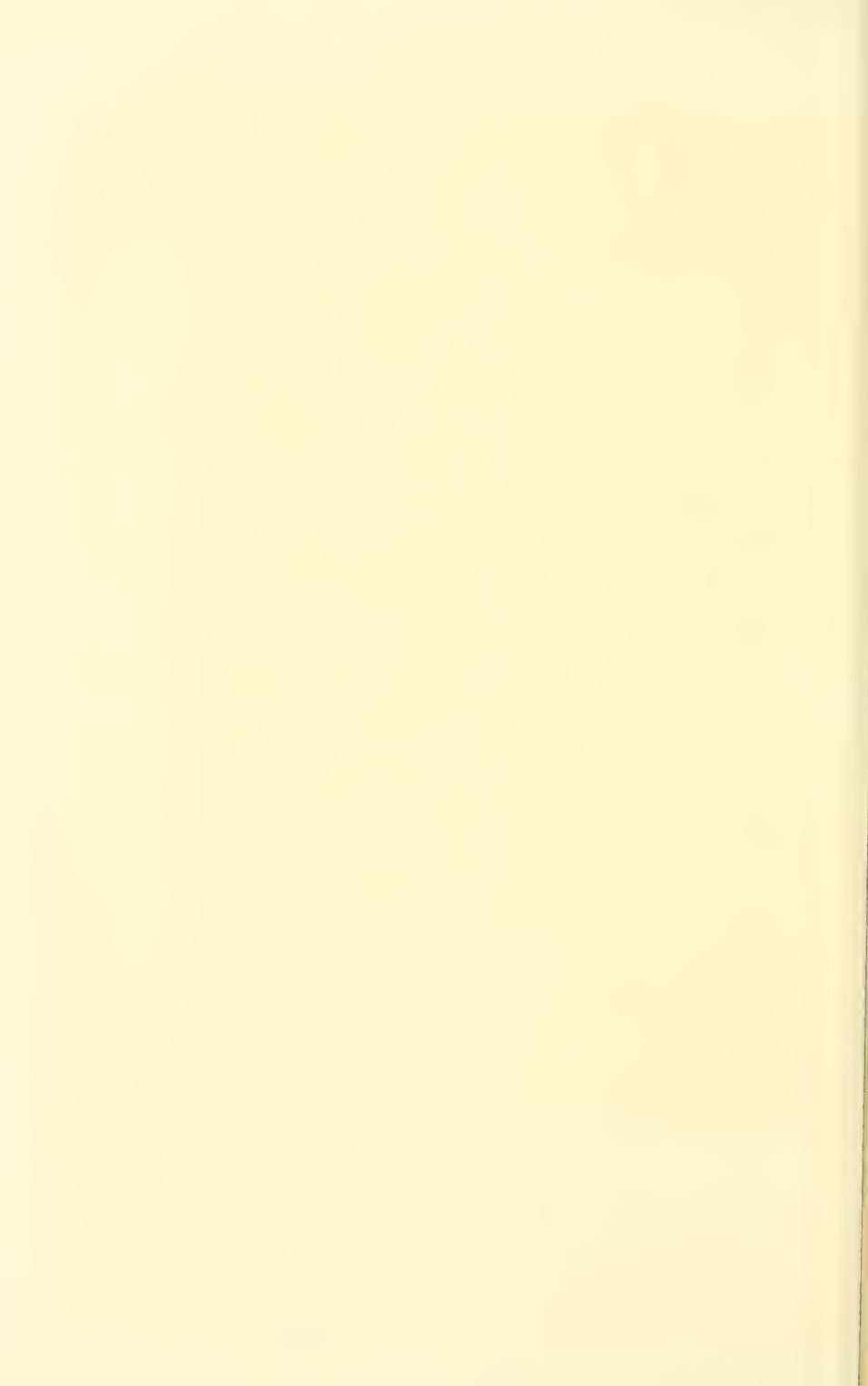
<sup>3</sup> Lord Francis Leveson-Gower, born 1799, was a son of the 1st Duke of Sutherland. He married a sister of Charles Greville, the diarist.

<sup>4</sup> The following intimation respecting the music of *Bonnie Dundee* appeared in *The Christmas Box*:—

"The publisher begs to inform the composers of music and music-sellers that Mr. James Power, of the Strand, music-seller, is the only person authorised by him to publish *The Bonnets of Bonnie Dundee*, by Sir Walter Scott."



4, SUSSEX PLACE, REGENT'S PARK. AINSWORTH'S HOME, 1827-31.



Although primarily intended for children, *The Christmas Box* contained contributions from other well-known writers—friends of Ainsworth's—in addition to Walter Scott. Charles Lamb sent his *Verses written in the first leaf of Lucy Barton's Album* ("Little book surnamed of white . . .") which were here printed for the first time; and other contributors included Theodore Hook, Lockhart, and Maginn. Ainsworth himself wrote the tale entitled *The Fairy and the Peach Tree*.<sup>1</sup> W. H. Brooke furnished quaint and delightful woodcuts for *The Christmas Box*.

There was also a rather foolish ghost story, yclept *Little Willie Bell*, anent a small boy who deposited a halfpenny in the plate at a church collection instead of the sixpence which had been given to him for that purpose; after his death, which followed the theft with retributive rapidity, his ghost haunted the room where he had secreted in life the stolen, non-spent, and spirit-troubling sixpence! This affecting tale appeared in the *first* volume (1828) of *The Christmas Box*, so the legend (attributed by Mr. Evans to Crofton Croker, the editor) that the bathos of this particular story caused the collapse of the book is entirely without foundation. In spite of *Little Willie Bell*, the first volume of *The Christmas*

<sup>1</sup> This particular story was highly praised by John Wilson ("Christopher North") in his paper on *Christmas Presents*. Presenting at this season a story-book to his "pretty little rosy-cheeked, dark-eyed, curly-pated Jane," Christopher reminds her of "that Mr. Ainsworth who carried you in his arms into the boat, you remember, and kept you there all the time we were sailing about on the lake . . . thou must read *The Fairy and the Peach Tree*, written by Mr. Ainsworth himself, and you will know from it, what you were too young and too much in love with him that long-ago summer to know, that he is a truly good man, and I will add, Jane, a writer of fine fancy and true feeling." See *Blackwood's Magazine*, 1828.

*Box* was most successful, for, writing to Crossley, in February, 1828, Ainsworth said, "*The Christmas Box* sells admirably; we have already exceeded 2000." *The Christmas Box* collapsed after the appearance of the *second* volume, for 1829, which was not published by Ainsworth at all, but by Ebers, who had then taken over the publishing business of his son-in-law.

The year 1828 was a busy one for Ainsworth as a publisher and bookseller, as his letters to Crossley show:—

"January, 1828.

"Let me ask whether you want the new editions of Evelyn and Pepys, as I have some copies I would gladly dispose of; and having purchased them at a grand book sale, I can afford to send them carriage free. . . . Dr. Hibbert, who has just left Manchester, dined with me yesterday. . . . I wish you would call for me at Zanetti's and Agnew's, and see the latter about the *History of the Collegiate Church*. It might be an advantage to me to have the Town publication of the work;<sup>1</sup> I have written at Dr. Hibbert's request, who has contributed a large portion of the work. . . . I do not expect an amusing book, and scarcely hope to sell a copy—but it looks respectable and may lead to something better. The Doctor . . . spoils admirable subjects—how deliciously Charles Lamb would have described the old school, and church, and monastic college with the library and thousand remembrances. Even I could have done better. As to Whatton . . . he is totally unfit for anything save doctoring horses and swaggering up the Portico with his creaking boots; I shall never forget the . . . ruddiness

<sup>1</sup> Ainsworth published W. R. Whatton's *History of Manchester School*, 1828; but the other two parts of Hibbert-Ware's and Whatton's work on *The Collegiate Church* and *Chetham's Hospital, Manchester*, bore Ebers's name when published in London.

of his meteoric face, nor his horrid creaking top boots. . . .”

“How do you like *The Fairy Mythology*?<sup>1</sup> The book has not sold well yet, but it only requires to be seen to be admired and sell. Puff it amongst your friends. . . .

“I have determined to come down to see my native place during the season of its approaching festivities. . . . You shall see me in a new character. I do not think Mrs. Ainsworth will come. . . . We will greatly enjoy ourselves. . . .

“Manchester seems unusually turbulent. ’Twas but the other day I read an account of a theatrical fracas in which Bucke was assaulted and Kay kicked—both of which circumstances greatly amused me; and now I hear of Riots at meetings and overthrowing of Borough reeves, black eyes, bludgeoning and what not. . . . I suppose you have not yet seen the Signor Leigh Hunto’s fat quarto;<sup>2</sup> it is really a bad book, and has affronted everybody. Lockhart is preparing a truculent review for the next *Quarterly*, which will be amusing from containing all Byron’s letters in which mention is made of the Signor, and in which, you may rest assured, he is not spared. . . .”

“February, 1828.

“Blackwood, I understand, intends giving a new number of the Cockney School in his next—subject, Leigh Hunt’s *Byron*. Haydon is preparing the exposure of some of the abominations of this filthy set; it will come forth in the shape of a pamphlet entitled *Leigh Hunt and his Companions*. It is a curious fact that all

<sup>1</sup> By Thomas Keightley. This first edition, published by Ainsworth, contained charming designs by W. H. Brooke.

<sup>2</sup> Leigh Hunt’s *Lord Byron and his Contemporaries*, 1828, which raised a storm of indignation on all sides. Hunt had taken advantage of the intimacy Byron had honoured him with to recount the pettiest gossip of the poet’s private life. Lockhart’s review of this work, in *The Quarterly Review*, was one of his most scathing productions.

this set, so apparently united, really blackguarded and abused one another delightfully. Shelley laughed at and quizzed Keats, as you will find from *The Quarterly*; Keats despised Hunt, and attributed his ill-success to Leigh's *praise* in *The Examiner*. . . . Drink my twenty-third birthday on Tuesday. . . . I am about settling with Heath for *The Keepsake* editorship.<sup>1</sup> . . .

"I am overwhelmed with the hurry and bustle of London. I intend, on Thursday, to fly to the bowers of dear Henley for a week, and you shall have my recollections of a spring in town from my peaceful quietude. You ask me what my present humour is: I know not how to define it—'tis a something created by varieties of Hocks, of which wine I am now become an inveterate drinker, rejoicing in Niersteiners, Hochheimers, Geidisheimers, Rudesheimers, Marcobrunners, and all other of the delicious vintages of the Rhine. Would that I could see thee near me, with a long-stemmed green bottle, and a bell-mouthed glass in hand. Aston has been completely drenched with the vintages of the south. . . . Another German mania is the beautiful Sontag<sup>2</sup>—a delicious singer, I assure you—exquisite to hear and see. . . ."

A successful book published by Ainsworth, in the summer of 1828, was *Seven Years of the King's Theatre*, being a most entertaining account of his father-in-law's, John Ebers's, management of the Opera House. It was partly written by Ebers, but the work was really put into readable shape by Ainsworth's old school friend and literary collaborator, J. P. Aston, who was then temporarily in London for the purpose of entering himself as

<sup>1</sup> This proposal fell through, and Frederic Mansel Reynolds became editor of the second and subsequent volumes.

<sup>2</sup> Henrietta Sontag (1806-54) was a great operatic success in all the capitals. She married an Italian Count in 1828.



an attorney. The book is full of good stories ; but, sad to say, many of them are imaginary, judging from what Ainsworth tells Crossley :—

“19th August, 1828.

“I am glad you like the *Seven Years*. . . . You will stare when you learn that all the anecdotes are bogus. The fact is that Mr. Ebers could not, or would not, furnish information, and had it appeared as he wished, it would have been a plain unvarnished record of the accounts. All the Taylor stories, etc., are hoaxes. Nevertheless, the book, I think, reads well, and presents Mr. Ebers in a good point of view—the chief object for which it was written. It is a singular apology for mis-management. It has sold well. . . .”

About the same time he published *Lyric Offerings*, the first production of Samuel Laman Blanchard,<sup>1</sup> who became his intimate friend. Ainsworth's friendship with Tom Hood originated in a similar manner by his publication of *National Tales*.

Another writer whom Ainsworth launched on a successful literary career was Caroline Norton,<sup>2</sup> the beautiful

<sup>1</sup> Laman Blanchard (1803-45), a journalist, who at different times was connected with *The New Monthly Magazine*, *True Sun*, and *Examiner*. The poems in his *Lyric Offerings* were much admired by Robert Browning. There is an interesting reference to Ainsworth's shop, in Bond Street, in a letter Browning wrote, many years later, to Blanchard on the subject of these poems : “What would I do to once again run (real running, for I was a boy) to Bond Street from Camberwell and come back with a small book brimful of the sweetest and truest things in the world.”

<sup>2</sup> Caroline, second daughter of Tom Sheridan, born 1808. Her marriage, in 1827, with George Norton, younger brother of the 3rd Lord Grantley, proved most unhappy. Through the influence of Lord Melbourne, Mrs. Norton obtained various favours for her husband ; the latter evinced his gratitude by accusing his wife of *crim. con.* with Lord Melbourne—claiming £10,000 damages from his patron. This famous trial took place in 1836, and resulted in a verdict for the defendant. George Norton died in 1875, and in the following year his widow married

granddaughter of Richard Brinsley Sheridan. Ainsworth acted as her literary adviser, and Mrs. Norton's visits to 27, Old Bond Street became so frequent and lengthy that, at last, some gossip was whispered on the subject. She was then only twenty, and Ainsworth zealously attended to all her business matters. He arranged the publication of her first book of poems, *The Sorrows of Rosalie*; but the work was not actually issued by him, for by the time it appeared, in 1829, his business had been taken over by J. Ebers and Co. Ainsworth, however, continued his exertions on Mrs. Norton's behalf, for we find him writing to Charles Ollier: "If it be possible, get me a notice of the enclosed into *The New Monthly*. By so doing you will infinitely oblige one of the most beautiful women in the world—the Hon. Mrs. Norton, the granddaughter of Richard Brinsley Sheridan. . . ." *The Sorrows of Rosalie* proved successful, and henceforward Mrs. Norton was an authoress of repute.

In the summer of 1828 Ainsworth again went abroad, and, at first, he had hoped that his best friend would accompany him.

" OLD BOND STREET,

" *August 19th, 1828.*

" MY DEAR CROSSLEY,

" I am infinitely pleased with your promise to be my *compagnon de voyage* during my tour, and in answer to your inquiry as to the place—I name instantly *Paris*. There was no one whom I so much wished to have had

Sir William Stirling-Maxwell, Bart. She died in 1877. Mrs. Norton's poetry was much admired by her contemporaries, who termed her "The Byron of her Sex." She was one of three beautiful sisters, known as "The Three Graces"; the other two became respectively Lady Dufferin, and Duchess of Somerset (the Queen of Beauty at the Eglinton Tournament in 1839).

with me during my late visit there, no one who would have heightened by his society the prodigious zest with which I relished the place as *yourself*; I quite longed to have had you with me. . . . How we shall ramble over all the delightful places. The Louvre! The Luxembourg! Notre Dame! Then magnificent, melancholy, gorgeously gloomy Versailles, with its thousand recollections of revel, and beauty, and blood. . . . *You must go*—that's fixed. . . . We will go by Rouen and return by Brussels, visiting the plain of Waterloo, of sanguinary and victorious memory. Shall we not rejoice to behold it! I must tell you that Crofton Croker has some idea of accompanying us; if he does, we shall make a pleasant trio. I can scarce fancy you in France—how you will stare at the Cafés and waiters, and blush at the sight of immodest and immoral chambermaids. . . . Paris will effectually cure the blue devils. . . .”

Ainsworth, however, was disappointed, for Crossley called off at the last minute, as he did again and again, later on, when the two had arranged a continental trip together. Crossley, like Mrs. Dombey, was unable to “make an effort,” and, plan how he might, he never left England for a single day during his long life of eighty-three years.

So Ainsworth had to find another travelling companion, and it was arranged that his brother should accompany him on a tour through Belgium and up the Rhine. Thomas Gilbert Ainsworth was then, temporarily, in better health, and this little trip with his brother was one of the last pleasures he experienced before mental darkness closed in. He left some records of this tour in a note-book, from which the following information is taken.

After staying a few days at the Shakespeare Hotel, Dover, the two brothers crossed to Calais on 30th August, 1828; they dined at *Dessein's* hotel, and set off at ten o'clock at night, by diligence, for Dunkirk, which was reached at 4 a.m. They proceeded via the Treckschnit to Bruges, and were delighted with that picturesque old city. Antwerp pleased them even more. Passing through Mechlin, they reached Brussels. Gilbert Ainsworth wrote: "Everything is pleasant about Brussels; the *table d'hôte* at the *Hôtel de Flandre*, where we are staying, is first rate, and the company extremely good. Drove to Lacken, the king's country residence. . . . Reserved the cathedral of St. Gudule for the evening, and were conducted over it by a monk, who brought to mind the friar in the *Sentimental Journey*." The next day they visited the battlefield of Waterloo, and, after dining at La Haye Sainte, started for Namur. Liege and Aix-la-Chapelle were visited next, and then Cologne. At Coblenz, Gilbert wrote: "At last we are on the Rhine; what a glorious river! The sight of the castled rocks and the picturesque ruins quite inspires me. . . . Posted with Mr. Leopold Reiss, whom we had met on board the steamer, to Frankfort, where we arrived at midnight, and put up at the magnificent *Hôtel de Russie*. Mr. Reiss, who is a young German merchant established at Manchester, showed us great attention and hospitality during our brief stay at Frankfort. Left for Wiesbaden, and put up at the *Quatre Saisons*. . . . Posted to Schwalbach—had a most delightful ride through a mountainous district. . . . At Mayence we engaged a *voiturier* for three days, to take us to Heidelberg. Slept the first night at Mannheim. Reached Heidelberg about twelve.

Nothing can be finer than the situation of the castle—nothing more picturesque than the ruins. Slept at Hoppenheim. Arrived at Darmstadt about eleven, and were much struck with the town . . . we were fortunate enough to witness an inspection of troops by the grand duke. Left Mayence next morning by early steamboat. Swept past castles, vine-clad hills, and picturesque towns in our rapid descent of the river, and reached Cologne at eight o'clock. Our journey to Calais was accomplished in four days by diligence. At Dunkirk, a painful incident occurred which impressed us both. We had mounted to the top of a lofty tower near the Church, which commands a fine view of the town, harbour, and surrounding country, and were descending the winding steps, when a man, evidently in a very excited state, pushed violently past us, rousing our anger. A few minutes afterwards we learnt that the poor wretch had thrown himself from the summit of the tower, and dashed out his brains on the pavement. Previously to committing this desperate act he had taken off his shoes—a common superstition. '*Il avait mangé son bien,*' remarked a bystander, who was gazing at the body. At Calais, we went to *Dessein's* hotel, and I was fortunate enough to be lodged in *Sterne's* room. Next day we crossed the Channel. Thus ended our pleasant tour."

On his return, Harrison Ainsworth wrote to Crossley :—

" Well, I have seen the Rhine ! I ascended, descended, and traversed both sides, lingering at the watering places, resting at Frankfort, detouring at Heidelberg, Mannheim, Darmstadt, and passing thro' the Low Countries in the short space of one month. . . . When

I tell you that I have been at Ghent, Bruges, Antwerp (glorious for its cathedral), Brussels, Waterloo, Namur, the Meuse, Liege, Aix-la-Chapelle, Cologne, Coblentz, Mayence, Frankfort, Wiesbaden, Ems, Schwalbach, Bingen, Rudesheim, Johannisberg, Mannheim, Darmstadt, and Heidelberg, I think you will acknowledge that I have seen something worth seeing, and regret that you were not of my company. Indeed, my dear Baron, you positively must spare *six weeks* next year, when I will engage to take you through Holland (full of old books, etc.); the most beautiful parts of Germany; Vienna—descend the Danube; Switzerland; and down the Rhine home. . . . When will you come to town? I am quite idle now, and the weather is still fine enough for many a delicious drive. I have excellent hock in my cellar, and venison, and a world of books—new and old—on my table. Come and see me. You can spare a week. I will return with you as far as Leamington, where we will visit Henley, Oxford, Woodstock, Blenheim, Stowe, Kenilworth, Stratford, Warwick, Hagley, etc. . . .

“ I enclose you a note from Lockhart and proofs of the Review of *Parr*.<sup>1</sup> He wishes you to read them, and make what additions and alterations or annotations you think proper. Pray oblige me, as well as Lockhart, by doing this, as I am sure you can do it excellently. . . . I am astonished to find how mildly Lockhart has handled the old boy (after the ‘hoary ruffian,’ etc.). Let me see your comments before I return them, and write me privately what you think of the review. I do not think he has made much of Parr’s theological character: the political is decidedly the best. . . .”

<sup>1</sup> For *The Quarterly Review*, January, 1829.

The beginning of the year 1829 found Ainsworth without employment, for by this time he had abandoned the publishing business which had commenced so successfully and pleasantly some two years earlier. This second edition of deserting his profession may appear to indicate instability of character, but the truth was his artistic temperament wholly unfitted him for a commercial career. Although at first he had liked his work in Bond Street—from its bookish nature, and the cultured literary acquaintance it brought him—his high-spirited and volatile nature soon found the cares of business life insufferably irksome. He was too impetuous to give that careful and patient attention to even the smallest detail, which is essential to prosperity in trade; he was too hasty in temper to contend with and overcome petty annoyances and difficulties; and too generous in disposition to make his undertaking a financial success. No doubt, also, he was disappointed that his aspirations to become a publisher of superior work to the “novel of fashionable life,” then in vogue, had not been more largely supported by authors and public. Consequently, this concatenation of reasons decided him to relinquish his publishing concern, which was taken over by J. Ebers and Co. Once his decision was made, the transfer was effected with characteristic haste, without counting the cost, safeguarding his financial rights, or thought of the future. Ainsworth was ever a man of letters, and never one of business.

The idle year of 1829 was uneventful, and there is little to record. He composed a few literary trifles; a tragedy on the subject of Philip van Artevelde<sup>1</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> Sir Henry Taylor's well-known drama, *Philip van Artevelde*, did not appear until 1834.

some melodramas were attempted, but apparently nothing was published.

In this year his second child, another daughter, named Emily, was born.<sup>1</sup>

Some glimpses of his life at this time appear in the letters to Crossley, which also betray a yearning for Manchester—the old happy days at home, and the ambrosial nights with his best friend at Mrs. Fisher's hostel in Smithy Door:—

“ 7th January, 1829.

“ You are a pre-eminently bad correspondent . . . the veriest trifles concerning Manchester and its aborigines interest me exceedingly, and never a week or a day passes but there is some strange event occurring—as a death, a dinner, a marriage, or a funeral,—in the detail of which I am somewhat concerned. . . . Very little will suffice to entertain me—all that I require is some familiar gossip of the old familiar faces, the green fields, and the pleasant parties, and the old books. Oh! for a chop at ‘The Fisher,’ the snug room—triangular and cosy, with old Izaak<sup>2</sup> and dim windows,—where our souls were bathed in ancient wine and in the blood evicted by the steaks! Jim, my spirit yearns for thee and their fatness again. Are such days never— Yes! by the gods! I will make a pilgrimage to the shrine of the Hostel of the Widow. . . . Then your reading—I want to know what you are about, what strange old tome you have found; whether you have gleaned anything quotable, or stumbled upon any passage worth extracting on the subject of gardening. . . .

“ I have been enjoying myself greatly in the country, staying for ten days at Petham House, near Canterbury,

<sup>1</sup> Miss Emily Ainsworth died unmarried in 1885, at the age of fifty-six.

<sup>2</sup> The portrait of Izaak Walton at the Unicorn Inn. See *ante*, p. 78.



where I have had plenty of shooting, and dinners worthy of an emperor. Exercise, too, which has slightly reduced my bulk, which, as I am informed, visibly increaseth. You will see me a most dignified and magisterial personage, and the father of a family. . . . I have not begun the poem—the shooting interfered with the reading, and I must resume in a day or two. Since my return, what with New Year's Day, Xmas Day, Twelfth Night, Pantomimes, and Parties, I really have not been able seriously to apply. However, I will. . . . I saw Lockhart the day before his departure for Abbotsford, where he is gone for a month. *The Quarterly* is ready; it will contain *inter alia* a review of *Parr* (by Lockhart), *Hajji Baba in England*<sup>1</sup> by Scott, and an article by Southey. Pray send your *Terbellia* in time for next number, and send it through me. . . .

“How do you like *Anne of Geierstein*<sup>2</sup> (pronounce it Geyerstine, an thou love me, and not Geersteen, as the Lady Cockneys do)? Are not the first volume and a half good? But what a falling off in the last volume. How infinitely little has he done with the Secret Tribunal, and how much less with Charles the Bold, whose tomb, by the way, I saw in my Flemish Pilgrimage.

“Washington Irving's *Conquest of Granada* does not appear particularly interesting. There, again, is a noble field: what a splendid people were the Moors! Good God! What a romance might be written of that period! What women—with eyes large, dark, oriental,—men chivalrous, and a land teeming with romance. I think we must set about a story ourselves. Have you heard from Lockhart, and what did you think of his use of your points in *The Quarterly*? I think he fails in his editorial capacity. . . .”

<sup>1</sup> A novel by James Morier, being the adventures of a Persian Gil Blas.

<sup>2</sup> Scott's *Anne of Geierstein* was published in May, 1829.

There are indications in the following letter that as early as May, 1829, Ainsworth was contemplating the composition of a book on the lines which, later, developed into *Rookwood* :—

“ Where shall I find a good account of funeral orations?—I don’t mean ancient ones, but authentic middle-age speeches delivered over the dead. Do you know where there are any stories of Gipseys?—I have *Bamfylde Moore Carew*.<sup>1</sup> . . . I saw Lockhart and engaged him to dine with you some day on your visit to London. He will be most happy. Shall I see you here for the Race Week? ”

Ainsworth again went north in the summer ; then to Wales, Kent, and France ; and in the autumn he and his wife stayed for some time at Barnes.

“ 23rd July, 1829.

“ Have you heard I am projecting a visit to Manchester? . . . I leave this on Sunday morning for Birmingham, where I shall sleep, and the next morning set off for Manchester—the coach arrives in the afternoon. I am going to stay for a few days with Gilbert Winter<sup>2</sup> at Stocks, but I shall certainly devote a day or two to you; when we will enjoy ourselves as of old, and talk over matters as in bygone times.”

“ 30th September, 1829.

“ We are still at Barnes, and shall be for a month. I am glad to hear you are to be in town so soon. Pray accelerate your journey as much as possible, and let us,

<sup>1</sup> The “ King of the Gipsies.”

<sup>2</sup> A solicitor of Manchester, who resided at Stocks House, Cheetham Hill.

now the fogs of October are setting in, and bright, blazing fires beginning to gleam upon our hearths, spend some long talkative evenings together, while we toast our knees at the grate, and sip the fine old bonded wine that gleams like a filmy ruby in our hands. I have much to tell you of the wonders of Wales; of the sublime and cloudy Snowdon—which I ascended; of the long Llanberis, its grand and rocky pass and quiet Inn, where I found a man (the picture of Southey)—an amateur of Gothic architecture; of Carnarvon, Conway, and Beaumaris; and then of Kent and shooting; and France, where I have been since I saw you—in short, the thousand and one things, deep, delicious, pleasing, which we will have to make the time pass sparklingly and quick, not counting the leaven of literature or women. . . . Poor Wadd has gone the way of all flesh; the world has lost the choice spirit. If ever there was an incarnation of the fine, noble wit and inimitable humour of Yorick—'twas Wadd.<sup>1</sup>

“I was with Lockhart the other day. Would you like to review Croker's edition of *Boswell* for *The Quarterly*?<sup>2</sup> If you would, he will send you the volumes as they are printed. It would be a fine subject for you, and one to talk of hereafter. Lockhart seemed vastly pleased with the idea of you doing it. . . .

“And now, Sir, learn that I am at work—that I have really written an act and a half of a Tragedy. . . .”

About this time, it is said, he wrote several vaudevilles and short pieces for the Adelphi, Olympic, and other theatres. Ainsworth, from his boyhood, always had a passion for the stage; and during these first years in London, owing primarily to his connection with Ebers,

<sup>1</sup> William Wadd (1776–1829), a famous surgeon. He was killed, in Ireland, by jumping off a car, the horse of which had bolted.

<sup>2</sup> See *Quarterly Review*, October, 1831.

he mixed a great deal with theatrical society, and had the entrée behind the scenes at most of the theatres in town and in Paris. So, at the end of 1829, having no regular work, he was leading rather a Bohemian life ; but his was a luxurious Bohemia, for the empty purse and scanty fare of some of the denizens of that nebulous region would never have suited our young literary sybarite. However, good dinners and wine and pretty actresses all have a way of swallowing a vast deal of money, and Ainsworth soon found it necessary to look around for some work again.

## CHAPTER VI

### LEGAL AGENCY. TOUR IN ITALY.

**F**INDING the need of some employment, Ainsworth, early in 1830, resumed for a time the profession of the law, which he had so willingly abandoned three years before to become a publisher. He, of course, no longer had any share or interest in his late father's legal business in Manchester; and wishing also to remain in London, he decided to practise there. For this purpose he took chambers at No. 12, Grafton Street, which, as he informed Crossley, "is a large, bow-windowed house, and looks down Albemarle Street and St. James's Street, on to the Palace; it is taking and gentlemanly to the last degree, and the neighbourhood is excellent."

Although he intended to practise as a solicitor, the new business seems to have been more of an agency for managing property and collecting rents than of a strictly legal nature. At first he was fairly occupied with work, and clients arrived in sufficient number to encourage hopes of success.

About this time he had formed an intimate friendship with the Rev. William Sergison, of Cuckfield Place, Sussex, and frequently visited the romantic old mansion he, later, so picturesquely described under the name of *Rookwood*.

Writing to this new friend, he says :—

“ 12, GRAFTON STREET,

“ 7th January, 1830.

“ MY DEAR SERGISON,

“ I fear it will be impossible for me to visit you at Cuckfield to-morrow, in consequence of one or two unavoidable appointments . . . should I be able to come down on Saturday, I will make the effort to break all legal and other trammels, and wend Cuckfield way. . . . I like my chambers very well, and so will you, I trust, when you come to town.

“ Lord Stowell’s <sup>1</sup> carriage has just rattled to the door, and the whole street of Albemarle is ringing with the rotatory wheels, so that I have plenty of harmonious sounds. . . . If you could effect anything of the kind you mention as to Town Agency, it would at ‘ this present ’ be of real service as affording some occupation to my clerk, who, sooth to say, has very little to employ him, or to reimburse me for the heavy salary which I am compelled to pay him. . . . Yesterday we partook of your venison, which was excellent and highly approved. . . . London is muddy, miry, and miserable to an unprecedented degree, so that you are well out of it at Cuckfield. The pantomimes are as dull as ditchwater, except, perhaps, Drury, the diorama of which is passable.”

Although Ainsworth kept on his chambers in Grafton Street for five years, the legal agency business came to an end before that period elapsed. History repeated itself. Literature was still, and ever, the master passion,

<sup>1</sup> William Scott (1745–1836), created Baron Stowell 1821. He was a noted judge, and brother of the first Earl of Eldon, Lord Chancellor. Lord Stowell had been a friend of Dr. Johnson, whom he accompanied to Edinburgh in 1773, and was a member of the great lexicographer’s Literary Club.



*William Harrison Ainsworth*  
*at the age of twenty-two.*

*from the original pencil drawing by D. Maclean  
November 1827, in the possession of Captain Lear.*





and so, for the second time in his life, he neglected the law to follow the primrose path of romance writing. In the next letters there is a great deal about literary matters and open-air pleasures, and scarcely anything at all about office work and the new legal concern, then but three months old.

“ 12, GRAFTON STREET,

” 21st April, 1830.

“ MY DEAR CROSSLEY,

“ . . . Have you been able to invent or find any plot, or other incident, adaptable to my projected Domestic Tragedy? I have been considering the matter, and find that the only two agents that have been employed are Jealousy and Poverty, which, of course, are endless and diversified in their treatment by the Poets, as the Crucifixion is by Painters. I intend to employ these, and moreover Avarice, and fancy a very appalling character might be drawn of a miser;<sup>1</sup> but I have as yet no plot—no *groundwork*. . . . I wish you could help me. . . . I send you two books and a letter which have found their way from *The Quarterly*. I presume from Lockhart's having sent you *Bentley*, he wishes you to review that work for him. . . . *The King's Own*<sup>2</sup> is excellent, excepting always the catastrophe, which is forced, unnatural, and revolting; but there are some spirited descriptive scenes, much acute remark, and much caricature sketching. It will amuse you. I know of nothing else—Horace Smith is as dull as ditchwater. Hook has written a novel,<sup>3</sup> or nearly so, of which people prophesy good things: I wish it would come out to relieve the unmitigated leaven of dulness and mediocrity with which we are inundated from the Colburn press. How it occurs I know not, but some people never

<sup>1</sup> This he did later in *The Miser's Daughter*.

<sup>2</sup> Captain Marryat's second novel, published in 1830.

<sup>3</sup> *Maxwell*, 1830.

read so well as in a magazine. Wilson, for example, and Lamb: who likes Elia represented even in the types of Thomas Davison, and where could the Professor write as he does in *Blackwood*—surely not in three hot-pressed volumes, to be published by Henry Colburn, of Old Burlington Street? . . .

“How fresh and beautiful the country looks just now. I hope you get out into the green lanes of a sweet, merry afternoon, as I do—revelling in the luxury of sweet-smelling hedges, transparent foliage, and all the other amenities of spring. I get quite familiar with all the pleasant rides near London, and can tell you of such parks, such old houses, and such delicious landscapes, as would make you pant like the hart in the wilderness to be my partner in my peregrinations. . . .

“London continues as gay, if not gayer (in spite of the King’s illness <sup>1</sup> and rainy weather). . . .

“You are mistaken if you suppose my silence arose from pique. Silence is not my mode of showing resentment: I am a master of fence, and prefer the assault; and had I really considered myself aggrieved, should have rung a peal loud enough to set the welkin in a roar. . . . I certainly have been surprised that you and Sudlow should never by any chance have sent me any business, and I may have damned you both as a couple of shabby fellows—yourself in particular; but this was your own concern, and if you could not do it, or would not, which is much the same, why, there’s an end of the matter. But, I repeat, I have not felt offended.”

The good-natured optimism of the above philosophy accounts for the dwindling business in Grafton Street, which, indeed, after 1830, was not seriously attended to. Ainsworth had more congenial work—literary, of course—on hand, and, in addition, he was abroad a great deal.

<sup>1</sup> George IV died a few weeks later.

In the summer of 1830 he visited Italy and Switzerland in the company of his friend, the Rev. William Sergison, of Cuckfield Place, aforementioned. A record of a portion of this tour exists in Ainsworth's journal,<sup>1</sup> apparently the only diary ever kept by him in the course of his long life. It consists of two manuscript volumes, written in rather illegible chirography, and the leaves are foxed and the ink has faded from the lapse of years. One of these volumes is dedicated to his wife in fifty-eight lines of blank verse, couched in the forced sentimental phraseology in vogue at that period.

The initiatory and concluding lines are as follows :—

TO MY DEAR WIFE.

To thee, dear love, these records of brief hours  
 (Brief in themselves, but ages without thee)  
 Spent in this sunny land of Italy,  
 I dedicate with fondest, tenderest wishes,  
 With prayers and hopes that Heaven may shed its blessings  
 On thee and my sweet babes, and grant me soon  
 To clasp thee to my anxious heart again.  
 These leaves will tell thee of the cities fair  
 Renown'd throughout the world I've visited.

'Twill tell thee this and more 'twill tell thee, love,  
 That mid these scenes of high delight was wanting  
 That dearer charm which thou alone could'st give them ;  
 And it will show thee that amidst them all  
 Fair though they be, fairer than I can tell,  
 Thy dear remembrance was for ever present.

W. H. A. VENICE, 13th Sept., 1830.

[These lines were written at the end of the tour.]

In selecting the following extracts from Ainsworth's diary the primary object has been to give an account, in his own words, of his personal experiences in Italy.

<sup>1</sup> Kindly placed at my service by Mr. Adrian H. Joline, of New York.

Consequently, long passages have been eliminated which recount the architectural, antiquarian, and artistic features of that wonderful and lovely country—details which may be read in guide-books and many another published journal of continental travel. . . .

The journal commences at Naples, when Ainsworth and Sergison were staying at the *Vittoria Chiaga*.

“ *Thursday, August 19th, 1830. NAPLES.*

“ . . . We took a boat out in the Bay, about an hour before sunset, in order to see the Town from it. No description, however florid, can be far-fetched. It is ravishing. The crescent-like form of the shores;—the town, its churches and castles—Vesuvius—all combine to render it harmonious and perfect . . . at sunset, a gun was fired from St. Elmo, which was answered from all the other batteries, and resounded hollowly along the shore . . . we could distinctly see the flash from the guns at St. Elmo many seconds before we heard the report. . . . Afterwards to St. Carlo’s. This brilliant theatre looked like the Hall of Aladdin’s palace. . . . It was illuminated, in honour of the King’s birthday, with multitudes of wax candles . . . it is far away the largest and handsomest house I ever beheld . . . there are 7 tiers of Boxes, hung with blue silk. . . . The opera was *Il Semiramis*. . . . Madame Foda acquitted herself well, and I was delighted with her music, but I would she had been more handsome. . . . Tamburini pleased me best of all . . . in a Basso part he is admirable. I am sure he would succeed greatly in London.<sup>1</sup>

“ *Friday, 20th.* Delivered my letters. . . . I had a letter of introduction to a fellow-townsmen, Mr. Close. . . . I was asked to dine with the family on Sunday, and I was kindly and hospitably received. At this dis-

<sup>1</sup> Antonio Tamburini, born 1800, appeared in London in 1832, and achieved a great success.

tance from home, and from my friends, it was truly delightful to meet with a person who would take an interest in me, and it made me very happy to talk over old times and old friends. . . . Rode out along the coast to Posilipo. To the Fondo, where I was delighted with a sprightly opera. . . . Signorina Grassi is an especial favourite of mine. She is a very pretty woman, *i.e.* she is more than pretty—animated and handsome, with eyes with fire enough to set Fops' Alley and the Halls in London in a flame. . . . I shall counsel Laporte<sup>1</sup> to have her engaged for London . . . she is the very image of Mrs. Ball Hughes.<sup>2</sup>

“ We had given up the idea of Vesuvius for this night, and I was greatly enjoying the pleasantries of the Fondo, when the *Laquet de Place* came in breathless haste to tell me that the ‘*Montagne jette le feu,*’ and that the ‘*autre monsieur*’ was waiting for me without. Out then I went, and found that he spoke the truth. We therefore arranged to set off at 12, and Sergison returned to repose at the *Vittoria*, while I regained my stall at the Fondo. At 12, we set out in a close carriage along the Portici road, accompanied by our *laquet*, Thomaso, to Resina, where we stopped at the house of Salvatore, the guide, who provided us with donkeys and torches. Much confusion occurred at starting by reason of certain auxiliary guides presenting themselves, and we were obliged to enter into a treaty with them, that if they would persist in affording us the pleasure of their company, we should only evince our sense of the gratification by a very slight reward. However, in the end we were obliged to pay. . . . We advanced some time along a rough road enclosed by high walls, but as we progressed the country became more open and the path more strong. We were shown the different beds of lava and told the

<sup>1</sup> Manager of the King's Theatre, Haymarket.

<sup>2</sup> Formerly Mercandotti, the Spanish dancer. See *ante*, p. 155.

dates of the eruptions that produced them, but it was difficult to see more than a few feet around by the flare of the resinous torch. There was a party in advance, whose torch shone like a star on the mountain's side. We were greatly excited by the splendid spectacle which Vesuvius presented—tinging the sky with red from his fitful fires. We stopped a moment at the Hermitage, where our already numerous band was enforced by a fellow with grapes, wine, and bread, and another torch was lighted. After riding another mile or two we dismounted, and the ascent began in real earnest. I essayed the mountain first, and felt so fresh that I was unwilling to take hold of the bridle which my guide had tied round his waist, and which he offered for my assistance up the mountain. The sides of the mountain were shelving and steep, and look very difficult in the daylight. As it is, the ascent was a great exertion, but I have experienced worse in Switzerland. . . . I reached the summit, and saw before me the immense area of the old, and now extinguished, crater, on which were lying—like immense lakes of molten iron—different streams of lava. Some were cooling, others a little faint, but one large sheet was flowing and cracking the rocks around it. It was indeed an awful sight to see this immense basin, the bottom of which,—of a sulphurous grey, slatish colour,—was split into rifts and chasms like the *Mer de Glace*. Near the centre, though somewhat to the left, and on the highest side of the mountain, were the cones of the present crater, which was then at work, and from the outer of which clouds of white smoke were issuing. Immediately after I arrived, a thundering crash was heard, and, amidst a burst of flame, it threw up stones and lava. As soon as Sergison arrived on the summit, and had contemplated the scene, we made the half circuit of the exterior of the crater, and would have descended to see the other nearer, but the guide said it

was impossible from the size and number of the stones ejected that this could be accomplished, and I therefore reluctantly abandoned the idea. Several projections of fire took place. The sound and thunder—the crash, if I may so call it,—was awfully fine. It was now about  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 4, and we found the air piercingly cold. We had hoped to see the sun rise from Vesuvius, but were disappointed. The wind, being a sirocco, blew up a cloud of fog which enveloped part of the mainland and obscured our view towards the east. After wandering about for an hour, getting upon different parts of the crags, and gazing downwards to see the effect of stones thrown into the crater, we descended. Arm-in-arm with my guide, I ran down the mountain side, and what it had taken me near an hour to accomplish in ascending, five minutes or less completed the other way. It was a perilous pleasure, but the only inconvenience I experienced was the filling my shoes with stones. Again the donkeys for two hours—horribly fatigued and sleepy—so much so, that I was obliged to get off and walk in order to keep myself awake. When we got to Salvatore's, we threw ourselves on the beds in his house, and slept in our clothes till 9 o'clock. We meant to have visited Pompeii to-day, and had so arranged it, but our coachman and his horses could not do it, and we were perforce obliged to content ourselves with Herculaneum. . . . The heat here was intense, and walking about in these 'roofless halls' I thought I should have been broiled alive. One is ever mysteriously susceptible after a sleepless night. Drove home through the market place, the scene of Masaniello's rebellion and his death. The Lazzaroni are fine fellows, and are very picturesque in their linen dress, drawers, and naked, shoeless feet and legs. To see them gathered together on the quays, or begging at a boat, is very picturesque. They always group happily. Also to see them clustering round a

melon stall, where the ripe, red fruit is cut in pieces and distributed, is a pretty sight.

“*Sunday, 22nd.* Torrents of rain . . . the first wet day in our journey. It has not rained in Naples for six months . . . the streets are running like weirs with muddy streams. Drove through the torrents to the Cathedral and the Annunziata. . . . The Chapel of St. Januarius was shut at the Cathedral, which I regret the more, as he is a saint in whom I take an especial interest.

“*Monday, 23rd.* Excursion to Pompeii. Drove out in a carriage with three horses, along the shores by Patici and Resina. . . . Were I to enter Pompeii again it should be through the Street of Tombs. . . . As it was, we entered by the Herculaneum Gate, and came at once upon the Forum. The amphitheatre, to which we walked through a luxuriant vineyard, is beyond description magnificent . . . the highest seats were devoted to the ladies (part being reserved for the vestal virgins . . .). We descended to look at the dens for the wild animals and the narrow passages by which the gladiators entered to delight the amiable ladies of the year of our Lord 30. . . . The Temple of Isis disappointed me. Our cicerone laughed greatly at the tricks of Priests, and pointed out the secret doors. . . . I brought away a few bits of the mosaic pavement. . . . Pursuing our way through the silent city, we came into the Appian Way, the Regent Street, it may be, of that day, wherein we saw the shops with the names of their inhabitants still visible. . . . Passing the gate of the city, we came upon the Street of Tombs . . . we entered one and saw the little crevices in which the urns containing the ashes were placed, and the pyre to consume the body, and the *inclinum* on which the friends of the deceased reposed. There were 5 or 6 urns still remaining. The Villa of Diomed concluded our interesting researches. . . . It is impossible to conceive a more delightful day than we



had for our excursion to Pompeii. The air, freshened by the rain, was blunt and temperate, the sky clear and free from haze, the dust laid and the earth cooled.

“*Tuesday, 24th.* Arm’d with a good basket of provisions we set out to visit the classic shores of Baia, at seven o’clock on a most lovely morning. The Grotto of Posilipo is a most curious work—a road cut through the heart of a mountain. There are lamps lighted in the centre throughout the day. . . . Emerging from the cavern, we drove along a lovely shore to Puzzuoli, where our cicerone appeared, recommending himself to our notice as a speaker of the English Tongue. . . . Our next *aparlant* was a Boatman with whom we bargained, after much bickering, to take us across the bay of Baia for a *piastre*. Next a donkeyteer appeared, and we made an arrangement with him for a land excursion. We drove off to Cumæ, our cicerone mounting the box with a couple of resinous torches. . . . Started to walk to the Sibyl’s Cave. . . . Previous to descending to the place of prophecy, we ascended a vine-covered hill to obtain an extensive view of the coast. It was very beautiful. The eye ranged along an undulating shore as far as Nola. . . . Looked down the Sibyl’s Cave. The oracular exit is choked with mighty stones. The cicerone lighted his torch and offered to creep in with me, but I was satisfied with an external view. . . . Passed the gloomy waters of Averno; here we mounted our donkeys, the most asinine of their kind—for all the thumping of drivers and ourselves could not accelerate their motion. . . . Embarked in a galley on the blue, rippling waves of Baia. The view of Vesuvius hence is fine, and brought to my mind Shelley’s lines in his exquisite *Sensitive Plant*—

“When the waves of Baia are luminous  
With the far-off seen fires of Vesuvius.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The lines from *The Sensitive Plant* should run:—

“Or the waves of Baiæ ere luminous  
She floats up through the smoke of Vesuvius.”

“ We pulled into shore, and ascended a rocky path to see the Baths of Nero. Here we met a man half-stripped, who showed us a basket of eggs, which he proposed boiling in the mineral water . . . he then plunged into a cavern from which a hot steam was issuing, and we followed for some paces, but we were forced back by the intense heat of the vaporous effluvia. Re-embarked. I bathed—water delicious, of the temperature of milk, but the man alarmed me by stories of sharks. Dined in the boat on cold fowl and pastry. Rowed back to Puzzuoli. Visited the Temple of Serapis. . . . A steep ascent to the Solfatina, an external crater. . . . On our return home we went by a cross road to the Lago d’Agnano and the Grotto del Cane ; the man came forth with two dogs in good condition, which he offered to half suffocate for the charge of 6 *carlini* ; partly in compassion to the poor animals, and partly because we were unwilling to throw away money upon an experiment so cruel and useless, we declined his offer.

“ *Wednesday, 25th.* Again to the Museo Borbonico . . . what a curious study are the household works discovered at Pompeii ; the Tea Urn is absolutely English—what can it have been used for ? The combs and pins, the pot of rouge, in fact, the whole apparatus of a lady’s toilette, are infinitely curious, and show that the sex has not degenerated, but was ever the same. The tickets for the theatres were sometimes a cameo, sometimes a mere bone. . . . Sat to Signor D’Anna for my portrait for Mrs. Sergison. *Cospetto!* what a likeness ! More like any Brigand Chief than a civilized Solicitor of Grafton Street. Dined with the Closes. Afterwards for an hour to St. Carlo’s. . . . Talking of operas, it is curious that the Government would not let the opera of *Masaniello* with Auber’s music be brought out here. They thought it might be too exciting, and so it might. . . . Drove out, after the first act, to Mr. Falconet’s Villa, a gentle-

man to whom I had a letter of introduction. A tedious drive through innumerable lanes and amidst high walls, till I, at last, arrived at the garden gate of the Villa. Another long drive amongst the trees, from which lamps were suspended. I was ushered into a blazing salon at once, and not having seen Mr. Falconet was some time before I could discover him. He introduced me to his lady—a pretty-looking blonde—formerly a Miss Pulteney. . . . It is the fashion at Naples to dance new figures every quadrille, and a man stands by to call them out . . . it is also the fashion to dance the gallopade and the mazurka. It is also an admirable fashion not to introduce you to any body, but to let you get a partner as you can. . . . Mr. Falconet, who is a banker, and keeps one of the best tables in Naples, only gave a very small supper—a table set out with preserved peaches, cakes, tea, coffee, and other slight refectations . . . how much better would it be if this were followed in England, instead of our wine-y, ebriate entertainments, which finish an agreeable recreative evening with disgust. The floor of the Ball Room was beautiful, ancient mosaic. There was a table in the next room at which the men seemed to be playing high.

*“Thursday, 26th.* We were to have left to-day, but Sergison decided upon having his own likeness taken, with which, when done, he was disgusted.

*“Friday, 27th.* Weighed anchor about 7. Drove along the pleasant Standa, remarking by the way the Lazzaroni bringing the figs and grapes, piled up in heaps with the greatest taste, and stuck with grass or flowers. The day was hot. . . . Being determined not to stop on the road, we took provisions in our carriage to last us the journey, and we dined in the very heart of the robbers' country—that is amongst the mountains. We made a display of silver spoons, knives, and forks, quite alarming, and highly indiscreet. In despite of the Malaria,

too, we passed the Pontina Marshes after nightfall, and arrived without accident at Rome, the next morning, at  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 8. And thus ends my journey to and from Naples, by far the most attractive of any city in Europe that I am acquainted with."

[Ainsworth and Sergison stayed at the *Hotel Europa*, Rome.]

"28th, *Saturday*. After dinner, we drove to the Villa Borghese—a splendid palace despoiled of its treasures, and greatly neglected. . . . Afterwards to the Villa Albani—a truly Italian residence, with a superb portico enriched with matchless statues, a marble balustrade terrace and stairs, groves, fountains, and baths. I have seen nothing I desiderate so much—no palace I should so much like to inhabit since I have been in Italy. . . .

"29th, *Sunday*. Rambled out to the Corso before breakfast. Entered a palace, now a Café—the immense apartments seemed to mourn their degradation by their melancholy looks, and the marble Cæsars to frown upon the dirty waiters that thronged the rooms. . . . After breakfast, we drove in the direction of the Gate of St. Paul's. . . . Driving along some filthy streets, we burst upon the broken arches of the Palatine Bridge, beneath which the *yellow* Tiber rolled over his sands of *gold*, or in plain English and plainer truth, a muddy stream rolled over a muddy bed, in which some brown Romans were bathing. . . . Passing the Hill of Pots—a mound much larger than Primrose Hill, raised from the broken pots of the Romans,—we approached the walls of the city and the pyramidal Mausoleum of Caius Cestius, near which is the English Cemetery. . . . We visited the burial ground, and found the monument of the poet Shelley, immediately beneath the walls of the city. It was covered with branches of trees—the clearings of the

wall, which being removed, I traced the following inscription :—

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.

*Cor Cordium.*

*Natus IV. Aug., MDCCXCII.*

*Obiit. VIII. Jul., MDCCCXXII.*

*'Nothing of him that doth fade,  
But doth suffer a sea-change  
Into something rich and strange.'*<sup>1</sup>

I gathered a little moss from his tomb, and strewed a bunch of rosemary over the grave of one of the most beautiful, though, perhaps, most erring of England's Poets. Near this tomb is a slab placed there by Capt. Trelawny for the reception of his remains after death. I afterwards visited the tomb of Keats, and read his touching epitaph, which he desired might be placed on his monument—'Here lies one whose name was writ in water.' The tablet bears the impression of a lyre. The appearance of this burying ground is indeed singularly interesting. The situation is classical and delightful. From the height where Shelley is buried you look over Monte Testaccio and behold the swelling dome of St. Peter's; around you are the remains of ancient Rome, and nearer, the tomb of Cestius, standing like a thing of another clime and of another age . . . it is a fit burying place for a poet. . . . Passing the Gate of St. Paul's we arrived at the Cathedral of the same name, which was destroyed by fire in 1823. It is now being rebuilt, and we saw some splendid columns which have been transplanted there from the Simplon. Our next visit was to the church of St. Sebastian the Martyr, who was destroyed by arrows. Here we had the imprudence to descend, in the full flow of perspiration, into the damp of the catacombs, which extend for miles under the city,

<sup>1</sup> Trelawny suggested this appropriate quotation from Ariel's song in *The Tempest*.

and where the early Christians retired in the times of the persecution, where they buried their martyrs, and concealed themselves. The place was very interesting, but having some regard to ourselves, and fearing a permanent visit to the cemetery near the Pyramid, we beat a retreat. We drove along a rough road to the superb Mausoleum of Cecilia Metella . . . walked across a field to the Circus of Caracalla . . . and descended a hill to the Grotto of Egeria, where a draught of delicious water from the Nymph's fountain was not unacceptable to our parched palates. . . . Drove afterwards to vespers at St. Peter's. . . . To the Piazza Navona, where we drove about in the water. This is the last Sunday of the Lake. Many carriages were parading the flooded place and the sides were crowded with spectators.<sup>1</sup> The balconies of the houses were filled with ladies and gentlemen, and there was a band playing on the steps of the church. Ascended the heights above the Piazza del Popolo—the view hence of Rome is beautiful, but the boundary on the horizon is bleak and uninteresting.

“*Monday, 30th.* This day ought to be marked with a white stone in my journal. Throughout, it has been more full of interest than any I have passed during my tour. We drove to the Villa Doria Pamfili—a truly princely villa in the finest Italian taste, with stately terraces, trim hedges, fountains, statues, and parterres of clipped box. It is the finest specimen of this style of gardening I have seen, and was the more delightful to me as I had long wished to meet with one of the kind. . . . The surrounding views of Rome and its environs are charming, particularly on the side of St. Peter's whose swelling dome seems to fill up one end of an avenue. . . . To the Vatican—that mighty storehouse of all that is wonderful in art. . . . Some idea of its extent may be formed when I mention that the length of the main

<sup>1</sup> Ainsworth described this scene in his tale, *A Night's Adventure in Rome*.

corridor in the Library is a quarter of a mile. . . . One would imagine that all the treasures of sculpture on earth had been collected, to judge from the immensity of the collection . . . it were hopeless to enumerate half, aye, the thousandth part, of the prodigies of art we beheld. I must, therefore, run over 'the tablets of memory' and recall what struck me most. First . . . the 'Apollo Belvidere'—no copy, no plaster cast, can give the faintest idea of the majesty of loveliness which this superlative sculpture embodies. . . . The 'Laocoön' is terrific—agony in every limb . . . Canova's 'Perseus' is exquisite—the figure is Greek in the softest and purest style. This I should rank as Canova's *chef-d'œuvre*. . . . The porphyry vases, the granite columns . . . the bronzes, the mosaic floors, the alabaster columns, the cups, vases, candelabra—numberless as the sands in ocean which we beheld. I must mention the grand pictures of Raphael, and also my pleasure upon coming unexpectedly upon Sir Thomas Lawrence's famous picture of George IV. Of the Vatican I can speak in no measured terms, it surpasses everything I either expected to see, or have yet seen. . . . I may say, as the Italians say of Naples—'Vede Vaticano e mori.'<sup>1</sup> . . .

"The cuisine of the *Europa* is perfect. Our dinners for the last three days have been finished specimens of *gourmanderie*—banquets which would not have disgraced Ude himself. After dinner we visited the *ateliers* of Canova and Thorwaldsen. I was greatly pleased at finding a model of his statue of Pauline,<sup>2</sup> which is not shown now. His *atelier* is now in the possession of Cincinnati.<sup>3</sup> . . . Thorwaldsen<sup>4</sup> is an artist of greater power, but not

<sup>1</sup> Ainsworth's description of the treasures of the Vatican is of great length, and only a third of it has been given here.

<sup>2</sup> Pauline Buonaparte as Venus Victrix.

<sup>3</sup> Canova had died eight years previously.

<sup>4</sup> Bertel Thorwaldsen (1770–1844), the Danish sculptor, who lived many years in Rome.

so much softness as Canova. I saw some very fine things in his studio. . . . Afterwards to the Baths of Diocletian—a proud mass of ruins. . . . Finished this day by a visit to the Coliseum by moonlight, and returned home through the Arch of Titus.

“*Tuesday, 31st.* Drove to the Mamertine Prisons in the Forum. Here the apostles Peter and Paul were confined by Nero, and here in the depths of the dungeon they show you a miraculous fount created, it is said, by St. Peter to baptize his sentinel. The water is excellent. . . . We were obliged to devote the early morning to the antiquities—the mid-day sun is so intensely hot here in Rome . . . this morning, even as early as nine o’clock, it was almost unbearable. But the worst time is, perhaps, the evening, which, strange to say, has not the cool one might expect, but on the contrary produces a dead, suffocating, feverish heat that is really frightful: in Naples, on the contrary, the meridian sun is tempered with the wind, except that wind happen to be a sirocco, and the evenings are delicious—mild, balmy, and full of southern softness. . . . We drove first to the Sciana Palace . . . afterwards to the Doria and Colonna Palaces. . . . I regret extremely that I am obliged to hurry over these divine collections, each of which ought to have its day. . . . To the Capitol—a *custode* was stabbed here the other night. . . . Another glorious collection of statues, but the apex in point of all is the ‘Dying Gladiator’—which is unquestionably the most wonderful statue of its kind in the world; the agony of the face has a reality about it almost vital. . . . There are in the Capitol some excellent bronze portraits of Michael Angelo, who is for all the world a model of Tom Cooke, the flat-nosed composer of Drury Lane. . . . After dinner, we ascended the Castle of St. Angelo and the Villa Lanti on Mt. Janiculus . . . from the castle we had a fine view of Rome.



“ *Wednesday, 1st September.* In England, this morning, the dogs are out, and the sportsman has sallied forth across the corn and turnip fields. The Campagna di Roma abounds in game, and there has been much shooting there for the last week . . . this gamesome season recalls one’s thoughts to merry England and its bracing atmosphere, and makes one long for fields and hills again. . . . At 6, to the great church of St. John Lateran, where there are many relics of singular curiosity:—the Table on which the Last Supper was served; a porphyry slab upon which the soldiers cast lots for the garments of Christ after the Crucifixion; and the pillars of the Temple which were rent in twain. A man need have active faith to believe all this, and I confess I am somewhat sceptical. . . . Afterwards to the Santa Scala or Holy Staircase, where we saw the marble steps worn by the knees of thousands of devotees; these steps were brought from Pilate’s house in Jerusalem. . . . Our first visit after breakfast was to the Pontifical Palace in the Quirinal, where we wandered about the Pope’s fine garden; in the garden casino are two charming rooms, in both of which are seats occasionally occupied by his Holiness, and upon which I placed my heretic body. We saw the Quirinal apartments, which are handsome, and command fine views of Rome. To the Barberini Palace. In one room here was the most interesting collection I have yet seen:—the pale and melancholy ‘Beatrice Cenci’ by Guido Reni; a lovely Raphael; a splendid Turkish female by Titian; and a rich and beautiful landscape by Claude. Never did any little room please me more, and I could not help exclaiming that for a moderate man like myself these pictures would be sufficient. I had heard that Lord Hertford had bought Pompey’s statue, and had removed it: I was glad, therefore, to find the stone where great Cæsar fell, if not in its place in the Capitol, still in Rome. . . . Again to

the Coliseum by moonlight—such a moon! Ascended among the ruined arches; as the moonlight fell between the broken arches into the corridor the effect was lovely—magical—sublime. We were accompanied in our walk by a monk with a lamp, and a soldier. The lamp and the soldier were both in the way.

“*Thursday, 2nd September.* At four o'clock this morning, by the grey light of dawn, we left Rome in a chaise for Tivoli; passing the Villa of Adrian, the road wound up an olive-clothed hill. . . . To the *Regina*, a disgusting hotel, where we ate a bad breakfast. . . . Our first visit was to the Temple of the Sibyl, to arrive at which we had to pass through a yard vile as the Augean stables; the celebrated Fall, which has figured so often in the engravings, and is really as picturesque as it is represented, was in full force. It issues in a boiling, furious torrent from a fissure in the rock, and precipitates itself into a basin below. The sun was fearfully powerful, and Sergison fairly gave in, and would not descend to the Grotto of Neptune. I, however, persevered, and submitted to a martyrdom for the sake of this really fine view; it is the *beau-ideal* of rocky caverns. Ascended, and mounting my donkey, rode through the abominable streets of Tivoli to the Villa D'Este; this decayed palace is indeed a noble mansion. The terraces and gardens, and above all the fountains, are the finest I have seen. My donkey descended the terrace steps with a facility quite surprising. Got back to dinner at 3. . . . I have said nothing of our daily attendant, Joly, and as he is now an acquaintance of some days' standing I shall afford him a place in my journal, besides that he reminds me of the great Culinary Professor Ude—both in manner and physiognomy. He is an amusing, good-tempered fellow, but a sad murderer of English, which he talks in a manner almost as unintelligible as High Dutch. . . . There is an eclipse of the moon to-night—the finest I

have ever seen. The shadow occupies a third of the moon, and is of a dark, transparent indigo. This night is truly lovely—truly Italian. I shall stand at my window for an hour to gaze upon this enchanting scene . . . now the bright luminary is half obscured . . . an hour after, the moon was totally obscured—not, however, with the dark opaque shadow we have in England, but a light brown transparent cloud. This is unusual, even in Italy. Never was there anything so truly beautiful—I quit it with pain—one look more—and then good-night.

“*Friday, 3rd September.* To the Villa Mattei. Saw the pictures in the Palazzo Corsini—a superb collection. The ‘Prometheus’ of Salvator Rosa is horrible—revolting. None but a murderer could have painted such a picture. There is a savage, butcher-like, gory minuteness that shows the innate satisfaction which the painter took in his subject. A series of pictures illustrating the career of a soldier pleased me much. A fine Anastasian-like<sup>1</sup> novel might be made of the incidents which these paintings suggest. Two small pictures by Rubens, full of story and costume—buff-jerkined, long-sworded, stalwart Flemings—also suggested a plot which time, if I had it, might mature into something. But alas! Time and I are always at variance. He is perpetually giving me the slip, and I find it difficult to overtake his rapid course. . . . To the Sistine Chapel to see Michael Angelo’s ‘Last Judgment,’ with which I was grievously disappointed; the absurdity of Charon is not atoned for because Dante, the over-rated Poet of Hell, has fallen into the same blunder; this jumble of Paganism and Christianity is strangely inexcusable in a man of Michael Angelo’s surpassing judgment. . . . A farewell visit to St. Peter’s—more beautiful than ever. We descended to see the subterranean Chapel. We also saw the Tombs of the

<sup>1</sup> Ainsworth alludes to Thomas Hope’s once popular romance, *Anastasius*, published in 1819.

Stuarts, who are thereon entitled Kings of England. A drive in the evening to the gardens of the Villa Borghese. Afterwards to the Pincian. The sun set wildly, boding rain. And now for a season, perhaps for ever, I must bid thee farewell, thou city of departed greatness; in many an after hour will the recollection of the noble works of art and antiquity I have witnessed arise to my imagination, filling my heart with rapture that I have achieved one great thing in my life—wandered over the temples and palaces of immortal Rome. I am always sad at leaving a place, but now I feel peculiarly so—nervous and dejected.

“*Saturday, 4th September.* One never has done paying in Italy. Just as we were setting off, first a waiter brought a fresh bill—then the *portier*—then the Boots—and the ostler of the Post, that I was out of all patience, and quarrelled with the latter about a few *baiouques*. At the Hill of Bacchus, where we had seen the City of Rome, spread out like a map in the Campagna, we lost sight of it for ever. A slight shower, with some flashes of lightning, and much wind blowing up the dust like a tornado. . . . Stopped to dine at the clean and picturesque Civita Castella. The Castle here is very fine; and there is an extraordinary bridge thrown in amazingly lofty arches across a ravine. This chasm extends for miles, and as the sides are clothed with wood it is very beautiful. I do not remember to have had a drive of greater variety and beauty; many fine old castles in the most romantic situations; a broad, wide plain through which we saw the serpentine meanderings of the Tiber. Our road lay among the mountains, and certainly the Jura had not as many charms of wooded hill, deep valley, and castled height. At Narni there is a mountain feathered with wood from base to summit, and a valley and river the most delightful I ever beheld. The clouds which had been for some time gathering thick and dark in the rear,

now hung ominous over our heads. We had seen one forked flash strike down over the Tower of Narni. As we were apprehensive of a thunderstorm, and night was drawing on apace—it being near 7 o'clock—we told our postboy to drive rapidly. He set off at a brisk gallop; but we had not gone above a mile or two when the lightning began to blaze down, flash after flash, so vivid and intense that it was painful to the eyesight to witness it. There were blinding forked fires and one or two loud rattling crashes. It was an awful sight, for who knows what the result may be in this fearful play of the elements. However, if one could divest oneself of the awe produced by the storm, it was a curious sight to see the Postillion, in his great cloak, riding in front, and the carts which we occasionally met—the cries and shouts mingling with the noise of the wheels and the roar of the thunder. I was not at all sorry when we arrived at Terni, and got housed at an hotel; as we crossed the bridge, the houses seemed in a blaze with the vivid flashes.<sup>1</sup>

“*Sunday, 5th September. Terni waterfall.*”

“We set off in a carriage drawn by two post horses, and passed country richly wooded with vines and olives.

<sup>1</sup> This is an early example of Ainsworth's graphic power in depicting storms—so prominent in his romances. He gave a more detailed account of this storm at Terni in the first edition of *Rookwood*, which was omitted, however, in later issues. But the magnificent description of the thunderstorm in Book II, Chap. 1 of *Rookwood* is, no doubt, based on the Italian experience. It commences: “The night was wild and stormy. The day had been sultry, with a lurid, metallic-looking sky, hanging like a vast galvanic plate over the face of nature. . . . At sunset, the hazy vapours . . . becoming gradually condensed, assumed the form of huge, billowy masses, which, reflecting the sun's light, changed, as the sinking orb declined, from purple to flame-colour, and thence to ashy, angry grey. Night rushed onwards, like a sable steed. There was a dead calm. The stillness was undisturbed, save by an intermittent, sighing wind, which, hollow as a murmur from the grave, died as it rose. At once the grey clouds turned to an inky blackness. A single, sharp, intensely vivid flash, shot from the bosom of the rack, sheer downwards, and struck the earth with a report like that of a piece of ordnance. In ten minutes it was dunest night, and a rattling thunderstorm.”

. . . After an ascent of some time, we got out of the carriage, and the cicerone of the place conducted us along a valley, where, crossing a bridge, we saw a house which was used by the decorous Queen Caroline.<sup>1</sup> . . . The road lies along the bank of the river, which forces its way through a fine mountain pass. After a toilsome walk of a mile and a half, we came in sight of the marble fall—pouring down its full stream from the top of a mountain. We mounted into a sort of alcove, and obtained a glorious view of the sheer descent of this stupendous fall. It is incomparably the finest cascade that I have yet seen. The rocks, trees, and little chapel on the heights, all make up a most beautiful picture. . . . Soon after leaving Terni, the road was, for the most part, very mountainous and extremely well wooded. As assistants to the horses we have had bullocks—very fine animals, but very slow ; the oxen in Italy are the most gentle creatures possible, and, for the most part, of a light fawn colour. Their horns are almost as long as an elk's, and frequently curiously curved. . . . Spoleto looked an interesting town, but we had not time to examine its objects of curiosity. At Foligno we dined. I walked to the Cathedral. We arrived at Macerata about half-past one at night, where we put up.

“ *Monday, 6th.* Off again at half-past six. Macerata is a clean, well-built-and-paved city. The view of the Appennines on the left is particularly striking. They stood out—a mighty chain—in bold and dense relief against the cloudless sky. We found Loreto full of people awaiting the fête of the Nativity, which takes place to-morrow. Our first visit was to the Santa Casa—the miraculous church which winged its flight from Palestine to Dalmatia, and thence across the blue Adriatic to the shores of Italy, where it now abides : it seems stationary enough at present. The little church's in-

<sup>1</sup> Caroline, wife of George IV, was wandering about in Italy 1814-20.

terior is incased in marble, filled with hundreds of never-dying lamps. The image of the Virgin is like a black image dressed up and covered with pearls. The church has four entrances, each of which is guarded by soldiers. It was thronged with peasantry, and I was delighted with the interesting sight of these people in their picturesque dresses grouped before the image. As we were leaving, a procession of pilgrims came slowly along the streets, chanting a hymn to the Virgin. We followed them to the steps of the Church, where they all prostrated themselves on their knees; and so proceeded, singing their choral hymn, till they arrived at the door, where the first line kissed the flags in mute reverence. They then moved in the same order, and still on their knees, to the altar, where they received the benediction of the priest, and afterwards proceeded to make the circuit of the Santa Casa. It was curious to observe the facility with which they moved along—nothing could exceed the devotion displayed by these poor people. One poor old woman never raised her head from the ground the whole time, but seemed to prostrate her whole spirit in the dust. There was a train of moisture all along the floor of the church from this poor creature's lips. I was never more affected with anything in my life than with this scene, and certainly never beheld such a display of devotion.

“Leaving Loreto, we burst upon a fine view of the Adriatic. To Ancona. I took a boat and rowed out into the bay—where I enjoyed a delicious dip in the Adrian Sea. The town has a bold appearance; the houses are of a brownish grey. Ascended by ladder-like steps to the cathedral, which is finely situated on a lofty point at the extremity of the isthmus; the situation of this church is very fine. The view embraces the coast as far as Pesaro and the distant Appennines, and on the other side, the boundless Adriatic, where I fancied I beheld, dimly revealed, the mountainous shore of distant Dal-

matia. Ancona is celebrated, and justly so, for the beauty of its women.

" *Tuesday, 7th.* Arose at four, and left Ancona for Pesaro by a road close along the shores of the sea. The notorious Bergami<sup>1</sup> is Postmaster of the three towns, Fano, Pesaro, and Catolica. . . . One of the horses reared so much as nearly to throw the postillion. Pesaro is a pleasant-looking town, and the women, from the casement windows, with their well-coiffed hair, make a pretty picture. Rimini is a curious old town, interesting to me for poetical associations; the castle-crowned heights of the rocky St. Marino are very striking. The vintage had commenced; we met carts and women with baskets, loaded with ripe fruit, and saw them gathering the grapes in the vineyards. The carts of this country resemble the ancient felled chariot, and they are painted and decorated with fresco. There are also curious little vehicles with a seat for one, well deserving the name of 'sulkies.' Before Cesena, we passed a small muddy river, with but little water, which is said to be the disputed Rubicon. I fell asleep, and so continued till we arrived at Forli, where we took up our abode for the night.

" *Wednesday, 8th September.* Off at 5. About two miles out, we felt by the sudden inclination of the carriage that something was the matter, and, calling to the Postillion, discovered that our right wheel had rolled off; we were obliged to mend it with ends and sticks as well as we could, and proceed thus to Faenza, where we were detained for a couple of hours while the carriage was

<sup>1</sup> Bartolomo Pergami (or Bergami), the Italian with whom Queen Caroline, wife of George IV, had been accused of criminal intercourse. Pergami was of good birth. He entered Caroline's service at Milan, in 1814, as a courier, but was rapidly advanced to higher posts, until he became her chamberlain. Pergami was the chief subject of the charges against the Queen, at the famous Trial of 1820, when voluminous evidence was given of his intimacy with Caroline, during that unhappy woman's wanderings on the Continent in 1814-20; but the House of Lords acquitted her.



repaired. I walked about the market, and attended service at the church or cathedral. . . . We passed through a flat and fertile country, bordered on the left by a chain of mountains, until we saw at some distance the tall tower of Asinelli at Bologna 'pointing to the skies'; the other spires and pinnacles of the city shortly revealed themselves, and we entered Bologna, the approach to which is almost English in its character. Drove to the *Hotel di San Marco*. After having made some alteration in our toilette, we sallied forth with a *lacquet de place* to see the galleries and other objects of curiosity. First to the Zambeccari Gallery, where we saw a very fine collection of pictures in a shameful state of neglect. Next to the Mareschalchi Palace. Then the Cathedral. After dinner, we walked to the promenade, and wandered about the city under the Piazzas, which here have a character quite their own. To-morrow we mean to get to Padua, *if we can*.

"*Thursday, 9th.* Rovigo! I said we should get to Padua if we could, and here we are only as far as Rovigo. Well, we are on the safe side, for they say there are brigands on the road—'Gentle Zibella, Beware, ah! beware! Night is advancing, the Brigand is near.' I often think of this stupid ditty as the evening draws in, and the light is paling in the west.

"Rose at six, and walked about a mile out of Bologna to visit the *Campo Santo* or Public Burial Ground. The road thither lies through green English hedges. . . . I was much amused by our cicerone pointing out a small *Campo Santo* near the gate, intended, he said, '*pour ceux qui ne sont pas Chrétiens Catholiques.*' I suppose he meant that not being of the true was, with him, to be of no faith at all. He forgot he was addressing a heretic. . . . Dined at Ferrara—a fine old town, with a stronghold flanked with towers, telling stories of captives and dark deeds done in the eastern turret. This castle is in

fine preservation, and the moat is just what a moat should be—full of water, and fit for service. I visited the Cathedral, which boasts a fine Gothic front, and the Library, where I feasted my eyes with the original MS. of the *Gerusalemme Liberata* <sup>1</sup> and the handwriting of the divine Ariosto, whose worm-eaten chair (in which I sat), inkstand, and a unique medal (cut not carved) found in his coffin, when exhumed, are here preserved. Walking down a Library, whose shelves are well stored with goodly tomes, our *custode* drew our attention to what I conceived to be an organ. It was the tomb of Ariosto. Never did tomb please me more. Where would a poet wish to be buried, but where most homage is done to his memory—in a secluded, select library; a library which contains the original of his own inimitable poems. This is, indeed, robbing death of its terrors, and strewing the tomb with flowers. It seemed to diffuse a holy inspiration over the room—as if the divine *afflatus* of the inspired bard still dwelt around his ashes. Beneath his apartment is a small Botanical garden. How enviable to walk in this garden, to meditate on lofty works, and strive to emulate the great spirit who has left such a record in the hearts of his fellow-men. Visited afterwards the cell in which Tasso was imprisoned. It is damp and dark enough, but not quite so bad as in his unhappy days. Lord Byron has cut his name in Greek characters (*βίρον*) near the door. On one side of it is inscribed '*Moneo and Venerari. S. Rogers.*' <sup>2</sup> I ventured to place my obscure designation near the autographs of these great names. I do not know that I have passed an hour more to my satisfaction, nor one more likely to live in my memory, than this spent in ducal Ferrara. Dined and departed. We crossed the broad

<sup>1</sup> By Tasso.

<sup>2</sup> For the credit of Rogers' Latin, one must assume that Ainsworth misquotes the inscription.

Po in a *pont volant*, which conveyed our carriage and all to the further shore for the trifling charge of four *pauls*. This is the only *real river* 'we have yet seen'—to borrow one of Sergison's phrases.

"*Friday, 10th September. Venice.* Left Rovigo at daybreak, and drove along a straight, fertile road to Padua. Padua has a reverend air; the domes of the churches are an agreeable variety—rising like mosques in the midst of the town. A hasty glance in a hurrying carriage was all we had to bestow. Venice lay before us, and Padua had no attractions when brought into juxtaposition with that loadstar. After crossing the Brenta, we visited a beautiful and princely palace, built by Palladio—now occupied by one of the House of Austria. At Mestre, which lies on one of the lagoons, we left our carriage, and a gondola, with four oars, conveyed us down the channel to the open sea, and thence to Venice. We were stopped on emerging from the angular lagoon by a *douanier*, to whom we had to pay for not searching our baggage. Having got rid of this scoundrel, we pulled swiftly across the level water to Venice, which lay before us, with its towers and churches. I must confess this view of Venice disappointed me, and I could not help comparing it to Liverpool. But the interior of the city is very different, and not only unlike any place I have ever seen before, but as curious and remarkable as it has been represented by all travellers. We were struck, upon entering the Canal which leads under the Rialto, with the admirable manner in which Canaletto and his school have caught the likeness of the place. Every tint, every broken bit of plaster, mouldering balcony, even to the very clothes hanging from the balconies, seem represented by that excellent artist. I say 'his school,' because three-fourths of the pictures called Canalettos, in England, are by his pupils or imitators. The number that are scattered about in England are

sufficient to fill a gallery as large as the Vatican. They show you, or pretend to do so, the original pictures at Naples, but these are doubtful. . . . I knew the Rialto in an instant ; it is wider than I expected. Our quarters are the *Leone Bianca*, near the Rialto. After dinner, we visited St. Mark's, the Ducal Palace, the Giants' Staircase, and the Bridge of Sighs. Canaletto's pictures of St. Mark are the place itself. Venice ! Here I am at last at Venice, and find it just what I expected—just what I fancied it from books and pictures. I hear the dip of an oar beneath my window—it is pleasant to think it is a gondola.

“ *Saturday, 11th. Venice.* I walked out before breakfast, alone, to visit the Rialto. . . . Later, went to the British Consul's about our passports. The Vice-consul, Mr. Tatham, told us of the rumoured disturbances at Brussels. . . . We ascended the marble steps of the Giants' Staircase ; the highest step was the place where Marino Faliero was decapitated. The Grand Hall is splendid ; immediately under the cornice are portraits of the different Doges who have governed Venice. I looked with much interest at the black-painted veil which covers the place reserved for Marino Faliero. No wonder Lord Byron was struck with this ; as he says, everything is, or was, romance about Venice. Even now the place seems rife with strange, unaccountable interest. Each decaying palace seems to tell mysterious stories of its former possessors. To-day, I met some reverend, bearded Armenians, who reminded me of Schiller's admirable ‘*Ghost Seer*,’ the scene of which is laid in Venice. To resume : we passed to the Hall of the Council of Ten, and thence into a large room where the Doge and Senate convened. We descended by the ‘*Golden Staircase*’ to the State Prisons ; these are horrible places. One cell is carved all over with the names of the unhappy inmates ; one of the cells tells a fearful tale, for near the

grated window are splashes—indeed, a stream of blood. The passage over the Bridge of Sighs is closed up, but I ascended several of the steps. It is impossible to avoid thinking with almost stifling horror of the sensations of the poor wretches who knew, when they crossed this infernal bridge, that their death warrant was signed, probably for no crime whatever. I saw an iron grating in the floor, beneath which a muffled gondola awaited to carry away the body of the wretched sufferer. . . .

“ The Square of St. Mark reminds me, somewhat, of the Palais Royal at Paris. . . . As we glided along the Grand Canal in a gondola, we saw all the great palaces. The Palazzo Foscari has a striking exterior, but, I understand, it is falling rapidly to pieces. Saw the Palace occupied by Lord Byron, in a very open part of the Grand Canal. It looks upon the Foscari ; the balcony is very spacious. Went in our gondola to the church of St. John and St. Paul. It is here Lord Byron laid the scene between Faliero and Israel Bertuccio (previous to the meeting of the conspirators) by moonlight. I had the whole scene so fully before me that I almost fancied I was acting a part in that Tragedy myself. There is something *theatrical* in Venice, an idea assisted by the life one leads—moving from places in gondolas, or wandering about St. Mark’s, which looks like an *actual scene* ; at least, I have seen it so often on the stage that it wants only Charles Kemble, or Young, or Kean, to make the illusion perfect. Wherever one goes one has Shylock, or Jessica, or Desdemona, or Foscari, or Faliero, constantly brought to one’s recollection. *This* is the great charm of Venice—a charm to *me* greater than even Rome possessed. I was much struck with the number of pigeons which I saw about St. Mark’s Place and the Ducal Palace, but was not aware at the time that these birds were protected by Government. The origin of this was a custom of the Venetians to celebrate Palm Sunday

by throwing various birds, with their legs tied, out of their windows to the common people. A few pigeons chanced to escape, and took refuge on the walls of the Ducal Palace, where they bred and formed a colony. The circumstance excited some interest with the Doge, who passed a law for their safety.

“ In the evening, to the little opera house, San Benedetto. Although but a short distance from the house we were half-drowned getting there. It is a dreadfully rainy night. Lightning and thunder—such a clap! Enough to shake a castle to its foundations—a discharge like that of ten thousand artillery. Now all is quiet except the drenching rain; 12 o'clock.

“ *Sunday, 12th September. Venice.* At length the sun has deigned to shine out and to reveal to us all the loveliness of this fair city. Hired a gondola for the day, for which we pay seven francs (by the hour the price is two francs). The gondolier told me that the value of his boat was about £20 (English), and that a boat lasted about fourteen years. . . . We landed at the stairs of St. Mark's Place, and ascended the tower of the Campanile. The ascent is nearly imperceptible, and has a trifling inclination upwards; it is so wide and easy that, it is said, the Emperor of Austria ascended on pony-back. The view from the gallery, nearly at the summit, is beyond conception delightful; on one side, the Islands of Lido, Lazaro, St. Georgio, and others, sleeping on the still, blue waters; nearer shore, innumerable swift-gliding gondolas. The view on the other side is over the densely crowded and red-tiled houses of the city. I was startled to find such a bold boundary of mountains—it was the huge, swelling, snow-clad Tyrol. Padua is seen from the Campanile distinctly. Entering our gondola, we were carried to the Armenian Convent, on the Island of the Lagoons. We were ushered through the establishment by a young Armenian, a handsome man with fine

dark eyes, who spoke English perfectly. He showed us the treasures of the place. He read us a little Armenian, which sounded like a barbarous tongue, and told us Lord Byron was proficient in it. We met the Archbishop, who received our inclinations with much dignity. Returning, we stopped at the Island of St. Georgio, where we visited Palladio's Church; the choir is the finest I have ever seen, rich in glorious wood carvings. It was our fortune here to meet with an intelligent barrister, named (I think) Greenwood, who expatiated learnedly on the subject of pictures and churches; we afterwards dined together. After visiting other churches and palaces, we saw the Palazzo Foscari—not that it is a show house, but merely because I felt some interest in the house itself.<sup>1</sup> It was shocking to see the deplorable state in which it is. It is an immense mansion, and must have been fitted up with great magnificence. The lower room is turned into a workshop for masons; and the Grand Hall on the first floor is hung with faded tapestry, in depressing contrast beneath the proud portraits of the Doges, Senators, and Cardinals, of this once lofty and illustrious, but ever unfortunate, line. It is in itself an emblem of Venice, of which the shell alone remains. All the spirit is fled, and the inhabitants who dwell here are no more the Venetians of old. After dinner, we rowed out to the Islands, and on our way enjoyed one of the most superb sunsets it has ever been my good fortune to witness. It was more than beautiful; the sky and sea were stained with crimson, orange, gold, and blue—all uniting and blending with an infinity of shades more exquisite than the hues of a rainbow. The effect of this extraordinary relief to the spires of Venice and its picturesque outline of houses was quite

<sup>1</sup> No doubt Ainsworth was thinking of his own boyish tragedy, *Venice; or The Fall of the Foscari*, written some nine years before. Venetian history had always had a great attraction for him.

wonderful. Some smoke, which was issuing from one of the islands, was tinged *au couleur de rose*. As the light faded away, the whole mass of the city was thrown into dark relief against the horizon and presented a picture something like a great transparency. We were quite enraptured. We walked about the gardens for an hour enjoying this delightful scene, and then paraded a little amongst the crowd under the Piazzas of St. Mark."

The journal ends here ; but the full extent of Ainsworth's tour is mentioned in the following letter to Crossley after his return home :—

" 12, GRAFTON STREET,

" 27th October, 1830.

" I do long indeed to have a good gossip with you about Italy, which I have traversed throughout ; about Venice—its Rialto, Bridge of Sighs, St. Mark's Place, Gondolas, and Ducal Palaces ; Florence—its galleries and olived hills ; Rome—its Vatican, Forum, Coliseum, and its thousand wonders and antiquities ; Naples—dearer than all—with Pompeii, Herculaneum, Baia, and Vesuvius, and its bluest and loveliest of bays. These will afford us many an hour's chat, when we meet again. How you would have enjoyed ' learned ' Padua, and delightful Pavia, where a man might have libraries, books, and good wine, and all the loveliness of a southern sky for £60 a year. Are you not astonished at what I have done, and at the time I have done it in ? In three months I saw a good part of Switzerland—Geneva, Mt. Blanc. Taking, first, the Mediterranean side of Italy, my route from Milan embraced Genoa, Spezia, Lucca, Pisa, Leghorn, Florence, Sienna, Rome, Velletri, Terracina, Capua, Naples ; and then returning to Rome, I took the Adriatic side by Loreto, Ancona, Rimini, Fer-



rara, Padua, Venice, Verona, Vicenza, Brescia, Milan again, and Turin. I entered Italy by the Simplon, and returned by Mt. Cenis and Savoy. I saw the Dey of Algiers at Naples. I was in Paris a few weeks before the Revolution, on my way homewards."

Back again in London, Ainsworth resumed his legal work perfunctorily; most of his time was, of course, devoted to literary pursuits of one kind or another, to horse exercise, and to social and symposiac pleasures.

In this year, 1830, his third child, a daughter, named Anne Blanche,<sup>1</sup> was born at 4, Sussex Place, where the Ainsworths continued to reside for some while longer. But the coming decade held, all unknown, momentous changes for them—triumphs and trials, fame and death.

<sup>1</sup> Subsequently Mrs. Swanson; she died in 1908, at the age of 78, at 48, Ventnor Villas, Hove.

## CHAPTER VII

“FRASER’S MAGAZINE.” WRITING “ROOKWOOD.” DICK TURPIN AND THE RIDE TO YORK. “CANTING” SONGS.

**D**URING the next few years Ainsworth was actively associated with *Fraser’s Magazine*—the far-famed “Regina, Queen of the Monthlies”—which was projected in 1830 by his friend, Dr. William Maginn, and a man-about-town named Hugh Fraser, from whom the new periodical received its designation. It was published by James Fraser, of 215, Regent Street, whose shop very soon became the *rendezvous* of the most brilliant band of writers who ever formed the personnel of a magazine.<sup>1</sup>

Founded originally as a counterblast to *Blackwood’s*, whose freedom of speech and violent methods of criticism it emulated, *Fraser’s* literary staff outrivalled the celebrity even of its prototype. Just as at Blackwood’s shop in Edinburgh, so at Fraser’s in London, the contributors to the magazine formed a literary club, where they met frequently to discuss their plan of campaign. Here, too, at 215, Regent Street, the Fraserians assembled at those memorable dinners—where conviviality and ripe scholarship joined hands—the fame of which has been preserved by the pencil of Maclise and the inimitable descriptions of Maginn. And what a glorious

<sup>1</sup> *Fraser’s Magazine* lasted for fifty-two years, the final number appearing in October, 1882; it had then become the property of Longmans and Co., who in the following month commenced *Longman’s Magazine*.

set it was that gathered around the table of Fraser—Maginn, Theodore Hook, Coleridge, Southey, Lockhart, D’Orsay, Carlyle, Sir David Brewster, James Hogg (“The Ettrick Shepherd”), Crofton Croker, Sir Egerton Brydges, “Father Prout,” Thackeray (then unknown to the public), Ainsworth, and many another gifted man. The volatile Irishman, Maginn, was the leading spirit at these ambrosial nights he had originated. He was a man of profound learning and brilliant, caustic wit; but the wine-cup proved the bane of “Maginn-and-water,” as his intimates called him. Then the even riper scholarship and classical humour of “Father Prout”; the irresistible drolleries of the punster, Theodore Hook, with his marvellous powers of improvisation; and the mordant satire of Lockhart; these alone would have made the Fraserian banquets famous.

The first dinner of the Fraserians seems to have been held in September, 1830, when they met to elect an editor; towards the end of the convivial evening, when song followed song, we are told that “. . . Mr. William Ainsworth here volunteered the following, accompanying himself on the hurdy-gurdy.” He is then represented to have sung a ballad entitled *The Wind and the Wave*, which “had a prodigious somniferous effect upon the auditory.” At the Fraserians’ dinner in 1834, Ainsworth’s vocal efforts were more successful. The conversation turning on the sermons of Edward Irving, “Turpin<sup>1</sup> Ainsworth, looking piously pretty over his glass, asked, ‘Does any one in the present company know anything of a couple of Spenserian stanzas . . . suggested by a

<sup>1</sup> Ainsworth had just won fame by the publication of *Rookwood* and the exploits of Dick Turpin.

story of St. Augustine, told by Irving in a sermon . . . and turned into verse thus? . . . Turpin with most graceful and Manchester delivery, repeated as follows :—

Long had Augustine o'er the sacred tome  
Studied, with anxious musings deep and high,  
Of Man's first destiny and final doom,  
And of the Godhead one in Trinity.  
In vain did he his restless thought apply—  
Exhaust in vain the functions of his mind ;  
No way he found to solve the mystery  
That drove him on in meditation blind,—  
Tossed as a storm-vexed ship by the relentless wind.

Heated and feverish, he laid down his book,  
And went to wander by the ocean side ;  
Where much his faith strange doubts and scruples shook.  
“ Why am I thus abandoned without guide—  
My reason mocked, my soul unsatisfied ?  
Can I believe that which to understand  
Is to my utmost stretch of thought denied ? ”

So spoke the saint ; and lo ! upon the strand  
He saw a fair young boy, lone, labouring in the sand.  
With a small vessel from the foaming sea  
He toiled in drawing portions of the wave,  
Which in a shallow sand-hole carefully  
He poured with anxious look and action grave ;  
Augustine watched awhile the blooming knave,  
And asked him why such toil he chose to waste ?  
The boy, still labouring on, quick answer gave,—  
“ I mean to empty out the ocean vast  
And all its surging waves into this hole to cast.”

“ O, foolish boy ! ” exclaimed the saint, “ the main  
Is all too mighty for this tiny hole ! ”  
“ O foolish saint ! ” returned the boy again,  
“ God is too mighty for thy tiny soul ! ”  
Sooner will I the streams of ocean roll  
Into this shallow cranny by its shore  
Than in thy bounded intellect the whole  
Of God's unbounded nature thou shalt pour.  
Back to thy books, good saint, with humble mind once more.”



MAGINN

BARRY  
CORNWALL

PERCIVAL  
BANKES

SOUTHEY

CHURCHILL

SERGEANT  
MURPHY  
MACNISH

AINSWORTH

IRVING  
MAHONY

GLEIG  
BRIDGES

CARLYLE

BENNINGHAM

D'ORSAY

MOIR

BURWSTER

HOOK

LOCKHART

CROFTON CROKER

FRASER

JERDAN

DUNLOP

HOGG  
GALT

COLERIDGE

THE FRASERIAN AT 215, REGENT STREET.  
 From a drawing by David MacIver, 1834.



[Later in the evening Ainsworth sang another song, but this will more suitably be alluded to after the publication of *Rookwood*.]

This particular symposium was, no doubt, the one illustrated by Maclise's<sup>1</sup> clever sketch, which depicts Fraser surrounded by his twenty-six principal contributors, and Maginn about to commence one of his inimitable Bacchus-inspired orations to the appropriate music of popping corks and clinking beakers. Ainsworth is seated between Coleridge and Macnish, and this little thumb-nail sketch is an admirable likeness and one of the most successful in the group.

Thanks to Maclise's delightful picture, we still can see the immortal band gathered around their festive board, though all the originals have long passed to the land of shadows. Coleridge was the first to go—dying, indeed, the same year. It is interesting to note that Ainsworth was the penultimate survivor of all the gifted company. Carlyle predeceased him, in 1881, by one year; and the last survivor was the Rev. G. R. Gleig, who died in 1888. But, of course, the majority of the Fraserians passed away long before the eighth decade of the last century:—

“ A narrower circle seemed to meet  
Around the board,—each vacant seat  
A dark and sad remembrance brought.”

And then, inevitably, the *Last Survivor*. As *he* gazed upon Maclise's picture of the past, what poignant memories must have thronged about him, what weird sensations have assailed him. *All* dead, those friends of

<sup>1</sup> Daniel Maclise (1806–70). Born in Cork. Came to London 1827, and rapidly attained fame. Died at 4, Cheyne Walk, Chelsea. His sister, Anna, married Percival Weldon Banks, one of the Fraserians.

bygone years—their merry voices silent for evermore. And yet, to borrow Mr. Bates's expressive words on the Last of the Fraserians,<sup>1</sup> "Do wit and scholar vanish from the board, the hum of converse cease? . . . or do shadowy forms fill the vacant chairs, and jest, anecdote and repartee, sound, in lingering echo, on the ear of the dreamer? Does he ever visit in fancy or reality, the once festive chamber? . . . Do the shades of the departed still assemble as of yore, and join in ghostly converse?" But enough, we are anticipating the future sadly. At the time now under review all the Fraserians were alive, and had but recently banded themselves together in the plenitude of their literary and symposiac powers.

In the early days of *Fraser's Magazine* things were very lively indeed at No. 215, Regent Street—in more ways than one. Its writers indulged in unlimited freedom of remark, and, in particular, Maginn's bludgeoning methods of criticism involved the magazine in many a broil and *cause célèbre*. The most eventful was that known as "The Berkeley Case." The Hon. Grantley Berkeley had written a novel entitled *Berkeley Castle*, wherein, very injudiciously, he revived memories of the notorious history of his family. An unjustifiably severe criticism of the book, and personal attack on the author, appeared in *Fraser's Magazine*, with the result that Grantley Berkeley promptly proceeded to 215, Regent Street to execute vengeance in person. Posting his brother, Craven Berkeley, on guard at the door, and a professional pugilist outside (to act as bully and prevent interference), Grantley Berkeley entered the publisher's

<sup>1</sup> In *The Maclise Portrait Gallery*, 1898 edition.



office, and demanded the name of the writer of the obnoxious review. James Fraser, though a small and delicate man, refused to give the information, whereupon his tall and powerful antagonist felled him to the ground, and, standing over the publisher, beat him savagely about the head and face with the butt end of a heavy, gold-headed hunting-whip. Berkeley's own account of the affair was, after failing to get the name of the writer of the review, "I, at once, with my fist knocked him down on his desk, whence on his recovering he snatched at some weapon close behind him . . . seizing him by the collar, I hurled him into the middle of his shop; where, on his refusing to rise . . . I gave him a severe flogging, which concluded in the gutter of the street, up which he presently fled, crying loudly for help." Of course, legal actions resulted. The two Berkeleys were tried for assault, in December, 1836, and Fraser obtained £100 damages; but the injuries the unfortunate publisher had received in the flogging brought on a lingering illness, which caused his death in 1841. In the counter action for libel—*Berkeley v. Fraser*—the plaintiff only received forty shillings damages.

The writer of the objectionable criticism was, of course, Maginn; and two days after the assault on Fraser he fought a duel with Grantley Berkeley, who slightly wounded him.<sup>1</sup> This duel took place in a secluded

<sup>1</sup> There was a darker scandal mixed up with this affair. Grantley Berkeley asserted, in his *Life and Recollections*, that Maginn had misused his position and power, as a leading critic, by forcing the poetess, Miss Landon, to yield to his immoral proposals, as otherwise he would ruin her literary career; that "L. E. L.," wishing to end this terrible arrangement, appealed to Berkeley for aid, and that he saved her from Maginn, who, in revenge, penned the ferocious review of *Berkeley Castle*. The accuracy of this curious story is doubtful.

meadow off the Harrow Road, within sight, it is interesting to note, of Kensal Lodge, where Ainsworth was at that time living; it is not recorded, however, if he was present at the encounter in support of his *confrère*, Maginn. From the date of this affair Maginn went rapidly downhill from over-indulgence in vinous pleasures. He left the magazine he had founded, and was eventually thrown into a debtor's prison. Soon after his release, in an advanced state of consumption, he died on 21st August, 1842. Such was the end of Maginn, the "Captain Shandon" of *Pendennis*, the accomplished scholar, the brilliant wit, who, under other circumstances, might have been a great figure in literature. As Lockhart wrote in his witty, but curiously outspoken, "epitaph":—

" Here early to bed, lies kind William Maginn,  
Who with genius, wit, learning, life's trophies to win

Turn'd author, while yet was no beard on his chin.

Light for long was his heart though his breeches were thin.

But at last he was beat, and sought help from the bin  
(All the same to the Doctor, from claret to gin),  
Which led swiftly to gaol, with consumption therein.  
It was much, when the bones rattled loose in his skin,  
He got leave to die here,<sup>1</sup> out of Babylon's din.  
Barring drink and the girls, I ne'er heard of a sin,  
Many worse, better few, than bright, broken Maginn."

Maginn's friends, headed by Lockhart and Edward Kenealy, made some provision for his widow and children, and to the fund raised for this purpose Ainsworth subscribed ten guineas.

<sup>1</sup> Walton-on-Thames.

But to revert to *Fraser's Magazine*. Although Ainsworth was associated with the publication for the first five years of its existence, it is difficult to trace his contributions, because, following the custom of the time, they were unsigned. Indeed, the only item that can be identified as his is a powerful short story, entitled *La Guglielmina of Milan*, suggested, no doubt, by his recent visit to Italy in 1830.

The year 1831 found Ainsworth twenty-six and, so far, not much of a success in life. The literary talent was there—he only lacked the occasion or opportunity for exercising it ; and, it may be conceded, the pleasures of London life had not been conducive to a sincere application to work. A change, however, was at hand : the nebulous fancies for a romantic tale, which had been thronging in his brain for some time, at length developed, and resulted in the production of *Rookwood*. The genesis of this remarkable book took place, quite by accident, at Chesterfield, where Ainsworth was visiting his connection, Mrs. James Touchet.<sup>1</sup> With reference to this visit, he writes to Crossley :—

“ 2nd August, 1831.

“ I leave town to-morrow, but shall not be in Manchester before Monday, as I purpose spending a day or two *en route* at Chesterfield. . . . I mean to stop a few hours at Nottingham on my road, in order to pay a visit to Byron's tomb at Newstead—I wish you were to accompany me. . . . Yesterday we had a grand disturbance here, on the occasion of the King opening New London Bridge. It was a magnificent sight on the water. Tens of thousands piled on the bridge, housetops, barges,

<sup>1</sup> Widow of Ainsworth's cousin. She was formerly Miss Eliza Buckley, of Manchester, her family being merchants in that city.

and boats ; upon the river and its banks. I did not believe even London boasted such a population. I long to see old Manchester once more, and the old familiar faces.”

[However, there was a delay. Mrs. Touchet, his hostess, was a talented woman, of brilliant conversational powers, and, although fifteen years older than Ainsworth, had very considerable influence over him to the end of her life.]

“ CHESTERFIELD,

“ 7th August, 1831.

“ You must excuse me a day or two longer. I meant to have been with you on Tuesday, but I fear it will be the latter end of the week. I will not fix a day, therefore don't expect me till you receive a positive letter to say so. You are a man of feeling—a man of philanthropy, and will overlook my errors, I am sure. Chesterfield has charms for me ; *that* you know, and therefore I throw myself on your mercy. I have many things to say to you, but I have not, at this moment, leisure to enter upon them ; therefore, as James Browne used to say,

“ ‘ I beg to subscribe myself,’

“ Yours ever,

“ W. H. AINSWORTH.”

Ainsworth found Chesterfield so attractive, and full of imaginations for his embryonic romance, that, after visiting Manchester, he returned to the Derbyshire town for several weeks, and there he commenced writing *Rookwood*. He stated :—

“ I first conceived the notion of writing this story, during a visit to Chesterfield, in the autumn of the year 1831. Wishing to describe, somewhat minutely, the trim gardens, the picturesque domains, the rook-haunted

groves, the<sup>7</sup>/<sub>4</sub> gloomy chambers, and gloomier galleries, of an ancient Hall<sup>1</sup> with which I was acquainted, I resolved to attempt a story in the bygone style of Mrs. Radcliffe (which had always inexpressible charms for me), substituting an old English squire, an old English manorial residence, and an old English highwayman for the Italian marchese, the castle, and the brigand of the great mistress of Romance. While revolving this subject, I happened, one evening, to enter the spacious cemetery attached to the church with the queer, twisted steeple, which, like the up-lifted tail of the renowned Dragon of Wantley, to whom 'houses and churches were as capons and turkeys,' seems to menace the good town of Chesterfield with destruction. Here an incident occurred, on the opening of a vault, which supplied me with a hint for the commencement of my romance, as well as for the ballad entitled *The Coffin*. Upon this hint I immediately acted, and the earlier chapters of the book, together with the description of the ancestral mansion of the Rookwoods, were completed before I quitted Chesterfield."

The writing of *Rookwood*, however, suffered many interruptions, for on Ainsworth's return to London he was involved in a chaos of business worries relative to the financial affairs of his father-in-law, Ebers. These matters caused him to lay aside, for nearly two years, the manuscript of his romance, and it was not until 1833 that the work was seriously resumed. Then, in May of that year, he writes to Crossley :—

"I am very glad to learn that you are likely to be in town during Whitsun week. . . . I wish you would bring

<sup>1</sup> Cuckfield Place, Sussex.

a few old Plays with you—I should be glad of a sight of some of them, as I am now hard at work on a Book.”

The author has also recorded that a large portion of *Rookwood* was written in the autumn of 1833 at Rottingdean, Sussex, and “ owes its inspiration to many delightful walks over the South Downs. Romance writing was pleasant occupation then.” Here he was within reach of Cuckfield Place, and able to describe from personal examination the ancient mansion which, as he says, “ is the real Rookwood Hall ; for I have not drawn upon imagination in describing the seat and domains of that fated family. The general features of the venerable structure, several of its chambers, the old garden, and, in particular, the noble park, with its spreading prospects, its picturesque views of the hall, ‘ like bits of Mrs. Radcliffe ’ (as the poet Shelley once observed of the same scene), its deep glades, through which the deer come lightly tripping down, its uplands, slopes, brooks, brakes, coverts, and groves, are carefully delineated with, I think, entire accuracy. . . .”

Ainsworth, indeed, had been struck with the romantic charm of Cuckfield from the time of his first visit there, a few years before, to the Rev. William Sergison,<sup>1</sup> and he enthusiastically described the place to Crossley then:—

“ 6th November, 1829.

“ Do not fail me on Sunday, when I trust to see you at 4, Sussex Place, to dinner at 5 o'clock. I have a

<sup>1</sup> He was originally the Rev. W. Saint Pritchard, and married Miss Anne Sergison, the heiress of Cuckfield. On the death of her brother, Colonel Sergison, Mrs. Saint Pritchard inherited the Cuckfield estate, and both she and her husband took the name of Sergison, in 1812. The Rev. William Sergison, who died in 1848, was the great-grandfather of Captain Charles Sergison, the present owner of Cuckfield Place.



CUCKFIELD PLACE, SUSSEX. ("ROOKWOOD.")  
*From a view kindly sent by Mr. L. Breitmeyer.*





thousand things to say, each of which will interest you. Such a fine old house as I have been at ; such a park filled with deer ; such an approach of limes ; such a rookery ; such fine old family portraits ; such carved screens ; such blazing wood fires ; such rooms where Elizabeth Regina has slept—quaint with carvings and rich with tapestry ; such haunted apartments and stories to tell. In short, I have that which will well season your bottle of old port.”

With his temperamental affinity to the romantic and the supernatural, Ainsworth, of course, at once determined to make this ancient hall the scene of a romance—and, indeed, none more fitting can be imagined for such a purpose. Cuckfield—with its oak-panelled chambers and dark closets, its long, gloomy galleries, its mysterious and vast cellarage, its great oak staircase hung with family portraits, its numerous ghost stories and supernatural traditions—is the ideal “ Haunted Manor House ” of story, rhyme, and Christmas picture.

Cuckfield has been enlarged and somewhat modernized since Ainsworth’s time, but fortunately the ancient sixteenth-century wing, on the north side, wherein most of the tragic incidents of *Rookwood* were enacted, remains much the same as he described it ; there is an indefinable air of mystery brooding over these darksome oak chambers and secret cabinets—the Shadows of the Past rise up and meet the stranger at the threshold—

“ O’er all there hung the shadow of a fear,  
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,  
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,  
The place is Haunted ! ”

Still standing, too, is the detached entrance gate, or clock-tower, of the time of James I ; and, on the left

side of this, the famous "Doom Tree," flourishing in a green old age, despite its baleful attributes, retains its place, as of yore, at the top of the lime avenue:—

"Amid the grove o'er arched above with lime trees old and tall  
(The avenue that leads unto the Rookwood's ancient hall),  
High o'er the rest its towering crest one tree rears to the sky,  
And wide out-flings, like mighty wings, its arms umbrageously.

And when a bough is found, I trow, beneath its shade to lie,  
E'er suns shall rise thrice in the skies a Rookwood sure shall die."

The curious and (at one time) credited superstition that a branch of this fateful tree falls to prognosticate the death of a member of the family owning the estate was skilfully introduced by Ainsworth into his story.<sup>1</sup> He also made effective use of the custom of the Sergison family to bury their dead by torchlight at the mid hour of night. With the exception of these two matters of the "Doom Tree" and midnight burial, the sanguinary records of the Rookwoods were, of course, imaginary, and bore no correlation to the annals of the Sergisons, who have been settled at Cuckfield since the seventeenth century: it was their house and park, but not their family history, that formed the groundwork of Ainsworth's romance.

The most remarkable portion of *Rookwood*—Turpin's

<sup>1</sup> Death portents of this description found credence in other parts. At Dalhousie Castle, in Scotland, a branch of an oak (named the Edgewell tree owing to its adjoining a spring) was said to fall before the death of a member of the family. The Breretons, of Brereton, in Cheshire, were warned of impending doom by the appearance of great pieces of wood floating on their sombre lake, named Blackmere, the timber resembling swollen corpses which have been long in water. Another family was visited by a raven as a death-token; and, similarly, at Cortachy Castle was heard the spectral Drummer of the House of Airlie.

Ride to York—was written on the author's return to London, early in 1834. Ainsworth and his wife were at this period residing, with Mr. Ebers, at a house called "The Elms," in Kilburn—the two establishments in Sussex Place having been given up.

Kilburn in the days of William IV was a straggling hamlet, well known for its tea-gardens, surrounded by charming country. London, however, was within easy reach, so the place was pleasantly situated for literary pursuits.

"The Elms," in Kilburn High Road, was an old-fashioned, rambling house of the type once so prevalent in the suburbs of London, but now, unhappily, fast disappearing through the ravages of the speculative builder. It was surrounded with lofty elms, and a lawn lay between it and the road. In the rear were extensive gardens and a large pond. Inside, the house was sombre and gloomy, owing to its dark woodwork and the proximity of trees; yet its atmosphere and associations were strangely in keeping with the romance Ainsworth was writing, for a dismal tale of suicide was attached to the pond in the garden, and the restless shade of the self-murdered one troubled the elm-shadowed house at night! Very likely, too, these same tall elms, inhabited by a colony of cawing rooks, may have suggested the title of *Rookwood*.<sup>1</sup> Undoubtedly Ainsworth found the old house in sympathy with his work, for here it was he

<sup>1</sup> "The Elms" is still (1910) in existence, though shorn of its elms, rooks, gardens, and ghostly pond. The house is hidden away by tall shops which stand between it and Kilburn High Road. The place is occupied by Messrs. Allen, builders, who utilize the house for offices. It consequently retains much of its original character; but the grounds are covered with sheds, etc.

wrote that *tour de force* of literary composition, "The Ride to York," and brought his book to a triumphant conclusion. Of the brief period in which he created the equestrian apotheosis of the famous highwayman he has recorded :—

"The Ride to York was completed in one day and one night. This feat—for a feat it was, being the composition of a hundred ordinary novel pages in less than twenty-four hours—was achieved at 'The Elms'—a house I then occupied at Kilburn. . . . From the moment I got Turpin on the high road till I landed him at York, I wrote on and on without the slightest sense of effort. I began in the morning, wrote all day, and as the night wore on, my subject had completely mastered me, and I had no power to leave Turpin on the high road. Well do I remember the fever into which I was thrown during the time of composition. My pen literally galloped over the pages. So thoroughly did I identify myself with the flying highwayman, that, once started, I found it impossible to halt. Animated by kindred enthusiasm, I cleared every obstacle in my path, with as much facility as Turpin disposed of the impediments that beset his flight. In his company I mounted the hillside, dashed through the bustling village, swept over the desolate heath, threaded the silent street, plunged into the eddying stream, and kept an onward course, without pause, without hinderance, without fatigue. With him I shouted, sang, laughed, exulted, wept. Nor did I retire to rest till, in imagination, I heard the bell of York Minster toll forth the knell of poor Black Bess. The whole panorama of the country between London and York seemed to pass before me ; and being per-



"THE ELMS," KILBURN.  
(WHERE AINSWORTH WROTE "THE RIDE TO YORK.")  
*From a view, taken in 1891, kindly lent by Messrs. Allen.*



sonally a good horseman, passionately fond of horses, and possessed moreover of accurate knowledge of a great part of the country, I was thoroughly at home with my work. I must, however, confess that when the work was in proof, I went over the ground between London and York to verify the distances and localities, and was not a little surprised at my accuracy. The pains of authorship are great ; but its pleasures, when they occur, are greater. And among the latter, I may instance the composition of this Ride to York."

This is the true enthusiasm which begets literary inspiration, and ensures success.

When it is remembered that the story of Dick Turpin's Ride to York—implicitly believed to be fact by thousands of persons—existed only in the imagination of Ainsworth, then is it possible to gauge the verisimilitude and vivid power of his creative faculty. The story of Dick's dashing ride will live for ever—conjoined with the name of his matchless mare, Black Bess. All along the Great North Road the legend is a truth ; every village through which the highwayman galloped (in the imagination of Ainsworth) during that famous ride has its own particular tale and relic of Turpin's feat. From Tottenham to Ware—from Huntingdon to Stamford—from Newark to York—a volume of Turpinian anecdotes could be collected from innkeepers and ostlers ; here, you may learn how Turpin refreshed his mare with strong ale and see the actual tankard he used ; and there, how he leaped the five-barred toll-gate ! And yet the ride never took place, and the splendid mare never died at the moment of victory within sight of the towers of

York. The death of Black Bess makes painful reading, but she, after all, only lived in shadowland—like her famous lean sister, the equally faithful Rozinante. What a wonderful art is this that can convert fiction into reality.<sup>1</sup> The Ride to York is a fact! As Mr. Thomas Seccombe says,<sup>2</sup> “Let the Legend grow! It is one of the big verities of fiction, of Fiction which is far greater and stronger than Truth! On clear nights, when the road winds upwards through dark copse and hollow to the dry and bracing upland, and spectral gates and railings reflect white light from the moon, my belief in Dick Turpin far outweighs my incredulity. I see the gallant outlaw dashing across the open, I hear the regular tlot-atlap of his horse’s hoofs, I see the smoking breath of Black Bess, and watch the curve of her flanks as she stretches herself on the level turf. . . .”

The Ride to York is not only remarkable for its description of equestrian prowess: it contains many exquisite little pen-pictures of the scenery of the Great North Road—of the quiet country-side sleeping in the moonlight—of lonely moorland shrouded in silver mist.

[Dr. Shelton Mackenzie, who had a weakness for printing in America “wonderful stories” which could never be substantiated, set forth the fable that “The Ride to York” was written by Dr. Maginn! It would be unnecessary to allude to this foolish statement did it not provide an amusing example of how “stories”

<sup>1</sup> George Augustus Sala described this Ride to York as “a piece of word-painting rarely, if ever, surpassed in the prose of the Victorian Era.”

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Seccombe wrote a most entertaining account of Dick Turpin’s career for *The Essex Review*, 1902. Turpin has been more fortunate than he deserved in his biographers.



get perverted from their real facts in the course of transmission. Dr. Maginn wrote a novel entitled *John Manesty*, in which he introduced a "Ride for Life"—in obvious imitation of the great feat in *Rookwood*. *John Manesty* was first issued, posthumously, in *Ainsworth's Magazine* in 1843-4, and when this "Ride for Life" incident appeared in due course, Ainsworth added a footnote as follows: "The exploit, described in this chapter, may possibly recall to some of our readers certain passages in the Ride to York, recorded in *Rookwood*. The resemblance is rather striking, it must be owned, and at first we seemed to recognise some old acquaintances. . . . The scenery and machinery are, we admit, pretty much the same. . . . All this is very gratifying, and we should have been well content with the compliment paid us by such unintentional imitation, had we not feared that we, ourselves, might be suspected of having some share in the new equestrian performance. This, we beg to state, is not the case."

So, although the real fact was that Ainsworth publicly disclaimed having written "The Ride" in Maginn's *John Manesty*, by the time the story reached Dr. Mackenzie—over the Atlantic, presumably—it was Maginn who had written "The Ride to York" in *Rookwood* !]

Much ink has been shed in criticism of Ainsworth's choice of Turpin as a hero. The author did not primarily intend the highwayman to fill that rôle in *Rookwood*—which, indeed, may be styled another "novel without a hero," for the gloomy and fate-haunted Luke is scarcely a satisfactory one. Turpin was only a subsidiary character, but from the outset the reading public took him to their hearts, and he has ever since been acclaimed as

the real hero of the book. This being so, it may be conceded at once that the Turpin of fact was by no means the generous and dashing outlaw of *Rookwood*. To demonstrate how Turpin came by his very flattering reincarnation at the hands of Ainsworth, and the credit of performing The Ride to York, it is necessary to give a brief account of the highwayman's real career.

Richard Turpin was born at The Bell Inn, Hempstead, Essex, in 1705. Brought up to the trade of a butcher, he early displayed a preference for cattle-stealing. He became, while still a youth, the leader of a band of robbers which infested Essex. Their plan of campaign was to attack lonely farm-houses while the men-folk were absent at work, and levy toll from the women. If the latter proved reluctant to disclose where the money was hidden, they were gagged and roasted in front of the kitchen fire until the torture compelled them to give in and pay up. One old lady, at Loughton, who valiantly refused to disclose her hoard, was actually placed *on* the fire, whereupon she capitulated and discovered £400. Soon after coming of age, Turpin married Hester Palmer, of East Ham, and, stealing a horse, took to the road in real earnest.

In association with that other famous highwayman, Tom King, Turpin for several years did very successful business in the Home Counties, particularly on the high roads north of London. By 1737 things were getting rather warm for Turpin and King, who then took up their abode in a cave, concealed by shrubs, near Loughton, in Epping Forest.

Soon after this, Tom King was accidentally shot by Turpin during a *fracas* at Whitechapel, much in the

manner described in *Rookwood*.<sup>1</sup> Turpin thereupon rode off to Long Sutton, in Lincolnshire, to escape from his pursuers, and *here* we have the germ of the legend of his Ride to York. In Lincolnshire he practised horse-stealing, and made occasional raids into Yorkshire. He assumed his wife's former name—Palmer—and set up as a "horse-dealer" near Beverley. But at last he was apprehended, and conveyed in chains to York Castle, where the whole countryside flocked to see him—so much so, that the gaoler made £100 by supplying strong liquors for Turpin and his visitors.<sup>2</sup> The gay outlaw consequently spent his time in drinking, joking, and telling stories of his past adventurous career. It must be confessed that Turpin conducted his dying much as his living, for he scoffed at the chaplain and suffered no remorse for his crimes. But he met his death bravely. For the last dread act of his life he dressed himself carefully in new clothes; under the scaffold itself he waved his cocked-hat and bowed to the ladies; mounting the ladder gracefully, he talked for half an hour with the hangman, and then threw himself resolutely off and died instantly. His execution took place on 7th April, 1739, when he was but thirty-three years of age. No sooner was Turpin dead than he became a popular hero. The fickle mob that had execrated the robber now bewailed his fate as untimely. When it was discovered that the surgeons had dug up his body for dissection, the people

<sup>1</sup> Ainsworth laid the scene of this incident at The Jack Falstaff (which may be identified as The Cock) Tavern, Kilburn; this enabled him to introduce some picturesque descriptions of the country surrounding that hamlet.

<sup>2</sup> Dick Turpin's fetters, weighing 28 lbs., are still preserved in York Castle.

were furious and rescued the corpse. After a triumphal procession through the streets of York, Turpin's body was reburied in the churchyard of St. George's-within-Fishergate-Postern, and the grave filled up with lime to save its contents from further interference by body-snatchers.

With every succeeding year Turpin's posthumous fame continued to increase, and only three years after his death he made his first of many appearances in famous literature. Fielding alludes to Turpin in *Joseph Andrews* (published in 1742), in the scene where Fanny is brought before the justice: "One asked whether she was to be indicted for a highwayman? . . . a third said 'He warranted she was a relation of Turpin. . . .'"<sup>1</sup>

But Turpin's fame and legendary exploits were chiefly propagated and preserved by the uncouth ballads and chap-books retailed by every wandering pedlar. These productions were garnished with a woodcut of the highwayman, fully armed, mounted on a *black* horse in the act of jumping a spiked gate. This black horse was the original, no doubt, of Black Bess.

Consequently, legends of Turpin thus sown took root, and sprang up again in all parts of England; and relics of the famous robber were, and are, as numerous as the pictures of Canaletto, and the bedsteads slept

<sup>1</sup> As Mr. Thomas Secombe points out, Turpin has in addition been mentioned in the pages of Smollett, Dickens, Tom Hood, D. G. Rossetti, Thomas Hardy, and of many other writers.

Mention must also be made of the equestrian club called "The Two Pins"—in commemoration of Turpin and Gilpin, "the two most celebrated English equestrians known to the road." This club was founded by Sir Frank Lockwood, who, like Ainsworth, was educated at the Manchester Grammar School. Evidently Turpin's shade has some occult influence over the *discipuli* of that scholastic establishment!

in by Queen Elizabeth, which we meet with o'er all our native land.<sup>1</sup>

Naturally, as the locality of his most famous deeds, Turpin legends were particularly prolific in Yorkshire, Cheshire, and Lancashire, and Ainsworth's father being a collector of highwaymen lore, it came about that the future author of *Rookwood* was saturated with the Turpinian tradition from his early childhood. As he himself stated in his Preface to the book: "My earliest associations are connected with sunny scenes in Cheshire, said to have been haunted by Turpin; and with one very dear to me (from whose lips I have listened to many stories of his exploits) he was a sort of hero; my father, indeed, has a share, and an important one, in these pages. To his well-remembered anecdotes, I am indebted for the character of *Turpin*. . . . Turpin was the hero of my boyhood. I had always a strange passion for highwaymen, and have listened by the hour to their exploits, as narrated to me by my father, and especially to those of 'Dauntless Dick,' that 'chief minion of the moon.' One of his adventures in particular, the ride to Hough Green, which took deep hold of my fancy, I have recorded in song. . . .<sup>2</sup> And then there was the Bollin,

<sup>1</sup> As recently as 1905, Dick Turpin's pistol (bearing his initials and the date 1737) was discovered during the demolition of the old Plough Inn, at Ealing, a resort of Turpin's at the time his grandfather was the landlord. Very appropriately, this pistol was used in a revival of the equestrian drama, *Dick Turpin's Ride to York*—founded on *Rookwood*.

Mr. R. A. Roberts, the Protean Actor, has the pistol with which Turpin shot poor King.

"Turpin Oaks" (wherein the outlaw hid) are scattered all over the country; Finchley, Enfield, Hounslow, Lincolnshire, and Yorkshire possess caves where he dwelt; Hockley-in-the-Hole had Turpin's "small leather portmanteau"; and Bagshot claimed a shed where Black Bess was stabled.

<sup>2</sup> The ballad of *Black Bess*, in *Rookwood*, Chapter 35.

with its shelvy banks, which Turpin cleared at a bound . . . all brought something of the gallant robber to mind. No wonder, in after years, in selecting a highwayman for a character in a tale, I should choose my old favourite, Dick Turpin!"

So much for the reasons of Ainsworth's choice of the robber for a hero.

As regards *The Ride to York*, beyond the fact that Turpin rode swiftly to Lincolnshire after the shooting of Tom King, Ainsworth had no direct evidence that his hero performed a marvellous ride to the north in twelve hours, for he admits: "I have not, as yet, been able to obtain satisfactory evidence that the extraordinary equestrian feat attributed to him, by oral tradition, and detailed in this work, was ever actually accomplished."

It must be remembered, however, that the legend of a highwayman performing a wonderful Ride to York in one day had been current for a hundred and thirty years before Ainsworth's time. It is recorded that, in 1676, a highwayman named Nevison, or Nevinson (known by the *sobriquet* of "Swift Nicks"), having robbed a traveller at Gadshill, on the Chatham Road, found it desirable to prove an alibi. The robbery was committed in the early morning, and at 4 a.m. Nevison rode off to Gravesend, where he was detained an hour or so waiting for a boat to ferry him and his horse across the river. From Tilbury he rode via Chelmsford, Dunmow, Cambridge, and Huntingdon, to York, which he reached at 7.45 p.m., having thus ridden about two hundred and twenty miles in less than fifteen hours. He established his alibi by aid of the testimony of the Lord Mayor of York, from whom the highwayman had inquired the time when he appeared

upon the bowling green at York at a quarter before eight.<sup>1</sup>

A more remarkable version of the Ride to York story is enshrined in the *Narrative of the Life and surprising Robberies and Adventures of William Page*, published in 1758. Speaking of alibis, the author said: "One instance, I myself remember, which happened upwards of thirty years ago. This was Harris, the famous highway-man, who robbed on the Black Mare. He committed a robbery in the morning in Surrey, on a gentleman, who knew him perfectly well, and therefore Harris rode for it, with such speed, trusting to the goodness of his mare, that in the evening, about sunset, he appeared on the Bowling Green at York; and pulling out his watch, showed it to the gentlemen present. But, notwithstanding this prodigious performance, namely, the riding one hundred and ninety-four miles in one day, so positive was the evidence against him, that he was convicted upon it. The old Duke of Richmond, as I remember, was so charmed with the vastness of the performance, and the bravery of the man, that he interceded for his life, and obtained it, on condition that Harris would give him his word and honour never to be guilty of the like offence again."

Ainsworth was inclined to believe that the hero of this story was Turpin, and "Harris" merely an *alias* of the redoubtable Dickon's. He observed: "Here we have the 'Black Mare,' the 'ride to York in a single day,' and the incident of the 'watch shown to the gentlemen

<sup>1</sup> This story will be found in Defoe's *Tour through Great Britain*. Nevison's ride to York is said to have greatly interested King Charles II, who bestowed the appellation of "Swift Nicks" on the hero.

on the bowling green,' told of Turpin at Hough<sup>1</sup> . . . it is highly probable that Page's biographer, partially informed upon the subject, may have substituted one name for another, and related a traditional anecdote of Turpin, with some trifling embellishments of his own. The date referred to (1728) coincides with the supposed period of Turpin's exploit. . . ."<sup>2</sup>

To sum up this matter : Since 1676 a shadowy legend had preserved the memory of a highwayman, mounted on a black mare, who, to prove an alibi, rode from the south of England to York in record time. Tradition ascribed the feat variously to three highwaymen in particular—Nevison, Harris, and Turpin. Ainsworth from an early predilection for Turpin chose to credit him with the exploit, and, by the magic of his pen, has persuaded the world to do the same. Incidentally he thus put the coping-stone on Turpin's posthumous fame as the *beau-ideal* highwayman, although, in reality, Dickon was by no means the best example of his class, such as Claude Du-Val would have been.

So Dick Turpin, with his "brown complexion, very much marked with the small-pox, his cheek-bones broad, his face thinner towards the bottom, his visage short . . ." has been metamorphosed from a rather commonplace robber into the most gallant and gay outlaw of all the ages—the very patron saint of highwaymen and the most revered cave-dwelling anchorite in all the Newgate

<sup>1</sup> See the ballad of *Black Bess*, in *Rookwood*, Chapter 35.

<sup>2</sup> The fact that Turpin was executed and Harris reprieved seems to indicate that they were distinct personalities. There was a James Harris tried for highway robbery in 1705 ; his horse was described as "a bay-gelding, with a black list down his back." Harris was found guilty, but afterwards reprieved. Probably this was the same man mentioned by Page's biographer in his anecdote of Harris.



Calendar. He was the progenitor of that long line of masked robbers with three-cornered hats, velvet coats and gold lace, top-boots and big pistols, who, in turn, have swaggered through chap-books, ballads, romances, melodramas, and boys' "penny-dreadfuls." Turpin himself must have figured in hundreds of stories provided for boyish consumption.<sup>1</sup> Most of these, no doubt, are written in imitation of the highwaymen portions of *Rookwood*, although they fail to catch the romantic charm and graphic power of the original model. To a not too critical reader, however, some of these outlaw tales will seem quite passable, particularly when the writers endeavour to imitate Ainsworth's constant succession of exciting incidents and adventures, and his realistic descriptions of old London or romantic countryside.

Stern moralists and censors of youths' literature notwithstanding, there is an undeniable fascination about the "pernicious" but picturesque cult of the highwayman: the heavy coach rumbling over the lonely heath—the ominous thud of a horse approaching at a gallop—the moonlit figure of the crape-masked horseman as he reins in his prancing steed and, covering the unhappy traveller with formidable holster-pistols, propounds his historic aphorism—"Your money, or your life!"

But to return to *Rookwood*. In this book Ainsworth introduced two real characters who were then living, and very much talked about in 1834. One was the notorious "Knight of Malta"—impostor, religious fanatic, and lunatic. His real name was John Tom, being the son of

<sup>1</sup> A series entitled *Dick Turpin*, now (1908) being issued by the Aldine Publishing Co., is already approaching two hundred numbers.

an innkeeper in Cornwall, where he was born in 1799. In 1832 he arrived at Canterbury, and, conducting a religious-political campaign, proposed himself as candidate for parliamentary honours. He styled himself "Sir William Courtenay, Knight of Malta, and King of Jerusalem," and at the same time proclaimed he was heir to the Earldom of Devon. The citizens of Canterbury were won over by his handsome face and figure and his strange oriental garb. He was a tall man, with a full beard, and bore a striking resemblance to the traditional portraits of Christ. At last, however, he was arrested and confined for four years in a lunatic asylum. On his release, in 1837, he returned to the neighbourhood of Canterbury, preached communistic doctrine, and proclaimed himself the Messiah—showing the signs on his hands and feet. Over a hundred disciples gathered round him; these he armed with cudgels, and led them about the country, mounted on a white horse. On 31st May, 1838, Tom shot and killed a constable who endeavoured to arrest him. The same afternoon two companies of soldiers were sent from Canterbury to apprehend the murderer, who fought desperately and shot dead one of the officers. The soldiers then fired in return, and John Tom, "Knight of Malta and King of Jerusalem," with eight of his followers, was killed on the spot.

The other living character that Ainsworth transplanted to his pages was a mendicant well known at all the race-courses of England, where he never failed to appear and divert the concourse by his pranks and quips. Jerry Juniper eventually met his death, by accident, at Chichester, on his way to Goodwood.

This Jerry Juniper was the principal medium by which Ainsworth presented his remarkable study of thieves' slang in *Rookwood*, particularly in the mendicant's famous "flash chaunt," *Nix my doll, pals, fake away* (meaning "Never mind, friends, go on—work away"). "Flash" or "cant" dialect is the code language of "the road"—words and phrases used by thieves and beggars in converse with each other, but perfectly unintelligible to those not initiated into the mysterious jargon. For example, "my thimble of ridge and my driz kemesa" means "my gold watch and my laced shirt." Many "flash" words are picturesquely suggestive of the things they adumbrate; thus "the darkmans" and "the lightmans" signify night and day respectively; "panter" is the heart; "glaziers" are eyes; "the mare-with-three-legs" refers to the triple gallows of the old days; and some of the expressions—such as "a kid-napper" (one who steals a boy)—seem to have developed into orthodox diction with some extension of meaning.

A whole literature might be compiled on this subject, for thieves' "patter" is of great antiquity, and "canting" songs have been in existence certainly since the fifteenth century. The French have numerous *chansons de l'argot* from the time of Villon (1431-85) to that of Victor Hugo; and the Spanish have a large collection of *Romances de Germania*. In England, although Beaumont and Fletcher, Ben Jonson, Middleton, and others, make frequent use of "flash" jargon in prose, lyrical examples are not so numerous as abroad. Nevertheless, our country can claim songs of this description both ancient and famous. The earliest that can be traced is in Robert

Copland's *The Hye-way to the Spyttel-hous*, 1536.<sup>1</sup> Next, Thomas Dekker wrote a rhyming jingle, *The Beggar's Curse*, in his *Lanthorne and Candlelight*, 1608. In 1610 Samuel Rowlands followed with his specimens in *Martin Mark-all, Beadle of Bridewell*. Thomas Middleton's *Roaring Girl*, 1611, presents many examples of "cant" phrases (Scene 1, Act V), and this play contains the lyric, *A Gage of Ben Rom-Bouse*.<sup>2</sup> John Fletcher, in *The Beggar's Bush*, 1622, wrote the "cant" song commencing:—

"Cast your nabs and cares away,  
This is maunder's <sup>3</sup> holiday:  
In the world look out and see  
Where so blest a king as he."

These lines are also quoted in *The Life and Adventures of Bamfylde Moore Carew*, the "King of the Gipsies," born 1693. Passing over the "flash" songs by Richard Brome in his excellent comedy, *A Jovial Crew*, 1641, we come to some very piquant pieces in J. Shirley's *Triumph of Wit*, 1707. These, and similar love lyrics of the hedge-row by other writers (which will be found in *The New Canting Dictionary*, 1725), exhale, more than any others, the "atmosphere" of the free, nomadic life of the high road and of nights in the open:—

Mistress. "Doxy, oh! thy glaziers shine  
fire; by As glimmer; by the Salomon!  
the mass. No gentry mort hath prats like thine.  
No cove e'er wap'd with such a one.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *Musa Pedestris* (Three Centuries of Canting Songs), by J. S. Farmer, 1896.

<sup>2</sup> See Vol. I of Middleton in the Mermaid Series of Old Dramatists, edited by Havelock Ellis, for many interesting notes on the origin of "flash" dialect.

<sup>3</sup> Beggar's.

hedge  
 duck  
 goose

" When the darkmans have been wet,  
 Thou the crackmans down didst beat  
 For glimmer, whilst a quaking cheat,  
 Or tib-o'-th'-buttry was our meat."

Space will not permit reference to other examples of the eighteenth century. To the year 1816 belongs the renowned slang song, *The Night before Larry was stretched*, which was probably written by Will Maher, a shoemaker of Waterford, and not, as often stated, by Dean Burrowes of Cork. "Father Prout" most felicitously translated this effusion into scholarly French, and entitled it *La Mort de Socrate*. Another famous Irishman, Tom Moore, joined the bards of slang with his pugilistic contributions to *Tom Cribb's Memorial to Congress*, 1819; and, soon after, Pierce Egan also hymned The Fancy in appropriate jargon. In *Blackwood's Magazine*, July, 1829, Maginn gave a spirited translation of Vidocq's *En roulant de vergne en vergne* under the title of *The Pickpocket's Chaunt*. Chronologically, Ainsworth comes next, in 1834, with his four "flash" songs in *Rookwood*—*Nix my doll, pals*; *The Game of High Toby* (highway robbery); *The Double Cross* (relating to pugilism); and *The Modern Greek* (dealing with card cheating, etc.). Pierce Egan included several ballads of highwaymen and other "prigging coves" in *Captain Macheath*, 1841. Sir Theodore Martin's four songs, entitled *Flowers of Hemp*; or *the Newgate Garland* (in *Tait's Magazine*, 1841), were, as will be shown later, intended to satirize the "criminal romances" of Ainsworth, Bulwer-Lytton, and Dickens. George Borrow introduced some snatches of songs in Romany lingo in *Lavengro* (1851), and in *The Romany Rye* (1857) he gave a complete example, relating how

the nomads "drab the baulo"; both these books, of course, are concerned largely with the dialect of gipsies and mendicants.<sup>1</sup> To come down to more recent times, the most remarkable "flash" versification was that of the late William Ernest Henley, whose *Villon's Good-Night* and *Villon's Straight Tip to all Cross Covets*, written in 1887, are as unintelligible as *Nix my doll, pals* to the uninitiated:—

" Fiddle, or fence, or mace, or mack ;  
 Or moskeneer, or flash the drag ;  
 Dead-lurk a crib, or do a crack ;  
 Pad with a slang, or chuck a fag ;  
 Bonnet, or tout, or mump and gag ;  
 Rattle the tats, or mark the spot  
 " You cannot bank a single stag :  
 Booze and the blowens cop the lot."

Mr. G. R. Sims ("Dagonet") has contributed some excellent slang songs to *The Referee*; and Mr. Albert Chevalier's lyrics in Coster dialect are too well known to need quotation here, as is also the case with many music-hall songs in slang phraseology by other writers.

Such, then, is the band of bards who have "pattered flash" in England during five centuries, and of all the "canting" songs written during that long period Ainsworth's *Nix my doll, pals* achieved the greatest notoriety or fame; for when the ditty was introduced into the dramatized versions of *Jack Sheppard* it obtained enormous popularity, as will be seen later on. Indeed, it is highly probable that the vogue of this song in 1839—when it was as popular in the drawing-rooms of St.

<sup>1</sup> There is also Borrow's scarce work *Romano Lavo-Lil; Word-Book of the Romany* (1874), which contains many examples of the English Gipsies' poetry.









*à propos* of *Nix my doll, pals* : “ We ourselves heard it read by a person, once very learned in such matters, and, gravely shaking his head, he asked, ‘ Are you quite *sure* that the writer of this book has never been one of the Family ? ’ ”

Ainsworth, however, had not been one of the “ Canting Crew ” ; he learned their jargon in a very matter-of-fact way. When Edmund Yates questioned him on the subject, and suggested that he interviewed numerous thieves and gipsies before he acquired his power to “ patter flash,” Ainsworth replied : “ Not at all. Never had anything to do with the scoundrels in my life. I got my slang in a much easier way. I picked up the *Memoirs of James Hardy Vaux*—a returned transport. The book was full of adventures, and had at the end a kind of slang dictionary. Out of this I got all my ‘ patter.’ Having read it thoroughly and mastered it, I could use it with perfect facility.”<sup>1</sup>

*Rookwood* was written in most haphazard manner, without any fixed scheme or plot, and the fate of its characters and the solution of its mysteries were only decided upon as the work progressed ; but, in spite of these *imbroglios* and constructive faults, the straying threads of the romance were skilfully gathered together and the story completed.

The results of its publication will be dealt with in the next chapter.

<sup>1</sup> *The World*, 1878.

## CHAPTER VIII

PUBLICATION OF "ROOKWOOD." FAME. A BUCK ABOUT TOWN. AINSWORTH AND LADY BLESSINGTON. KENSAL LODGE AND ITS SOCIETY. FRIENDSHIP WITH CHARLES DICKENS.

**R**OOKWOOD was published in April, 1834, in three volumes, by Richard Bentley,<sup>1</sup> of New Burlington Street. The book was an instantaneous success and took the town by storm, primarily by its quaint originality and extreme unconventionality—the blending of the natural with the supernatural, the sober realities of everyday life combined with the fantastic imaginings of weird romance, the stifling horrors of the charnel-house mixed with the merry life of outlaws on the breezy heath-land. Here was a vivid contrast of sensations which proved irresistible to the reading public, long since heartily sick of the dreary stream, which had deluged the country for the past ten years, of "Tales of Fashionable Life," wherein inane heroes named Mortimer or Mordaunt, in the intervals they could spare from Crockford's, made

<sup>1</sup> Richard Bentley (1794-1871) was in partnership with Henry Colburn from 1829 to 1832, but in the latter year he became a publisher on his own account. In 1833 he was appointed publisher to the King, and his business increased yearly. The firm of Bentley and Son flourished for over sixty years, but on the acquisition of their business by Messrs. Macmillan, the well-known name ceased to exist in the publishing world.

vapid love to the Lady Julia De Vere or her French maid; wherein "scenes" at the opera and race-course formed the incidents, the tittle-tattle of the servants' hall provided "conversation," and the amours of ballet dancers and milliners supplied the necessary spice to ensure a sale.

Consequently, both readers and critics welcomed with acclamation this new, bizarre romance, which delighted them with its fresh and vivid descriptions of scenery and dramatic events; harrowed them with its blood-stained mysteries; and excited them with its inimitable narrative of *The Ride to York*—which is, as a critic observed, "an image of the reader's course as he leaps the abrupt gaps and turns the picturesque corners of this singular tale."

"His story is one that never flags . . . we expect much from this writer . . .," thundered the ponderous *Quarterly Review*; "Written with great vigour and wonderful variety . . .," boomed *The Spectator*; "It is long since such a work as this has been produced—the author exhibits ability of no ordinary kind . . .," chimed in *The Atlas*. And so on. *Rookwood*, unaided by any illustrations at its first appearance, was read by everybody and talked about by everybody. Never did a book by a practically unknown writer attain so rapid a success. The first edition appeared, indeed, anonymously; but the author's name became known at once, and Ainsworth was the Lion of the day—courted and fêted by all the most distinguished members of literary, artistic, and social circles in the greatest city of the world. Thus Fame was his, and the golden dreams of boyhood were realized beyond all expectation. Naturally, in the

first flush of success his thoughts turned to the friend in far-away Manchester who had sympathized with those boyish dreams of literary renown fourteen years ago, and so materially assisted in their consummation. Within a week of the publication of *Rookwood*, Ainsworth found time to dash off this letter :—

“ 27, OLD BOND STREET,

“ 6th May, 1834.

“ MY DEAR CROSSLEY,

“ A thousand thanks for your excellent notice of *Rookwood* in *The Herald*. It has done me right good service. . . . The Book is doing famously well here—making, in fact, quite a *sensation*. It has been praised in quarters of which you can have no idea—for instance, by Sir James Scarlett<sup>1</sup> and Lord Durham.<sup>2</sup> I have also received a most flattering letter from Bulwer-Lytton, and it has been the means of introducing me to Lady Blessington and her *soirées*. In fact, as Byron says, I went to bed unknown, arose, and found myself famous. Bentley has already begun to speak of a second edition—he wants to advertise in all the papers. . . . ‘ The English Victor Hugo ’ has already appeared as a paragraph. What do you think of the review in *Bell’s Weekly Messenger*? Write me, if you please, fully and honestly what is said of the book by people in Manchester.<sup>3</sup> My mother must have her copy *express*, so please let your boy take out the parcel to Prestwich as soon as possible—a mother’s impatience claims a little indulgence. . . . I shall expect you in the Manchester Race Week, and shall

<sup>1</sup> The Attorney General. He was created Baron Abinger in 1835, and died in 1844.

<sup>2</sup> John George Lambton (1792–1840). Created Earl of Durham in 1833. Ambassador at St. Petersburg.

<sup>3</sup> The corrected proof of *Rookwood* is preserved in the Chetham Library, Manchester.

keep back my crack literary party till you come, so don't disappoint me on *any account whatever*. Lockhart told me yesterday that Southey was really the author of *The Doctor*."

*Rookwood* was dedicated by the author "To his mother . . . with every sentiment of love and veneration."

The first edition was soon exhausted; the second followed in August, and bore the author's name on the title-page.

Soon after, there was issued separately, by Colnaghi, a series of six engravings illustrating Turpin's Ride to York, from drawings by Edward Hull. These are now extremely scarce, although seventy years ago every inn on the Great North Road proudly displayed them, as Ainsworth wrote at the time.

*Rookwood* was dramatized for the Adelphi and other theatres,<sup>1</sup> and at Astley's sawdusty Temple of Thespis, Ducrow produced the famous equestrian drama, *Turpin's Ride to York*, which is often revived in circus and music-hall to this day in condensed versions.

An additional, and rather curious, phase of popular fame which accrued to the author of *Rookwood* was his portrait pasted up in all the public omnibuses—conveyances which had but recently come into use—where it was eagerly examined and discussed by the jolted passengers. The custom seems obsolete now. We no longer see the physiognomies of our most famous *literati* among the notices proclaiming the merits of soaps and other domestic necessities which adorn the modern bus, motor

<sup>1</sup> A later version of *Rookwood*, by G. Dibdin Pitt, was produced at the Victoria Theatre in October, 1845. "Dickens, Maclise, and myself went to see *Rookwood* last night," Forster wrote to Ainsworth at the time.

or otherwise ; but there is no reason why this pleasing custom of our forefathers should not be revived, and it is worth the consideration of popular and advertising novelists of to-day.

None were more pleased and gratified with Ainsworth's success than his *confrères* on the staff of *Fraser's Magazine*. In the number for June, 1834, appeared the review of *Rookwood* entitled *High-ways and Low-ways ; or Ainsworth's Dictionary, with notes by Turpin*, written, it is believed, by Thackeray.<sup>1</sup> In this, Ainsworth was very highly praised at the expense of Bulwer-Lytton : " With Mr. Ainsworth all is natural, free, and joyous : with Mr. Bulwer all is forced, constrained, and cold. Ainsworth is always thinking of—or rather with his hero : Bulwer is always thinking of himself." And so on, until in the end Bulwer is quite violently and personally abused in terms it is unnecessary to quote here.<sup>2</sup>

In *Fraser's Magazine* for July, 1834, appeared Ainsworth's portrait by Maclise—No. 50 of that inimitable series of semi-caricature sketches known as " The Gallery of Illustrious Literary Characters," which formed, perhaps, the most remarkable feature of "The Queen of the Monthlies." Here we see Ainsworth in the immaculate get-up of a dandy of 1834, seated carelessly on a table,

<sup>1</sup> Ainsworth, however, attributed it to another member of the staff—Jack Churchill.

<sup>2</sup> Thackeray always disliked Bulwer-Lytton's literary style ; he wrote to Lady Blessington, in 1848 : " I wish to explain what I meant last night with regard to a certain antipathy to a certain great author. I have no sort of personal dislike to Sir E. L. B. L., on the contrary, the only time I met him, at the immortal Ainsworth's years ago, I thought him very pleasant, and I know . . . that he can be a most generous and delicate-minded friend. BUT there air sentiments in his writings wh. always anger me, big words wh. make me furious, and a premeditated fine writing against which I can't help rebelling."

and in the background are the appurtenances of a highwayman and a portrait of Dick Turpin. The sketch was accompanied by a humorous, slap-bang, free-spoken exposition, written by Maginn, which represents that irrepressible Hibernian's conception of an "impressionist memoir." The following are the most amusing passages:—

"We have not the pleasure of being acquainted with Mrs. Ainsworth, but we are sincerely sorry for her—we deeply commiserate her case. You see what a pretty fellow THE young Novelist of the Season is; how exactly, in fact, he resembles one of the most classically handsome and brilliant of the established lady-killers. . . . No Truefit, anxious to set off his Brutus, could have devised a more neatly cut countenance; no *unstricken* Stultze need ask a more dashing outline of back, hip, thigh, leg, etc., etc., etc., for the exhibition of toggery. We may, without swagger, apply to Ainsworth what Theodore Hook has sung of D'Orsay *le beau*:

'See him, gallant and gay,  
With the chest of Apollo, the waist of a gnat';

—but then comes the rub for Mrs. A., as well as the rhyme for 'gay':

'The delight of the ball, the assembly, the play!'

"Alas! it were well if 'balls, assemblies, and plays' were all: there are also such things, not un-dreamt-of in the philosophy of the Mayfair fair ones, as *boudoirs* and *tête-à-têtes*; and the best we can say for this Turpin of the cabriolet, whose prancer will never masticate a beef-steak, is, that if he ever escapes scot-free during the first





AINSWORTH AT THE AGE OF TWENTY-NINE.  
*From the sketch by Maclise in "Fraser's Magazine," 1834.  
Reproduced from "The Maclise Portrait Gallery," by permission of  
Messrs. Chatto & Windus.*



month of the blaze of his romance, he is a lucky as well as a well-grown lad. Of this all concerned may be only too sure, that many a dove as well as crow will, on the present occasion,

‘Make wing to the Rooky-wood.’<sup>1</sup>

“Well, Heaven send him a good deliverance . . . we own we regard with fear and trepidation the fiery furnace of flattering sighs through which this strapping A-Bed-Nego must endeavour to bring his jolly whiskers unsinged. . . .

“His father was a flourishing *gentleman*, *i.e.* solicitor at Manchester; and the old boy spared no pains to train up his child in the way he should engross. But love and genius will out; and here he is, two hundred miles from the Babylon of spinning-jennies, murdering right and left before and behind the scenes of the opera—writing *Vau-devils* for Yates—*Interlewds* for Bunn—and after having had to do, more or less, with we know not how many little pieces at the Olympic, now at length astonishing London and Cræsufying Bentley by a real dashing display of the long-buried inspiration of Romance! May he turn out many better novels, none worse, than *Rookwood*; may the *Adelphi* in the meantime do justice to his Highwayman; and may he, as far as is consistent with the frailty of humanity, penetrate puffery, and avoid the three insatiabls of Solomon, King of Israel! Amen.”

Thus we see that Maginn could have held his own in the cheap press of to-day.

<sup>1</sup> *Macbeth*, Act III, Scene 2.

Concurrently with the success of *Rookwood*, Ainsworth burst upon the town as a buck of the first degree, and his good looks and fine clothes were almost as much talked of as his dashing romance. There was an undeniable air of distinction about the perfectly fitting garments of the dandy of William IV's reign—the immaculate coat, with its high, gothic-arched collar rolling round the expanse of black satin stock (ornamented with two jewelled pins conjoined by a fragile, gold-linked chain), the tightly-strapped trousers, the great beaver hat; but, on the other hand, we should now consider *outré* the ultra-gorgeous waistcoat and the profusion of rings and gold chains; and still more should we object to the thick curls—dank with macassar-oil—and the flowing whiskers of those bygone bucks.

There are many contemporary references to Ainsworth's good looks, but they often confirm what is hinted above anent the objectionable style of some of the fashions then in vogue. A personal friend of his says he was "a handsome man, but it was very much of the barber's block type of beauty, with wavy scented hair, smiling lips, and pink and white complexion. As a young man he was gorgeous in the *outré* dress of the dandy of '36, and in common with those famous dandies D'Orsay, young Benjamin Disraeli, and Tom Duncombe, wore multitudinous waistcoats, over which dangled a long gold chain, and numberless rings." Mr. Henry Vizetelly records that this "young and good-looking author . . . was the literary lion of the day. He was somewhat of a fop in dress, but that was the way with good-looking men in those days, and made an unnecessary display of the many rings he wore, but his manners were singularly

pleasant, and there was not a particle of conceit. . . .” G. A. Sala noted: “Count Alfred D’Orsay and William Harrison Ainsworth were two of the best-looking and the best-dressed men in London”; and that caustic table-talker, Samuel Rogers, the banker-poet, observed: “I hear that a young fellow from Manchester is the star of the season. I hope he will put D’Orsay to the right-about.” But Ainsworth did not do that—for Count D’Orsay was too supreme a sartorial star ever to be eclipsed in his own sphere—he was content to shine as a rival luminary. D’Orsay, of course, was his friend since the time they met at the Fraserian *symposia*, and was remarkably like him in personal appearance, as well as dress—so much so that, when riding quickly on horseback, Ainsworth was frequently mistaken for D’Orsay, the King of the Bucks, “the glass of fashion and the mould of form—really a complete Adonis,” as poor Haydon put it.

As Ainsworth mentioned in his letter to Crossley, the success of *Rookwood* was the means of introducing him to Lady Blessington and her famous *Salon*. The beautiful Countess of Blessington was one of the most interesting and remarkable personalities of her period. Born in 1789, in Co. Tipperary, Margaret Power, the daughter of a typical Irish squire, had a stormy and painful career before she attained to the coronet of “eight pearls mounted on high golden rays.” At the age of fourteen she was compelled by her parents to marry a man she detested—Captain Farmer. This drunken brute shamefully ill-treated the unfortunate child, even to the extent of physical violence. She, however, obtained her freedom when Farmer, during a drunken orgy, fell from a window

and broke his neck. She had, of course, left him before this event. Living under the protection of a Captain Jenkins, she attracted the attention of Charles Gardiner, 1st Earl of Blessington, a widower with thirty thousand a year. Lord Blessington greatly admired Mrs. Farmer, and, after the opportune death of her husband, made her his wife, despite her damaged reputation. This was in 1818, and Marguerite (as she now spelt her name) became a countess with a great position and vast wealth. For a few years she entertained regally in St. James's Square; and then the Blessingtons set out for a prolonged continental tour. In Genoa they saw a great deal of Byron, as Lady Blessington recorded in book form. The Blessingtons had in their party Count Alfred D'Orsay, then a young man in the first flush of his wonderful beauty—"Cupidon déchainé," as Byron described him. In 1827 D'Orsay was married to Lady Harriet Gardiner, Lord Blessington's daughter by his first wife, and heiress to his fortune. Lady Harriet was only a very young girl, and neither she nor D'Orsay had any liking for each other. Consequently this loveless marriage—merely one in name—soon terminated in separation, for it was his wife's stepmother who possessed the Count's affections. Lord Blessington died suddenly in 1829, and in the following year his widow and the D'Orsays returned to London.

Here Lady Blessington took up her residence in Seasmore Place, Park Lane, and commenced that famous *Salon* which will always be associated with her name. It was a *Salon* of men only that surrounded the beautiful hostess and her immediate relatives, for female society—excepting a few literary women and such damaged dames

as Byron's famous Guiccioli—avoided the frail Countess as they would the plague. For now the tongue of scandalous rumour was wagging furiously concerning Lady Blessington and her handsome stepson, D'Orsay, who dwelt in her house, presided at her table, and was her inseparable companion. The unhappy Countess D'Orsay, unable to bear with this state of affairs any longer, returned to the Continent, and her husband and stepmother remained together in London. Although, of course, the aristocratic and rigidly virtuous British Matrons would have nothing to do with Lady Blessington, as usual, by that curious and very English convention, the lady's *chevalier* was a welcome guest everywhere and sought after by the most exclusive hostesses.

However, Lady Blessington had her compensations ; she was the cynosure of all eyes as she drove in the Park in her great, high chariot of green and crimson, guarded by gigantic hanging-footmen in powder and velvet, and horsed by splendid bays ; likewise in her box at the opera, she was the observed of all, and here—gorgeously gowned and wearing magnificent jewels—she held, between the acts, a reception of the most distinguished men in society, art and literature, and the professions, under the jealous eyes of her more virtuous, but less successful, sisters.

*This* was the cause of the hatred *la comtesse déréglée* experienced from women—she attracted the other sex ! In spite of domestic entreaties and threats, all the most famous men of the time attended Lady Blessington's assemblies at her exquisitely furnished house, where in sybaritic splendour she entertained both mentally and corporeally, for the choicest little epicurean feasts pre-

ceded the *Salon*. Then, seated in a gilt chair of state, tactfully leading the conversation among the brightest stars of her era, Lady Blessington reigned a queen indeed. Hither came, at one time or another, Brougham, Melbourne, Tom Moore, Sam Rogers, Lyndhurst, Disraeli, Bulwer-Lytton, Dickens, Thackeray, Forster, Walter Savage Landor, Monckton Milnes, Landseer, Prince Louis Napoleon (afterwards the Emperor), Campbell, Sir Thomas Lawrence, Wellington, and, in fact, every man who was anybody. Talent was the passport to this intellectual Elysium, and the greatest minds found in Lady Blessington an ideal hostess, a cultured companion, and a sympathetic friend. There must have been something singularly charming in a personality which could so universally win the affectionate and true friendship of the wide circle who surrounded her—men whose temperaments and tastes were as varied as stones on the sea-shore.

Such, then, was the brilliant coterie to which Ainsworth was introduced by the success of *Rookwood*; here he met several old friends and made many new ones—Disraeli and Lord Albert Conyngham (afterwards the first Lord Londesborough) in particular. Lady Blessington herself, then in the full meridian of her charms at the age of forty-four, had a special liking for her new Lion, for, in addition to his cleverness, was he not the double of D'Orsay? *Such* good looks and style were particularly pleasing to *Miladi*; and so we have the well-known story of Lady Blessington placing herself on the hearthrug between D'Orsay and Ainsworth, and saying that she had the two handsomest men in London for her supporters. There is also an amusing anecdote rela-





THE COUNTESS OF BLESSINGTON.  
*From the portrait by E. T. Parris in "The Book of Beauty," 1834.*



tive to an Irish gentleman, who, observing the beautiful Lady Blessington engaged in conversation with the handsome Ainsworth, the handsome D'Orsay, the handsome Tom Duncombe, and the handsome Sheridan, compared the Countess to "Venus surrounded by the Three Graces—only there were four of them!"

Lady Blessington was, of course, literary, and at the time of Ainsworth's introduction was editing *The Book of Beauty*. She at once enlisted the services of the new member of her leonine menagerie as a contributor, and sent him an engraving round which his story might be written. Here is his reply:—

"27A, OLD BOND STREET,

"May 31st, 1834.

"DEAR LADY BLESSINGTON,

"Rest assured that my best efforts shall be used to make my illustration of the engraving you have been good enough to send me worthy of the pages of *The Book of Beauty*. I like the subject, and will endeavour to do justice to it. The unknown dame has striking and beautiful features; rich in expression and charged with melancholy. Her dress, I conclude, is such as might belong to any lady of any modern European clime, so that I may lay the scene of my story where I please . . . most certainly, however, mine will not be a tale—as it is called—of Fashionable Life, be the scene where it may.

"The notice of our productions, if I may venture to compare them, is, I imagine, confined to the introduction to the review of Morier and Miss Edgeworth, in the next *Quarterly*. . . .<sup>1</sup>

"I send you a magazine which I have just received, in which there is a notice of *Rookwood*, which may, per-

<sup>1</sup> Both *Rookwood* and Lady Blessington's *Repealers* were favourably mentioned in this article. See *Quarterly Review*, Vol. LI, p. 482.

haps, amuse you. Ducrow is about to produce *Turpin's Ride* at Astley's Amphitheatre—on Monday night. I doubt, however, if it will be well done. Nevertheless, I should be delighted if you can patronize him, as, if popular, the piece may be very serviceable. I also send you the announcement of the 'Songs of *Rookwood*,' which you will perceive the editor intends to lay at your ladyship's feet.

"Believe me, always, Yours faithfully,

"W. HARRISON AINSWORTH."

Ainsworth's contribution duly appeared in *The Book of Beauty* for 1835,<sup>1</sup> and was entitled *A Night's Adventure in Rome*. It is a dramatic tale—quite in the *Rookwood* style—and in it the author made good use of the impressions he had received during his visit to Italy.

A little later, Ainsworth furnished Lady Blessington with other contributions for her *Annuals*. In addition to various verses, he contributed to *The Keepsake*, for 1841, a very powerful story entitled *Beatrice di Tenda*,<sup>2</sup> and concerning this he wrote to Lady Blessington:—

"April 21st, 1840.

"I will with pleasure illustrate your plate with a short prose story, but not upon the terms you suggest. I can accept no pecuniary consideration for any trifle I may write in this way; and the only bargain I will make with you—not a hard one—is that I reserve the copyright. . . . The subject I have chosen (which Dumas terms an *extra-historical*) is that of *Beatrice di Tenda*, with whose

<sup>1</sup> In this same volume of *The Book of Beauty* was a portrait of Ainsworth's cousin, Miss Ellen Harrison (daughter of his uncle, James Harrison), who was noted for her beauty. The portrait was entitled "The Pink Domino."

<sup>2</sup> Reprinted as *Michele Orombello* in *Ainsworth's Magazine*, Vol. IX, 1846.

tragic end you are, no doubt, well acquainted. Her plate, therefore, may bear the name of the heroine of the story."

When Lady Blessington removed to Gore House, Kensington, in 1836, Ainsworth still continued a constant attendant at her famous assemblies. Unfortunately, in 1849, Lady Blessington and D'Orsay were overwhelmed in financial *débâcle*, and fled to France, where the former died within a few weeks, and the Count in 1852. Gore House was abandoned to that saddest of all fates—a public sale, and the beautiful rooms, where so many bright wits had assembled at countless brilliant entertainments, were invaded by brokers, bargain-hunters, and fashionable women who came to gaze in triumph at the ruin of the house they had never entered during its prosperity. The scene moved Thackeray to tears. Thus expired the glories of Lady Blessington's *Salon*, and nothing like it has ever arisen since in London.

Owing to the fame of *Rookwood*, Ainsworth was also invited to Holland House during the regime of the third Lord Holland—"Nephew of Fox and Friend of Grey"—and of his clever and remarkable wife, Elizabeth Vassall, whose memorable *Salon* included such men as the Prince de Talleyrand, Lord Brougham, Macaulay, Tom Moore, Samuel Rogers, Theodore Hook, Washington Irving, Sydney Smith, Lord John Russell, and Earl Grey.

Ainsworth must indeed have appreciated the thousand points of interest connected with Holland House—that most fascinating of seventeenth-century houses; its memories of Addison and the Foxes; its ghost stories; its splendid library and staircase; its wealth of china closets; its numerous portraits and relics of the Stuart

period ; its wonderful Reynolds portraits ; its Miniature Room, filled with exquisite examples of Cooper, Plimer, and Cosway ; and its lovely gardens and rose-walks. There is nothing quite like Holland House—it is unique.

Unfortunately, Ainsworth's beautiful young wife did not participate in the fame and pleasures which accrued from the literary success of her husband : the romantic early marriage, which commenced so auspiciously and happily, became clouded with differences, and a separation resulted. Mrs. Ainsworth remained with her father, and her husband, early in 1835, went to reside with his connections, Mrs. James Touchet and her sister, Miss Buckley, at Kensal Lodge, in the Harrow Road, and thus commenced his association with the district he made so famous in literary annals, and with which his name will always be coupled. Kensal Lodge was his home for six years ; there he wrote his most celebrated books in the maturity of his powers, and consequently we now approach the most interesting period of his life.

Here, then, we find him commencing *Crichton* ; gathering around him an ever-increasing circle of famous friends ; and already dispensing that boundless hospitality which—reaching its acme, later, at the adjoining Manor House—made the Harrow Road the most noted and popular literary *rendezvous* of the early Victorian era. Always an ideal and generous host, Ainsworth kept open house at Kensal Lodge, small though it was. It was simply a little white house, consisting of a dining-room, double drawing-room, and four or five bedrooms : but it welcomed the brightest wits of the last century within its walls.

The Lodge was one of three houses that stood quite



KENSAL LODGE, HARROW ROAD. AINSWORTH'S HOME, 1835-41.  
*Drawn by Mr. Hugh Thomson for "Middlesex: Highways and Byways Series,"*  
*and reproduced here by kind permission of the publishers, Messrs. Macmillan*  
*and Co., and the artist*





alone—midway between the hamlets of Kensal Green and Harlesden Green—in a beautiful rural district. Kensal Lodge is still in existence, but amid very different surroundings: now it is faced by streets of mediocre houses and shops, and noisy trams pass its door.

One cannot help pausing a moment here in regretful memory of the fast-vanishing country of West Middlesex—murdered and devoured by the octopus-builder, whose implacable tentacles stretch into the green-land ever further and further, month by month, destroying ancient trees and obliterating meadows. How pretty it was even twenty years ago: how little is left now. Middlesex was never mountainous and grand, never wild and romantic: but its wooded expanses and hills had a distinctive beauty essentially English in aspect. Such rich, green meadows and fragrant hayfields; such straying hedges of hawthorn and red may; such little grass-grown lanes that even Devonshire might have boasted of. And then what splendid elms and chestnut trees and noble oaks—unequaled anywhere. Where could be found more picturesque villages than Pinner and Edgware, and where such quaint, tiny churches as Greenford and Perivale? And what finer view of the “coloured counties” than that from Harrow churchyard and Horsingdon Hill? If so charming a few years ago (and even now in parts), how doubly so in the days of William IV, when the country lay at London’s very doors.

In 1835, when the visitors from town rode out to Kensal Lodge, they were practically in the country after passing Tyburn Gate. In front of them, along the Bayswater Road, lay market-gardens, but their nearest route was up the Edgware Road, where the straggling houses

grew fewer and fewer, until, in the Harrow Road, the real open country was reached. And nowhere was it prettier than by Kensal Lodge. In front, the house looked over the chain of undulating, thickly-wooded meadows (through which ran the footpath to the charming little village and church of Willesden) to the heights of Kingsbury and Harrow. At the back, Kensal being on very high ground, there was an extensive view over the countryside of North Kensington (the Norland House estate, the Porto Bello farm lands, and Notting Hill, famous for nuts and nightingales) away to the Surrey Hills beyond the Thames:—"A superb panorama . . . a vast and beautiful prospect . . . exquisite indeed," as Ainsworth described it in *Jack Sheppard*.<sup>1</sup>

What wonder, then, that the friends of the host of Kensal Lodge were always ready to ride or walk out to this delightful rural retreat, partake of a five-o'clock dinner (the usual hour in those days), and, after jovial converse, return to town by moonlight amid the serenade of nightingales.

But it is time to step over the grass plot, with its white posts and chains (which then separated the house from the high road), and see the company who, at one time or another, between 1835 and 1841, were Ainsworth's frequent guests at Kensal Lodge.

Here is Thackeray describing his next review for *Fraser's*, and there the crafty and cultured "Father Prout,"<sup>2</sup> keeping the table in a roar with his classical

<sup>1</sup> Epoch III, Chap. I.

<sup>2</sup> Francis Mahony (1804-66), a native of Cork, had been prefect of studies at the Jesuits' College at Clongoweswood. Owing to a vinous adventure, he resigned in 1830, and soon after he was notified by the Jesuits that he was no longer a member of the Society. He came to

witticisms ; here are other old friends from " Regina's " staff—Maginn, Count D'Orsay, Percival Banks, and the brilliant young artist, Daniel Maclise ; here, too, is that other great artist, George Cruikshank, in his convivial days (very different to his subsequent Temperance enthusiasm), who takes more wine than anyone, and who will presently amuse the guests by singing *Lord Bateman*<sup>1</sup> and dancing the hornpipe, *à la* T. P. Cooke, to the accompaniment of Romer, the composer ; there, talking brilliantly (of himself, probably), is Disraeli, extravagantly dressed and loaded with jewellery—like his neighbour, Bulwer-Lytton ; here, just come to town, is the humorous Hibernian, Samuel Lover ; and next comes the witty minor canon, Richard Barham, then about evolving *The Ingoldsby Legends* ; here is Charles Ollier with the rising publisher, young John Macrone ; there are the clever journalists, William Jerdan and Laman Blanchard ; here is John Forster, from *The Examiner*, and near him the scholarly Dyce ; and there, greatest of all, is Charles Dickens—enthusiastic, and flushed with the universal success of *Pickwick*.

Truly an immortal company—the majority in the glow of youth, overflowing with high spirits, gifted with genius, and full of ambition for the years to come. If it were only possible to record the table-talk that passed at these

London to follow a literary career, and in April, 1834, commenced his wonderfully clever classical parodies and polyglot verses in *Fraser's Magazine*. Mahony had known in boyhood a certain Father Prout, a priest at Watergrasshill, Co. Cork, who died in 1830, and the ex-Jesuit borrowed his old friend's name for a literary pseudonym.

<sup>1</sup> In a letter to Ainsworth, Laman Blanchard wrote : " Cruikshank keeps his ground I see. May his tankard never be less, and his whiskers flourish a thousand years. Pray Heaven he hath not lost his voice singing of anthems ! When you see him give the least of his admirers—yet no little one either—a lift in his jolly remembrance."

little dinners at Kensal Lodge, when wine-cup and soul flowed in conjunction !

Of all the party who used to assemble there, Dickens was the host's most intimate friend, and as such presided at one end of the table. Ainsworth had played a prominent part in launching "Boz" on his immortal career, for he introduced him to his first publisher, his first illustrator, and his best friend and subsequent biographer.

It was some time in 1834 that Ainsworth became acquainted with a smart young man of twenty-two, who was acting as parliamentary reporter for *The Morning Chronicle*, and who was also contributing to *The Old Monthly Magazine* and *The Evening Chronicle* certain tales and sketches. The extraordinary merit and fresh humour of these as they continued to appear was perceived by Ainsworth ; he strongly advised the young author to issue them in book form, and, with a view to this, introduced him to his own publisher, Macrone, and also to George Cruikshank. The result was, Cruikshank furnished illustrations for Dickens's tales, and Macrone published, early in 1836, *Sketches by Boz*—that first flight of a genius whose Pegasus winged its way ever higher and higher up Parnassus.

In the same year Dickens, for the first time, met John Forster, at Ainsworth's table, in Kensal Lodge, and thus commenced their long and eventful friendship. But in these early days Ainsworth was equally the intimate friend of both, and the three young men were inseparable companions.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In a letter, dated 7th Feb., 1839, Dickens wrote to J. P. Harley : "This is my birthday. Many happy returns of the day to you and me. I took it into my head yesterday to get up an impromptu dinner on this auspicious occasion—only my own folks, Leigh Hunt, Ainsworth, and

As Forster records in his *Life of Dickens* :—

“ A friend now especially welcome was the novelist, Mr. Ainsworth, who shared with us incessantly for the three following years in the companionship which began at his house . . . and to whose sympathies in tastes and pursuits, accomplishments in literature, open-hearted generous ways, and cordial hospitality, many of the pleasures of later years were due.”<sup>1</sup>

In the first years of their friendship the three were devoted to horse exercise, and Dickens and Forster would ride out from town to Kensal Lodge to pick up Ainsworth. After exchanging badinage with Mrs. Touchet, who—having been a noted horsewoman in her youth—was rather critical of their equestrian prowess as she gazed from her window, the three *litterati* would gallop off for miles into the lovely country that stretched away to the north and west. Away by Twyford Abbey and the clear, winding Brent to tiny Perivale and Greenford, most sylvan of hamlets, through the green vale of Middlesex to Ruislip, and home by Stanmore and Harrow; or another day, away across breezy Old Oak Common to Acton, stopping for a few minutes at Berrymead Priory to exchange greetings with Bulwer-Lytton, on through Acton's narrow High Street, with its quaint,

Forster. . . . Lord bless my soul! Twenty-seven years old. Who'd have thought it? I *never* did! But I grow sentimental.”

<sup>1</sup> John Forster (1812-76), a native of Newcastle, was the same age as Dickens; Ainsworth was seven years older. Forster established himself quite young, being only twenty when he obtained, in 1833, the post of literary critic for *The Examiner*.

In all probability, Dickens also met Maclise for the first time at Kensal Lodge, for Ainsworth and the artist were friends of nine years' standing in 1836.

raised pavement and ancient red-tiled houses, past "Fordhook," Fielding's last and well-loved home,<sup>1</sup> past Ealing's parks and long village green, round through orchard-bordered lanes to Chiswick, with its countless memories, and so by Shepherd's Bush to Wood Lane and the Scrubs, home again. A delightful country, abounding with associations; nowhere do so many famous figures of the past haunt every step as in despised Middlesex.

Ainsworth also used to accompany Dickens on the very long walks the latter delighted in. Mary Howitt, in her *Autobiography*, noted in 1836: "Driving one day near Hook, on the Brighton Road, some four or five miles from Esher, we met Charles Dickens. . . . He was walking with Harrison Ainsworth. I have no doubt they were both on the look-out for facts, images, or characters to weave into their constantly appearing fictions; and in Dickens's next production, *Master Humphrey's Clock*, I was amused to see that our stout and wilful pony Peg had not escaped his observation, but had been set to do service in Mr. Garland's chaise."

Dickens and Ainsworth often went off on little week-end jaunts together in these pleasant days of youth and early fame. And no one enjoyed with more zest than "Boz" the cosy convivialities of Kensal Lodge. Here is a contemporary letter from Dickens (to Laman Blanchard) anent one of his frequent visits to Ainsworth at Kensal Green, and it contains an allusion to the lively author of *Handy Andy* in quite Wellerian phraseology:—

<sup>1</sup> A coincidence that Ainsworth, some years later, became godfather to Dickens's sixth son, Henry Fielding Dickens—the distinguished K.C. of to-day.



CHARLES DICKENS, AT THE AGE OF TWENTY-SEVEN.  
*From the portrait by Maclise, 1839.*





“ 48, DOUGHTY STREET,

“ *Sunday morning.*

“ MY DEAR BLANCHARD,

“ I have booked you—one inside—for the fly to Ainsworth's, wherein all available places are now secured. As we have one Mr. Lover, of Charles Street, Middlesex Hospital, in the way-bill, and the gen'l'man is to be took up at his own door, I must trouble you to have your luggage ready at the *Courier Office* at a quarter past five. . . .

“ Always faithfully yours,

“ CHARLES DICKENS.”

*Rookwood* was still selling famously. The third edition was issued in 1835, by an energetic young publisher, John Macrone, of 3, St. James's Square,<sup>1</sup> who also, in the following year, published the fourth edition. This last was illustrated with engravings by the renowned George Cruikshank, and in this way was initiated the inimitable conjunction of author and artist, which later bore such splendid fruit. Although forty-three years of age, Cruikshank had not reached the height of his powers when he executed the designs for *Rookwood*.<sup>2</sup> Some of these are delightful, particularly “Turpin's flight through Edmonton,” which is in his best style; but, it must be admitted, others are weak. In the “Death of Black Bess,” for instance, the horse is but a shadow lying on the road, though the little landscape and church spire in the background are very charming. It is evident that

<sup>1</sup> Macrone was originally in partnership with Cochrane at 11, Waterloo Place, and at this date (1835) had just started in business for himself.

<sup>2</sup> Cruikshank's twelve illustrations to *Rookwood* were also issued separately, in a wrapper, in 1836.

neither Ainsworth nor his publisher were satisfied with the illustrations, for the former wrote :—

“ KENSAL LODGE,

“ *March 8th*, 1836.

“ MY DEAR MACRONE,

“ Thanks for your letter. I *have* seen some of George Cruikshank’s designs, and it was because I thought them so sketchy that I wrote to you. They are anything but full subjects and appear to be chosen as much as possible for light work. He shirked the inauguration scene, for instance, because it was too crowded. I quite agree with you that a few good designs are better than many meagre sketches, and all I want is that you should make George understand this. He has evidently two styles, and one can scarcely recognize in some of his ‘ *Bozzes* ’<sup>1</sup> the hand of the designer of the *Comic Almanack*. . . . I pray of you to see G. C., and don’t let him put us off so badly—there’s a good fellow ! ”

And a few days later he wrote :—

“ I shall write to G. C. to-day myself. But do not omit the necessary *clincher* on your part. . . . I am very sanguine respecting *Rookwood*.”

Ainsworth’s letters to Macrone are full of references to the new edition of his book, at which he was hard at work in revising :—

“ KENSAL LODGE,

“ *April 23rd*, 1836.

“ Mrs. Touchet tells me in *great confidence* that she begged you would send me no more proofs of *Rookwood*, but with all deference to my kind friend’s judgment,

<sup>1</sup> The illustrations Cruikshank furnished for Dickens’s *Sketches by Boz*.

and a due appreciation of *her* and your motives, this will never do. The proofs must be sent as heretofore. There are certain trifling matters which I cannot even trust to *you*—a few additions, perhaps a line to the notes, or a motto, which must be made, and which will scarcely occupy a moment. . . .

“As to corrections to the Preface—these I will do what I like to the tune of some dozen pages, or else I will give you no preface at all. Seriously, I don’t think I shall have to make any alterations, and if I do, the cost will be next to nothing, but I don’t like to be tied.

“Have you written to Edwards<sup>1</sup>? I cannot allow my nose to appear in such a fashion, and shall take it much amiss if you do not cause the needful alteration to be made! . . .

“By the by, have you sent a copy of *Rookwood* to Forster? If not, do so with my compliments. . . . Also send one *with my compliments* to Michael Conan, Esq., 58, Lincoln’s Inn Fields—the same address as Forster. He will give it a notice, I hope, in *The Herald*. Also send one to *Lady Blessington* . . . and to John Heath, Esq., 11, Albemarle Street. . . .

“Ollier tells me that a good notice of *Rookwood* has appeared in *The Sun* . . . and that Mr. Moran of *The Globe* was vastly pleased with the book, which he meant to notice on the first opportunity. Mr. Moran appeared highly tickled with your having sent a copy to his wife—and the lady, I understand, is not less gratified.

“Of course you have sent copies of *Rookwood* by the agents to the country newspapers, as it is there we must look for the chief sale. The book is much admired.”

The delightful ballads which are scattered so profusely through *Rookwood* have always formed some of

<sup>1</sup> Edwards engraved the 1836 portrait of Ainsworth, by Maclise, for the frontispiece of this fourth edition of *Rookwood*.

its most attractive features. They are touched with the true spirit of old minstrelsy. These lyrics vary in subject and metre—those sung by Turpin are lively and gay, and those chanted by the weird sexton are sombre and ghastly. Many of them were set to music by Mr. F. Romer and others, and so popular did they become that Ainsworth determined to delve further in this unexpected mine. Consequently, in the fourth edition, eight new lyrics were added to the original twenty-three. In addition to these, another ballad has a little history of its own. At the dinner of the Fraserians, previously alluded to,<sup>1</sup> in 1834, Ainsworth, towards the close of the convivial evening, sang a song entitled *One Foot in the Stirrup; or Turpin's First Fling*, concerning which "the company universally exclaimed 'Capital. It is as superb as anything in *Rookwood*.'" This excellent anapæstic lyric was founded on an anecdote of Turpin related to Ainsworth by his friend, Mrs. Hughes, and it was included in the fourth and all subsequent editions of *Rookwood*, in place of a song entitled *The Lament of Du-Val*. This fact, and another new ballad—the ghastly *Hand of Glory*—form an irresistible temptation for a short digression concerning Mrs. Hughes,<sup>2</sup> of Kingston Lisle, Berks, where Ainsworth was her frequent and honoured guest.

Mrs. Hughes, one of the most remarkable women of

<sup>1</sup> See *ante*, pp. 223-5.

<sup>2</sup> Mary Ann Watts, daughter of the Rev. George Watts, Vicar of Uffington, Berks. Born 1770. Married Rev. Thomas Hughes, D.D., Canon of St. Paul's Cathedral, and tutor to the younger sons of George III. Mrs. Hughes was the mother of John Hughes, a clever writer, and grandmother of Thomas Hughes, author of the famous *Tom Brown's Schooldays*. Mrs. Hughes died at Reading, in 1853.

her time, had been the intimate friend and correspondent of Sir Walter Scott, Southey, Sir T. Lawrence, Kemble, and many other famous men. She was noted for her marvellous collection of ghost stories, county legends, family traditions, old ballads, and folk-lore in general, which she was always delighted to place at the service of her literary friends. She provided Scott with the legend of Wayland Smith's cave for *Kenilworth*, and was the originating cause, so to speak, of *The Ingoldsby Legends*, for, perceiving Barham's gift for quaint rhyming and verse-making, she related to him various tales suitable for his freakish muse. Very truly, Barham wrote in the copy of *The Ingoldsby Legends* he presented to this lady:—

“ To Mrs. Hughes, who made me do 'em,  
*Quod placeo est—si placeo—tuum.*”

Mrs. Hughes's husband and Barham, as dignitaries of St. Paul's, both occupied houses in Amen Corner, and the two families saw much of each other. Hence, *The Dead Drummer*, *Hamilton Tighe*, and *Look at the Clock* were lyrical versions of legends supplied by Mrs. Hughes; and *The Hand of Glory*, the best, perhaps, of all the delightful Ingoldsby collection, originated from a fire-side conversation on superstitions at her house. As we know, the recipe for *The Hand of Glory* in *Ingoldsby* varied from that in *Rookwood*, but as Barham sang in the former:—

“ For another receipt the same charm to prepare,  
 Consult Mr. Ainsworth and *Petit Albert*.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> When first issued in *Bentley's Miscellany*, 1837, Barham added this note: “ Vide *Rookwood*, the most spirited and original romance of the day.”

Ainsworth's "churchyard ballads," as they were termed, and the proximity of his new residence to Kensal Green Cemetery, produced some amusing remarks in the review of the fourth edition of *Rookwood* in *Fraser's Magazine*. This was entitled *Another Caw from the Rookwood. Turpin out again*, and was also written, it is believed, by Thackeray:—

" . . . Our Regina takes still a *quasi*-maternal interest in this young author. . . . That face (with figure to correspond) sold five hundred extra copies of our magazine two years ago.<sup>1</sup> . . . We know not whether he has yet determined what school of poetry he intends to patronize . . . *we* think he has a decided vocation for the 'sepulchral': his immortal ballad of *The Old Oak Coffin* . . . revealed in him the existence of a power akin to that of Ezekiel, and was, in sooth, as glorious a vision of dry bones as we can recollect just now. Southey has chosen a domicile on the margin of his favourite lakes to enact the *genius loci*: it is not without reason that Ainsworth has latterly selected a rural residence close by the grand necropolis on the Harrow Road: if 'the cemetery company's directors' have any brains they will vote him £500 a year and create him laureate of the graveyard, with the grass of the enclosed grounds in fee-simple to his Pegasus for ever."

The fifth edition of *Rookwood* followed in 1837—No. 60 of "Bentley's Standard Novels." It contained some interesting notes on Turpin, etc., omitted in later editions, and two excellent illustrations by J. Cawse, which make one regret he did not furnish more. The figure of "Luke,"

<sup>1</sup> An allusion to the portrait of Ainsworth by Maclise in the magazine, July, 1834.

in the frontispiece, was drawn from the author, for Ainsworth wrote to his friend, Charles Ollier :—

“ KENSAL LODGE,

“ HARROW ROAD.

“ On Tuesday last I sat to Cawse as a model for Luke. . . . Will you give me the pleasure of your company at dinner at six on Monday? I have some songs, etc., to show you . . . and something pleasant touching Allan and his wife in the new *Rookwood*. . . . The roads are now passable, and nothing to be feared as regards the weather. . . . Send Bentley to the Devil and come to me. Don't disappoint me. . . . The postman will call for an answer as he comes along about 9 o'clock to-morrow morning. . . .”

The above suggests a pleasant picture of the rural and primitive conditions then existing in what is now the populous and sordid Harrow Road. Ollier, who lived further along, nearer London, at Westbourne Green—in those days a small hamlet—was the friend who first perceived Ainsworth's gifts as a ballad-writer; for, chancing to see one of the latter's earliest compositions of this description, he strongly urged the writer to pursue his lyrical efforts, which was done with complete success.

To Crossley, Ainsworth wrote in 1837 :—

“ I send you a copy of the new edition of *Rookwood* and a Broadside of the Songs—it promises to be popular. . . .”

And later :—

“ I have again to thank you for your exertions in my behalf. *The Manchester Courier*, containing your kind notice of *Rookwood*, reached me on Monday; and it is

somewhat curious (as in that notice you allude to my book being read on the banks of the Ohio and Ontario) that the same post should bring me a letter, as if in confirmation of your statement, from Cincinnati on the former river. This letter is from a Yankee collector of autographs, and as it is rather a novelty in its way, I will transcribe it. Here it is:—

“ ‘ CINCINNATI, OHIO,

“ ‘ *October 24th, 1837.*

“ ‘ W. Harrison Ainsworth, Esq.

“ ‘ Dear Sir,

“ ‘ I am engaged in making a collection of autographs of celebrated and distinguished authors; consequently I trust that you will excuse the liberty I have taken in addressing you, as I feel extremely desirous to enrich my collection with a specimen of the autography of one so pre-eminently distinguished, throughout Europe and America, as is W. Harrison Ainsworth, Esquire.

“ ‘ Before closing, allow me to congratulate you upon the triumphant reception your late production has met with throughout Europe and America. . . .

“ ‘ Your most obedient, humble sevt.

“ ‘ JOSEPH B. BOYD.’

“ Now is not this delicious? Of course I sent him an autograph by return, and took care to word my letter in such manner as should be most agreeable to his national vanity. But, joking apart, it is something to have conjured up a correspondent in this remote region. . . .

“ An English edition of *Rookwood* has appeared at Paris—very beautifully printed in one vol. *Encore!*”



An edition in French was entitled *Les Gentilshommes de Grand Chemin*, which was certainly an elegant rendering of highwaymen. *Rookwood* was also translated into Dutch.

The great success thus achieved by his narrative of Dick Turpin's exploits caused Ainsworth, at this time, to contemplate composing a veritable Valhalla of romantic outlaws. He stated :—

“ Turpin . . . is only part of a plan, as this work is part of a more extensive edifice, which, in time, I may be able to construct. . . . The portrait of the robber is not, I am free to admit, complete in all its details. But, though I have not yet found canvass enough for it, the tablet exists fully wrought out in my imagination. In Turpin, the reader will find him upon the road, armed, mounted, laughing, jesting, carousing, pursuing, and pursued. In Du-Val . . . he shall find him at the theatres, at the gambling-houses, on the Mall, at court. . . . In Sheppard . . . he shall discover him in Newgate ; shall witness his midnight labours ; admire his ingenuity and unconquerable perseverance ; and marvel at his extraordinary escapes. The character of the robber to be complete, should be presented in all these phases. And it shall be my business so to perfect it. . . .”

As we know, only the Jack Sheppard portion of this scheme was realized ; and one feels inclined to regret that Ainsworth did not “ take the air upon the heath at eventide ” with that gayest “ minion of the moon ” —Claude Du-Val, who would have cut an exceedingly gallant figure in an Ainsworthian romance :—

“ . . . For all

Men he made stand, and Women he made fall ;  
 The second Conqueror of the Norman Race,  
 Knights to his Arms did yield, and Ladies to his Face ;  
 Old Tyburn's glory, England's blustering thief,  
 Du-Vall the Ladies' Joy, Du-Vall the Ladies' grief.”—

as his epitaph in Covent Garden church records.

It is true that Claude Du-Val appeared in Ainsworth's *Talbot Harland*, but *that* was in 1870, when the author's pen had long exhausted its pristine power, and the gay outlaw in that work is very different to what he would have been had he attained to literary honours in 1837.<sup>1</sup>

In concluding this account of *Rookwood*—one of the most remarkable and successful novels of the nineteenth century—and its results, it may be stated that Ainsworth in writing it had no particular mission or moral to inculcate, for, as he frankly admitted: “ I had, throughout, an eye rather to the reader's amusement than his edification. . . . The chief object I had in view, was to see how far the infusion of a warmer and more genial current into the veins of Old Romance would succeed in reviving her fluttering and feeble pulses. The attempt has succeeded beyond my most sanguine expectation. The ancient lady has arisen from her couch, taken the air, and succeeded in attracting a crowd of youthful admirers. Let me hope that, in more able hands, her restoration will be complete.

“ Romance, if I am not mistaken, is destined shortly to undergo an important change. Modified by the German and French writers,—by Hoffman, Tieck, Hugo,

<sup>1</sup> The original agreement, dated June, 1836, between Macrone and Ainsworth for the publication of the latter's proposed (but never written) romance, to be entitled *Claude Du-Val*, is in the possession of Mr. Peter Keary.

Dumas, Balzac, and Paul Lacroix—the structure, commenced in our own land by Horace Walpole, Monk Lewis, Mrs. Radcliffe, and Maturin, but left imperfect and inharmonious, requires, now that the rubbish, which choked up its approach, is removed, only the hand of the skilful architect to its entire renovation and perfection.”

How much Ainsworth, by his later and more finished work, himself added to the “Structure of Romance,” the following pages will endeavour to demonstrate; and it is permissible to hope that he—in conjunction with Walter Scott, the romancers mentioned above, and the distinguished writers who have succeeded them in our own day—will be adjudged worthy of a niche of memory in the completed erection.

## CHAPTER IX

WRITING "CRICHTON." MACRONE : HIS RELATIONS WITH  
AINSWORTH AND DICKENS. "THE LIONS OF LONDON."

IT is now necessary to return to 1835-6, when Ainsworth's time was so fully occupied in writing *Crichton* and other projected works, and in entertaining his friends, that the days were all too short. In a letter to Mr. Howman Smith, of Birdhurst, Croydon, he says :—

" KENSAL LODGE,  
" June 18th, 1835.

" I have not time at present to hunt up Edwin Landseer, and besides, my acquaintance with him is very slight. I should think that the introduction of either of his friends Lewis or Cattermole would be more available than mine, and perhaps before you proceed to shear ' Paul ' <sup>1</sup> you may see one or both of them.<sup>2</sup>

" *Crichton* will not be published until next season, about the 1st of October. . . . I am still unable to fix any period for my long talked of, long anticipated visit to Birdhurst. I hope I shall be able to accomplish it this summer, but I begin to doubt. Time slips on, or rather flies so swiftly, that it almost eludes my grasp. . . ."

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Smith's horse, of which Sir Edwin Landseer made a fine painting.

<sup>2</sup> Ainsworth adds in a further letter : " Pray make my compliments to Mrs. Smith, and tell her that I met Cattermole the other day at Somerset House, and he expresses his anxiety to pay you a visit at Birdhurst."

John Forster, writing to Ainsworth in 1836, demonstrates that he was longing to go out to Kensal Lodge, and yet unwilling to interrupt the literary work of his constant host there :—

“ You will forgive the delay in answering your note, my dear Ainsworth, when I assure you that it has arisen from my inability to make up my mind to the *not* dining with you on Saturday. Even now that I write to say I will not be with you, I cannot in any way satisfactorily make up my *mind* to it. But I know it is best that you should be interrupted as little as possible just now, and therefore I will not come. Praise me and love me for my generous self-denial. My warmest wishes for your success in all things. Browning has finished *Strafford*<sup>1</sup> most triumphantly!!! More of this when we meet. Do not forget *Sordello* in the pleasant country.

“ Yours, my dear friend, ever affectionately,  
“ JOHN FORSTER.”

Forster, who wished Ainsworth to persuade Macrone to publish Browning's early work, *Sordello*, evidently could not resist the pleasant temptation of coming out to dine, after all ; for Ainsworth writes to Macrone :—

“ June 14th, 1836.

“ Forster, whom I saw yesterday, tells me that Colburn is anxious to publish Browning's new poem *Sordello*. I hope you will not let this work, which will, at all events, do you credit as a publisher, slip through your hands without due consideration. It is impossible to foretell in such a case as the present whether the work will *pay* or not. My own opinion, from all I hear and know of Mr. Browning, is that it will do so. But at all events, it will do what I am so desirous you should do for your-

<sup>1</sup> Produced at Covent Garden Theatre, May, 1837, by Macready.

self—contribute to *fan* your character as a publisher of taste and discrimination ; and viewed only in this light is a very desirable undertaking for you. You should see Forster as soon as you can, and come to some positive understanding on this point. . . .”

And pursuing the same subject a little later, Ainsworth gives an interesting pen portrait of Browning at the age of twenty-four :—

“ MY DEAR MACRONE, “ July 29th, (1836).

“ I had yesterday, as I anticipated, the pleasure of making your new Poet’s acquaintance, and from what I saw of him—and from what I heard and saw—I am induced to form a very high opinion of him. He is full of genius. In appearance he might pass for a son of Paganini, and Maclise and I must hide our diminished heads before his super-abundant black locks—while even your whiskers, improved as they are by the salt water, are insignificant compared with his lion-like ruff. But this is absurd—and as absurdity is the farthest thing removed from Mr. Browning, I ought not to connect anything of the kind with him. *Sordello* complete, he is to write a Tragedy for Macready—and I feel quite sure that he has great dramatic genius. As, moreover, his Tragedy is to be written for and produced next season, you will have no reason to regret your immediate undertaking.<sup>1</sup>

“ Mighty changes are about to take place in *The Examiner*. What these changes are I am not at liberty to unfold—but they are of a nature that will much interest the literary world and publishers in particular. It is not improbable I shall see Browning again on Sunday. Macready invited me to dine at Elstree to meet

<sup>1</sup> For reasons which will be obvious presently, Macrone did not publish *Sordello* ; eventually it appeared in 1840.

yesterday's party on that day—and my present intention is to go.

“The more I think over Runnymede, the better I like the project. Assuredly the book will do. Neither would I delay *Boz* an instant. Apropos of *Boz*, I received a letter from my mother the other day, and she, who reads *nothing*, had been reading the *first* bit of *Boz* with great delight. Now, mark me, she had not received this copy from me. This is the highest compliment I can pay the book.

“Mrs. Touchet sends Mrs. Macrone a few vegetables. You say they are not wholly unacceptable. . . .

“And lastly, in reference to the agreement which Master Dickens was about to copy. Insert the clause prepared by Copley and make the conditions relating to *Rookwood* refer to *this edition*, and I shall be abundantly contented: neither shall you have any more reason to complain of me.

“I have now spun a sufficiently long yarn and have only to wish you success in the most important matter of all—the negotiations with Moore—*Memento Mori*—and also *Moran*.<sup>1</sup> Success attend you!

“Best remembrances to Mrs. Macrone—if she looks as well as you look after your journey, you may rest perfectly contented.

“Ever yours, in hot haste,

“W. H. A.”

Like his friends Ainsworth and Dickens, Forster had a very original epistolary style. Here is an example in another letter to Ainsworth, in 1836:—

“We won't receive any excuses. Here am I just on the point of starting in the midst of a heavy shower of rain, to take every chance of exposure, in a shabby

<sup>1</sup> Of *The Globe*.

uncovered gig, cab,—phaeton I believe courtesy calls it. Risk something for your country. Don't leave all the patriotism to me. Come without fail. *Do* come (in a very insinuating tone). Seriously, your excuses are admirable but they won't do. . . . I have just received the proof sheets of Bulwer's tragedy [*The Duchess of La Vallière*] to revise for him, we will look at it together. In headlong haste, but with heartiest good wishes, ever, dear Ainsworth,

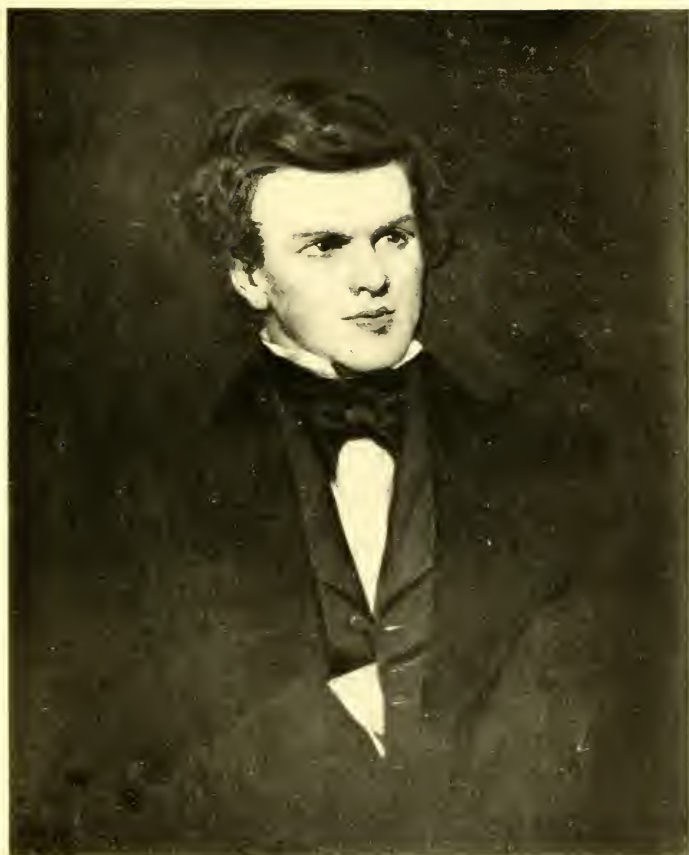
“ Your attached,

“ JOHN FORSTER.”

No doubt Ainsworth went, for Forster always got his way with everybody. “ I cannot explain the secret of his influence over people,” Ainsworth said. “ He had a knack of making people do as he liked, whether they liked it or not. It was difficult at all times to put up with the bluster of the ‘ arbitrary one.’ ” Ainsworth would go on to tell a good story of this characteristic of Forster's. The former had discovered a fine, and almost complete, set of Hogarth's engravings. The price was £5, which, in Ainsworth's words, “ I could not just then spare, or, at least, did not think I ought to spare. I took John Forster down to see the Hogarths; whereupon he actually said that he would and *must* have them himself, and as he had not five pounds of loose money at that moment, I should lend that sum to him! I pointed out the absurdity of the position—that I wanted the engravings for myself, and could not afford to lay out the money; how, then, could I lend it to him? It was of no use. He overruled me, had the five pounds of me, and bought the Hogarths I was longing for!”

Despite Forster's little idiosyncrasies, he and Ainsworth remained the greatest of friends, and at one time,





JOHN FORSTER,  
*From the portrait by Warrington and Maclise, 1830, by permission of the owners,  
the Misses Crosbie.*



1838, the former acted as confidential agent for Ainsworth in a delicate family matter, which it is not within the province of this work to detail.

Ainsworth was now devoting very careful attention to, and working very hard at, *Crichton*—a book which greatly interested “Father Prout”; the erudite priest made several valuable suggestions to the author, who often mentions him in his letters to Macrone, the publisher:—

“KENSAL LODGE,

“March 8th, 1836.

“My head spins round with working at *Crichton*, so that I scarcely know what I write; but I am going to volunteer to dine with you, if you will have me, at 5 on Friday, and I much wish you would ask the ‘Father’ to meet me. I can’t get him out here at present—indeed, I have scarcely time to see him—but I should be glad to have a little quiet chat with him and you relative to all matters in agitation. For God’s sake don’t make any offer for the copyright of *Pencillings*.<sup>1</sup> That book seems to bewitch you. You won’t sell 700 more. . . . I have written to Hansard (the printer) to explain. I will furnish him with ten written pages of *Crichton per diem*, till the work is complete. Beyond that I cannot go.”

On 23rd April, 1836, he continued:—

“If I live twenty days longer the whole MS. (*preface excepted*) shall be in Hansard’s hands, and my labours in regard to *Crichton* at an end—for correcting the proof I hold to be nothing. In point of matter *written* and *cast aside* I have already achieved *Crichton*. But this is nothing to the purpose. To the 25th I pledge myself

<sup>1</sup> *Pencillings by the Way*, by N. P. Willis.

—so make yourself easy on that score, and on all other scores in which *I* have any concern. I am really sorry I have delayed you so long, but I will make it up to you in the end.”

“ KENSAL LODGE, HARROW ROAD,

“ *June 2nd, 1836.*

“ MY DEAR MACRONE,

“ I have just made up a parcel to the ‘ Father ’ enclosing him two volumes of *Crichton*, and requesting him to prepare a startling review of it for the July number. A Fraser Churchill, whom, you may remember, wrote the original glorious notice of *Rookwood* in ‘ *Regina*, ’ has written to me to offer to Fraserize *Crichton*—but he thinks, as I do, that Mahony, from his learning and general familiarity with the period and the subject, the more eligible critic. Churchill, however, will give me under any circumstances a ‘ flourish of trumpets ’ in *The Carlton Chronicle*, a new journal in which he will have the potential voice. Forster I shall see next week, and will make all arrangements with him. In fact, the moment I do launch myself I will bestir myself in every quarter for favourable breezes.

“ I have applied about the Spenser Club—and think my admission is tolerably secure. I do not see the slightest reason why the circumstance of your being a Publisher should militate against your admission—Murray and his son are members of the Athenæum—and, at all events, I hope you will make timely application. Would be a nice place of meeting for us. See to this.

“ I am exceedingly sorry to hear of the unsuccessful subscriptions of *Lord Roldan*<sup>1</sup> and *The Magician*.<sup>2</sup> From the former I own I did not anticipate much, but from Ritchie I expected and *still* expect great things. A subscription in these days is no test of a work’s success, and rely upon it if *The Magician* fulfils the promise held

<sup>1</sup> By Allan Cunningham.

<sup>2</sup> By Leitch Ritchie.

out in the first 24 pages—*it will do*. The season is against it. Ollier told me that they do nothing literally at Bentley's, and that his conviction is that nothing *will* do at the present moment. We shall see. October, he says, is the best month in the year, and I therefore strongly advise you to get *Boz*, if possible, ready by that month. I am sorry you did not keep back Ritchie till then.

“ I hope and, indeed, nothing doubt but you will do great things next season. And if you will only trust yourself to my guidance, I will bring you safely through. Three or four *safe* books, published at *safe* periods, would contribute more to your well-doing and general respectability than a host of mediocre works. Leitch Ritchie *was* a safe preson. Whether he is safe *now* is doubtful. In October he would have been a sure card. Never, while you live, after this season, unless I become Sir Walter Scott, a contingency not very probable, publish after March—I would not even go beyond February. And with this counsel set to work in time and prepare for your campaign. There is more in this than at first sight you may be inclined to concede. If you will suffer me to direct your course, I feel confident that I can not only make you a successful but—what in my opinion is of as much consequence—a *recherché* and gentleman-like publisher.

“ I have a plan respecting Chichester, which I will communicate to you hereafter, calculated materially, I think, to advantage you.

“ Very shortly now I shall put the finishing stroke to my labours, and thenceforth I am at your service. Depend upon it—I speak it not lightly—but next season, if you will trust yourself entirely to me, you shall have a brilliant one. But you must make your arrangements speedily, for *take my word that it is the autumnal* and not the spring season which is the profitable one.

"I shall be very glad to see you when you can ride out. There is an omnibus leaves the Castle Inn, Edgware Road, every day at 12, which will get you down here at  $\frac{1}{2}$  past, and another returning at 3, so you can readily get back.

"Yours ever,  
"W. H. AINSWORTH."

And on other dates he wrote to Macrone, concerning the publication of *Crichton* :—

"I return you the Churchillian notice, which I have carefully re-copied and slightly altered. You must get it inserted.

"Tom Hansard <sup>1</sup> tells me you hamper him about the *Crichton* type—for God's sake don't do so at this juncture. . . .

"I received a very gratifying letter to-day from Mr. P. Fraser-Tytler <sup>2</sup> respecting our great work. Next week you must advertise daily—and push it in all ways.

"I have just *discovered* that in the title you say 'three volumes' without the preposition. Now, this will never do. I will not have bad English on my title-page to please any man. It must be '*In Three Volumes.*' Mind this. I shall write to Hansard, but I should be glad to be spared all this infernal and nonsensical botheration. Once for all, *I* will have no innovations. . . . Do, for Heaven's sake, let us not commit these absurdities. . . . I am glad to perceive a friendly allusion to me in *The Athenæum*. And as I perceive that they are sadly in want of *Books*, I think, under all circumstances, it would be good policy to let Dilke have the two first vols. . . . I wish you would call on him if you know him, and if you don't—never mind—but go. And get old Allan Cunningham to exert himself.

<sup>1</sup> The printer.

<sup>2</sup> Author of *The Life of the Admirable Crichton*, 1819.

“ I must entreat you as you wish *Crichton* to be completed—as you wish me well in every way, not to bother me with letters of any sort. I am half distracted—and it appears to me as if I could make no human being understand my wishes. I *will* do *Crichton* by the 28th—but you must *do* your part, and you must take as much drudgery off my hands as you can. Understand me.

“ I want you personally to see Hansard, and to arrange with him that nothing can interfere with the rapid progress of the work. The proofs I get in the middle of the day are always returned next morning. Never mind *how* they are cut up—he must put more men on.”

Despite Ainsworth's energy and efforts, the publication of *Crichton* was destined to suffer many delays. To the author's growing irritation, various unavoidable circumstances compelled the date of issue to be postponed again and again; and 1836 began to slip away with still no sign of the actual appearance of the work from which Ainsworth anticipated so much. The question of who should illustrate the book was one cause of delay.

It is interesting to record that it was originally intended that the illustrations to *Crichton* should be furnished by Thackeray, who was then in Paris, and consequently able to make drawings on the spot of scenes described in the story:—

“ I conclude you have written to Thackeray and forwarded him the sheets of Vol. 3,” Ainsworth writes to Macrone; and “ Get me Thackeray's address from the ‘ Father,’ as I wish to write to him. There is a picture in the Museum at Paris I wish him to see.”

Thackeray, in those days, thought he had as great an aptitude for the pencil as the pen—and, indeed, his

illustrations to his own works are often delightful and in perfect sympathy with the letterpress—but, somehow, his sketches did not find favour with his brother-writers whose works he sought to illustrate. Just as Dickens declined his services for illustrating *Pickwick*, so Ainsworth considered Thackeray's designs for *Crichton* unsuitable, and the negotiations fell through. It was next proposed that Daniel Maclise should illustrate *Crichton*. This young artist, then aged twenty-nine, was rising rapidly into fame from the brilliant work he had contributed to *Fraser's Magazine*. Ainsworth had known the gifted boy from the time of his first arrival in London, from his native Cork, in 1827. They met at the house of Crofton Croker, and Maclise was only about twenty years of age when he executed the beautifully finished pencil sketch of Ainsworth<sup>1</sup>—the first of his many portraits of the author.

Ainsworth was naturally anxious to secure the aid of Maclise's art for *Crichton*, and wrote to his publisher :—

“ July 13th, 1836.

“ On the other side you will receive Maclise's agreement. I ventured, on your part, to exceed the terms proposed by a couple of pounds, and to make it £50, instead of forty-five guineas. . . . May I request, therefore, that you will at once accede to these terms—write to Maclise by return to that effect—and put an end to this much delayed matter. Do not, I beg of you, stand upon this trifle. Will you also be so good as to send the three coppers of the right size to Maclise *at once*, as he is anxious to get to work without further procrastination. . . . I saw the ‘Father’ this morning. He has

<sup>1</sup> Reproduced on p. 188 of this volume.





Daniel. Mc. Flise

Drawn in Oct. 1829

London

DANIEL MACLISE.

*By himself. Reproduced from O'Driscoll's "Memoir of MacLise" by permission  
Messrs. Longmans, Green & Co.*



heard nothing from Thackeray, and expects to hear nothing. I am not displeased with this, as I am sure Maclise will make admirable illustrations. . . . I write these few hasty lines at Fraser's."

On the other side of the above letter is Maclise's agreement:—

"I engage to furnish three etchings illustrative of the 3 vols. of *Crichton* by the 20th of September, for fifty pounds. . . .

"D. MACLISE. July 12th."

However, this scheme also came to nothing, for reasons which will be apparent presently.

Ainsworth worked harder and harder at *Crichton* as the work progressed, and he found it necessary to sacrifice many of his social pleasures. Thus, to his connection, Hugh Beaver, he wrote:—

"KENSAL LODGE,

"August 24th, 1836.

"I regret to say that I am compelled by circumstances, over which, unluckily, I have no control, to give up all idea of visiting you, as I anticipated, in September. The engagements I have entered into with my Publisher tie me fast, and, in truth, I cannot leave town at all during that month without great inconvenience both to himself and to me. . . . This is a great disappointment to me. On all accounts I am annoyed. Everything, too, seemed to combine to gratify me a few days ago. A Spanish Matador's dress of the smartest description was offered me by a friend, who is just returned from Madrid, to wear at your fancy ball—but this, with the rest, must be given up. I *do* hope, however, in the course of the autumn to spend a week or so with you at Glyn Garth.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Beaver's seat, Glyn Garth, Anglesey, is now the episcopal residence of the Bishop of Bangor.

I am especially desirous to see the result of all your plans, and am quite sure the house must be beautiful. Its situation is perfect. I do not think I shall leave London now before the middle of November. . . . *Rookwood* has been reprinted and enjoys great success in Paris. I shall send *Crichton* to wait upon you, as soon as he makes his *début*. . . .”

As the work, at last, neared completion, Ainsworth's enthusiasm and zest for labour increased. He wrote to Macrone, in November, 1836 :—

“ I am getting on gloriously. . . . I have been working night and day at *Crichton*, and have done it all in the rough. I am now re-copying and shall transmit daily to Hansard. It will be impossible to be out on the 10th ; but let not that discomfort you. Before the end of the month I stake my name and your own that we shall blaze away in style. Do not on *any consideration* discontinue the advertising ; merely alter the date into ‘ *in a few days*.’ I shall go on now like a tiger and trust very soon to change ‘ *in a few days*’ into ‘ *now ready*. . . .’ Jerdan is certain to give us a leader—a first page I mean ; Forster a bang-up article in *The Examiner* ; Banks in *The Carlton Chronicle*. I will put it at the very latest that these reviews appear simultaneously on Saturday, 26th, when I engage to be ready. On Monday, 28th, you subscribe with all this *éclat*. On Thursday, 1st December, will appear *The New Monthly* and *Fraser's*, each with first-rate notices, which will carry us gaily along the tide. . . . One thing I beseech you to do—keep up your spirits. ‘ *Boz* ’ will do, and I shall do—and though we shall not make up your £5,000 by next Xmas, WE will put a few cool hundreds into your pocket to help to carry on the war, and to establish your credit. Let me congratulate you about Moore. You have indeed added

a princely name to your list, and have done what few other publishers could do. I feel convinced you will have a good season. Let me, in conclusion, beg you now to address yourself towards bringing out *Crichton* with *éclat*. In three weeks it will be before the Public, but, in God's name, don't stop the advertising now. . . . Follow Bentley's plan. One thing I must stipulate, my dear Macrone,—not a copy of the two vols. must be sent to any *reviewer without my concurrence*. Before you send one out—*see me*. Now mind, I am peremptory about this. Do you mean to send the two vols. to Professor Wilson<sup>1</sup>? Honest Jack Churchill,<sup>2</sup> you will see, is at work, and, from his letters, that he does not like the Dedication to that jolly old girl, Lady Blessington. You will see, also, that he—who has not a spice of humbug in his composition—really likes the work. From *him* this is high praise. . . . I hope Mrs. Macrone and the little fellow are well. I long to see them: but it is out of the question at present. I don't want to bother you by asking you to come out here; neither do I want to be worried in any way. I wish to keep my own nerves as firmly strung as I can. Don't expect another letter of any sort from me at present. Write to me, nevertheless, as letters do me good."

Ainsworth's nerves were beginning to suffer from the strain, and the energy expended by night and day on his book, and as the time for delivery drew nigh he worked himself into a fine frenzy; thus:—

"MY DEAR MACRONE,

"You *cannot* conceive the positive *agony* I endure in writing even a note. My head at this moment is splitting. I have done the best I can with your lines,

<sup>1</sup> Of *Blackwood's Magazine*.

<sup>2</sup> One of the *Fraserians*.

and would have done better if I had leisure—but I have still two hundred good pages to write, and for the sake of things of a thousand times more consequence than the damned *Andalusian Annual*, don't interrupt me. If you could only see how nervous I am at times, you would hold your hand. . . . I am horror-stricken with the mistakes which Hansard has made in the Preface. You talk of reading over slips—but I ought to read them over five times *myself* before they pass. I am greatly distressed at this—but cancels *must be made*. I enclose you the pages. . . .

“ In the quotation from Abernethy there are two damnable typographical mistakes, so that I do not wonder at the ‘ Father ’ falling foul of it. In other respects it reads very well—and *does* very well in spite of Prout's objections. My love to him and tell him so.

“ Hansard has *omitted* full two pages of printed matter and nearly two of copy. And these are sheets to go out amongst reviewers. Now, here is a positive fact. What do *you* say to it? Ought not a man to have patience to stand all this? How the devil Hansard gets through his business I can't imagine. After all, he omitted to send me proofs of the *Address to Visconti* for which I wrote, and substituted the lines entitled *Love's Homily*, for which I did not write. However, keep smooth with him till we get done. Send Yates, of the Adelphi, the two vols. on Monday, and desire him not to show them as they are unpublished; get your potent ally, Andrews, to recommend the book to Yates to be dramatized—a good spectacle at the Adelphi would be worth all the puffs. Send also, at the same time, another set to Buckstone. I am greatly indebted to Andrews' zeal; he is a prime fellow. Send *Crichton* in my name to Laman Blanchard, Esq., 13, Gt. Marlborough Street, on Monday—marked ‘ private and immediate,’ and carefully sealed. He will review them in *The Court Journal*. I shall write

to Jerdan to-morrow, with my two vols. of *Crichton*, to make it a personal favour to myself to let us have the *first* page of the *Gazette*. I am somewhat calmer now than when I began, but still highly nervous ; but indeed, indeed, my dear Macrone, you have given me a dreadful printer. . . . I am really in despair. I dare scarcely send away a proof ; nor do I believe such blunders were ever made before. . . . Rely on it, Macrone, your *great card* now is *Crichton*. Attend to that, and that only, for the next ten days." . . .

All in vain. A stroke of Fate, an unthought-of catastrophe, shattered the whole scheme into dust. On the very eve of the publication of *Crichton* poor Macrone died suddenly, and, of course, all arrangements for issuing the book were cancelled—by the hand of Death.

One can imagine the effect of this calamity upon Ainsworth's impetuous and highly strung nature. Here was the excessive labour of two years and the work so eagerly expected by the public—the successor to the all-conquering *Rookwood*—brought, for the time being, to naught. Not only this ; he was to have received £350 from Macrone for his MS. But his great disappointment did not make him oblivious of the far greater misfortunes of his friend's young widow and children, who were, unhappily, left in dire financial difficulties, and he came, as ever, generously to the rescue. Dickens did the same, in spite of disputes with the late publisher over the copyright of *Sketches by Boz* and other matters.

The assistance rendered by Dickens to Macrone's family clearly demonstrates the kindness and generosity which characterized the great writer, for his differences with his publisher had been of an acute and bitter

nature. Ainsworth having introduced Dickens and Macrone to each other, as previously described, was fully acquainted and concerned with their subsequent disagreements; consequently, by means of his letters to Macrone, it is possible to throw some additional light on a matter which is treated rather obscurely and insufficiently in Forster's *Life of Dickens*.

Forster's account, briefly, is that Macrone bought for £150 the copyright of *Sketches by Boz*, which he published in two volumes, early in 1836. *Pickwick*, issued in parts by Chapman and Hall, commenced in March of the same year, and by August had so increased the fame and financial value of its author's literary work that Macrone decided to bring out a new edition of *Sketches by Boz* in monthly parts, similar in size and form to *The Pickwick Papers*. Dickens objected strongly, considering this proposal as calculated to injure his reputation most seriously, and sent Forster to remonstrate with Macrone, who proved "inaccessible to all arguments of persuasion." In the end, after much discussion, Dickens and Chapman and Hall bought the copyright of *Sketches by Boz* for £2000 (intending to reissue the work themselves). Macrone was thus £1850 to the good on his original purchase price, to say nothing of the profits he had made from the sale of his first edition, the whole speculation occupying only a few months.

But Forster, in his biography, failed to make any mention of the important and interesting fact that Dickens was under legal agreement with Macrone to publish a *novel*—*Oliver Twist*, probably—for which he, the author, was to receive £200; and that, as a result of the squabble over *Sketches by Boz*, Dickens—despite



the risk of an action at law—severed all his arrangements with Macrone, and declined to write the novel he had agreed upon.

To add to the annoyances of Macrone, he only learnt in November that, as far back as August, Dickens had signed an agreement with Bentley to write for him two novels (*Oliver Twist* and *Barnaby Rudge*) for £500 each : whereas Macrone might have secured one of these for £300 less ; now he had lost for ever the prolific gold mine which, thanks to Ainsworth, he had been the first to exploit ; and Ainsworth's comments on the situation, contained in the following letters, cannot have provided much comfort in his troubles :—

“ MY DEAR MACRONE, (12th November, 1836.)

“ Mr. Dickens's letter did not in the least surprise me. I was certain that he had entered into an agreement with Mr. Bentley—and so I told you at the time—and you *ought*, in my opinion, to have ascertained the point long ago. I must decline, however, giving any judgment on an *ex parte* statement : nor will I be dragg'd into a dispute with which I have, personally, no concern. Enough for me, and for you, that I have refused offers from the same and from another quarter. But this much I *will* say—had you submitted your reply to Mr. Dickens to me, I should have objected to its going forth in its present shape. I differ from you in thinking you have kept your temper, though I own the circumstances are sufficient to endanger one's equanimity ; and I find it hard to blame Mr. Bentley or any other spirited Publisher (yourself, for instance) for patronizing rising talent. Your difference is with Mr. Dickens—and to him alone should your letter and your complaints have been confined. Mr. Bentley might with equal reason have complained of *you* when I left him : for from all that appears

in Mr. Dickens's letter, he (Mr. Bentley) is completely exonerated.

"Mr. Bentley, I happen to know, is placed in precisely the same predicament with yourself in the case of Mr. D. Jerrold,—a writer immeasurably inferior to 'Boz.' Pending an agreement from Mr. Colburn, Bentley obtained a written memorandum from this gentleman for a novel. Thereupon Colburn remonstrates and bargains with him for two stories—to which Mr. Jerrold consents, and signs an agreement to that effect, Colburn undertaking to defend all actions from Mr. B. So much for the present state of the Publishing world—and so much for the quarrels of Publishers.

"I sincerely regret, however, you have lost Mr. Dickens. It is a serious misfortune. For I look upon him as unquestionably a writer of the first order. I am far from thinking Bentley's terms are at all adequate to his worth. £500 is the minimum value of his Novel: and in my opinion he ought to have £800 for it—£200 was preposterously small.<sup>1</sup> And you will find that the sale will fully bear out what I now state. Once more, I say, I am exceedingly sorry for your loss. You will not easily repair it."

(14th November, 1836.)

"I was extremely unwell yesterday when I received your letter and enclosure. I now write, in the strictest confidence—and I trust to your honour as a gentleman not to quote me, or to show this letter—I now write, I say, to advise you to place the matter between Mr. Dickens and yourself *immediately* in legal hands. Your reply to him ought simply to have been—

'My dear D. In reply to your note, I beg to state that I shall hold you to your agreement.'

<sup>1</sup> Bentley eventually paid £4000 for *Barnaby Rudge*; it is uncertain whether it was this work or *Oliver Twist* which Macrone had arranged to buy for £200 at the outset.

Nothing more. The allusion to Mr. Bentley was (pardon my frankness) in extremely bad taste—and the whole tone of the note betrayed irritability and *weakness*. This I state that you may judge of its effect on the opposite party. He who is firm is always calm: and in the present matter you must be firm. I hope you have agreements for both the *Sketches* and the *Novel*. I fear the Memorandum for the latter does not fix any time for its appearance. But get legal advice at once, and I pray of you write no more hasty letters in which you commit yourself more than you imagine. Mr. Dickens clearly had no right to destroy his agreement: but this information will be much better conveyed to him by a solicitor. . . .

“Yours ever,  
“W. H. A.”

(28th November, 1836.)

“I have received . . . Mr. Dickens’s agreements. . . . There cannot be a shadow of doubt but that he is bound fast. So be easy on that score. The matter is, however, of so much consequence that you should get legal advice without a moment’s loss of time. He should be written to immediately by a solicitor to inform him that you expect him to fulfil his agreement forthwith. If he rebels—bring your action at once. It is a clear case in your favour.

“I will send you back his agreement to-morrow. Henceforth, I must observe, if you send me a letter requiring answers—especially on legal matters—I shall make legal charges for them; *i.e.* until the completion of *Crichton*. A letter now robs me of a guinea.”

(29th November, 1836.)

“I now return you Dickens’s agreements—and I repeat what I said last night, that there cannot be a doubt of

your *security* in the matter. Still, I think you would be extremely to blame, where a matter of so much consequence to yourself is at stake, if you did not take the *best* legal advice, acting throughout in a gentleman-like spirit—but in a most decided manner. Rely on it, if you do not do this—you will hereafter regret it. If due notice be not given to Mr. Dickens it may be construed into a waiving of your claim. . . .

“ Yours ever,  
“ W. H. A.”

But poor Macrone and his claims passed away together very shortly after ; the Great Destroyer rendered the dispute between author and publisher futile in a moment. Consequently, Dickens, instead of having to face a legal action, was enabled, in association with Ainsworth, to act nobly as the succourer of his adversary's family. Writing to Talfourd, he said : “ Ainsworth and I are attempting to get up a one volume collection of original fragments for the benefit of Macrone's (the publisher) widow, who is left utterly destitute, with two helpless children.”

The book duly appeared, in 1841, but in three volumes, and was entitled *The Pic-Nic Papers*. Ainsworth's contribution was *The Old London Merchant*, and Dickens supplied *The Lamplighter*. Many other literary friends assisted, and “ Phiz ” and Cruikshank furnished illustrations.

Shortly before Macrone's unexpected death, Ainsworth had arranged to write for him a new work, to be issued in the then popular mode of monthly parts, and his letters, during the fall of 1836, to the publisher are full of the project :—

“MY DEAR MACRONE,

“I have just hit upon a title which I think will do—and if you think as well of it as I do, I beg you will hasten to Moyes’s Printing Office and add it to the grand advertisement in *The Literary Gazette*. I shall send this by a *special* messenger so that you may be in time for *The Gazette*. Advertise in all the Sunday papers—both *Crichton* and *The Lions*—and don’t forget with the latter my old friend *Bell’s Life in London*.

“And now for the advertisement. What think you of *The Lions of London : or Country Cousins in Town?* Is it not first rate? I shall fill it up afterwards as thus—  
‘Being the adventures of . . .’

“All this in good time. Depend upon it we will make a sensation about New Year’s Day. I have a plot in my head already. . . .

“We will make it a first-rate affair. We will have our Lion’s Head for correspondents and our Lion’s mouth for advertisers, and in due time I will look out a capital motto. . . .

“In the meantime let our Lion’s preliminary roar be heard.

“Yrs ever,

“W. H. A.”

(12th November, 1836.)

“My own opinion is that *The Lions* will be a great hit—they shall be (excuse these vile puns) Lions of many *tales*—and come <sup>out</sup> with great *éclat*. So sanguine am I of the project that I tell you frankly and fairly, before we start, that I shall not be content with less than £50! a number *if the work succeeds* and will afford it. It will occupy a considerable portion of my time—I shall throw all my energies into the undertaking—and a less sum will not answer my purpose. I will start with pleasure on the terms proposed, viz. £20 for the first number—

but we must have a specific agreement for the succeeding parts. It is my intention to give lots of comic songs—but do not, as you value our success, mention any of the details of our project to anyone likely to *blab*. Be cautious in this respect, I pray of you. Whatever hints we drop will be adopted elsewhere. Advertise constantly—so that the Public gets hold of our name—but ‘make no sign’ of what we mean to be at. I perceive you do not advertise Leech. Have you any notion of employing George Cruikshank? I should like to know if he is employed for Bentley. Ascertain this. . . .

“My best wishes. Advertise *stiffly*. The more you keep my name before the public, the better for yourself.

“Yours ever,

“W. H. A.

“I have made fifty beginnings, I should think, to *The Lions* and have only just satisfied myself.”

Matters were expedited, and in the second series of *Sketches by Boz* it was announced, among the notices of Mr. Macrone’s forthcoming productions, dated December, 1836, that on 1st January, 1837, would appear:—

“No. 1, Price one shilling, of a New Monthly Publication, entitled *The Lions of London*, by W. Harrison Ainsworth . . . and illustrated by George Cruikshank.

“*The*. ‘I wonder, if the lion be to speak.’

“*Dem*. ‘No wonder, my lord: one lion may, when many asses do.’  
“*A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.”

In this work it was Ainsworth’s intention to present a vivid contrast of subjects—a tragic, historical novel combined with humour of the Pickwickian style, which Dickens had made the rage of the day. For the latter element, Ainsworth intended to introduce into his book

a popular and well-known character then living in London—the quidnunc, Tom Hill “of all the realm of Cockayne.” Tom Hill was originally a drysalter, but, after amassing a competence, he developed into the proprietor of *The Monthly Mirror*, an ignorant book-collector, and a busybody who knew everyone and everything in town. He was the good-natured butt of all his friends, and endless jokes were cracked concerning his presumed great age. Maginn said he was at school with Ainsworth’s great-grandfather; James Smith pointed out it was impossible to trace the exact year of his birth, as the register containing the entry was burnt in the Fire of London; and Theodore Hook capped them all by saying “Pooh, pooh!” (Hill’s invariable exclamation) “he’s one of the little Hills that are described as skipping in the Psalms!” Tom Hill was the original of Poole’s *Paul Pry* and of the same writer’s “Jack Hobbleday” in *Little Peddington*, and Theodore Hook hit off his peculiarities in the character of “Hull” in *Gilbert Gurney*. So Ainsworth was quite in the fashion when he, also, decided to enlarge the immortality of this amusing little cockney.

In addition to Cruikshank’s illustrations to *The Lions of London*, further drawings were to have been supplied by John Leech, who was then but nineteen years of age and on the threshold of his great and deserved fame. From the following letters of Ainsworth’s it is evident that Leech essayed in his youth more tragic subjects than those delightful and humorous sketches with which his name will always be associated:—

“MY DEAR MACRONE,

“I now write to beg you—though you have made an arrangement with George Cruikshank—to engage

Leech as a subaltern assistant to fight under the 'greater Ajax.' Each number will embrace old and new London. Let Leech undertake the old—the romantic—the picturesque; George—the modern comedy and manners. I feel so strongly on this point that I would *insist* upon it if I thought that would have the effect. If you agree to this, Leech *must* execute a design for No. 1, and let his design be either architectural—some old part of the Tower, the prisons, etc., if there are any—or let him take an historical bit, the execution of Catherine Howard or a scene of a dungeon or gloomy room in the Tower. Do not, I pray you, lose a moment in engaging Leech to do this. He will find costumes, etc., for the reign of Henry in the Museum. If he decides upon the execution, it must be upon a scaffold, with a jailer, a headsman with his axe in his hand, halberdiers, etc., in the costume of Henry 8th. Any scene of this sort, to which I can write a ballad or story relating to the Tower in Henry 8th's reign for No. 1.

"Now, don't neglect this. Rely upon it, if each No. has a story of this sort in it—and is properly illustrated—we make such a hit as has not been made even by *Pickwick*.

"I have been greatly indisposed since I saw you, but I am now well again and working in a way to delight you."

"November, 1836.

"MY DEAR MACRONE,

"I wrote to you very hastily this morning respecting a serious and tragic design for *The Lions* to be executed by Leech, and I am now going to write a little more seriously and deliberately on the project. So assured am I of the excellence of the notion, and of the effect which an alternation of comedy and tragedy will have upon the sale of the work, that I am convinced, if the expense be a few pounds greater in the first instance,



the returns will be quadrupled. It at once, also, removes us from any comparison with the *Pickwick*, which I am most anxious to avoid. These designs should also be historical—illustrating events and scenes in and about London. The execution of Catherine Howard took place on Tower Hill. But I think a better and more striking subject would be the headless body of Catherine Howard lying in an open coffin, within the chapel of the Tower—which he must sketch—and the two persons present, Henry VIII and the executioner. This, if well done, would be grand and ghastly—affording deep shadows and strong effects. I will write a ballad of the first (Thames) water to this, and I hope my suggestion will have the effect of making Leech richer, if not Ritchie.<sup>1</sup>

“ Another suggestion, and this refers to George Cruikshank. In addition to the figures I suggested, I wish him to introduce, as entering my old gentleman’s chamber, Thomas Hill, Esq. (*in propria personâ*) or, as I shall call him, ‘ Tom Vale.’ If George has not seen him, you can get the sketch from *Fraser’s Magazine*;<sup>2</sup> but introduced he must be, as I mean to carry him out triumphantly, and to make him play the part of ‘ Mr. Weller ’ in my story. I wish George, therefore, to give the portrait as exact as possible, as I am sure his character will be a hit. Don’t let Tom get wind of it in the meantime. . . . I have made a beginning with Tom to-day, and small though it is, I will know no pause till I come to an end. . . . And now adieu to *The Lions* for a few days.”

It was adieu to *The Lions* for ever. Although so keen about his new project at first, Ainsworth soon found, owing to the pressure of *Crichton*, that he could not do

<sup>1</sup> A punning allusion to Leitch Ritchie, a well-known writer of the time.

<sup>2</sup> Hill’s portrait was No. 51 of “ The Maclise Portrait Gallery.”

justice to two works at once; and the final abandonment of *The Lions of London* scheme can be traced in the author's letters to Macrone:—

(December, 1836.)

“ Finding it utterly impossible to finish the first No. of *The Lions of London* in anything like a satisfactory manner in time for publication on the 30th of this month, I have determined to harass myself no further by ineffectual efforts, and now write to request you will withdraw all advertisements for its appearance on that day. It is with the greatest regret and reluctance that I make this request—but I have no alternative. Of course all expenses which you have hitherto incurred respecting the work will be placed to my account.

“ I shall now return to *Crichton*, which no consideration shall again induce me to leave, for a single instant, until its completion. When that book is published, if you are still disposed to proceed with *The Lions*, we can modify our plans and begin *de novo*. Proceeding in this hurried manner would serve neither of us—for it is clear that No. 2 would be as much driven into a corner as No. 1, nor, indeed, can I possibly work satisfactorily, if at all, against time. It may suit others to do so, but it does not suit me.”

“ I am sorry to hear of your indisposition, and trust Mrs. Macrone escapes, and may continue to escape, this all-prevailing epidemic—of which (Heaven be praised) no symptoms have, as yet, appeared at Kensal Lodge. . . .

“ You do not answer my question about the picture frame. I intend to have my effigy<sup>1</sup> over the mantel-piece to astonish the Ladies on their return. Neither do you say what you have done about Thackeray. I trust your influenza has not entirely stopped your pen.

<sup>1</sup> Maclise's portrait of Ainsworth, painted in 1836. Reproduced in this work; frontispiece of Vol. II.

“ I must, by the bye, tell you that at Dawlish they form a very different notion of what was done towards *The Lions* from yours : Mrs. Touchet writes, ‘ We have been so very much delighted with *The Lions*, which we all think so extremely clever, amusing, and interesting, that we cannot help regretting wofully that you had not time to finish them, as they would have entirely eclipsed *all other periodicals*.’ This may be, and no doubt is, partial criticism. But I am glad the thing is not considered so wretchedly bad as it appeared in my own esteem. I must say that my account of Xmas is a devilish deal better than the vulgar twaddle which I see copied into *The Athenæum* from *The Humourist*.

“ I have not heard from Mrs. Touchet since I sent off *The Andalusian*<sup>1</sup> (which by the bye is extremely clever, and quite surprised me : talk of my editing it ! I am sure I could not improve it).”

There was also trouble about the title of *The Lions*—another writer claiming it by reason of prior adoption, and concerning this Ainsworth wrote to Macrone :—

“ I return you Mr. Kidd’s letter. It appears to me that *you* are, even by his own showing, the person who ought to complain. His letter states, in a passage which I have underlined, that a new edition of his work ‘ *bearing that exact title is in the press*.’ Does not this speak for itself ? He is taking advantage of your advertising to put forth his own obscure publication.

“ The exact title is the legal point for consideration, and if the former edition of his work be entitled (which you should have ascertained by procuring the work before writing me) *A Guide to the Lions of London*, I am sure you are safe—and you ought to prevent him from

<sup>1</sup> *The Andalusian Annual*, issued by Macrone in 1836, contained tales, poems, songs with music, and large coloured plates, all dealing with Spanish subjects.

taking your title. Let him keep to his own. The whole thing is an impudent affair. Why should he now leave out *A Guide to*, etc., but because he wishes to substitute his work for yours—and this *you* must prevent.

“If you wish to make assurance doubly sure, consult Mr. Forster on the point, who I am sure will give you the ‘law of the matter’ with much pleasure.

“In any case, if you choose, should Kidd prove obstinate, you can get over the difficulty by dubbing the work *Macrone’s Lions of London*—but this, I confess, I do not like. However, I leave the matter to you. Kidd’s letter is a mere attempt to bully you into giving all the points. Get a copy of his work and take it, with *his* letter, to Forster—and act as he directs you. . . .”

And here is his last letter on the subject of this ill-fated work :—

“I see your advertisement of *The Lions* in the Papers to-day. So far this is very well. But here I must beg you to stop. Having announced that the periodical is abandoned, and a volume to be substituted, it is needless to continue the advertisement—because the work will *not* appear shortly and stands in the way of its predecessor. Seriously, while *Crichton* is pending I think the announcement of ‘a new work’ by the same author is injudicious and likely to be prejudicial. That, however, is your concern. My objection is this. The long announcement of *Crichton* has occasioned me so many annoyances in various ways that I am determined, if I can help it, never to be bothered in the same way in future. Under these circumstances I must request you to withdraw the advertisement till the proper period, which will not be for some months to come. . . .

“Ever yrs.

“W. H. A.”

But, as related, Macrone's death put an end to all schemes he was concerned in; and for some reason Ainsworth did not carry out the proposed work with any other publisher. This is to be regretted; one would have liked to have seen his promised contrast of tragedy and comedy, and how Tom Hill would have fared in his hands in a Wellerian rôle; one would have liked, even more, to examine those designs of Leech's illustrating tragic scenes in the Tower.

No doubt, some of Ainsworth's ideas for the historic section of *The Lions of London* were utilized in *The Tower of London* subsequently. But the only definite relic of the lost work that has been preserved is the design Cruikshank executed for the covers of the monthly parts. This was afterwards used on the covers of *Old St. Paul's*, when issued in monthly parts, but very inappropriately, for the woodcut represented a view of Wren's cathedral instead of the earlier Gothic building with which that story deals.

Such was the end of the great scheme which promised to exercise so brilliantly the combined talents of Ainsworth, Cruikshank, and Leech; but, instead, proved an abortion—consigned to the limbo of things never to be realized.

## CHAPTER X

PUBLICATION OF "CRICHTON." WRITING "JACK SHEP-  
PARD." DICKENS AND AINSWORTH: VISITS TO  
MANCHESTER.

**C**RICHTON, of course, soon found another publisher. After Macrone's death, the MS. was taken over by Bentley, who issued the work, in three volumes, in February, 1837. The delay in its production only tended to whet the public's interest in the book, and the splendid welcome it received made full amends for the disappointment and set-back caused by Macrone's death a few months before. The sale of *Crichton* was phenomenal. The exultant author, now on the flood tide of success, wrote off to his best friend:—

" KENSAL LODGE,  
" *March 1st, 1837.*

" MY DEAR CROSSLEY,

" At length my labours are completed. My success has been triumphant. The whole of the first edition was sold out the first day—1250 copies. I am now at press with a second. . . . I will send you a complete set of the second edition—but I have not a copy, even for myself, of the first. Let a porter take out my mother's copies.

" Ever affectionately yours,  
" W. HARRISON AINSWORTH."

Although so well received, it must be confessed that *Crichton* was caviare to the general body of novel readers. It was a *very* historical romance, and the mass of erudition, the quantity of Latin, and the ultra-profuseness of detail with which it bristled, must have sadly perplexed the great bulk of its less cultured readers. *Crichton* never had the popular appeal of *Rookwood* and its successors ; and, for the reasons given above, it is still the least read and known of Ainsworth's ten or so best novels, written between 1834 and 1852.

*Crichton* is a fine romance, and one on which the author expended some of his best powers—when those powers were at their meridian ; but the book is almost one wherein Ainsworth's style ran riot. He simply poured out with prodigal lavishness his antiquarian and historical knowledge, and indulged to the full his taste for detailed, minute description of costume, jewels, furnishings, and archæology, and a thousand other things, and—for a *novel*—it is overloaded with scholarship and Latinity. But it is a wonderful picture of the period it relates to ; and the author in his few visits to Paris grasped the secret charm of its ancient streets and buildings, noted every detail, and assimilated all into the spirit of his romance.

*Crichton*, too, exhales the very atmosphere—the modes, the philosophies—of the court of Henri Trois, permeated, above all, by the spirit of intrigue—intrigue of every description, amorous when circling around the King, the courtiers, and Marguerite, Queen of Navarre ; but dark and malevolent when woven by the terrible Catherine de Medici and her confederate, Ruggieri.

The suggestion that Ainsworth wrote his book in

imitation of the Valois romances of Dumas is entirely gratuitous, for *Crichton* appeared some *seven years before* the great French author produced his wonderful series of Valois novels.

*Crichton*, then, was a *tour de force* for an English writer ; and, it is safe to say, it will always be consulted by those interested in the career of the remarkable Scotchman, who, at the age of eighteen, in 1579, so distinguished himself in Paris :—

Matchless Crichton ;  
In wit a bright one,  
Form a slight one—

. . .

Whose rare prosperity  
Grace and dexterity,  
Courage, temerity,  
Shall for a verity  
Puzzle posterity !

to quote Ainsworth's clever rhyming summary of " The Admirable's " gifts.

As in *Rookwood*, so in *Crichton* a large number of lyrics were scattered through the book, touched with the sure hand of a polished minstrel ; such was *Yolande* and the *Song of the Spirit* ; and what a wealth of by-way reading and knowledge culled from rare tomes is enshrined in the terrible *Sorcerer's Sabbath*, which, with its notes, is a veritable exposition of certain phases of the Black Art.

*Crichton* contains many scholarly notes, which culminate in the remarkable appendices ; in the latter, too, the author gave his lyrical translations of " The Admirable Crichton's " *Epicidium on Cardinal Borromeo* and his *Gratulatio to Gaspar Visconti*. These, it is only fair to state, were translated from the original Latin into



English prose by his erudite friend, Crossley. The following letter from Ainsworth, written in August, 1836, when engaged on *Crichton* and the *Gratulatio*, will be read with interest here :—

“ MY DEAR CROSSLEY,

“ The above, as you will perceive, is a congratulatory ode from our friend, James Crichton, to Gaspar Visconti, the successor of Carlo Borromeo in the Archiepiscopal Chair of Milan. I am now fully satisfied that Crichton was a dissatisfied and unsuccessful place-hunter, and fixed his abode at Milan in the hope of getting some preferment from that wealthy see. Borromeo died on the 4th of November; on the Day of Mourning out comes the *Epiccedium*; the next month, Gaspar Visconti is chosen to the vacant Chair—and lo! we have this puffing congratulation, which, to my thinking, is as gross a piece of flattery as has ever since been perpetrated by the most fawning hanger-on or editor. . . .

“ I have to thank you in no measured terms for directing Thorpe to forward me the delectable little quarto containing the original *Epiccedium* and the accompanying *Gratulatio*. As a poem, I prefer the latter, and I think you will agree with me. It is certainly more Crichtonish and characteristic—if only for its alliterative couplet and the introduction of himself. I am surprised these two poems have escaped the vigilance of Fraser-Tytler.<sup>1</sup> The *Gratulatio* appears to me wholly unknown . . . the writer in the *Biographie Universelle*, from whom I learnt that a copy of the *Epiccedium* was in the Royal Library at Paris, makes no mention whatever of the former piece. Here, therefore, is a genuine treasure trove . . . . The first tract in this inestimable quarto is an account of the quality of James Crichton by Aldus Manutius, and this relation turned out to be the identical *Affiche*

<sup>1</sup> Author of *The Life of the Admirable Crichton*, 1819.

discovered by P. F. Tytler, which he ascribes to an *unknown writer*. . . . The relation is in Italian—not Latin—as is the *Affiche*, . . . and there are some important variations . . . but they are decidedly in favour of my version. For instance, in the description of Crichton's personal appearance, he is described by Aldus as 'of high stature, with light hair, and a very comely visage,' which is omitted in the *Affiche*. . . . This tract bears date x. Oct., 1581. The *Affiche* is dated 1580. . . . Now tell me what you think of all this.

"My object in sending you the congratulatory effusion is to get you to translate it *literally* into prose, as you did the *Epicedium*, and I must trouble you to let me have it as early as possible—in fact, by *return*, there's a good fellow. I am sorry I shall not be in Manchester during the Festival—but I am tied fast by this cursed task. I want you to go to the Manchester Exhibition, where you will see my portrait. . . .

"Ever affectionately yours,

"W. HARRISON AINSWORTH."

Crossley was, indeed, a valuable friend—one such as but few men possess. Not only did he find this book of rare Crichtonian tracts for Ainsworth, but he could supply a translation of sixty stiff Latin lines by return of post! Just as when they were boys, so now in manhood, Crossley was ever the willing and self-effacing helper of his more brilliant friend.

In his romance of *Crichton*, Ainsworth, very properly, essayed to depict the wonderful Scot in his rôle of the gallant and the courtier, rather than that of the scholar and disputant. Many of his hero's personal traits and manners were sketched from Count D'Orsay, who may be said to be the prototype of Ainsworth's *Crichton* as a

*preux chevalier*; and in the Preface to the first edition the author complimented both the Count and two other friends—"Father Prout" and John Wilson—as follows:—

"Crichton, I take it, was something between *le beau* D'Orsay and the learned priest of Watergrasshill of our times—combining the grace and wit of the one, with the scholarship and readiness in its display of the other; or, perhaps, a nearer approach to his universal attainments might be found in the personality of his distinguished countryman—Professor Wilson—the modern Admirable Scot!"

Ainsworth was prone to laud his friends a little too generously in print; further on in this same Preface he wrote of John Forster:—

"Great things have been achieved by this youthful historian. But still greater may be expected from him. . . . Mr. Forster is a subtle analyser of character—a profound and philosophical thinker. . . . It is a high privilege to enjoy the friendship of one whose name will be, hereafter, an earnest of some remembrance by posterity. This privilege I can boast; and may assert with Charles Nodier, who, speaking of his friend Dumas, puts forth his claim to immortality. . . . '*Je suis l'ami de Forster.*'"

This foolish, but kindly intended, puff for a young and then almost unknown writer was reprobated in the review, written by "Father Prout," in *Fraser's Magazine*, whose notice of *Crichton* in other respects was highly favourable. "Father Prout," to his credit be it said, was in those days opposed to this sort of puffery—even when it was devoted to himself. In the Preface to the

fourth edition of *Rookwood* (1836), Ainsworth complimented his friend in the highest terms, and at considerable length, terming him an "incomparable linguist . . . whose erudition and research are a mystery to this generation . . . something between Sterne and Rabelais. . ."

"Prout" was quite annoyed when he read, in proof, the allusion to himself in *Crichton*, and let Ainsworth know it. But the latter would not strike out the complimentary references, and wrote to Macrone: "I am sorry very kindly meant allusions do not please the Father, whom I was most anxious to please; but say no more about it—it must stand."

Later on, "Prout" did not hesitate to claim that he had rendered considerable aid to Ainsworth for *Crichton*. He said:—

"When Harrison Ainsworth . . . took up James Crichton in place of Dick Turpin, a noble field lay before him. I sketched the plan, and pointed out to him that the story, in all biographies, of Crichton's having been killed in a drunken brawl at Mantua, by Duke Gonzaga, on the 3rd July, 1583, was manifestly untrue, as there was to my knowledge, at Paris . . . a printed broadsheet of verses by him on the 4th November, 1584 (a fact he was able to verify by getting another copy from Milan). . . I had proof that he was at Lisbon in 1587, and that in 1588, he sailed thence with his friend Lope de Vega on board the Invincible Armada, to avenge the death of Mary, Queen of Scots. That his galleon, driven up the German Sea and rounding Scotland, was wrecked in the winter of that year on the coast of Ayrshire. That disgusted with the triumphant reign of Elizabeth . . . and the general aspect of Europe, he

gave up continental affairs, settled down as a tranquil farmer, married a Highland lassie, and lived to a good old age, as evinced by his well-authenticated song of *John Anderson, my jo*. . . . That Crichton, during his long life in Ayrshire, under an humbler name, was author of most of the popular songs and tunes that have enriched the Land o' Cakes is known to a few only. . . . This startling narrative of what was in some sort the posthumous history of his hero, Ainsworth did not grapple with, but stopped at Paris, making him a kind of fencing-master, rope-dancer, and court dandy . . .", etc.

Very interesting all this, but, like most of the learned and hoaxing Jesuit's discoveries, it needs to be taken with a grain of salt.

Ainsworth's *Crichton*, when published by Bentley, was not illustrated; the fine designs by "Phiz" first appeared in the third edition in 1849. But just before his last illness, in 1836, Macrone issued—preparatory to the book—a folio containing twelve tableaux from *Crichton*, designed and etched by John Franklin. These illustrations are scarcely in sympathy with the spirit of the romance, being cold and formal; but Ainsworth himself thought very highly of them, for he wrote:—

" KENSAL LODGE, HARROW ROAD,

" MY DEAR MACRONE, " Friday night, 12 o'clock.

" I am really so charmed with Mr. Franklin's drawings that I cannot rest till I have disburthened a little of my admiration to you. They are all exquisite—but if I have a preference it is for the scene in the Oratory in which Crichton confronts Henri. As a piece of composition merely, this is perfect. The figures are charm-

ingly grouped and charmingly designed. And then how full of feminine, graceful, and beautiful anger are the features of Marguerite de Valois. Since it has furnished subjects for these masterly drawings, I shall really think better of my own performance. In good sooth you must give 18 of them and charge the work a guinea and a half. I will do all in my power for it. But, depend upon it, it will require no aid. I am *sure* it will do. One thing only should be observed, *viz.* to introduce Crichton personally into nearly every subject. The poisoning scene at the beginning of Vol. 2 should be one scene—and I think the dancing. This, as Mr. Franklin would manage it, would be very graceful, and might afford scope for the faces of the Dames of Honour, Ronsard, Brantome, and other worthies. I would also suggest the interview between Catherine de Medici and Crichton in the pavilion for one subject—the point where he strikes the dagger into the parchment. And, again, the scene in the laboratory, where he unmasks and discloses his features to the before-mentioned Catherine. But after all, Mr. Franklin will be a much better judge of what *ought* to be illustrated than I can be. Let him do as he has done, and I am confident the work will have immense success. . . . You *shall* have as much matter from the book as will be needful to tell the story, and I will write an introduction or whatever else may be needful with the greatest pleasure.

“ Believe me, I am perfectly enraptured with these designs—and congratulate myself upon falling into such excellent hands. . . . Meanwhile, when you see Mr. Franklin tell him with all the enthusiasm you can what I think. And rely upon it your enthusiasm will fall short of mine.

“ Ever, my dear Macrone,

“ Yours faithfully,

“ W. HARRISON AINSWORTH.”

An edition of *Crichton* was published at Paris, in English, by Galignani, in 1837; and the book has been translated into Dutch, Russian, and German.<sup>1</sup>

*Crichton*, also, was dramatized for the Adelphi by E. Fitzball, and for Astley's by Ducrow. In connection with the former, Edmund Yates told a good story. His father, Fred. Yates, proposed to Mr. Levi, of the Surrey Theatre, the idea of producing there his successful Adelphi version of *The Admirable Crichton*. "That's a capital notion," said Levi, "*The Admiral Crichton*; and we've something in the Wardrobe that'll just do for it! Jones, step up to the Wardrobe, and fetch that admiral's uniform I bought last week."

In 1837, Ainsworth contributed a preface and notes to the English edition, published by Bentley, of *Nick of the Woods*, a story of Kentucky, by Dr. Bird. It is an exciting tale of adventure and life among the Red Indians—in the style Mayne Reid, later, excelled in—and it, of course, appealed to Ainsworth, who said in his preface, "Nothing is dearer than fearful adventure, hairbreadth escapes, and profound mystery." And these were the constituents that formed the basis of the next romance from his own pen—*Jack Sheppard*.

Ainsworth now began to evolve the scheme of his new story. It is to be regretted that he was not encouraged to persevere in the high standard he aimed at in *Crichton*; but the public, for the reasons alluded to in the last chapter, not according that work the favour it bestowed on *Rookwood*, the author naturally resolved to return to the so-called "school of criminal romance" wherein he

<sup>1</sup> To avoid repetition later, it may be stated here that all of Ainsworth's best novels have received similar compliments.

had gained his first fame and fortune. So now his thoughts turned to Jack Sheppard, for whom, as he said earlier, "I had always a sneaking liking in my boyhood . . . and one day I may present the world with his autobiography, which happened, singularly enough, to fall into my possession."

Accordingly, the time had come, he conceived, to carry out this plan; but it was originally his intention to name the book *Thames Darrell*, and it is under that title it will be, at first, alluded to in his correspondence with Crossley during the time of composition:—

" KENSAL LODGE,

" May 29th, 1837.

" I think you will be glad to hear that I propose visiting Manchester for a few days next week, when I hope to spend some pleasant hours with you. I shall travel with Hugh Beaver, and take up my quarters during my short stay at 'The Temple.'<sup>1</sup> I want to consult you about my new romance, which is a tale of the reign of George the First; and as that monarch cuts a conspicuous figure in the story, I shall really be thankful if you can lend me any memoirs, or other matter, relating to him, or put me in the way of finding them. My exact year is 1724. I mention this that you may direct your thoughts to that period. It is my intention to introduce Jack Sheppard. Have you any history of old Newgate, or any picture of that old prison? I think this scarcely likely—but I must look to you for George the First. It is curious there should be so little known about his habits, manners, etc., which are exactly what I want. I mean to write a sort of Hogarthian novel—describing London, etc., at the beginning of the Eighteenth Century. But all this, and a good deal more, we will talk over

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Beaver's house at Cheetham Hill.



when we meet. . . . You must go over with me to Ros-therne one day."

Some delay took place in the progress of the work :—

" *November 5th, 1837.*

" I almost hesitate in making the present application, and yet I know not why I should do so, as I trust you will not hesitate, for a moment, to return me any other answer to it than such as may suit your convenience. Without further prelude, then—can you, without inconvenience, lend me £150 for three months? I must enter into a little explanation of my circumstances that you may know exactly *why* I require this assistance. On the completion of *Thames Darrell* I have £200 to receive from Bentley. This book ought to have been written by, and the money received in, December. But I cannot satisfactorily complete it before the end of January, and will not, therefore, attempt it. In the meantime, I shall require the sum I have named for Christmas. . . . If needful, I can obtain the advance from Bentley. But it will be attended with bother, and a humiliating sense of obligation, which I would gladly avoid. . . . I have many other friends to whom I could apply, but you are the only person to whom I choose to be under such an obligation. . . ."

" *November 11th, 1837.*

" Pray accept my cordial thanks for your very kind letter, and its enclosure, a Bank Bill for £150. I am not less obliged by the accommodation, than gratified by the prompt and handsome manner in which it has been conveyed. Believe me, my old and dear friend, for you are my oldest and dearest friend, that I am more, infinitely more, delighted to find that I was not mistaken in my estimate of your character, than I am relieved by the assistance which your loan has afforded me. Rely

on it, I will find early and efficient means of evincing my sense of your generosity. Amid my many faults, that of ingratitude has never, I believe, been imputed to me. . . . But you are among the few who have ever understood me—and you will understand me now. It will be quite convenient to me to return you the £150—now advanced—by the middle of February. . . . I hope we shall then drink to the success of *Thames Darrell*. In the meantime, I hope to see you here at Christmas. . . .

“How do you like *Pickwick*? I dine next Saturday with the author to celebrate the completion of his grand work. He is about to edit the *Life of Grimaldi*—to appear with the Pantomimes at Christmas.”

The following letter will be read with great interest by all Dickensians—and who is not one?

“KENSAL LODGE,

“November 22nd, 1837.

“MY DEAR CROSSLEY,

“. . . On Saturday last we celebrated the completion of *The Pickwick Papers*. We had a capital dinner, with capital wine, and capital speeches. Dickens, of course, was in the chair. Talfourd<sup>1</sup> was the Vice, and an excellent Vice he made. He speaks with great fervour and tact, and, being really greatly interested on the occasion, exerted himself to the utmost. Just before he was about to propose *the* toast of the evening, the head waiter—for it was at a tavern that the carouse took place—entered, and placed a glittering temple of confectionery on the table, beneath the canopy of which stood a little figure of the illustrious Mr. Pickwick. This

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Noon Talfourd (1795–1854), M.P. for Reading. Judge of the Common Pleas, and knighted 1850. Author of *Ion*, produced at Drury Lane, 1836. Talfourd died suddenly while addressing the Grand Jury at Oxford.

was the work of the landlord. As you may suppose, it was received with great applause. Dickens made a feeling speech in reply to the Serjeant's eulogy. There were present Tom Hill, Jerdan, Forster, Macready, Dickens Senr., Hogarth (Dickens's father-in-law), one or two private friends, the printers, publishers, and engraver. The same party were invited to celebrate the Christening of the next work. Just before dinner Dickens received a cheque for £750 from his Publishers. On Sunday, Forster, Dickens, and I dined with the Serjeant, who has recently paid me the most flattering invitation. He is a very kind-hearted and most hospitable person. . . . If you *can* find your way here at Christmas, I need not say how delighted I shall be to see you, and I will then introduce you to all the jolly boys I have just mentioned.

“ Ever your attached

“ W. H. A.”

*Pickwick* appeared in book form soon after, and Dickens wrote, on 10th December, 1837, to Forster: “ Chapman and Hall have just sent me three ‘extra-super’ bound copies of *Pickwick*, as per specimen enclosed. The first I forward to you, the second I have presented to our good friend Ainsworth, and the third Kate<sup>1</sup> has retained for herself.”

Ainsworth was not only the intimate friend of Dickens, he also influenced the latter's early literary work on several occasions. It was, no doubt, the vast popularity of *Rookwood* which caused Mr. Sam Weller to select, as a topical subject, his touching and romantic ballad, “ *Bold Turpin vunce on Hounslow Heath*,” on that memorable occasion when Mr. Pickwick's immortal “ gentleman ” burst into song in the legal atmosphere

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Dickens.

of Portugal Street. No doubt, too, it was the great success of *Rookwood*—five editions within three years—which induced Dickens to enter as a student, and later become a professor, in the school of “criminal romance.” Ainsworth, during his researches for *Jack Sheppard*, probably gave Dickens many tips for *Oliver Twist* concerning the ways of thieves, and he certainly found “Boz” the name of “Sikes” for his burglar—for there was an actual James Sikes, the friend and companion-robber of Jack Sheppard. And then, of course, “The Cheeryble Brothers” were introduced by Ainsworth. But before we come to them, several letters from Ainsworth claim quotation. To Crossley he writes:—

“February 8th, 1838.

“I have been working very hard at *Thames Darrell*—not altogether satisfactorily, but still making good progress. Another month will see it out of my hands, and rejoiced, indeed, shall I be to lay down my pen. I have a tremendous year before me, and though *Thames Darrell* is a heavy millstone enough, it is nothing to what is to come. In sober seriousness, I mean to write as hard as I can, and make as much as I can in every way. I have no lack of employment if I choose to accept it, and, indeed, I have already accepted a reasonable year’s work. I think I told you that Dickens and I are about to illustrate ancient and modern London in a *Pickwick* form. We expect much from this. Talfourd has just completed a new Tragedy on a classic (Greek) subject. I was invited to a first reading, but declined it, as I do all invitations at present. The only day on which I have dined out latterly was Monday last, when Jerdan gave a grand dinner at the Freemason’s Tavern to sixty persons, to celebrate the coming of age of *The Literary Gazette*. We had famous speechifying.”

It is greatly to be regretted that the proposed collaboration between Dickens and Ainsworth was not consummated. It would have been a work of unusual interest. No doubt it was a revival of the idea of *The Lions of London* (previously described)—Ainsworth to write the historic and tragic portion, and Dickens to supply the humour and the scenes in modern London: an inimitable combination.

Although hard at work on *Jack Sheppard*, Ainsworth did not relax his extensive hospitality at Kensal Lodge. Nothing gave him greater pleasure than to entertain his friends, and in addition to his own large circle of intimates, who were habitually at his table, he always welcomed young men of talent who were making their name, and used his best efforts to establish them in the literary world of London.

The last survivor of those who dined with Ainsworth at Kensal Lodge was Sir Theodore Martin, who favoured me with his interesting reminiscences of the occasion in the following words:—<sup>1</sup>

“ I dined once with Mr. Harrison Ainsworth on the occasion of a visit to London from Edinburgh, where I then resided, and from where I had been for some time in correspondence with Mr. Ainsworth, whom I first met on the same visit at the rooms of Mr. Percival Weldon Banks, Barrister. It was a pleasant party who were gathered round Mr. Ainsworth’s Board. I remember only Dickens, Forster, Dyce, George Cruikshank, and Banks. There were several others whose names I entirely forget. The conversation was very brilliant, and

<sup>1</sup> Sir Theodore Martin, who died in 1909, was about twenty-one years of age when he visited Ainsworth.

interesting to me, young man as I then was. . . . Forster seemed to me a very dictatorial person—Shakespeare owed much of any popularity he had to the influence of *his* patronage of the poet.

“Dickens had then written a few numbers of *Pickwick*. Ainsworth had recently published his Admirable *Crichton*, and was at work on his *Jack Sheppard*, for I remember his taking me to his working room upstairs, and showing me the rare mezzotint of Sheppard, and a number of engravings, hanging about the walls, of people and places that were to be dealt with in the novel. . . . I found Ainsworth a genial correspondent, and he did the honours of his table well.”

On 6th March, 1838, when writing the commencement of the second epoch of *Jack Sheppard*, Ainsworth received the news of the death of his wife, who passed away, after a long and painful illness, at her father's house, 18, Kensington Terrace, Notting Hill. Fate dealt hardly with Mrs. Ainsworth. Romance, happiness, health, all faded early—and then death, at the age of thirty-three.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Twelve years had elapsed since her marriage in 1826, and Ainsworth alluded to the clouds which had obscured its bright promise in the following passage, which he wrote in *Jack Sheppard* the day his wife died: “Twelve years ago! It is an awful retrospect. Dare we look back upon the darkened vista, and, in imagination, retrace the path we have trod? With how many vain hopes is it shaded! with how many good resolutions, never fulfilled, is it paved! Where are the dreams of ambition in which, twelve years ago, we indulged? Where are the aspirations that fired us—the passions that consumed us then? Has our success in life been commensurate with our own desires—with the anticipations formed of us by others? Or, are we not blighted in heart, as in ambition? Has not the loved one been estranged by doubt, or snatched from us by the cold hand of death? . . .” (Epoch II, Chapter I.)







Ainsworth was greatly shocked by this occurrence, as his letters testify.

But to pass on to other matters mentioned in his correspondence. In April, 1838, he wrote to his cousin, Dr. James Bower Harrison, who had requested his aid in finding a publisher for a medical work he had written:—

“ I have read your MSS. with very great pleasure. . . . I will use all the influence I possess to procure you a publisher. I think the work extremely well written . . . it reflects great credit upon you ; and I hail with great pleasure the rising of a new star in our family. . . . I can easily understand your impatience ; but, except ministers of state, I believe no class of men are so tiresome as publishers—perhaps none so impatient as authors and courtiers. . . . Are you at all interested in the subject of animal magnetism ? The other day I accompanied my friend Dickens to see some girls magnetized by Dr. Eliotson, and a more curious exhibition I never beheld. Unless there was some collusion, which I can scarcely imagine, the effects of the magnetizer were truly surprising—almost magical. . . .”

[Dickens, as we know from his letters to Lady Blessington, and Forster's *Life*, was greatly interested in the subject of animal magnetism.]

To Crossley, Ainsworth writes :—

“ I am extremely anxious to have your opinion upon *Thames Darrell*. I send you the first epoch. I need not tell you to be careful of the MS., as you will perceive it is my only copy. . . . I had a very polite letter from Edinburgh, from a Mr. Maidment, an advocate, who volunteered to make any extracts for me from the scarce books in the Advocates' Library. His letter was accompanied by a thick volume called *The Abbotsford*

*Miscellany*, containing many curious historical records. It is printed by the Abbotsford Club. This Mr. Maidment sent me, some time ago, some particulars of Turpin which I included in the notes of the last edition of *Rookwood*. . . . In his letter to me, Mr. Maidment, speaking of the volume, says, 'It is a privately printed work, circulated only among the members of the Abbotsford Club, and of necessity very rare. I venture to think that the greater portion of the contents will be deemed interesting and important by those who relish ancient records, in which number I venture to include the accomplished author of *Crichton*. (!!) If fond of *diablerie* and witchcraft, I think you will be interested in the Trials in Orkney during the middle of the Seventeenth Century.' The papers on witchcraft and sorcery are extremely curious."

He continues to Crossley, on 7th April, 1838 :—

"I am glad you like *The Abbotsford Miscellany*. I will write to Mr. Maidment on the subject of your admission to the Club. . . . I think a visit to the Northern Athens would be a pleasant excursion one of these days. What say you? Apropos of Scotsmen! I met Lockhart the other day looking quite like an old man, and very much shaken with rheumatism. He is so much altered that I scarcely knew him. Of course you have read his last volume of *The Life of Scott*? I have been greatly delighted with it. I asked Lockhart what he thought of the *Pickwick*. He said he thought 'it was all very well—but'—with one of his usual laughs—'damned low!' I am sorry to hear what you say about *Nicholas Nickleby*. I feared it was not so well adapted for general popularity as the *Pickwick*—though, in reality, far better. But the truth is, to write for the mob, we must not write too well. The newspaper level is the true line to take. In

proportion as Dickens departs from this, he will decline in popular favour—of this I am certain. I think, however, he has so much tact that he will yet retrieve himself—and become bad enough to suit all tastes. . . . I hope you *do* intend coming to town. We must then have a small compact dinner of the better *literati*. . . . You will be glad to learn that I am making good progress with *Thames Darrell*. Jonathan Wild comes out tolerably well. I am rather sanguine about this book.”

Crossley having acquired the MS. Diary of Roger North (a legal worthy who lived 1650–1733), thought of editing it, and consulted Ainsworth about the chances of publication. The latter wrote :—

“ *October 15th, 1838.*

“ I saw Colburn on Saturday and am sorry to say that the interview was not attended with the success I could desire. He did not positively decline the proposal—in fact, he wished the matter to be kept open (for he is a sad shuffling fellow), that if you would put the work in order, and when complete offer the MS. to him, he thought he *might venture* to print one edition of 750 copies, for which the utmost he could give would be £150. This I told him I was sure you would not listen to. If the Diary is what you represent, and I am certain it is, your safest and best plan will be to publish it on your own account. . . . I have no doubt that I might by dint of bullying Colburn get you £200 for an edition of 1000—but such remuneration is inadequate and absurd. The copyright is a very valuable one and not to be hastily parted with. I really think, judiciously managed, you ought to make £1000 by it. Now, if you think proper, I will do this for you, and I am so sure that I am right that I strongly urge it as a means of repaying, in some degree, the obligations I am under to you. I

will, I say, undertake the whole arrangement of the matter for you with the Longmans or some other equally influential house, and I will engage to say you shall have £500 in your pocket before the end of 1839, and the copy-right of the work into the bargain—and possibly *then* you may be able to make a better arrangement with these scurvy publishers than you could do now. . . . I will make *bargains* for you with paper makers, printers, boarders, etc., so as to relieve you of all trouble ; I will give directions about advertising, etc. ; and will, moreover, use all my influence with reviewers. . . . I mentioned the subject on Saturday to Forster, and he is of the same opinion as myself. He is satisfied—if the Diary is worthy of its writer—that it will have an extensive sale. At the beginning of December I shall be wholly at your service, and will put you to press if you are ready. Till then I shall be wholly occupied with *Thames Darrell*. Dr. Maginn is the editor of a Liverpool paper.”

In his next letter Ainsworth had important news for Crossley :—

“ October 31st, 1838.

“ I write a few hasty lines to apprise you that you are likely in the course of this week, or the beginning of next, to have some illustrious visitors. Dickens has just started for Stratford-upon-Avon and Chester, accompanied by Mr. Browne<sup>1</sup> (the ‘ Phiz ’ of *Pickwick* and *Nickleby*) the artist. He will reach Manchester on Saturday, I believe. On Sunday next, Forster starts, per railroad, to join him, and I suppose on Monday they will call on you, as they are armed with letters of introduc-

<sup>1</sup> Hablot Knight Browne (1815–82), the son of a merchant, of Kennington Lane. He produced his first etching, *John Gilpin*, in 1833, and his *Pickwick* illustrations brought him fame in 1836, when he was just of age. He married Miss Reynolds in 1840 ; Mr. Gordon Browne is the youngest son of “ Phiz.”

tion to you. Dickens's object is to see the interior of a Cotton Mill—I fancy with reference to some of his publications. I have given him letters to G. Winter and Hugh Beaver. Forster is anxious to see you. He has spoken to Colburn, since I last wrote, on the subject of North's Diary, and will tell you what he heard. It appears that Colburn is now not unwilling to undertake the book. You will find Forster able to give you the best *practical* advice on the subject, as he knows all the publishers and their tricks. Forster and Dickens will only remain in Manchester till Wednesday."

Dickens duly came to Manchester, and there he met his "Cheeryble Brothers"—William and Daniel Grant, the wealthy and benevolent calico printers of Cannon Street, in that city. The Grants had originally come from Scotland, and emigrated to Manchester in almost a penniless condition. Gradually they became successful by sheer industry and honest dealing, until, at last, they attained immense wealth. It is needless to describe here their humanity, simple-mindedness, and generosity, for is it not all recorded in the pages of *Nicholas Nickleby*?

A rather supererogatory argument was waged recently in print as to whether Dickens ever actually met the Grants.<sup>1</sup> One would have thought the statement in Forster's *Life* sufficiently explicit: ". . . Mr. Ainsworth . . . with whom we visited, during two of those years, friends of art and letters in his native Manchester, from among whom Dickens brought away his Brothers Cheeryble."

<sup>1</sup> See *Country and Church of the "Cheeryble Brothers"* and *Story of the "Cheeryble Grants,"* both by the Rev. W. Hume Elliot; *T.P.'s Weekly*, March-April, 1907; and Mr. Percy Fitzgerald's *Life of Charles Dickens as Revealed in his Writings*.

To settle this question once and for all, I am enabled to state on the best authority—that of Ainsworth's daughter—that not only did Dickens meet the Grants in person, but that one of the objects of his visit to Manchester was on purpose to see them. Ainsworth, as described previously, had known the Grants from his boyhood, when he used to see them in the Cross Street Chapel and elsewhere in Manchester. He had often told Dickens about the two brothers—their remarkable history, their personal traits, and certain peculiarities of manner and dress—believing that the Grants would furnish excellent characters for the observant “Boz” to study, assimilate, and subsequently introduce into one of his books. Ainsworth was right. Dickens, as the composition of *Nicholas Nickleby* progressed, finding it necessary to create some characters who would assist *Nicholas* on his way and play the part of benefactors, determined to make use of, and study from the life, the two quaint, benevolent old merchants of his friend's native city, of whom he had heard so much. That this was one of the objects of Dickens's visit to Manchester, in 1838, is clearly apparent in the following letter of introduction Ainsworth gave him to Crossley :—

“ KENSAL LODGE,

“ *October, 1838.*

“ I am sure it will give you pleasure to receive this note, handed to you, as it will be, by my friend Mr. Charles Dickens ; and I am equally sure that it will give you pleasure to show him any attention in your power during his stay in Manchester. I rather suspect that he is reconnoitring for character, and perhaps you may aid his researches ; but at all events you can help

him to the best glass of wine in Manchester, and that will materially assist his judgment in coming to a favourable conclusion of the habits of my townsmen. I greatly regret that I cannot accompany him. I forgot to mention that Mr. Browne, the artist who illustrates *Nicholas*, will travel with Dickens, so that I must beg you to extend your hospitality to him. Pray let them see the Club,<sup>1</sup> and taste its cookery.

“I now wish to add a special introduction for my friend Forster. He is Dickens’s most intimate friend, as well as mine, and he visits Manchester in order to see it in company with Dickens.”

Ainsworth also provided the trio with letters of introduction to his old friend, Gilbert Winter, a prominent solicitor of Manchester, who occupied a perfectly appointed house, known as “Stocks,” on Cheetham Hill. Ainsworth gave Mr. Winter a hint that Dickens wished to see the Grants, and accordingly the latter were invited to the dinner Mr. Winter gave in honour of Dickens, who then *saw* his “Brothers Cheeryble” for the *first* time. In the fifth edition of Canon Richard Parkinson’s *Old Church Clock* there is a footnote which states:—

“During the winter of 1838 two comparatively young men came on a visit to Manchester with letters of introduction from Mr. W. Harrison Ainsworth to Mr. Gilbert Winter and Mr. James Crossley; the one was Mr. Charles Dickens, the other Mr. John Forster. Mr. Gilbert Winter, with his usual hospitality, gave a dinner-party at ‘The Stocks,’ Cheetham Hill Road, in honour of the two visitors. Among the company were Messrs. Daniel and

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Fisher’s hostel in Smithy Door, where Ainsworth and Crossley used to spend their evenings in the old days.

William Grant (whom Mr. Dickens then met for the first time, and afterwards immortalised as the 'Cheeryble Brothers'), Mr. J. C. Harter, Mr. James Crossley, and Canon Parkinson . . . there was quite a passage of arms between Mr. Forster and the Canon, in which the somewhat confident cockney wit of the former was completely extinguished by the strong powers of repartee exhibited by his more acute and ready northern antagonist." <sup>1</sup>

Gilbert Winter also gave a breakfast-party at "Stocks" in honour of the distinguished visitors. Dr. James Bower Harrison, Ainsworth's cousin, was one of the guests, and he recorded that "Mr. Dickens was then writing *Nicholas Nickleby*, and I well remember his reading the proofs of his novel, and smiling at his own writings. He was then a smart-looking young man of rather effeminate appearance, wearing long hair, very much like the pictures of the hero of his story. . . . I still call to mind his polished boots and drawing-room-like attire. . . ."

Mr. Hugh Beaver, too, related that on another day, in Manchester, Dickens, after reading an unfavourable criticism of one of his books—wherein it was said of the work, "What is good is not original, and what is original is not good"—was greatly upset, and stamped up and down the room, with the annoying review in his hand, swearing, "They shall eat their words!"

It is a significant fact that Dickens was accompanied on his "reconnoitring" visit to Manchester by "Phiz," the illustrator of his book, who, no doubt, came to take some notes of the personal appearance of the originals for his "Cheeryble" sketches.

<sup>1</sup> Forster was a North-countryman by birth, and could only be termed a Cockney by residence.



[It is scarcely necessary to adduce further proof that Dickens met the Grants;<sup>1</sup> but I may add, as evidence of "Boz's" great interest in the prototypes of his "Cheerybles," Miss Hogarth told me that a portrait of Daniel Grant always hung in a prominent place in all Dickens's houses; it was on the staircase at Gadshill.]

Although Dickens, Forster, and "Phiz" were only in Manchester for three days, they found time to go out to Cheadle Hall, in Cheshire, to see Ainsworth's three little girls, who were at boarding-school there. This incident throws a pleasant light on the kindness of these three very gifted men. They were all young ("Phiz" was only twenty-three, and the other two were both twenty-six), and might have preferred to stay and enjoy themselves in Manchester, where fêting and dinners awaited them: instead, they gave up a considerable portion of their brief visit to go to Cheadle, in order to be able to give their friend, Ainsworth, news of his daughters. The three young men took three books, duly inscribed and autographed,<sup>2</sup> to present to the three little girls, who had never seen their visitors before. There was one *contre-temps*. The youngest little girl, maliciously deceived by a school companion, thought Forster was the dentist come to execute fell purposes, and wept bitterly and made loud lamentation when the astonished author of *The Life of Cromwell* advanced to greet her! However, the dis-

<sup>1</sup> Mr. W. K. Keeling, a former president of the Manchester Academy of Arts, stated (1906) that he was present at a dinner in Manchester, when Dickens and the two Grant brothers were among the guests.

<sup>2</sup> One of these books—Agnes Strickland's *Juvenile Scrap Book*—bearing Dickens's autograph, was sold at Sotheby's for £1. 3s., in 1896. The youngest sister (Mrs. Swanson), however, preserved the books presented to her, on the occasion mentioned above, until her death in 1908.

concerted Forster was soon able to substantiate his pacific intentions and friendly attentions.

Ainsworth's three friends evidently enjoyed their visit to his native "Babylon of spinning-jennies," for he wrote to Crossley:—

"November 14th, 1838.

"Dickens and Forster called on me on Sunday to give me an account of their expedition, and to bring me their two *Olivers*—*Twist* and *Cromwell*. Have you read *Oliver Twist*? If not, you have a treat in store. Dickens is an excellent fellow—I am glad you like him—and so is my friend Fury-Fire-the-Faggot. The twain expressed themselves highly, most highly, delighted with your and G. Winter's attention.

"I am pledged to Bentley to deliver the MS. of *Thames Darrell* on the 17th December, when I shall receive the copyright money. *Rookwood* is becoming popular in France. I have just received a French journal—*La Commerce*—in which there is a review of the work. The critic styles it 'une tentative remarquable fait par un homme d'une science rare et d'un esprit qu'on ne peut nier.' Then a long analysis of the story and a particular praise of the character of Turpin. . . . This, you will own, is pleasant. Praise sounds like praise out of one's own country. We shall meet at Christmas, and will then talk over my next book, and discuss the present—which I hope you will like, and which I trust will be as popular as thrice-lucky *Rookwood*."

*Jack Sheppard* was nearing completion. A long delay had been caused by some alterations being made to the story at the request of the publisher, Bentley. Concerning this matter, Ainsworth wrote to their joint friend and literary agent:—

“ KENSAL LODGE,

“ *December 10th, 1838.*

“ DEAR OLLIER,

“ I send the MS. of *Jack Sheppard* for Bentley's inspection. I cannot, for a moment, suppose that he will retract from his promise of Saturday. But if he does, I will certainly take a very different course, both in the arrangement of my work and as to the mode of publication. At the same time, I am anxious that you should satisfy him of my zeal—and on this head you cannot speak too strongly. I am heart and soul in the matter. The larger parcel contains the MS. as prepared for *The Miscellany*. The smaller parcel contains the excised matter, that Bentley may *satisfy* himself of the *extent* of the alterations. . . . I sent the proof and new matter to Mr. Wilson the first thing this morning. I shall be at the Parthenon, in St. James's Square, at one o'clock, and will thank you to meet me there at that hour with the Bill, which I can place in my banker's hands. . . . Understand I am peremptory about the bill for six months. I shall order dinner here at three, and we can return together. Of course you won't forget the MS.”

Before dealing with the publication of *Jack Sheppard*, we must describe the momentous visit Ainsworth paid to Manchester in the company of Dickens (and Forster), which took place just as the book appeared. Certain citizens of Manchester had determined to entertain her famous son and *his* famous friend at a public banquet ; but the invitation seems to have been so worded as to leave it in doubt whether the dinner was in honour expressly of Dickens or of Ainsworth, or of both conjointly. However, the pleasantest feelings in the matter existed between the two principal guests. In the first instance,

apparently, Ainsworth had been invited by the Manchester people, and he, in turn, invited Dickens to accompany him to his native city; but, being without a spark of jealousy, he was perfectly willing that Dickens should be *the* guest of honour. The latter was equally ready to be pleased with any arrangement that might be made, and was delighted to accompany his friend to Manchester, although it was only a few weeks since his previous visit to the city of cotton.

Ainsworth arranged that he and his friends should stay with his connection, Hugh Beaver, at "The Temple," on Cheetham Hill. Their host was a wealthy cotton-spinner, and his sister, Ellen, had married James Harrison (Ainsworth's uncle).

Here is the letter concerning this eventful visit:—

" KENSAL LODGE,

" December 24th, 1838.

" MY DEAR BEAVER,

" I don't know whether I ought to tax your hospitality so far as I am about to do; but, at all events, I trust the peculiarity of the case will plead my excuse. I am about to visit Manchester, on the 12th of January, in company with my friends, Mr. Charles Dickens, the author of *The Pickwick Papers*, and Mr. Forster, the author of *The Life of Cromwell*. Now, could it be consistent with your arrangements to receive us from Saturday the 12th to Wednesday the 16th—the utmost extent of our stay? You will find both my friends most agreeable, well-informed men—and I need not enlarge upon the merits of Mr. Dickens, as by common consent he has been installed in the throne of letters vacated by Scott. You may possibly have heard of their recent visit to Manchester, and it was the very friendly reception they

then experienced which induces them so soon to repeat their visit. It is proposed by some friends of mine to give them a dinner at the Club on Monday the 14th, with Mr. G. Winter in the chair, and Mr. Crossley means to give them a dinner on Tuesday. They, also, propose to go to the Assembly on Wednesday night, and start, after the ball, per railroad for London. I have thus put you in full possession of our plans—and if they accord with your views at all, it will give me great happiness to introduce my friends to you.

“ I shall not propose their staying at Stocks<sup>1</sup>—as being young men I know they would not like the restraint necessarily imposed in the mornings by female society—and I really know no house where there is so much ease and comfort combined with hospitality as yours; <sup>2</sup> and it is on that account mainly that I have made the above proposition to you—for Dickens and Forster are both anxious to stay at an hotel. I think, however, that you will find them *so* agreeable that you will not regret the inconvenience I may put you to. Understand, however, all this is written on the supposition that you may be in Manchester at the time, and that it may suit your arrangements. Otherwise, I must entreat you to consider it unsaid. I cannot hear of your coming to Manchester on our account. . . .

“ Believe me, my dear Beaver,

“ Most faithfully yours,

“ W. HARRISON AINSWORTH.”

Of course, Mr. Beaver was delighted to entertain the famous trio, and so Ainsworth wrote as follows to Crossley anent the final arrangements for the visit :—

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Gilbert Winter's house.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Hugh Beaver was a bachelor at this period; but he married a few months later, Isabella, daughter of Sir Duncan Campbell, of Barcaldine, Bart. Beaver also owned Glyn Garth, Anglesey.

## " KENSAL LODGE.

" We start for Manchester *positively* on Friday the 11th of January; sleep the first night at Tamworth, where a brother<sup>1</sup> of Dickens's resides; and proceed per railway next morning for our destination. . . . We shall stay altogether at 'The Temple'; Hugh Beaver sent us a most kind and pressing invitation, which we have most gladly accepted. He is a glorious fellow that same Hugh Beaver, and sends his carriage to meet us on our arrival at the Railway.

" It is the wish of all three of us to get the public dinner over as soon as possible; and we should therefore prefer its taking place on Monday the 14th. We dine at 'The Temple' (H. Beaver's) at 7.30 on Saturday, where you will be invited. We will dine with you on Tuesday, and on Wednesday at Stocks. Now, in respect to the public dinner. Is it to be given to me or Dickens—or to both? Acting upon your former letter, I invited my friends to accompany *me*, imagining the dinner was to be given in my honour: but I have no feeling whatever in the matter, and only desire to have a distinct understanding about it. If the dinner is given expressly to Dickens, I think a letter of invitation should be sent him. But you are the best judge of the propriety of this step; and it might be only giving needless trouble, as he is sure to come if the dinner *is* to be given to me. However, I should be glad to know it as soon as possible, in order to prepare myself for the event, as I should like it to go off with *éclat*. I shall feel greatly obliged by your giving me an accurate idea of the arrangement of the toasts, etc. I must own I feel rather nervous when I think of it, but I will endeavour to acquit myself with

<sup>1</sup> Alfred Lamert Dickens (1822–60). He was at this date a youth, and studying engineering at Tamworth, where he was probably living in lodgings. He eventually married in Yorkshire. Alfred Dickens died, at Manchester, at the early age of 38.

credit. We shall certainly not prolong our stay beyond Wednesday night, on which night, also, we mean to go to the assembly. I shall write to you again early next week with the Magazines, and shall be glad to have your opinion of *Jack Sheppard*. I calculate upon a notice of *Jack* from your pen in *The Courier*. It will form a good *avant-courier* of my visit . . . and you will really do me an important service, as if *Jack Sheppard* turns out a hit—I mean a decided one—the value of my copyright will be doubled. I am sure, therefore, I may calculate upon the services of my *oldest* friend. . . . Dickens means to bring you a copy of *Oliver Twist*. . . . We are keeping Christmas jollily here. All seasonable wishes to you.”

And on 10th January, 1839, Crossley was notified :—

“ Dickens and I have just secured places for ourselves and Forster in the Mail, at the Railroad office, for 8 o'clock on Saturday morning. . . . I wish you had sent me *more* particulars relative to the public dinner, for—I repeat—I am devilish nervous about the speechifying.”

The three literary lions duly arrived in Cottonopolis, and, as arranged, their host, Hugh Beaver, gave a dinner-party in their honour, on the first evening, at “The Temple.”

Manchester, at that date, had just received its charter of incorporation, and the Conservative party in the city were opposed to, and rather restive under, their new civic honours. So the local *Courier* delivered itself as follows :—

“ We understand that Mr. W. Harrison Ainsworth is visiting Manchester, accompanied by his friend, Mr. Charles Dickens, the well-known ‘Boz.’ We don't know

whether the latter gentleman has been tempted by our new municipal body to take a journey northward or not, but we doubt whether he would find, taking the whole country through, a more copious harvest than that body presents, including mayor, aldermen, and councillors, for his inimitable talent of pourtraying the ridiculous."

The same paper also recorded that "On Sunday the literary trio attended divine service at the Collegiate Church, when the Rev. R. Parkinson preached a most admirable sermon on the late hurricane."

On Monday, the Public Dinner to Ainsworth and Dickens took place, and on Tuesday they dined with James Crossley. The latter was of portly build, and his dinner-table being triangular in shape, the host, seated at the apex and against the wall, found his noble proportions very much confined. Dickens noticed this, and in proposing Crossley's health remarked, "During the whole evening, seeing the peculiar position our host occupied at the dinner-table, I could not help being reminded of Dr. Primrose's famous family picture in *The Vicar of Wakefield*, and I have been wondering all night how ever he should be got out, but still more amazed how he ever got in."

On Wednesday, Dickens, Forster, and Ainsworth dined with Gilbert Winter at Stocks House, and here, in all probability, the Grants again met their immortalizer. This terminated the festivities; and "we had a jolly journey up to town, and are all looking forward to seeing you here to repay your hospitality," Ainsworth wrote to Crossley. This visit to Manchester, in the company of Dickens, was, no doubt, one of the most gratifying





WILLIAM HARRISON AINSWORTH, AT THE AGE OF THIRTY-FOUR.  
*From the portrait by R. J. Lane, 1830.*



incidents in Ainsworth's career. Here, in his native city, to be honoured and fêted in equal association with the most celebrated author of the day, must have been the complete consummation of the ambitious dreams of boyhood, which yearned always for literary fame—the golden fruit was all his to gather when he was still but thirty-three.

And now we come to the launching of the long-expected *Jack Sheppard*, for the success of which Ainsworth was so anxious. To a friend he wrote :—

“ MY DEAR JONES,

“ Bentley will forward you the introductory chapters and illustrations of *Jack Sheppard* with this note. As it is of the utmost consequence to me to produce a favourable impression upon the public by this work, I venture to hope that you will lend me a helping hand at starting. . . . *Jack* will not prosper if he has not your benediction. You will greatly oblige me by noticing it, as much at length as is consistent, on Saturday next, and I am assured if you will strike the first blow as boldly as you have always hitherto done in my behalf, you will insure me a signal triumph.”

And a signal triumph he achieved.

## CHAPTER XI

### JACK SHEPPARD: THE YOUTH, THE BOOK, AND THE PLAY.

**J**ACK SHEPPARD was first issued periodically in *Bentley's Miscellany*; it commenced in the number for January, 1839, and concluded in that for February, 1840.<sup>1</sup> From the outset the work was a triumphant success: "*Jack* has made a most successful launch. Bentley is in tip-top spirits," wrote Ainsworth. Month by month, as the story progressed, illustrated by George Cruikshank's wonderful pictures, the fame of it increased more and more; it was praised everywhere, and nothing was said *then* about "immoral influences": that charge arose later.

In October, 1839—some time before its completion in *The Miscellany*—the work was issued in three volumes, by Bentley, with Cruikshank's twenty-seven engravings, and the portrait of Ainsworth by R. J. Lane. The book was dedicated to the author's old friend, Gilbert Winter, of "Stocks," Manchester. Ainsworth had only com-

<sup>1</sup> *Jack Sheppard* was also issued by Bentley in fifteen monthly parts, commencing in 1840. These contained fine impressions of Cruikshank's plates, together with a design by the artist for the covers—a slightly different version of the illustration "*Jack* carving his name on the beam." *Jack Sheppard* in parts is extremely rare and valuable now. The only complete set—I know of—is owned by my friend, Captain Douglas, R.M.L.I., the well-known Cruikshank collector, who paid £30 for this item, which on its original publication cost but fifteen shillings.

pleted his story in MS. the same month, during a visit to Mrs. Hughes, at Kingston Lisle, Berks. To illustrate the rapidity with which he, at times, worked, the following extract, from (what may be termed) the author's autograph time-table for writing the book, will show how much he accomplished each day :—

- “ 5th *Thursday*.      Escape of Sheppard.  
 “ *Friday*.            Darrell.  
 “ *Saturday*.        Recapture of Sheppard.  
 “ *Sunday*.           Newgate.  
 “ *Monday*.          Ditto.  
 “ *Tuesday*.        Grand escape.  
 “ *Wednesday*.    Escape continued : after incidents.  
 “ *Thursday*.        Discovery of Darrell.  
 “ *Friday*.           Clearing up.  
 “ 14th *Saturday*.    Execution of Sheppard.”

It will be of interest to give here a brief account of the real career of Jack Sheppard, in order to show in what respects Ainsworth's romance differed from facts.

Jack Sheppard was born at Stepney in December, 1702, and was brought up at the Bishopsgate Workhouse. Mr. Kneebone, a woollen draper, befriended him, and apprenticed the boy to Owen Wood, a carpenter, who lived in a court to the north of Wych Street. Jack Sheppard early displayed the cloven hoof, and took to stealing. His first theft was from the “ Rummer ” Tavern (which we see in Hogarth's picture of “ Night ”), at Charing Cross ; and he also robbed his benefactor, Kneebone. In April, 1724, he escaped from St. Giles's Roundhouse ; and from the New Prison in May. At the latter, he got rid of his irons, cut through a double grille

of oak and iron bars, dropped twenty-five feet by means of blankets, and scaled a wall, twenty-two feet high, with a companion on his back. Jonathan Wild captured him in July, and he was tried and condemned to death. On 31st August, by the help of a file, supplied by his mistresses, Edgeworth Bess and Mrs. Maggot,<sup>1</sup> he escaped from the condemned hold, but was rearrested on 10th September. On the 16th he effected his escape from the "Castle" at Newgate: <sup>2</sup> freeing himself from his fetters, and snapping the two chains that held him to the floor, he removed a stout iron bar from the chimney, climbed up, forced many bolted doors, reached the leads of the prison, and scaled a twenty-foot wall, which brought him to the roof of a house—and freedom. Nine days after his escape he was arrested in a drunken condition at the "Sheers" Tavern, Clare Market, and taken back to Newgate. Here all the town crowded to see him, and paid the gaolers 3s. 6*d.* a head for the privilege. Sir James Thornhill, the Court Painter, came to the prison and painted a striking portrait of Jack,<sup>3</sup> in irons; and

<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Lyon, "Edgeworth Bess," was a violent-tempered and powerfully made woman, and Mrs. Maggot of a milder disposition. For some reason, Ainsworth reversed their characteristics and made Poll Maggot the amazon, and Bess the gentler Circe.

<sup>2</sup> The stonework of Jack Sheppard's cell in Newgate, and the heavy doors and iron grilles he broke through, are now at Tussaud's Exhibition in Baker Street, where they were removed after the demolition of the old prison, in 1903.

<sup>3</sup> G. A. Sala stated that when he was in Washington, U.S.A., Mr. Bayard showed him in the bar-parlour of a tavern off Pennsylvania Avenue, an old oil portrait of a haggard-looking young man, in eighteenth-century costume, which was said to be Sir James Thornhill's portrait of Jack Sheppard. The sitter had a rough beard, which Sala considered evidence of its authenticity, as Sheppard, heavily ironed in prison, would be unable to shave. But the engraved version of Thornhill's portrait, reproduced opposite, shows Jack Sheppard as clean-shaven and not particularly haggard-looking.



*Jack Sheppard*

JACK SHEPPARD, ÆT. 21, IN NEWGATE PRISON SHORTLY BEFORE  
HIS EXECUTION.

*From the painting by Sir James Thornhill, November, 1721.  
Engraved by G. White.*





chapmen, by aid of ballad and "surprising history," carried his fame throughout the country. Jack Sheppard was executed at Tyburn on 16th November, 1724, at the age of twenty-one. Death only increased his fame. *The Harlequin Sheppard* was produced at Drury Lane Theatre a month later; Defoe issued two pamphlets concerning the gaol hero; and topical preachers based their discourses on his escapes—one divine exhorting his hearers to open the locks of their hearts with the nail of repentance; burst asunder the fetters of lust; mount the chimney of hope; take from thence the bar of good resolution; break through the stone wall of despair; rise to the leads of Divine meditation; descend the stairs of humility, and so escape from the prison of iniquity and the clutches of that old executioner, the devil!

Jack Sheppard's boon companion and fellow-robber was Joseph Blake—"Blueskin"—a dapper fellow of great strength and cruelty. When on trial for the burglary at Mr. Kneebone's, he attacked and nearly killed Jonathan Wild, cutting his throat terribly. "Blueskin" was executed, a few days before Jack Sheppard, at the age of twenty-eight.

The London haunts of Jack Sheppard and his companions were in existence until recently. Owen Wood's house and the courts round Wych Street, frequented by Jack, were swept away in the clearance made for the new street, Kingsway, about 1900. The "Black Lion" Tavern—a noted resort of Sheppard's—was pulled down in 1880. The "Black Jack" Tavern, in Portsmouth Street, met a like fate in 1896; and a man was living early in the nineteenth century who had seen Jack Sheppard drop from an upper window of this house into

the street, when escaping on one occasion from Jonathan Wild and his myrmidons. The "Flash Ken," in the Mint, Southwark, described by Ainsworth, was only pulled down in 1907, and beneath the house were discovered a vault and subterranean passage, formerly, no doubt, used by frequenters of the place when escaping from arrest.

It will have been seen that Ainsworth's narrative of the principal exploits of Jack Sheppard's career was quite veracious ; but, of course, for the purposes of his story he interpolated various romantic incidents and fictitious personages that were wholly imaginary. Such was the account of Sheppard's descent from an ancient Lancashire family on his mother's side, and such the existence of Sir Rowland Trenchard and Thames Darrell. But so skilfully did Ainsworth combine the real and imaginary characters, and interweave actual facts with his own picturesque fancies, that it is no easy matter to separate them. The most remarkable thing in this connection is the association of Jack Sheppard's name with Willesden. Just as Ainsworth grafted the memory of Dick Turpin on to the Great North Road, so has he presented the Willesden district for all time with a robber who knew it not. The very name of the place always suggests Jack Sheppard : the robbery in the quaint little church—the escape from the Cage—the murder at Dollis Hill—the arrest in the churchyard on that autumn day when the wind whirled the yellow leaves from the tall elms. How real it all seems. The places were not imaginary : the red-tiled farmstead still stands at Dollis Hill, in the beautiful park-like road beyond Neasden ; there is Willesden church, and near it was the Cage (which stood

just opposite the site of the White Hart Inn), the earlier Six Bells Inn, and Mrs. Sheppard's Cottage (to the N.E. of the church). And yet Jack Sheppard was never here—so far as authentic records go. It is true that a family named Sheppard had been settled in the parish from a very early date—indeed, from the time when the name originated. Willesden was always famous for its farms and grazing land, and the avocation of William the Shepherd, of the Middle Ages, became the cognomen of his descendants ; but that Jack Sheppard was one of them has yet to be proved. However, the occurrence of the name in the district caused Ainsworth to locate his hero there, and, at the same time, it gave him an opportunity of describing the lovely country that lay around his own home at Kensal Lodge (exquisite sylvan scenes, of which but few now survive the encroachment of the builder). Thus the locality became known everywhere as “The Jack Sheppard Country.” Even ten years later, Maclise wrote to Forster : “I certainly told them you were at a picturesque cottage in a green lane somewhere in the country of Jack Sheppard . . . in pastoral Willesden. . . . I half suspect you of leading a jolly life out there with Ainsworth at all hours.”

Nothing, however, offers such extraordinary proof of the magic of Ainsworth's pen as the general belief that Jack Sheppard was buried in Willesden churchyard. When the book was at the height of its success and fame, half London came out to see the simple wooden monument—two posts supporting a plank—which Ainsworth had described as marking the robber's grave ; and the old sexton made quite a small fortune by selling little pieces of the wood to curiosity collectors—as he

gleefully and gratefully told the daughters of the author who had unwittingly provided the man of tombs with this illicit source of revenue. As recently as 1907, a correspondent in *Notes and Queries* stated that Ainsworth had restored the grave of Jack Sheppard, in Willesden churchyard, sixty years ago. There was a *John Sheppard* buried at Willesden in 1559, and his tomb may have been restored by Ainsworth for sentimental reasons (possibly it was the same the sexton had converted into cash): but alas! for romance—Jack Sheppard, the prison-breaker, was buried in the graveyard of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields Workhouse, where his body was discovered when the coffins were removed for the extension of the National Gallery in 1866.

. . . . .

The success of Ainsworth's *Jack Sheppard* increased daily, and was phenomenal. His "little burglar," as the author related, "became the lion of the day," and the huge sale of the book<sup>1</sup> exceeded that of *Oliver Twist*. This, unfortunately, gave umbrage to Forster, who could never for an instant bear that his idol, Dickens, should be eclipsed, and caused him to pen an antagonistic article on *Jack Sheppard* in *The Examiner*. Although, as Ainsworth said, "Forster's devotion to Dickens was complete and enthusiastic," this was an unkindly act towards the man who had made him acquainted with Dickens. But it was powerless to affect the story's vogue. "Forster's article has been perfectly innocuous, and has done no harm whatever here. In fact *Jack* is

<sup>1</sup> The great sale of *Jack Sheppard* was not evanescent; nearly fifty years later, it was said, twelve thousand copies of the book were sold within five years.

carrying everything before him. . . . They are bringing him out at half the theatres in London,"<sup>1</sup> Ainsworth wrote to Crossley. Nevertheless, he was grieved by this incident, and spoke of it sorrowfully many years after ; but, ever generous, he showed no resentment at the time to Forster, and the affair was only a passing cloud on their friendship.

Of course, the immense success of *Jack Sheppard* and *Oliver Twist* did not fail to attract the attentions of the satirists. Thackeray produced his *Catherine*, which was certainly excellent burlesque of the works in question,<sup>2</sup> but his object—and the story—failed ; for, in Thackeray's own words, "When the public went on reading the works which I had intended to ridicule, *Catherine* was, in a word, a failure, and is dead with all its heroes."

*Jack Sheppard*, *Rookwood*, *Oliver Twist*, and *Paul Clifford* incidentally caused the production of a well-known book of humorous ballads. Sir Theodore Martin having written *Flowers of Hemp ; or the Newgate Garland* and other verses satirizing these "criminal romances," was thereby brought into communication with Professor Aytoun, who also had a gift for satiric parody. The result was the two writers collaborated in the composition of the *Bon Gaultier Ballads*. Some of their earlier verses concerning the immense popularity of the "crimi-

<sup>1</sup> It was this palpable evidence of success and the extensive advertising of the book which particularly annoyed Forster, who wrote in the article in question : "Bad as we think the morals, we think the puffs even more dangerous . . . public morality and public decency have rarely been more endangered than by the trumpeted exploits of *Jack Sheppard*."

<sup>2</sup> In particular, his imitation, in the last chapter, of *The Murder on the Thames*, from *Jack Sheppard*, was very funny.

nal romances" were very amusing. Thus, parodying Wordsworth's lines to Milton:—

"Turpin, thou should'st be living at this hour :  
England hath need of thee.

Great men have been among us—names that lend  
A lustre to our calling—better none :  
Maclaine, Duval, Dick Turpin, Barrington,  
Blueskin and others, who called Sheppard friend."

And then, of course, there was the rather cruel adaptation of the ballad, *She wore a wreath of roses*, for a description of a lady of the Poll Maggot type in the "boozing ken":—

"She wore a rouge like roses the night that first we met ;  
Her lovely mug was smiling o'er mugs of heavy wet ;  
Her red lips had the fulness, her voice the husky tone,  
That told her drink was of a kind where water was unknown."

And in *The Faker's New Toast* (1841) "Bon Gaultier" wrote:—

"Come, all ye jolly covies, vot faking do admire,  
And pledge them British authors who to our line aspire ;  
Who, if they were not gemmen born, like us had kicked at trade,  
And every one had turned him out a genuine fancy blade,  
And a trump.

"'Tis them's the boys as knows the vorld, 'tis them as knows  
mankind,  
And vould have picked his pocket too, if Fortune (vot is blind)  
Had not to spite their genius, stuck them in a false position,  
Vere they can only write about, not execute their mission,  
Like a trump.

"Then fill your glasses, dolly pals, vy should they be neglected,  
As does their best to helewate the line as ve's selected ?  
To them as makes the Crackman's life, the subject of their story,  
To Ainsworth, and to Bullvig, and to Reynolds<sup>1</sup> be the glory,  
Jolly trumps."

<sup>1</sup> G. W. M. Reynolds, a voluminous romance writer of the period, whose books, though picturesque and prolific in incident, are almost forgotten now.

The early numbers of *Punch*, too, contained many smart hits at the professors of the school of criminal romance. The following example from Mr. Punch's *Literary Recipes* sums up succinctly, if unkindly, the ingredients of *Oliver Twist* and *Jack Sheppard* :—

“ Take a small boy, charity, factory, carpenter's apprentice, or otherwise, as occasion may serve—stew him well down in vice—garnish largely with oaths and flash songs—boil him in a cauldron of crime and improbabilities. Season equally with good and bad qualities—infuse petty larceny, affection, benevolence and burglary, honour and housebreaking, amiability and arson—boil all gently. Stew down a mad mother—a gang of robbers—several pistols—a bloody knife. Serve up with a couple of murders—and season with a hanging-match.

“ N.B. Alter the ingredients to a beadle and a workhouse—the scenes may be the same, but the whole flavour of vice will be lost, and the boy will turn out a perfect pattern—strongly recommended for weak stomachs.”<sup>1</sup>

Imitation of his work was another compliment, or penalty, which accrued to Ainsworth from the great success of his book. Spurious “ memoirs ” and blood-thirsty romances concerning Jack Sheppard appeared in infinite variety all over the country. The most remarkable of these was a production entitled *The History of Jack Sheppard—A Romance founded on facts*. It was issued anonymously, and the text was the most brazen copy of Ainsworth's—the same characters and even his “ flash ” songs were introduced with but little alteration.

<sup>1</sup> Probably this was written by Thackeray.

But the illustrations were very singular. They purported to be by "Jack Sketch," and were quite in the style of Cruikshank. Of course, all these imitations were ephemeral, and soon paled their feeble fires in the brilliant light of the original work.

The climax of Ainsworth's success was reached in the theatres, where no less than eight dramatic versions of his *Jack Sheppard* were produced almost simultaneously in the autumn of 1839; and Cruikshank's inimitable designs, elaborated into scenery, became familiar to the populace in all quarters of London. The theatrical managers made immense profits, but most unfairly, owing to the faulty laws of copyright, the author whose ideas coined this wealth did not benefit by it. All that Ainsworth received was £20—sent to him by Davidge, of the Royal Surrey Theatre, whose version received the *cachet* of the author's approval in the following letter, which was printed on all the programmes and daily in the newspaper advertisements:—

"October 18th, 1839.

"SIR,—Having, in compliance with your request, witnessed your Rehearsal, and perused the Drama founded on JACK SHEPPARD, in preparation at the Surrey Theatre, I am satisfied it will furnish a complete representation of the Principal Scenes of the Romance; and have, therefore, no hesitation in giving my entire sanction to the performance. The fact of the whole of the Scenery having been superintended by Mr. George Cruikshank, must be a sufficient guarantee to the Public for its excellence and accuracy.

"I remain, Sir,

"Your obedient servant,

"W. HARRISON AINSWORTH.

"To G. B. DAVIDGE, Esq."



The rôle of *Jonathan Wild* was played by John Neville (father of Mr. Henry Neville), and that of *Jack* by Mr. E. F. Saville, and the play must have been quite mild fare to the startling drama which followed it at this house—*The Devil's Daughter : or Hell's Belles !*

Another transpontine version of *Jack Sheppard*—that at “Queen Victoria's Own Theayter”—is noteworthy from the following reference in the Diary of the Rev. R. H. Barham, author of *The Ingoldsby Legends* :—

“October 17th, 1839. Went with W. Harrison Ainsworth to call on Mr. Moncrieff,<sup>1</sup> author of the forthcoming version of *Jack Sheppard* for the Victoria Theatre. Moncrieff was quite blind, but remarkably cheerful. He gave us in detail the outline of the plot as he had arranged it, all except the conclusion, which had not as yet been published in the novel, but which Ainsworth promised to send him. Moncrieff, in a very extraordinary manner, went through what he had done, without having occasion to refer to any book or person, singing the songs introduced, and reciting all the material points of the dialogue. He adverted to his literary controversy with Charles Dickens respecting the dramatic version of *Nicholas Nickleby*, which he declared he would never have written had Dickens sent him a note to say it would be disagreeable to him.”<sup>2</sup>

The best and most successful version of *Jack Sheppard* was that by J. B. Buckstone, which crowded the Adelphi

<sup>1</sup> William T. Moncrieff was the son of a tradesman in Newcastle Street, Strand, and wrote many successful dramas, including *The Spectre Bridegroom*, and dramatic versions of Pierce Egan's *Boxiana* (1819) and *Life in London* (1821).

<sup>2</sup> Moncrieff, becoming totally blind, entered as a pensioner at the Charterhouse, and died there in 1843.

Theatre nightly for months; <sup>1</sup> but Ainsworth never received a farthing of the profits. The fame of this production still survives, owing to the remarkable impersonations of "Jack Sheppard" by Mrs. Keeley, <sup>2</sup> and of "Blueskin" by Paul Bedford. It was, perhaps, Mrs. Keeley's most successful part, although she only received about £15 a week (for the huge salaries of to-day were unknown to the "Stars" of 1839). The critics were in raptures with her performance: "Nothing could be more exquisite than Mrs. Keeley's acting; the naivete, the assurance, the humour and the boldness of Sheppard were excellently delineated; the slang was given without the least admixture of vulgarity. . . ." <sup>3</sup> Mrs.

<sup>1</sup> The piece was produced on 28th October, 1839, and the cast was as follows:—

Jack Sheppard . . . . .	Mrs. Keeley.
Blueskin . . . . .	Mr. Paul Bedford.
Jonathan Wild . . . . .	Mr. Lyon.
Owen Wood . . . . .	Mr. Wilkinson.
Thames Darrell . . . . .	Mr. E. H. Butler.
Sir Rowland . . . . .	Mr. Maynard.
Kneebone . . . . .	Mr. H. Beverley.
Abraham Mendez . . . . .	Mr. Yates.
Mrs. Wood . . . . .	Mrs. Fosbroke.
Winifred Wood . . . . .	Miss Allison.
Mrs. Sheppard . . . . .	Miss M. Lee.
Poll Maggot . . . . .	Mrs. Nailor.
Edgeworth Bess . . . . .	Miss Campbell.

<sup>2</sup> Mary Anne Goward (1805-99). Born at Ipswich, and made her first appearance on the stage at Great Yarmouth. Acted at Dublin, and then at Ipswich, 1824, when she recited an address written by her friend and benefactress, Mrs. J. Cobbold. Made her first appearance in London, at the Lyceum, in 1825. Married Robert Keeley in 1829. She and her husband had the management of the Lyceum 1844-7. Mrs. Keeley received a remarkable tribute on her ninetieth birthday, in 1895, a memorable performance taking place at the Lyceum, the scene of her early triumphs. Mrs. Keeley's two daughters married respectively Albert Smith and Montagu Williams, q.c., the well-known barrister.

<sup>3</sup> The late Henry Neville, who well remembered Mrs. Keeley in this rôle, told me: "Her dramatic power and pathos were marvellously convincing. . . . Paul Bedford was a great power, and dominated all



PAUL BEDFORD AND MRS. KEELEY, AS BLUESKIN AND JACK SHEPPARD  
SINGING "NIX MY DOLLY PALS" AT THE ADELPHI THEATRE, 1839.  
*Sketched from the life by George Cruikshank*



Keeley, indeed, fully deserved her great success in this part, for it was the result of much thought, genuine hard work, and considerable expenditure of physical energy. For instance, she went over Newgate and saw the prisoners in order to pick up realistic wrinkles for her rôle; she wore real locked handcuffs on the stage in the Escape scene, and squeezing her hands from these was a painful process—"I came down to the front, in full blaze of the footlights, so that the audience might fully judge," she said; she planed real chips from the wood in the carpenter's workshop scene; and thoroughly identified herself with the character of Sheppard. Although she always played the part with the highest animal spirits, it involved a severe physical strain, and after the great scene of the Escape from Newgate the actress used to stagger off the stage, completely exhausted, and collapse into the arms of a man specially stationed in the wings to prevent her from falling. "It was the most trying character of any that I attempted," Mrs. Keeley stated. What wonder, then, with such realistic acting that the audiences "followed her every movement with rapt attention"; that "young eyes sparkled as Jack carved his name on the cross-beam,"<sup>1</sup> and broke his fetters the scenes he played in; his marked individuality was firm, keen, and most delightful."

Mr. Henry Neville was, of course, only a young boy when he saw *Jack Sheppard*, and he related how, when he was supposed to be in bed and asleep, he used to slide down the water pipe outside his window and slip off to the Adelphi to witness this exciting drama, which was an adventurous proceeding, as he lived in a very lonely house called "Melrose," in Kennington, which was surrounded by a large garden and orchard.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Serjeant Ballantine recorded: "How well I remember her charming little figure upon the stool in Jack's workshop, and her sweet voice singing the naughty sentiment contained in the words, 'and I'll carve my name on the dungeon stone.'"

and escaped from the prison so daringly ; that *Nix my dolly, pals, fake away* was always uproariously encored. This last was the famous "flash" song, from *Rookwood*, which had been interpolated into the stage versions of *Jack Sheppard*, and set to music by G. H. Rodwell.<sup>1</sup> It was sung by Mrs. Keeley and Paul Bedford, and towards the end of the fourth verse they used to dance to the tune with Mrs. Nailor and Miss Campbell (the impersonators of "Poll Maggot" and "Edgeworth Bess")—just as we see them in the accompanying sketch, which Cruikshank drew from the life one night at the Adelphi. *Nix my dolly, pals* created a *furor*, and was the song of the day. As Sir Theodore Martin records :—

"*Nix my dolly* . . . travelled everywhere, and made the patter of thieves and burglars 'familiar in our mouths as household words.' It deafened us in the streets, where it was as popular with the organ-grinders and German bands as Sullivan's brightest melodies ever were in a later day. It clanged at midday from the steeple of St. Giles, the Edinburgh Cathedral (A fact. That such a subject for cathedral chimes, and in Scotland, too, could ever have been chosen will scarcely be believed. But my astonished ears often heard it.) ; it was whistled by every dirty guttersnipe, and chanted in drawing-rooms by fair lips, little knowing the meaning of the words they sang."

Almost equally popular was *Jolly Nose*, the Drinking Song from *Jack Sheppard*, set to music by Rodwell, and sung at the Adelphi in his own inimitable manner by that prince of port-wine comedians—"Glorious Paul

<sup>1</sup> George H. Buonaparte Rodwell (1800-52), an operatic composer, was also proprietor of the Adelphi Theatre.

JACK.

My noble Father as I've heard say Was a famous merchant of vapors gay<sup>(1)</sup>

BLUESKIN.

Nix my dol ly palls fake a way<sup>(2)</sup> nix my dol ly palls fake a way.

CHORUS.

Nix my dol ly palls fake a way nix my dol ly palls fake a way

Nix my dol ly palls fake a way nix my dol ly palls fake a way.

JACK.

The knucks in quod<sup>(3)</sup> did my shoal men play And

in a box &amp;c

(3) A dancing master.

(4) Nothing comrades, on, on!

(5) Thieves in prison.

MUSIC FOR "NIX MY DOLLY" BY G. H. RODWELL.  
*Chimed by the bells at St. Giles' Cathedral, Edinburgh.*





Bedford" (as Ainsworth styled him), whose jovial red face and mellow voice were exactly suited to the ballad in question.

*Jolly Nose*, as Mr. W. Bates pointed out,<sup>1</sup> is a free lyrical translation of one of the *Vaux-de-Vire* of Olivier Basselin; but Ainsworth gave it an English touch, essentially his own. For comparison, two of Basselin's verses are given here alternately with the corresponding two of Ainsworth's song:—

" Beau Nez, dont les rubis ont cousté mainte pipe  
De Vin blanc et clairet,  
Et duquel la couleur richement participe  
Du rouge et violet.

" Jolly Nose! the bright rubies that garnish thy tip  
Were dug from the mines of Canary;  
And to keep up their lustre I moisten my lip  
With hogsheads of claret and sherry.

" Le verre est le pinceau, duquel on t'enlumine;  
Le vin est la couleur  
Dont on t'a peint ainsi plus rouge qu'une guisgne  
En beuvant du meilleur.

" For a big-bellied glass is the palette I use,  
And the choicest of wine is my colour;  
And I find that my nose takes the mellowest hues,  
The fuller I fill it,—the fuller."

The fame of Paul Bedford's *Jolly Nose* travelled far and wide, and he told, in his *Reminiscences*, how, being tried by hoarseness, he went to seek medical advice: "The doctor advised me to inhale the floating vapour. I did so for a long time. 'Now,' said he, 'try your voice,' and I began chanting that pathetic ballad, *Jolly Nose*. At that moment the bell in the adjoining apartment rang; the doctor disappeared, and on entering the

<sup>1</sup> See *The Maclise Portrait Gallery*, 1898, p. 260.

room the occupant said, 'Ah! ah! I know who my neighbour is! It is *Jolly Nose* Paul! Will you, doctor, ask him to oblige me by singing the song through?' At the request I complied, and my admiring friend in the next room was none other than Prince Louis Napoleon." Many years later, at the Shakspeare Tercentenary Concert at the Agricultural Hall, Islington, in 1864, Paul Bedford warbled Ainsworth's *Jolly Nose* to an audience numbering about twenty thousand. One might have thought this excerpt an anachronism on such an occasion; but Paul, before commencing to sing, addressed his hearers in his unique style, and in the course of the oration observed: "My fostering and encouraging friends, I will breathe forth the result of a dream, dreamed by that inspired and immaculate bard, William Shakspeare. . . ." The vision of the world's poet proved to relate to Bardolph and his "Jolly Nose," and—Bedford related—"the address was greatly enjoyed." He then chanted the plaintive ballad, which was "vociferously redemanded by the admiring crowd."

*Jack Sheppard*, with Mrs. Keeley in the title-rôle, was revived, at the Haymarket, in 1852 (when O. Smith played "Jonathan Wild"), and again in 1855, at Sadler's Wells. There was yet another revival of this drama, at the Surrey Theatre, in 1858, when Mrs. Billington appeared as "Jack Sheppard," and Paul Bedford resumed his old part of "Blueskin." Thus, nearly twenty years after its initial production, the play was still very popular. This was the last representation in London.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> There was, of course, the famous burlesque of this drama—*Little Jack Sheppard*, at the old Gaiety Theatre, in 1885, wherein Nellie Farren achieved one of her greatest triumphs.

There was also a French version of *Jack Sheppard*, produced in Paris. Concerning this, Charles Hervey recorded :—<sup>1</sup>

“ Ainsworth frequently came to Paris during my stay there, and we generally went the round of the theatres together. When a version of *Jack Sheppard* was brought out at the Porte St. Martin under the title of *Les Chevaliers du Brouillard*, he was specially invited by the manager to witness the performance ; and, although favourably impressed by the talent displayed in the part of the hero by Madame Marie Laurent, avowed his decided preference for its original representative, Mrs. Keeley. He had a sort of nervous laugh, which broke out at intervals when anything happened to strike his fancy ; and the sight of the gauze curtain drawn across the stage to simulate a London fog so convulsed him with merriment that, in spite of all his efforts to restrain it, the familiar ‘ ha ! ha ! ’ every now and then burst out involuntarily. . . . ”

Ainsworth’s preference for Mrs. Keeley’s rendering of “ Jack Sheppard ” is confirmed by the following letter of forty years later :—

“ MY DEAR HERVEY,

“ *December 6th, 1879.*

“ In reply to your inquiry, I can say—without a moment’s hesitation—that, as a whole, I preferred Mrs. Keeley’s ‘ Jack Sheppard ’ to that of Madame Marie Laurent, though there were particular points in which the admirable French actress far excelled the other. But both pleased me so much that I scarcely like to institute a comparison between them. Madame Marie Laurent’s

<sup>1</sup> *Longman's Magazine*, April, 1885.

was undoubtedly a more vigorous conception of the part—but I cannot give the palm to her. . . .

“Cordially yours,  
“W. HARRISON AINSWORTH.”

It was the tremendous vogue of *Jack Sheppard* at the theatres which caused the storm of adverse criticism on “moral grounds” to gather and burst around Ainsworth’s head, making him the scapegoat for all the (imaginary) evil results arising from the “School of Criminal Romance”; which was manifestly unfair, for if the charges brought against *Jack Sheppard* could be substantiated, *Oliver Twist*, *Paul Clifford*, and *Eugene Aram* should stand in the same dock and receive similar reprimands. But as *Jack Sheppard* was the most successful and popular of the four, seventy years ago, he was signalled out for attack—for success ever begets envy and detraction—and, as just stated, it was his theatrical prosperity which generated the trouble. As Laman Blanchard pertinently inquired: “Why did not the outcry break out when the housebreaker first broke out amidst public plaudits? Why was it silent for a whole twelvemonth? . . . As the story month by month developed, not an audible objection was raised in the most fastidious coterie. . . .” But, as Blanchard pointed out, after the story had been dramatized, “the prison-breaker’s popularity became all at once an offence . . . because low people began to run after him at the theatres.” This much may be admitted; if, as some writers stated, every errand-boy was ambitious to become a burglar owing to *Jack Sheppard*, it was the fault of the theatrical versions, for, it may be assumed, the said

errand-boy could not afford to pay £1. 5s. for the book, or even shillings monthly for the story as it appeared in *Bentley's Miscellany*: there were no cheap editions in those days.

A great deal of rubbish has been scribbled by superficial critics concerning the so-called "immoral influence" of *Jack Sheppard*, and wild statements have been made which cannot be proved. It is true that two intimate and gifted friends of Ainsworth's saw fit to criticize the work adversely; but the later writers who—parrot-like—have echoed the opinions expressed by Thackeray and Forster have ignored, or been ignorant of, the personal—and, if truth be told, petty—reasons which biassed the criticisms of these two *literati* on the book in question. As already stated, Forster was angry that *Jack Sheppard* should have eclipsed, even temporarily, the fame of *Oliver Twist*, though Dickens himself was not in the least upset; and Thackeray was annoyed at the failure of his *Catherine*—the satire which he intended should ridicule and kill the success of *Jack Sheppard* and Co. How faulty was Thackeray's reasoning on the morality of *Jack Sheppard* is apparent from his inconsistent remarks concerning this book in his articles on Cruikshank<sup>1</sup> and Fielding<sup>2</sup> respectively. In the latter he said: "Ainsworth dared not paint his hero as the scoundrel he knew him to be. He must keep his brutalities in the background . . . and so he produces a book quite absurd and unreal, and infinitely more immoral than anything Fielding ever wrote. . . ." But in his eulogy on Cruikshank, when he praised in almost

<sup>1</sup> *Westminster Review*, June, 1840.

<sup>2</sup> *The Times*, 2nd September, 1840.

extravagant terms the artist's dramatic and sensational designs for *Jack Sheppard*, he said: "It seems to us that Mr. Cruikshank really created the tale, and that Mr. Ainsworth, as it were, only put words to it. . . ." The point he wished to prove was, that while it took an author pages of description to impress his creation on the reader's mind, the artist could convey *his* message instantly with a few strokes of his pencil. That, of course, is obvious and requires no proof: it is the essential difference between the pen and the pencil—the advantage the artist has over the writer in obtaining his effects at once and at a glance. Thackeray, in his pique against Ainsworth, also forgot the obvious fact that if the latter's prose descriptions were so immoral, the low scenes and situations of such a pernicious work—whether "created" by the pencil of Cruikshank or any other artist—were scarcely worthy subjects for high eulogy.

Thackeray's critical conclusions anent *Jack Sheppard* are, therefore, somewhat perplexing: Ainsworth is condemned for his "infinitely immoral" story, and Cruikshank highly praised for having "*created* the tale"! Sheppard's (or rather Ainsworth's) "brutalities" undergo a pleasing change in the hands of Cruikshank. Thus, 'The Robbery in Willesden Church' is "a piece of artistical workmanship"; "'The Escape from Willesden Cage' is excellent; the 'Burglary in Wood's house' has not less merit"; 'The Murder of Trenchard' has "terrible vigour"; and 'Jack's escape from Newgate' has "reality and poetry." No word here about the "immorality" of covering such things as robberies and murders with the glamour of "artistical workmanship" and "poetry"—no criticism of the artist for not daring

to "paint his hero as the scoundrel he knew him to be." That is the point. Of course, and very rightly so, Ainsworth did "not paint his hero as the scoundrel he knew him to be": he suppressed Sheppard's worser crimes just as Thackeray omitted descriptions of the grosser vices of the original of his "Lord Steyne" and of other historical personages who figure in his books. A novel is not a catalogue of crimes, or a full indictment of a man's misdemeanours.

It will have been seen that Thackeray's criticism of *Jack Sheppard* was not quite consistent and sincere; and the same remark will apply to later writers who have dealt adversely with the book.

As a matter of fact, the alleged immorality of *Jack Sheppard* is a myth: the story is absolutely moral. The path of vice leads but to the gallows. There is not an unclean suggestion within its pages; not an incident—not a word—that could, in the hackneyed phrase, "bring a blush to the cheek" of that trying and alarming young person of seventeen. One would like to see the statistics relating to those "errand-boys" who have become criminals as the result of reading *Jack Sheppard*. Criminals are mainly the product of heredity and environment. With but few exceptions they spring from the criminal classes: they are not made by reading romances, for the majority of them are bred and educated in vice before they can read, and many of them never learn the latter accomplishment at all. The only charge that could be substantiated against Ainsworth is that he threw a romantic glamour over his merry sinners: but the shadow of the hangman is ever dogging their heels, and retribution overtakes them at the last. They never

escape the gallows. What could be more moral? *Jack Sheppard* is simply a prose version of that famous series of pictures by the greatest of moralists—Hogarth's *Industry and Idleness*. The two apprentices of the painter are represented by Jack Sheppard and Thames Darrell—one takes the wrong road and reaches Tyburn Tree, and the other by virtuous ways attains extreme prosperity and marries his master's daughter. Ainsworth's interesting suggestion that Hogarth conceived the original idea of *Industry and Idleness* after seeing Jack Sheppard in Newgate may very likely have been the case. It is probable, also, that Hogarth was an actual eye-witness of Sheppard's execution and made sketches of the scene, which, perhaps, he utilized twenty-three years later, when designing his picture of the execution of the Idle 'Prentice. Certainly the latter bears a strong physical resemblance to Jack Sheppard.<sup>1</sup>

As Hogarth collectors know, the plates of *Industry and Idleness* have each a scriptural text attached; and so faithfully did Ainsworth follow the Hogarthian design<sup>2</sup> and believe in the moral his book also inculcated, that he intended to introduce appropriate texts at the commencement of the various epochs of the story. This intention, however, was wisely abandoned on the advice of his friend Barham, of *Ingoldsby* fame, who read *Jack Sheppard* in proof. Concerning these proposed texts he wrote to Ainsworth:—

“ I ventured to strike out the top motto of your 3rd epoch, *taken from the Gospels*. The same objection, in

<sup>1</sup> Hogarth's picture of the Execution at Tyburn has topographical value, for it shows the actual site of the gallows, which stood in the Edgware Road, just about where the latter thoroughfare joined the Oxford Road.

<sup>2</sup> See *ante*, p. 328, and *post*, p. 379.



my mind, applies to the mottoes attached to Epoch 2 . . . do let me entreat you to cancel them . . . the mixing up sacred texts with a work of fancy will revolt many persons who would otherwise read it with pleasure, and will afford your enemies such a handle as they will not fail to use powerfully. . . .”

So the texts were eliminated, and in all other respects Barham thought very highly of *Jack Sheppard*: “I look forward with great eagerness for *Jack* to-morrow, not having seen a bit of proof of that . . . this month,” he wrote to the author.

Three, at least, well-known and discriminating writers also championed *Jack Sheppard* from the outset, and stood by their opinion that the book pointed an admirable moral all through the subsequent virtuous clamour.

William Jerdan maintained in *The Literary Gazette* that *Jack Sheppard* had no evil tendency and that it was free of any offence; Albert Smith sustained the defence bravely in *The Literary World*; and John Timbs, the erudite antiquarian, said, “None but a master could have produced such a work out of such materials,” and highly praised Ainsworth’s research and design. *Fraser’s Magazine* naturally supported its former contributor, and Percival Banks, when writing to Ainsworth to offer to review *Jack Sheppard* therein, said: “I am anxious that it should succeed, and the more especially because I find certain of the dunces and blackguards are against you.” And even *Punch*, whose humorous shafts aimed at Ainsworth were always sharply pointed, observed of *Jack Sheppard*—“The pen that recorded his adventures played like a sunbeam about him,” and asserted that

the morals of this book were on an entirely different level to the host of imitations its success generated.

However, the great majority of critics followed in yelping chorus the lead of Thackeray and Forster, and many worthy people, who obediently formed their opinions from their newspapers, came to regard Ainsworth, via *Jack Sheppard*, with horror, as a criminal educator and perverter of youthful minds! <sup>1</sup> The persecution of the author of *Jack Sheppard* even went beyond the bounds of journalistic criticism. Certain Pecksniffs at the Athenæum Club resented the proposal that Ainsworth should become a member. Lady Blessington was very anxious to secure his election to that ponderous establishment, and her influence with the leading men of the day would have silenced the opposi-

<sup>1</sup> The point of view of these estimable, but mistaken, people is expressed in the following letter from the famous Miss Mitford, a typical maiden lady of the period, to a friend: "I have been reading *Jack Sheppard*, and have been struck by the great danger, in these times, of representing authorities so constantly and fearfully in the wrong; so tyrannous, so devilish, as the author has been pleased to portray it in *Jack Sheppard*, for he does not seem so much a man or even an incarnate fiend, as a representation of power—government or law, call it as you may—the ruling power. Of course, Mr. Ainsworth had no such design, but such is the effect; and as the millions who see it represented at the minor theatres will not distinguish between now and a hundred years back, all the Chartists in the land are less dangerous than this nightmare of a book, and I, Radical as I am, lament any additional temptations to outbreak, with all its train of horrors. Seriously, what things these are—the *Jack Sheppards*, and *Squeerses*, and *Oliver Twists*, and *Michael Armstrongs*—all the worse for the power which, except the last, the others contain! grievously the worse! My friend Mr. Hughes speaks well of Mr. Ainsworth. His father was a collector of these old robber stories, and used to repeat the local ballads upon Turpin, etc. to his son, as he sat upon his knee; and this has perhaps been at the bottom of the matter. A good antiquarian I believe him to be, but what a use to make of the picturesque old knowledge!"

tion in Pall Mall ; but Ainsworth declined to be nominated, and wrote to Lady Blessington :—

“ After all, your kind exertions on my behalf, in respect to the Athenæum, were thrown away,—or rather, I was unwilling to avail myself of them, having been given to understand that I should meet with formidable opposition from a hostile party, whom I must term the Anti-Jack-Sheppardites ; and have thought it better to let things take their course, and withdraw, though I have since been informed the strength of the enemy was greatly overrated, and that I should have come off victorious, had I done otherwise. I do not regret the step I have taken. I would have had the pleasure to call at Gore House to acquaint you with this determination, but I was summoned hastily to Manchester on account of the alarming illness of my mother. I am deeply sensible of your kindness and shall ever consider myself largely your debtor.”

And it would seem, from the following letter, that Ainsworth was black-balled at another club :—

“ I regret much, my dear W. H. A., to be obliged to communicate to you the foregoing resolution. I intended to have written to remind you that the first meeting of the Trinity Club is held to-morrow at 58, Lincoln’s Inn Fields. I am now of course disabled from doing this. I will only therefore delicately hint to you that when we last met we spoke of a certain other meeting in the week to come.

“ Always believe me, my dear boy, affecty. yrs.,  
“ JOHN FORSTER.”

Ainsworth’s sensitive nature was hurt by the outcry against *Jack Sheppard* more, perhaps, than his contem-

poraries realized. Ten years after, in 1849, writing to Murdo Young, of *The Sun*, he said :—

“ Permit me to thank you—and to thank you most heartily—for the very gratifying notice of the Cheap Re-issue of my *Tales*, which you have given in this day’s *Sun*. Your reviewer <sup>1</sup> has done me a great service, and one for which I must ever feel grateful. I allude to his gallant defence of *Jack Sheppard*. He has spoken the truth, and justified what he advances. The book was run down in certain quarters because it was thought necessary to run down the writer—and a ‘cry’ was raised. But though this gave an ill reputation to the work in question, the main object of the assailants was unsuccessful. They did not shake my popularity. The attacks, however, gave me considerable annoyance at the time ; but I assure you none of them gave me half so much pain as I have just now experienced pleasure in reading the honestly indignant defence which you have been good enough to insert in *The Sun*.”

And in letters to Charles Kent himself, Ainsworth wrote on the same subject :—

“ *November 20th, 1850.*

“ I have just received *The Sun* of last evening, containing your review of *Jack Sheppard*. Need I say how much I am indebted to you for that review ? It must be gratifying to me ; but it displays great generosity and courage in you to speak out as you have done on the present occasion. I did intend to introduce the republication of this much maligned romance with some prefatory remarks ; but I could not have done so without offence to some persons, who, to serve their own purposes, got up a ‘cry’ against me, but with whom my

<sup>1</sup> Charles Kent, born 1823 ; poet, journalist, and barrister. He became the proprietor of *The Sun* in 1863.

quarrel is now arranged. It required some forbearance to let the occasion pass, especially as I am sure I could make my case good, for I really believe the romance to be harmless—as harmless at least as *Oliver Twist* and *Paul Clifford*. By the bye, I have never compared the last edition of *Oliver Twist* with the first; but I suspect there are considerable alterations to fit it for the scrupulous reader. This edition of *Jack Sheppard* has undergone neither revision nor modification. I have left it as I wrote it, with all its sins upon its head. Of this be assured, that in this work, which you have so gallantly and (I believe) so justly defended, I never had the remotest intention of holding up vice to admiration. If I have done so, I believe Hogarth to be equally culpable. Again accept my heartiest thanks, and believe me always

“Very sincerely your obliged

“W. HARRISON AINSWORTH.”

“I was greatly indebted to you for your very friendly mention of me in *The Sun*. . . . Ere long I hope I shall have the pleasure of making your acquaintance and expressing to you in person how strongly I feel your kindness. You have truth and justice on your side, but it is not every one—in these days when literature is divided into cliques, and when if you belong to one party you are run down by another, and if you belong to *no* party you are run down by *all*, as I have been,—it is not every one, I say, who would have the manliness and gallantry to speak out as you have done, and I most sincerely thank you. . . .

“I hope your wild protégé, *Jack Sheppard*, has reached you. I shall never forget your gallant conduct in standing by him.

“Ever cordially yours,

“W. HARRISON AINSWORTH.”

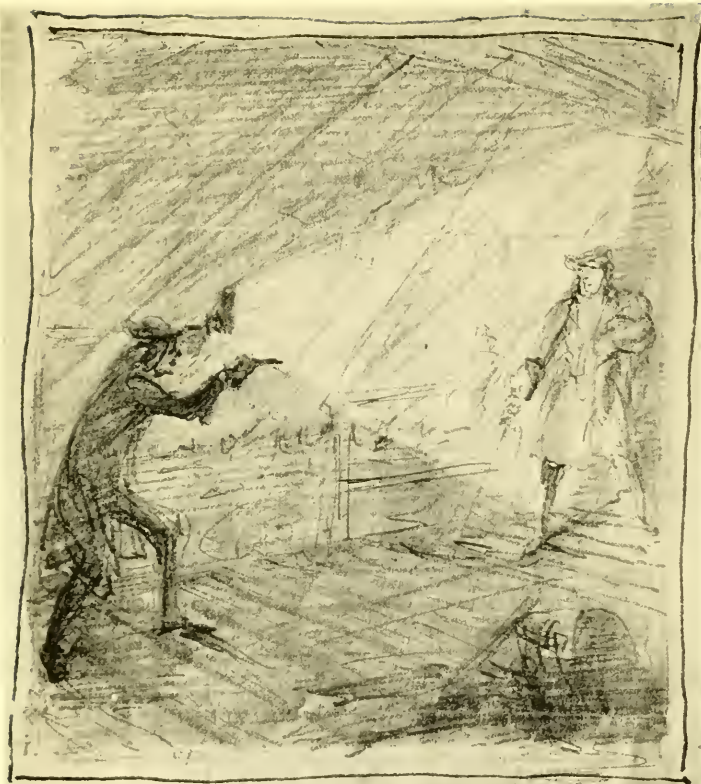
*Jack Sheppard's* offence in the eyes of his detractors

must have been due to the fact that he was an Englishman—a cockney. He was too close at hand. Distance lends enchantment to the view: for the same critics would have nothing but praise for a criminal who was made heroic by the glowing pens of Scott, Dumas, and Victor Hugo, so long as the scene of his crimes was in Scotland or France.

The outcry against Ainsworth for having chosen a robber for a hero cannot seriously be justified. If it is inherently immoral to take a criminal for literary purposes and make him picturesque and interesting, then the greatest writers will have to stand in the same pillory as the author of *Jack Sheppard*. The principal characters of Shakspeare's tragedies—of *Hamlet*, of *Macbeth*, of *Othello*—are but murderers; Falstaff is a robber and worse. Scott must answer for *Rob Roy*; Fielding for *Jonathan Wild*; Gay for *The Beggar's Opera*; Schiller for *The Robbers*; Hood for his magnificent *Eugene Aram*; Dumas for his *Celebrated Crimes*—and so on through Literature of all times and countries. This brilliant band of criminals, illuminated and idealized by literary limelight, cannot deny the consanguineous claims of poor, abused *Jack Sheppard*!

No writer was better served by his illustrators than Ainsworth; and, without going so far as Thackeray's extravagant estimate, it is pleasant to acknowledge the immense assistance rendered to *Jack Sheppard* by Cruikshank's inimitable pictures.<sup>1</sup> They were in perfect sym-

<sup>1</sup> That illustrating "Jack carving his name on the beam" was used for the theatrical posters all over London; and the design was also borrowed by *Punch* for a political cartoon, wherein Lord John Russell is carving his name. See *Punch*, Vol. I, p. 259.



GEORGE CRUIKSHANK'S FIRST SKETCH FOR THE SCENE IN THE LOFT IN  
"JACK SHEPPARD"; THE FIGURE OF JONATHAN WILD WAS SUBSEQUENTLY  
MUCH ALTERED.

*Photographed by Mr. Hubert Grubbe from the original drawing in the possession  
of S. M. Ellis.*





pathy with the story, and no one thought more highly of them than Ainsworth. "Cruikshank's illustrations," he wrote to a friend, "are, in my opinion, astonishingly fine. The scene in the loft throws into shade all his former efforts in this line"; and at another time he said of these same plates, "From their Hogarthian character, and careful attention to detail, I consider these by far the best of Cruikshank's designs. They raised him to a point he had never before attained."

Nothing, indeed, could be more powerful than the plate illustrating "The Murder on the Thames"—with Old London Bridge in the background, dim lights glimmering from its picturesque houses, and the lurid rack of storm clouds above; and most realistic is that of "The Storm," where we can *see* the *rush* and swirl of the water through the arch—the dashing spray, and almost hear the roar of the torrent and hurricane. How delightfully quaint is the "Escape from Willesden Cage," with its clever rendering of early morning light; how charming the glimpse of country landscape in "The Escape from Clerkenwell Prison"; and how wonderful the wealth of detail and observation in the series of six plates illustrating the procession to Tyburn and the execution—worthy of Hogarth himself.

The most remarkable portion of *Jack Sheppard* is the magnificent description of The Great Storm of November, 1723, which is an example of Ainsworth's style at its best. Here, with infinite power of suggestion, he prepares the mind for the coming terrors by preliminary pictures of the ominous and storm-boding sky, and the mysterious appearance of the river at midnight. His appeal is ever to that fascination or fear of the super-

natural—the unknown—latent in every human brain. The storm rises, and the author's descriptive power keeps pace with its fury, until at last in a "war of words"—as Thackeray termed it—the culmination is reached:—

"The hurricane had now reached its climax. The blast shrieked, as if exulting in its wrathful mission. Stunning and continuous, the din seemed almost to take away the power of hearing. . . . The intense darkness added to the terror of the storm. The destroying angel hurried by, shrouded in his gloomiest apparel. None saw, though all felt his presence, and heard the thunder of his voice. Imagination, coloured by the obscurity, peopled the air with phantoms. Ten thousand steeds appeared to be trampling aloft, charged with the work of devastation. Awful shapes seemed to flit by, borne on the wings of the tempest, animating and directing its fury. . . ."

More suggestive imagery of storm terrors could not be found, and with this fine passage we must bid adieu to *Jack Sheppard*—a book whose history, as a contemporary writer observed, is a chapter in the history of London manners in the nineteenth century. *Jack Sheppard* has triumphantly weathered all the storms and attacks that have assailed him, and his numerous resurrections in print prove him to be, as Charles Kent said, "the most hydra-headed of romances and the very phoenix of literature."

## CHAPTER XII

EDITOR OF "BENTLEY'S MISCELLANY." "GUY FAWKES."

**B**ENTLEY'S MISCELLANY, the famous monthly magazine, named after its founder, Richard Bentley, the publisher, commenced auspiciously in January, 1837, under the editorship of Charles Dickens. And a wonderful list of contributions the first volume boasted—*Oliver Twist*; Lover's *Handy Andy*; the best of *The Ingoldsby Legends*; and work by "Father Prout," Marryat, and Ainsworth<sup>1</sup> (who wrote *The Song of the Month—April Fools*).

That was essentially a dining age, so, following the example of the Fraserians, the leading literary men connected with *The Miscellany* often met for gastronomic purposes in the Red Room at the publisher's house in New Burlington Street, which in those days had a large garden at the rear.

<sup>1</sup> Sir Theodore Martin was one of the early contributors to *Bentley's*. He wrote to Ainsworth, from Edinburgh, in November, 1838:—

"I was disappointed at not finding a Rabelaisian paper in *The Miscellany* this month. It would be none the worse, don't you think, for a lift from a man of mettle like Banks? . . . I sometimes write Boz with odds and ends, which generally, I suppose, he very quietly shelves. He told me, when I met him at your house, that a sketch of mine—a queer affair called *The Double-Bedded Room*—was in the printer's hands, and ecod! it seems they don't mean to let it out of them again. . . . However, thank the immortal Gods, few can have less of the author's irritability than I have. . . . If they come out, well! If not, 'deil thank them,' as we say here. . . . Maidment says he is to speak to Professor Moir about a notice of you in *Blackwood*."

Tom Moore notes in his *Diary* :—

“ November 21st, 1838.—Dined at Bentley’s : The company all the very *haut ton* of the literature of the day. First (to begin *low* in the scale) myself, then Mr. Jerdan of *The Literary Gazette*, then Mr. Ainsworth, then Mr. Lover, then Luttrell, and lastly ‘ Boz ’ (Dickens) and Campbell. Poor Campbell I was sorry to see broken and nervous. Our host very courteous and modest, and the conversation rather agreeable. Lover sang. . . . For-got, by-the-bye, one of the cleverest fellows, Barham, the Minor Canon. . . . ”

*Bentley’s Miscellany* was printed by the publisher’s brother, Samuel Bentley, at Bangor House, Shoe Lane ; and Dickens, Ainsworth, Barham, and others, were constantly there when revising the proofs of *Oliver Twist*, *Jack Sheppard*, and *Ingoldsby*, etc.

“ *Nell Cook* is ripe,  
And up in type—  
So Bangor boys repeat—  
And *Colin Clink*  
Is daubed with ink,  
Down to a single sheet ”—

as Barham wrote to Bentley. Bangor House disappeared in 1885.

As is well known, an acute dispute arose between Dickens and Bentley concerning the editorship of *The Miscellany*, and some brief account of how Ainsworth came to succeed Dickens as editor is now necessary.

When, in 1836, Dickens first made his business arrangements with Bentley, he was only a young—and, until that year, unknown—man. Consequently the

terms he accepted—to edit *Bentley's Miscellany* for £20 a month, and to contribute two serial stories (*Oliver Twist* and *Barnaby Rudge*) for the sum of £500 each—seemed very good remuneration. But the universal success of *Pickwick* and the ever-increasing fame he was attaining with *Oliver Twist*, naturally caused Dickens to place a higher value on his work, and so, in 1837, his salary as editor of *The Miscellany* was increased to £30 a month, and the price for the novels to £750 each. A further advance of terms was granted in 1838, but Dickens was still dissatisfied, and in February, 1839, he refused to continue the editorship. However, after much discussion, new agreements were made, one for *Oliver Twist* and *The Miscellany*, and a second for *Barnaby Rudge*, for which Bentley now arranged to pay £4000—certainly a large and liberal advance on the £500 originally agreed upon for the work. Very shortly after, Dickens found the strain of editing *The Miscellany* and writing two intricate stories simultaneously more than he could bear, and asked for a postponement of six months before producing *Barnaby Rudge*. The demand seems to have been reasonable: Dickens ever put his best powers into his work, and under the existing circumstances he felt he could not do justice to himself and to his reputation. But Bentley was unable, for very good reasons, to agree to the postponement of *Barnaby Rudge*, and so the inevitable breach took place between publisher and author. Before this event, however, Dickens had bought back the copyright of *Oliver Twist*, and resigned the editorship of *Bentley's Miscellany*. The publisher then approached Ainsworth, who became editor of *The Miscellany* at a salary of £51 a month.

Somehow, a rumour got about the town that it was Forster who had advised Dickens to break his sixth and last agreement with Bentley concerning *The Miscellany* and the other matters in dispute. This, however, was not the case, and Dickens, very indignant at the false charge against his friend, took prompt measures to put the right complexion on the affair, and penned a very long letter to Ainsworth with that view. The following extracts from this communication will demonstrate Dickens's warm defence of Forster; but the most personal allusions to others concerned are omitted here, for no good purpose could be served now by reviving the more painful features of a controversy between those who have long since gone down to the dust:—

“ DOUGHTY STREET,

“ *Tuesday morning, March 20th, 1839.*

“ MY DEAR AINSWORTH,

“ If the subject of this letter, or anything contained in it, should eventually become the occasion of any disagreement between you and me, it would cause me very deep and sincere regret. But with this contingency—even this before me, I feel that I must speak out without reserve, and that every manly, honest, and just consideration impels me to do so.

“ By some means—by what means in the first instance I scarcely know—the late negotiations between yourself, myself, and Mr. Bentley, have placed a mutual friend of ours in a false position and one in which he has no right to stand; and exposed him to an accusation—very rife and current indeed, just now—equally untrue and undeserved, namely that he, who a short time before had pledged himself to Mr. Bentley (in the presence of Mr. Follett) to see my last agreement with that person exe-

cuted and carried out, counselled me to break it, and in fact entangled and entrapped the innocent and unsuspecting bookseller . . . into taking such steps as led to that result. Now I wish to remind you . . . that even by me no agreement whatever was broken ; that I demanded a postponement of my agreement for the term of six months—that Forster (to whom I have been alluding of course) expressly and positively said when you pressed upon me the hardship of my relations with that noblest work of God in New Burlington Street, that he could not and would not be any party to a new disruption between us—that *he was bound to see the old agreement performed*—that he wrote to Mr. Bentley warning him of my dissatisfaction—that he saw Mr. Bentley for a full hour, in his own rooms . . . read to him a letter of mine in which I had expressed my feelings on the subject, and strongly urged upon him the necessity and propriety of some concession—that Mr. Bentley went away thanking him and appointing to call again—that he never called again—that he wrote me an insulting letter dictated by his lawyers—that Forster then washed his hands of any further interference between us—that Mr. Bentley then went out to you at Kensal Green—and that you and he, between you, and without any previous consultation or advising with Forster,<sup>1</sup> settled

<sup>1</sup> Dickens was mistaken on this point. Ainsworth had consulted with Forster, and it was against the latter's advice that he accepted Bentley's terms—judging by the following letter to Ainsworth :—

“ I write to you one hasty but most earnest entreaty *not to sign any such agreement* as that you described to me last night. I foresee the result if you do : you will be in Bentley's power. I implore you not to do it. You deceive yourself ; most men do. But why have men friends if a friend should not, at such a moment, interfere to avert the ill consequence of such self-delusion, so miserably common to all of us. Don't disregard what I now say to you. You can accomplish all you desire with Bentley, *without* putting on his letters. Nor is it from him alone you will run the danger of incurring serious annoyance—but from all who are made parties to this agreement—the mass of the public included. As your sincerest friend, let my advice have some influence

upon certain terms and conditions which were afterwards proposed to me through you, and communicated to Forster, for the first time and to his unbounded astonishment, by both of us. I remind you of all this, because Mr. Bentley is going about town stating in every quarter what may or may not be his real impression of Forster's course. . . . I remind you of all this, because Forster must and shall be set right—not with Mr. Bentley, but with the men to whom these stories are carried—and his friends as well as foes—because there are but two persons who can set him right—and because I wish to know distinctly from you who shall do so, *without the delay of an instant*—you or I. There is another reason which renders this absolutely necessary. Forster, acting for Mr. Savage Landor, arranged with Mr. Bentley for the publication of two tragedies by that gentleman, which were proceeding rapidly through the press when these matters occurred, and have since been taken from the printers by Mr. Bentley—not published, though the time agreed upon is long past; not advertized, though they should have been long ago—their existence not recognized in any way. . . . Mr. Landor, who . . . is violent and reckless when exasperated, is as certain by some public act to punish the bookseller for this treatment (if he be not prevented by an immediate atonement) as the sun is to rise to-morrow. This would entail upon me the immediate necessity, in explanation of the circumstances which led to it, of laying a full history of these proceedings before the public. . . .

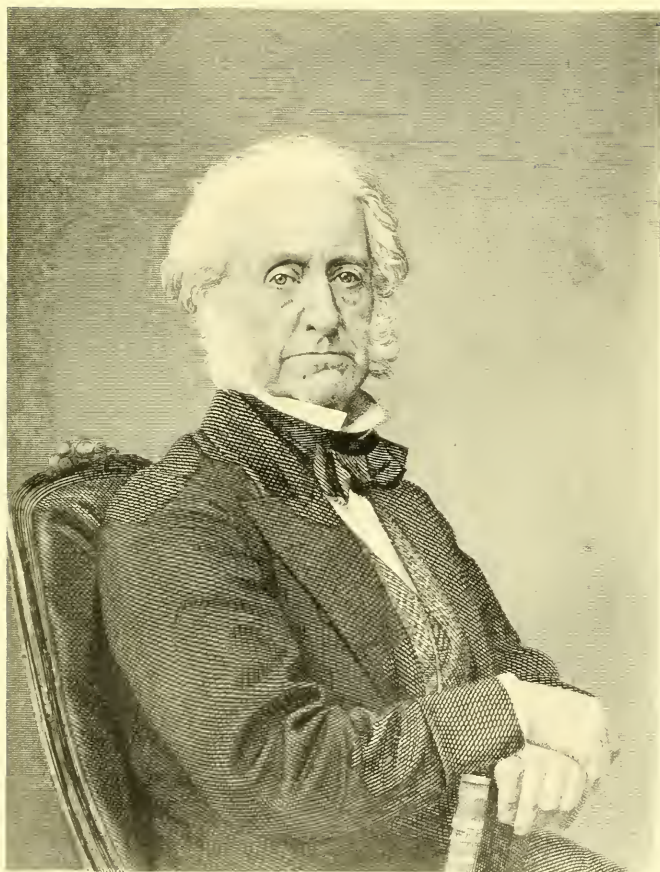
“But however painful it will be to put myself in

with you. I could not sleep last night for thinking of the misery you were wilfully incurring. Remember what I told you yesterday—that you are now in a better position than Bentley. *You can get all you wish from him, and hold a superiority over him, if you do not wilfully and willingly put yourself beneath his feet.*

“Your friend as you know me,

“JOHN FORSTER.”





RICHARD BENTLEY.

*From an engraving by Joseph Brown, by permission of his grandson,  
Mr. Richard Bentley.*



communication once again with Mr. Bentley and openly appeal to you to confirm what I shall tell him, there is no alternative unless you will frankly and openly, and for the sake of your old friend, as well as my intimate and valued one, avow to Mr. Bentley yourself that he [Forster] is not to blame, that you heard him again and again refuse to interfere although deeply impressed with the hardship of my case—and that you proposed concessions which he, feeling the position in which he stood, could not have suggested. Believe me, Ainsworth, that for your sake, no less than on Forster's account, this should be done. . . . I do not mean to hurt or offend you by anything I have said, and I should be truly grieved to find I have done so. But I must speak strongly because I feel strongly, and because I have a misgiving that even now I have been silent too long.

“ My dear Ainsworth, I am

“ Faithfully yours,

“ CHARLES DICKENS.”

Happily this disagreeable affair did not cause any breach of the intimate friendship existing between Dickens and Ainsworth.<sup>1</sup>

Dickens's editorship of *Bentley's Miscellany* came to an end with the issue for February, 1839, and his closing words in and to the thriving magazine he had superintended from its birth were entitled, *Familiar Epistle from a Parent to a Child*: herein, after some ruminations on the superseding of the old mail coach and its ancient guard by the modern steam-engine, he said:—

“ In fact, then, my child, you have changed hands. Henceforth, I resign you to the guardianship and pro-

<sup>1</sup> It is pleasant to add that Dickens and Bentley became on friendly terms again in after years, and the latter was invited to Gadshill, in 1857, to meet Hans Andersen.

tection of one of my most intimate and valued friends, Mr. Ainsworth, with whom, and with you, my best wishes and warmest feelings will ever remain. . . . *Your* guard is at home in his new place, and has roystering highwaymen and gallant desperadoes ever within call. . . . With hat in hand, I approach side by side with the friend who travelled with me on the old road, and presume to solicit favour and kindness in behalf of him and his new charge, both for their sakes and that of the old coachman, Boz."

Ainsworth, in March, having mounted the box, drove, as somebody said, straight to Newgate; for *Jack Shepard* was careering through *The Miscellany* at the time he assumed control. *Oliver Twist* was also still appearing serially, and concluded in the April number. Other important contributions during Ainsworth's editorship were more of *The Ingoldsby Legends*; Cockton's *Stanley Thorn*; E. A. Poe's *Fall of the House of Usher*; Heine's *Troubled Heart*; and Longfellow's *Village Blacksmith*, *Wreck of the Hesperus*, and *Voices of the Night*. Cruikshank, Alfred Crowquill, and Leech were the illustrators.

Ainsworth was a good-natured editor, and when papers sent to him for *The Miscellany* were unsuitable, he often went out of his way to give advice to his correspondents for placing their work elsewhere. No better case can be given than that of J. A. Overs, a poor carpenter, who, although dying of consumption, thought he had literary gifts, and constantly sent his compositions to Ainsworth in the hope of acceptance for *Bentley's*. Ainsworth very patiently wrote him many letters full of

advice, and some extracts are given here as an example of his kindness and courtesy :—

“ *May 18th, 1839.*

“ TO MR. OVERS.

“ MY DEAR SIR,

“ I hasten to assure you that it is from no inattention on my part that you have not received an answer respecting your contributions to *The Miscellany*. The articles to which you refer were handed to me by Mr. Dickens and are in Mr. Bentley’s possession—whether intended for insertion, or not, I cannot, at this moment, inform you. But as Mr. Bentley has reserved to himself the entire control of *The Miscellany*, I can do no more than recommend an article to his notice. This explanation, under the particular circumstances of your case, I have thought it right to give you. . . . The rank or position of a writer weighs little with me, and your own position, which you describe very forcibly and touchingly, is only an additional recommendation to my best exertions in your behalf. I shall be glad to forward your views and to render you any assistance in my power. But if I might offer a suggestion to you it would be to confine yourself for the present to prose writing, and to describe, as faithfully and minutely as you can, circumstances and matters with which you are intimately acquainted, so as to give individuality and character to your compositions—a course which, judging from what I have seen of yours, would insure your success. . . .”

“ *June 5th, 1839.*

“ I have both written to Mr. Bentley and spoken to him on the subject of your verses, and am still in the dark as to whether or not he will insert them. I have, however, addressed a note to him this morning, which I trust will enforce a decision. If the articles are declined I will see what I can do further.”

“ KENSAL LODGE, HARROW ROAD.

“ February 4th, 1840.

“ I regret very much that I was not in the way when you called on Sunday ; as independently of missing the opportunity of making your acquaintance, which I am anxious to do, I am quite sorry you should have had so long a walk without some rest and refreshment. I have read your story with great interest, and think very highly of it. But I own I wish you had chosen a different subject. In the present style of writing you must inevitably be contrasted, and I fear disadvantageously, with other and established authors ; whereas if you had followed my advice, and selected a subject from your own walk, you would have stood a much greater chance of success. . . . I do not say this to discourage you, but to direct you to a course which, I am assured, will best conduce to the attainment of the object you have in view. For instance, in my last work—*Jack Sheppard*—what immense value the knowledge of your business would have been to me in the delineation of such a character as Wood. Believe me, a plain, homely story, depicting in the nervous, natural language which you have at command, the struggles, adventures, loves, hatreds (if you please) of a young carpenter would be worth a hundred high-flown, historical romances. . . . Write, in fact, your own life. . . . In this you could not fail. . . . On some Sunday when I am at leisure, I will write to beg you to come out to me, as I shall be glad to see you and talk over your plans with you. With best wishes in all sincerity.”

Thus a busy editor, who also had three books on his hands (for *Guy Fawkes*, *The Tower of London*, and *Old St. Paul's* were all being written or planned at this date), could find time to read attentively the rather

wearisome lucubrations of a sufferer from *cacoethes scribendi*, write long letters full of advice concerning them, and even entertain his humble correspondent at Kensal Lodge.

[Ainsworth did not forget the carpenter when he started his own Magazine in 1842, and wrote to Overs: "If I can strike out some plan, by which I can avail myself of your talents, I will gladly do so. . . . I hope to use some of the shorter papers, and in earnest of my good wishes and intentions send you the enclosed." But the shadows were closing in for poor Overs, and he died in 1844. Dickens was also interested in him, and wrote the preface to a small collection of the carpenter's stories. When Overs was almost at the point of death, his last conscious act was to direct a copy of his book to Dickens, in which he had written, "With my devotion." Dickens interested Miss Burdett-Coutts in Mrs. Overs's case, and she assisted the widow and children in many ways.]

To celebrate his thirty-sixth birthday, in 1841, Ainsworth invited a talented quartette of his most intimate friends to dine at Kensal Lodge; and it appears, from the following invitation to Blanchard, that there was some joking among the set anent the frequent tendency of the "artistic temperament" to forget the disagreeable advance of Time:—

"MY DEAR LAMAN, "January 28th, 1841.

" . . . I want you to dine with me at six o'clock on Thursday, February 4th—my birthday—and if you are absent on that occasion, you had better not show yourself at Kensal Lodge again during the present year, that's all! I shall be twenty-eight! Only think of that. Forster, I believe, *is* twenty-eight, or has he grown

younger as you and I do? I enclose you a note for Davidge, or his right-hand man, Fairbrother; but they are a queer lot at the Surrey. . . .

"Drop me a note to say you will come on Thursday. If you don't—you know what a dash of that unusual length means. I expect Dickens, Forster, and Maclise.

"Yours ever,  
"W. H. A."

The dinings at Kensal Lodge never relaxed. Here is an amusing note from Thomas Noon Talfourd:—

"A dinner party at home prevents me from making one of your menagerie on Saturday, when I trust for your mother's sake that your noble specimens will rival the performance at Drury Lane <sup>1</sup> in tractability. You will see that I am absent both in body and mind, as my niece holds the pen <sup>2</sup> while my wife holds the reins."

To Mrs. Macready, the wife of the actor, Ainsworth wrote on March 2nd, 1841:—

"I have the pleasure to send you a subscription for Mrs. Siddons' bust from my friend, Mrs. Hughes, of Kingston Lisle, an old friend of the illustrious lady in whose behalf you are interesting yourself. Mr. Pickersgill, the artist, has also promised his subscription."

But to return to *Bentley's Miscellany*, wherein Ainsworth first issued his next romance, *Guy Fawkes*, which commenced in January, 1840, and did not conclude until

<sup>1</sup> Van Amburgh's performing lions which, according to Bunn, the lessee, were a greater financial success than Macready. Perhaps this was due to Royal Patronage, for Miss Mitford recorded: "Our Queen (Victoria) delights in strong, not to say worse, emotions, whose chief pleasure it was to see the lions fed in Van Amburgh's time. . . ." etc.

<sup>2</sup> Except the signature, the letter was dictated.



November, 1841, in its serial form. The work, however, was finished some months earlier, and was published, in three volumes, by Bentley, in July, 1841—an edition which has now a high monetary value, as much as £21. 5s. having been paid for a copy at auction.

The author wrote the concluding portion of *Guy Fawkes* at Kingston Lisle, during another brief visit to his friend, Mrs. Hughes. The following letter to Ainsworth from his hostess, concerning his visit, will give an idea both of the kindly, simple nature and epistolary style of this remarkable lady, whose gifts charmed Sir Walter Scott, Mrs. Siddons, Southey, Barham, and many other distinguished friends and correspondents :—

(“ KINGSTON LISLE, BERKS.)

“ July 9th, 1841.

“ MY DEAREST FRIEND,

“ To be sure it is most unnecessary to plague you with a note merely to say what you know very well—*viz.* that the thought of seeing you once more at Kingston has diffused a general happiness over the whole family, but none can feel it as much as I do. On Monday, please God, I will meet you, and how glad, how *very* glad shall I be : yet even now and then a sort of *qualm* comes over me as if something would arise—disappoint me—but I will try to be hopeful. To-day, I wish you had fixed to-morrow for your journey, because there would be less time for intervening accidents to prevent it ; and when to-morrow is over I shall be glad that Monday is the day, because the future will be better than the past. Mary<sup>1</sup> and I have been as busy as Bees catering for

<sup>1</sup> Mary Hawkes, the housekeeper. She owned the portrait of Mrs. Hughes, reproduced in this work, which she bequeathed to her old mistress's grandson, “ Tom Brown ” Hughes, in the possession of whose widow it now is.

you. You will never be able to get through your fatigues unless you have all sorts of help—quiet ; sweet air ; a really delightful garden (though its glories are hourly fading) ; your own hours for every meal ; your own sitting-room ; your great chair ; your table (and an additional one) ; your bed thoroughly aired. Mary is intent on pleasing you by her cookery ; I have secured chicken, duck, wild rabbit ; I have just got a tongue from Newbury (for Mary, despairing of her cinerary, had not one ready) ; I have good pease, young beans, the potatoes are as good as usual ; your beer has never been touched ; I have two or three bottles of the old Madeira, and some Brandy which has been ten years in the house. With all these appliances doubt not that *Guy Fawkes* will be finished here as prosperously as *Jack Sheppard*. If we can devise anything else for your comfort we will. My son,<sup>1</sup> who greatly admires *Old St. Paul's*, is most anxious about Ashdown Park. And now, dearest friend, farewell, and God grant us a happy meeting on Monday. *Pray* stay as long as you can. . . . I dare not look over my note, for I am sure it is so foolish that I should never send it if I did. I cannot help telling you how happy I am with the hope of seeing you.

“ Ever your affectionate

“ M. A. HUGHES.”

Ainsworth very naturally dedicated *Guy Fawkes* to the friend at whose house the work had been completed, amid such kindly attentions within and such charming rural surroundings without. He wrote :—

“ MY DEAR MRS. HUGHES, “ July 26th, 1841.

“ You are aware that this Romance was brought to a close during my last brief visit at Kingston Lisle,

<sup>1</sup> John Hughes, of Donnington Priory, Berks.



MRS. M. A. HUGHES.

*Reproduced from the portrait in the possession of Mrs. Thomas Hughes by permission of the owner and of Messrs. Smith, Elder & Co.*



when the time necessary to be devoted to it deprived me of the full enjoyment of your society, and, limiting my range—no very irksome restriction,—to your own charming garden and grounds, prevented me from accompanying you in your walks to your favourite and beautiful downs. This circumstance, which will suffice to give it some interest in your eyes by associating it with your residence, furnishes me with a plea, of which I gladly avail myself, of inscribing it with your name, and of recording, at the same time, the high sense I entertain of your goodness and worth, the value I set upon your friendship,—a friendship shared in common with some of the most illustrious writers of our time,—and the gratitude I shall never cease to feel for attentions and kindnesses, little less than maternal, which I have experienced at your hands.

“ In the hope that you may long continue to diffuse happiness round your own circle, and contribute to the instruction and delight of the many attached friends with whom you maintain so active and so interesting a correspondence ; and that you may live to see your grandsons <sup>1</sup> fulfil their present promise, and tread in the footsteps of their high-minded and excellent-hearted father,—and of *his* father, I remain

“ Your affectionate and obliged friend,

“ W. HARRISON AINSWORTH.”

*Guy Fawkes* is one of Ainsworth's best romances ; very carefully written, the original scheme laid down skilfully traced through intricate ways to its final gloomy *dénouement*, it is also the most psychical of all its author's books. There is, indeed, very considerable power of analysis of character—not, as a rule, a prominent feature

<sup>1</sup> One grandson was, of course, Tom Hughes, the future author of *Tom Brown's Schooldays*.

of Ainsworth's work—displayed in *Guy Fawkes*, wherein he sought to contrast the contending influences in a cause by portraying such varied characters as the loyal and devout Catholic of that period; the unscrupulous and ambitious plotter, masking his designs under the cloak of religion; the crafty but sincere Jesuit; and the gloomy and superstitious enthusiast—as exemplified in the personality of Fawkes himself. Above all, Ainsworth's aim, as he said, was to enforce the doctrine of Toleration. The result was a story of very great interest combined with the most picturesque account of the Gunpowder Plot extant.

Ainsworth followed the main outline of its history very faithfully. He was quite justified in laying the earlier scenes of his narrative in Manchester and the neighbourhood, for many of the events which engendered the conspiracy took place there. Lancashire was always a stronghold of the Old Faith, and the extreme persecution endured by the local Roman Catholics, and the barbarous executions of their priests in Manchester, were prominent causes in the development of that wild, despairing plot conceived by desperate men to avenge their wrongs and restore their religion. Ainsworth's principal deviations from fact were the presence of Guy Fawkes in Lancashire (which is only traditional) and the romantic love-story which united the fate of the arch-conspirator with that of Viviana Radcliffe. It may, perhaps, be said that in his presentment of Viviana—the loyal and devout Catholic—Ainsworth created an unnatural character, whose conduct of her affairs of the heart was wholly foreign to normal feminine psychology. There is an interesting reference to this point in one of

Mrs. Hughes's letters to Mrs. Southey,<sup>1</sup> wife of the poet. The two ladies kept up an extensive correspondence, in which Ainsworth was constantly mentioned, and when discussing the heroine of *Guy Fawkes*, Mrs. Hughes wrote: "I fairly warned Mr. Ainsworth that Viviana's odious conduct to Chetham (after Chat Moss, too!) had entirely taken away all interest in her fate, and that I must think her character very unnatural. He had some crotchet of exemplifying the power of bigotry—the length to which a devoted Catholic will go when enthusiasm seizes her: but he has actually made a lovely young woman, who felt affection as well as gratitude to a devoted and amiable young man, change her sentiments and literally *fall in love* with a gloomy, self-devoted Bigot, whose purpose from the first was revolting—however accounted for by his miserable superstition. . . . I cannot guess why Mr. Ainsworth has taken such a view of the female mind . . . his first impressions were not likely to be favourable, for his poor wife (though, as I have heard, very beautiful) was a most inferior person. . . ."

The introduction of that famous Manchester worthy, Humphrey Chetham, into the story was, of course, another example of author's license. Ainsworth had long contemplated making use of his fellow-townsmen of an earlier century in this way. In a letter to his mother, when presenting the fifth edition of *Rookwood* to her, he said: "Hereafter, if I should realize a design which I have always entertained, of illustrating the early manners and customs, as well as the local peculiarities of

<sup>1</sup> Formerly Caroline Bowles, the poetess. She married Southey, as his second wife, in 1839.

the great commercial town to which I owe my birth, and over the interests of which I shall ever fondly watch, it shall be in a story based upon the fortunes of the excellent founder of the Chetham Hospital and Library (one of the noblest institutions in the Kingdom), to whose beneficence my townsmen are so largely indebted, and whose character has always appeared to me to represent, in the highest degree, the best qualities of a Manchester merchant of the good old stamp."

Although Humphrey Chetham was not associated with the Gunpowder Treason ; and although Guy Fawkes was never in love with and wedded to Viviana Radcliffe, and never, presumably, participated in those exciting adventures and escapes near Manchester, it is a further striking proof of the power of Ainsworth's imaginative art that the events concerned with these particular points are the most vivid and real in the story. Nothing could be more fascinating than the Lancashire scenes of *Guy Fawkes*, and the finest portion of the book is the wonderful description of the flight of the fugitives over Chat Moss—the vast and dangerous marsh situated to the west of Manchester. This is one of the most moving incidents in romantic fiction—the very essence of dramatic narrative. How vividly is here pictured the awe-inspiring appearance of the great swamp stretching away in grey mystery under the faint light of the waning moon ; how skilfully its terrors are enhanced by the ominous cries of night-birds, and the weird lights—exhalations of the marsh—which come flitting towards the fugitives. And then the ghastly fate of the pursuers—swallowed up in the morass, their dying struggles seen by the glimmer of



these fen-fires.<sup>1</sup> Once read, this scene can never be forgotten.

The Chat Moss episode is another example of Ainsworth's subtle affinity with Nature in her terrible and mysterious phases—of his powers of suggestion of the Unknown; and in this preliminary picture of horror he intended to typify or prefigure the ultimate fate of the Gunpowder Plot conspirators, who, after many adventures, were themselves engulfed in destruction.

Ordsall Hall, the scene of many of the dramatic incidents in *Guy Fawkes*, is still in existence, although it no longer commands "a beautiful view of the winding course of the river . . . of the woody uplands beyond it, and of the distant hills of Cheshire." Manchester—or rather Salford—has consumed the country surrounding Ordsall,<sup>2</sup> together with the moat, gardens, and "noble avenue of sycamores," that once were attached to this fine old mansion, which was the seat of the Radcliffes from the thirteenth to the seventeenth century.

It now stands in the midst of a slum district, hemmed in by mean streets, but the old hall is in excellent condition, being used as a Clergy School. After suffering years of neglect, going sadly to decay, and being divided

<sup>1</sup> Chat Moss still exists, though reduced in size and shorn of its terrors by means of draining and cultivation; but on the evening I visited it, as the vast marshy plain grew dim at the approach of night, and the mists rose, it was possible to realize the mystery—and former horrors—of the spot.

<sup>2</sup> Trafford Park, the lovely sylvan district through which Ainsworth described the fugitives riding in their flight from Ordsall to Chat Moss, has been transformed almost entirely into docks appertaining to the Manchester Ship Canal.

A very interesting account of the localities mentioned in *Guy Fawkes*, and Ainsworth's other novels which relate to Lancashire, will be found in a series of articles by Mr. Edmund Mercer, contributed to *The Manchester Evening Chronicle*, October–December, 1904.

into three separate tenements, Ordsall Hall was restored by the late Earl Egerton of Tatton, for the ecclesiastical purpose just mentioned, and it is now possible to realize its pristine glories, despite some inevitable modern "improvements." Its main architectural features date from the Tudor period, and the exterior views of the N.W. front, of black timber ornamented with white quatrefoils—the projecting wings, the pointed gables, the great embayed windows—all are eminently picturesque. The magnificent banqueting-hall—one of the largest in Lancashire—still boasts its massive open-work oak roof, with clustered pillars and great tie-beams of the same wood. Some of the original ancient glass has recently been restored to the large oriel window. Beyond the hall is the Star Chamber, which is much the same as Ainsworth described it in *Guy Fawkes*, when the Jesuit, Oldcorne, was hidden in the secret recess of the vast chimney-piece.<sup>1</sup> This room is formed throughout of oak, and the ceiling is still studded with the gilt stars which gave it the name it has always been known by. Upstairs, the panelled rooms have curiously moulded ceilings, and the Radcliffe arms elaborately carved in stone over the fire-places. Ordsall well repays a visit.

In view of Ainsworth's description of the escape of Viviana Radcliffe and her companions from Ordsall Hall by means of a secret passage running under the moat,<sup>2</sup> it is interesting to note that during some excavations, in 1887, a subterranean passage was discovered, in Ordsall Lane, which, it is believed, originally communicated with the Hall.

In *Guy Fawkes*, also, Ainsworth presented an admir-

<sup>1</sup> Book I, Chapter III.

<sup>2</sup> Book I, Chapter V.

able picture of old Manchester in the early part of the seventeenth century. He fully described its ancient streets and buildings—Salford Bridge and its prison ; The Seven Stars Inn (which is still in its original condition, and, dating from about 1366, claims to be one of the oldest taverns in England) ; the beautiful Collegiate Church ; and, above all, the ancient College (which he had loved and frequented as a boy under its later designation of the Chetham Library), then the residence of the Warden, Dr. Dee, divine and magician, who was so effectively introduced by Ainsworth into his romance. The weird incident of the invoking of a departed spirit and the revivifying of a corpse by Dr. Dee,<sup>1</sup> was founded on the actual memoirs of that remarkable ecclesiastic, whose rare work, *Relations with Spirits*, was in Ainsworth's possession, together with many other books and manuscripts dealing with the Black Art.

George Cruikshank supplied twenty-two illustrations for *Guy Fawkes*, but these designs are not considered by experts to possess the merit of his other work of this date. He was on bad terms with Bentley, and, it is said, wilfully made his later illustrations for *The Miscellany* inferior, in order to obtain a release from his agreement with the publisher.

Thus, Cruikshank wrote to Ainsworth :—

“ March 11th, 1840.

“ I had just got home when I was honor'd by a visit from Mr. Bentley, who expressed considerable displeasure at the plates for the *Guy (Fawkes)* and *Stanley Thorn*—and gave me to understand that he should employ another artist in *The Miscellany* besides myself. Upon

<sup>1</sup> Book I, Chapter VII.

this I declined having anything further to do with it, upon which he took his leave, not, however, without a great deal of *hot breath* being expended on both sides. . . . I shall be very glad if I can be really quit of him. . . .”

No doubt, Ainsworth remonstrated with the fire-eating artist, and pointed out that he did not see why bad illustrations should spoil the interest of his story—merely to gratify the private pique Cruikshank was nursing against Bentley. For this reason, or perhaps because Cruikshank could not help working well in spite of himself, the later illustrations to *Guy Fawkes* seem admirable. “The Landing of the Powder,” with its moonlit view of Lambeth, is charming; and “Guy Fawkes laying the train,” and the two scenes illustrating his arrest and execution, are sombre, powerful studies, entirely in sympathy with the text. Ainsworth must have been satisfied with Cruikshank’s illustrations, judging from a sentence in the following letter:—

“MY DEAR OLLIER,

“June 22nd, 1841.

“I am scarcely surprised to learn from you that Mr. Bentley states that I promised Mr. Barham to write two separate stories for the November and December numbers of *The Miscellany*. . . . Nothing of the sort was either expressed or implied, and I cannot believe Mr. Barham made any such statement, because it is entirely foreign to the spirit of the whole arrangement. I will thank you, however, to give Mr. Bentley distinctly to understand that I will not write any such story or stories, and that if he does not think fit to enter into the proposed arrangement I shall adhere to the original agreement and finish *Guy Fawkes* in February next. I

beg you will also give him to understand that I will not allow Mr. Leech, or any other artist than Mr. Cruikshank, to illustrate any portion of the work ; and that I insist upon a clause to that effect being inserted in the agreement. I shall also require twelve copies of the work when published—a provision for which must also be inserted in the agreement.”

This letter foreshadowed some coming changes. Cruikshank got his way, and was released from his arrangements with Bentley, who then engaged John Leech as the principal artist for *The Miscellany*. Ainsworth concluded *Guy Fawkes* there in the following November (instead of February, 1842), and resigned the editorship of *Bentley's Miscellany* at the same time, for, as the tone of the letter shows, his relations also with Bentley were getting strained, and the final rift came in December, 1841.

*Guy Fawkes*, however, had been a great financial success, and, it is said, Ainsworth received as much as £1500 from it. The real reason for this success is not far to seek, for the work is one of the best of historical novels. It *arrests* attention by its continuity of interest. Incident follows incident, exciting escape upon terrible adventure ; on and on—without pause or *longueur*—the dramatic narrative proceeds, until the inevitable tragic end is reached.

## CHAPTER XIII

“THE TOWER OF LONDON.” “OLD ST. PAUL’S.”

**T**HE TOWER OF LONDON was, as Laman Blanchard put it, the romance twin-born with *Guy Fawkes*, running chapter by chapter with the latter work. It seems a wonderful feat that two such powerful and entirely distinct romances could have been produced simultaneously: yet such was the fact. The twins, however, did not pursue their way side by side in the same place. *Guy Fawkes*, as described, appeared in *Bentley's Miscellany*; but *The Tower of London* was issued by itself in monthly parts, bound in yellow wrappers, price one shilling.<sup>1</sup> The first number appeared in January, 1840, and the work, running through the whole year, was completed in December, when it also appeared in volume form with all Cruikshank's wonderful illustrations. Bentley was the publisher both of the monthly parts and the first edition, and it was one of his most profitable productions.

From the time of his first sight of the Tower of London,

<sup>1</sup> The preliminary advertisement was as follows:—

“Mr. Ainsworth's new Romance, illustrated by George Cruikshank. On the 1st of January next with the Magazines, will be published, price one shilling, handsomely printed in 8vo, the first number of *The Tower of London*. With Three Illustrations on Steel in each number; and Woodcuts by G. C. This work, to be completed in Thirteen Numbers, will be the only Monthly Publication illustrated by George Cruikshank, with the exception of *Bentley's Miscellany*.”

A fine set of *The Tower of London* in parts is now worth £30.

in 1824, Ainsworth had determined to make that unique monument of English history the groundwork and scene of an historical romance ; and now, sixteen years later, the opportunity came to realize this long-cherished project in conjunction with the invaluable aid of Cruikshank as illustrator. The Tower, with its thousand historical associations and tragic reminiscences, presented—none better—immense possibilities for a work of this description, and most completely did author and artist grasp their opportunity, and most successfully consummate their scheme beyond the utmost expectation.

From all its varied history, Ainsworth chose the era that enabled him best to describe the Tower in its triple capacity of palace, prison, and fortress—the later Tudor period, when its dungeons were ever full and the axe in frequent employment, while, at the same time, the monarchs of England still used the building as a residence. Thus, a vivid contrast of subjects and situations was secured—from the banquet-hall to the dungeon—from the masque to the rack—from the throne to the block ; while the restriction of the action to the circumscribed area of the Tower preserved an uninterrupted sequence of scenes—picturesque, dramatic, humorous, ghastly, in turn, yet forming a cohesive whole. Nothing is more remarkable in *The Tower of London*, as a romance, than the ingenious manner in which Ainsworth contrived, to use his own words, “such a series of incidents as should naturally introduce every relic of the old pile—its towers, chapels, halls, chambers, gateways, arches, and drawbridges—so that no part of it should remain unillustrated.” And how marvellously well he suc-

ceeded. The whole of the Tower is successively described, and yet this description seems a necessary part of the unbroken narrative. There is no appearance of effort on the author's part to achieve this effect, no pause in the onward march of his events, and the reader has no sense of being instructed or of receiving a lecture on architecture. On the contrary, there is an irresistible fascination which compels attention to the end. Just as in *Guy Fawkes*, there is the same sustained interest, incident following incident without ever a pause; but there is something more—the realization of the “atmosphere” of a building like the Tower and all the influences, historical and occult, that emanate from it.<sup>1</sup> The author conveys to the reader the sensation of fear and despair which depressed the heart of the unhappy prisoner as—when brought, by water, captive to the Tower—he shot the gloomy arch of Traitor's Gate; he conveys the tortures and terrors experienced in the dungeons; and pictures, like reality, the execution scenes on the blood-stained scaffolds of Tower Hill and Tower Green. The vivid realism of the book is extraordinary. For sheer horror the description of the burning of the heretic on Tower Green has no equal. The author, too, has a wonderful power of suggesting what *may* be lurking unseen, and that is the secret of the effectiveness of the mysterious occurrences in the Tower dungeons. And then, in pleasant contrast, we have the merry doings in the Stone Kitchen—the pranks of Xit, the dwarf, and the amazing gastronomical feats of the three giant

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Percy Fitzgerald has pointed out to me, in an interesting letter, that Dickens also, following the method of Victor Hugo and Ainsworth, has made a building the “motive” of a story—Rochester Cathedral in *Edwin Drood*.



warders. These old friends of one's boyhood reading always seem like realities.

Ainsworth was again very successful with his characterization in this book. Particularly forcible was the delineation of the subtle and plotting Spaniard, Simon Renard, and of the arrogant, ambitious Dudley, Duke of Northumberland. Of Queen Mary's character the author took a lenient view, and endeavoured to demonstrate his own conviction that her sole fault as a sovereign was bigotry. The effects of this quality on the workings of the female heart was a favourite study with him. It cannot be denied that much of the popular odium and prejudice attaching to the memory of Mary Tudor emanated from the excessive zeal of ultra-Protestant writers, who did not hesitate to suppress mention of her better qualities, and who unduly exaggerated the Queen's intolerance in matters of religion. The characters in *The Tower of London* are very numerous, but all are distinctive and etched with a sure hand. Even such subsidiary figures as Mauger, the headsman, Nightgall, the gaoler, and Sorrocold, the chirurgeon, stand out with a grim reality which impresses their personalities upon the reader as clearly as those of the more prominent historical characters in this romance.

Ainsworth ever—from boyhood to old age—delighted to picture the customs and costumes of bygone times, and in *The Tower of London* he gave full rein to this gift. In particular, stand out his minute descriptions of the gorgeous raiment worn by Queen and courtiers on the occasion of Lady Jane Grey's progress to the Tower; and the details of the now obsolete dishes which graced the gargantuan banquets of Tudor days. The lavish

hospitality of those times, extended to all and sundry, of course appealed to Ainsworth personally, for he practised the same virtue himself—within the limits of early Victorian habits! From much study of sixteenth and seventeenth-century literature, manners, modes, and buildings, and from constantly writing on the same subjects, he became more akin in temperament and mind to the manners of these earlier eras than to those of his own. He always saturated himself with the subject he was writing about—hence the vivid realism of such a book as that now under consideration.

*The Tower of London*—still, perhaps, the most popular of all Ainsworth's works—deservedly achieved a great success as it progressed. It was a success of the right kind—appreciation and praise from cultured readers: not the acclamation of the multitude and the notoriety bestowed by the boy in the street, such as the stage versions of *Jack Sheppard* received. Month by month, as the romance appeared, vast numbers of people visited the Tower of London to examine the various buildings of the old fortress, as they were successively depicted by Ainsworth's pen and Cruikshank's pencil. The sale of *The Tower of London* was very large, and all the publishers were anxious to secure the future joint productions of this author and artist who collaborated so prosperously in every way. One bookseller proposed to Ainsworth and Cruikshank, that if they would bring out another work similar in style and interest to *The Tower*, he would take 30,000 copies a month to begin with, and pay ready money for them; and another bookseller offered to take 20,000 copies a month upon the same terms.

Cruikshank, indeed, rendered immense aid to Ainsworth in *The Tower of London*; and, although he was not the "originator"—as he foolishly claimed to be many years later (which matter will be dealt with in a subsequent chapter)—he was the invaluable partner in the brilliantly successful enterprise.

In this romance Cruikshank found the inspiration for his finest work; and his illustrations proved the height to which his genius could soar. For the time being he abandoned his own inimitable humorous and grotesque style for grand and impressive designs on a far more ambitious scale than anything he had yet essayed. He had always considered himself a great historical painter who had lost his way in the bypaths of art, and his magnificent, sombre, and Rembrandtesque studies for *The Tower of London* proved that he was right. The theme wholly engrossed him, he put his best powers into these wonderful steel engravings, and he was enthusiastically excited with the subject. "Let nothing turn you aside from the Tower. The Tower! The Tower! The Tower! is the word—forward to the Tower!" he wrote off to Ainsworth.

Certainly it was a unique combination of author and artist, and no romance ever had illustrations so perfectly in sympathy with the text as this. Take, for instance, the mystery of the plate, "The Night before the Execution," where the ghost of Anne Boleyn—"unsubstantial almost as the mist"—flits around the scaffold in the dim, grey light of dawn; the unparalleled horror of "The Burning of Edward Underhill," where we see the man's agony, see the ascending fire and smoke carried aside for an instant by the wind, and perceive the re-

flection of the flames in the chapel windows ; the weird imaginativeness of "Mauger sharpening his Axe," with its wonderful rendering of light and shadow ; the marvellously distinct portraiture of the vast number of minute faces in "The Execution of the Duke of Northumberland" ; the power of suggestion in "The Death-Warrant," "The Fate of Nightgall," and "Jane meeting the body of her husband," with the carrion-crows wheeling overhead ; the clever smoke effects and wealth of detail in the plates illustrating the Storming of the Tower ; and, finally, the sombre horror of "The Execution of Jane," concerning which Cruikshank himself wrote to Ainsworth, "I am almost afraid the execution is *too* horrible."

In addition to the forty fine illustrations on steel, Cruikshank supplied fifty-eight woodcuts of singular merit, illustrating, mainly, the architectural features of the Tower.

As already stated, *The Tower of London* was originally issued in monthly parts, and Ainsworth's method in writing it was as follows : At the beginning of each month he and Cruikshank used always to spend a day in the Tower itself—thoroughly examining and grasping the details of those portions of the building they intended to depict in their next number ; and as every facility was afforded them by the authorities, they explored the entire fortress from its highest turret to its deepest dungeon. Author and artist would then return to Kensal Lodge to dine, and talk over and arrange their incidents and scenes for the ensuing number of the work.

Ainsworth's plan was to write in the morning, and to devote the afternoon to social pleasures and riding or

walking. Consequently, although he wrote with great rapidity, his literary instalments were often in arrears; he would then work till late at night at the Sussex Hotel, Bouverie Street, which was close to his printers—Bradbury and Evans—and the concluding portions of the number on hand would pass straight from his desk to the printers, and be set up in type. But this mode of composition did not affect the quality of his work. He was ever the most careful and exact of writers, and thoroughly conversant with his subject. He never hazarded a statement on the chance of its being correct, but always verified his details personally. He carried this passion for accuracy to an amusing extent on one occasion when engaged upon *The Tower of London*. Working very late one night at revising the proof of this romance, he came across a specific statement he was not quite certain about. Time pressed, as it was the eve of publication. But he was resolved not to pass the doubtful detail without actual verification, and for this purpose, then and there, set out on a special journey to the Tower. Satisfying the sentries of his pacific intentions, Ainsworth rang up the unfortunate officials, who, needless to say, were not appreciative of the earnest zeal of this accurate author when it came to rousing them out of bed at midnight, in order that he might verify a trivial detail appertaining to his description of the Tower!

To celebrate the completion of *The Tower of London*, Ainsworth gave a dinner at the Sussex Hotel, Bouverie Street, where, as already related, much of the work had been written. Concerning this function he wrote Crossley :—

“ KENSAL LODGE,

“ December 7th, 1840.

“ Chancing to call on Rodd to-day, I heard that you are expected in town at the latter end of this week, and I therefore lose not a moment in letting you know that I have a large party dining with me on Saturday next, the 12th, at the Sussex Hotel, Bouverie Street, Fleet Street, at six o'clock, to celebrate the completion of *The Tower of London*; and I sincerely hope you will be able to join them. You will meet many persons whom you cannot easily see, except under similar circumstances, and I really think if you *are* coming to town, it would be worth coming a day or two earlier to be present at this dinner. You do not tell me what you think of *The Tower* in its complete state. I have worked desperately hard to get it done, as you may suppose. . . . You told me that you have a *second* part of De Foe's *History of the Plague*. Pray bring this with you. I will take the greatest care of it, but it is quite necessary I should see it, as I commence a new Romance with the New Year, under the title of *The Plague of London*. If you have any other tract relating to the period, or to the Fire, I shall feel obliged by the loan of it. . . . Let me have a line to say you will be with me on Saturday. You will meet a great number of people from the Tower.”

The guests, who numbered about sixty, at this memorable *Tower of London* dinner included Dickens, Forster, Talfourd, Barham, Maclise, Clarkson Stanfield, R.A., H. W. Pickersgill, R.A., John Hughes, Laman Blanchard, Jerdan, T. Longman, Grainger, Major Elrington (the Fort Major and Acting Governor of the Tower), Mr. Edmund Swift (the Keeper of the Regalia), and, of course, George Cruikshank, who occupied the vice-chair.

Another guest was a son of William Blackwood, the

publisher, whom Ainsworth had first met in Edinburgh eighteen years before, when he himself was but a young and aspiring writer. John Blackwood, in writing home a long account of *The Tower of London* dinner, said :—

“ . . . There was a great deal of speechmaking, and ‘ butter me and I’ll butter you ’ seemed to be the principle on which they all went. Talfourd, in giving Ainsworth’s health, touched upon the excellence of the company assembled. In coming to the Booksellers he gave a panegyric upon them, and said they could boast the presence of a Longman and a Fraser. Ainsworth whispered to him, and he said, ‘ But Scotland hath a thief as good ; one who is the representative of one who had Scott for his friend and Wilson for his inspired aid—one who did more than any other for the advancement of literature on the other side of the Tweed.’ Ainsworth returned, and then went on to toast almost the whole of the company individually. About the centre he gave me, and begged to introduce me to the company as one who, he doubted not, would shortly take a leading part in London publishing. He spoke very handsomely about our father. . . . George Cruikshank was very good. He sang *Lord Bateman* and some others. The claret and champagne were as plenty [*sic*] as could be wished. . . .”<sup>1</sup>

Cruikshank was always, at that period, very convivial on occasions of this sort, and Ainsworth told an amusing anecdote of the artist’s *post-prandial* generosity at *The Tower of London* dinner. As the guests were dispersing, several of them adjourned to the coffee-room, and of these Cruikshank took charge, saying to Ainsworth—who had to start on his drive home to Kensal Green—

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Oliphant’s *Annals of a Publishing House*, from which the above letter is quoted by permission of the publishers, Messrs. Wm. Blackwood and Sons

“ Now understand—this part of the entertainment is to be mine ! ”

“ Very well,” Ainsworth replied. “ So be it.”

But next morning Cruikshank had forgotten all about his proposition, and Ainsworth had a considerable sum to pay for “ coffee and cigars ” !

James Crossley was, of course, present at this dinner, and over forty years later gave his interesting reminiscences of the event at another memorable banquet—that given to Ainsworth by the Mayor of Manchester in 1881. The portion of Crossley’s speech relating to *The Tower of London* dinner of 1841 may appropriately be quoted here. He said :—

“ I was very forcibly struck on coming into this room with the recollection of another dinner in honour of Mr. Ainsworth which took place just forty years ago in London, and at which I had the good fortune to be present. It was given in celebration of his popular, and deservedly popular *Tower of London* ; and if any one wishes to know how Mr. Ainsworth looked at that time—for forty years make rather a difference in a man’s personal appearance—I cannot do better than recommend him to look at the fine contemporary portrait painted by Pickersgill, Sen.<sup>1</sup> . . . The place where this London dinner was given was one of those old hotels, spacious and commodious, which had the reputation of many good dinners. . . . The inn was a comfortable one, and excellently adapted for the party. . . .

“ The chairman on that occasion was Mr. Serjeant

<sup>1</sup> Reproduced opposite. The artist received £300 for this portrait, which presents Ainsworth at full length standing in his hall at Kensal Manor House.





WILLIAM HARRISON AINSWORTH, AT THE AGE OF  
THIRTY-SIX.

*From the portrait by H. W. Pickersgill, R.A., 1811  
Photographed by Mr. Mercer.*



(afterwards Mr. Justice) Talfourd,<sup>1</sup> . . . and the party that was congregated on that occasion was a fair and full representation of those who as authors, as critics, as artists, as publishers, were in the first rank in the metropolis at that time. Amongst them was, then in the full bloom of authorship, delighted and delighting, Charles Dickens—and with him his friend and subsequent biographer—I cannot say successful biographer—John Forster. . . . Amongst the party were several of that group of Fraserians of whom I believe Mr. Ainsworth is now the sole survivor,<sup>2</sup> but who still sit around their table perpetuated and pictured by the admirable sketches of Maclise. Nor was there wanting on that occasion that capital artist, whose bark will ever

Attendant sail,  
Pursue the triumph and partake the gale,

with the works of the distinguished authors whom he so admirably illustrated. Need I say I refer to George Cruikshank? The Chairman, in proposing the toast of the evening, did full justice to the work which had been the means of calling that party together; and in his happiest terms gave his estimate of the literary merits of Mr. Ainsworth. That estimate was a very high one, and it was enthusiastically seconded and adopted by the party present. My only regret is that of that speech and of Mr. Ainsworth's grateful response there is at present no report. Horace deploras the want of the *vates sacer*, but what is the *vates sacer* to the reporter, without whom wit, wisdom, and eloquence are only born

<sup>1</sup> It would seem to be an error to describe Talfourd as "Chairman"; Ainsworth, of course, presided at his own dinner-party.

<sup>2</sup> There was one other survivor—the Rev. G. R. Gleig.

and spoken to perish. The characteristic of the remaining part of the evening was the grand geniality and the utter impossibility of anything like a jar. There were rival authors present, but they did not quarrel; there were hostile critics, but their challenges were limited to champagne; there were men of different schools, but they broke down the partition in order to make the harmony perfect. There was a case of mortal feud, but it was arranged by an armistice which lasted, at all events, that evening. I believe everybody spoke—whether accustomed or unaccustomed to public speaking, who was able and capable in his turn of assisting that grand social exhibition. Amongst the gentlemen who were present was one of the name of Swift, who lived to a very advanced age. He was the Keeper of the Regalia of the Tower, and a collateral relative of the great Dean of St. Patrick's. All that could be expected of him was the usual stereotyped speech of an official, but had the Dean of St. Patrick's himself been resuscitated from the dead he could not have given utterance to a speech more admirably appropriate than that which was spoken by Mr. Swift. You said at once, 'The man who could make such a speech as this deserves to keep the Regalia of England.' The good fortune of the speakers extended even to the humble individual who now addresses you. I happened, when called upon, to mention that twenty years before I had the pleasure of co-operating with the Chairman in contributing to a publication which is now, I believe, not forgotten, and that was *The Retrospective Review*. That seemed to touch some pleasant chord in the Serjeant's mind, and he, in his usual impulsive manner, left the chair and

gave me a most cordial greeting. More than that, he invited me, not to see his library—for he thought, possibly, I had seen libraries enough—but invited me to examine and to taste that unique collection of specimens of the fine historical vintages of Oporto—extending in chronological series from 1790 to 1830—which at great trouble and great expense he had collected for himself and well affected friends—and which ultimately—I say nothing about *Ion*, or his Parliamentary and forensic eloquence—most deservedly placed him upon the judicial bench. (I accepted the learned Serjeant's invitation, and made it my business, as far as I could, to assist him in those historical investigations—of which he had supplied the material at his hospitable table.) . . .

“The proceedings were carried out with admirable spirit and success to the end. I cannot tell you—I have referred to my diary, but it does not assist me—at what time we broke up; but from inquiries I made I ascertained that every guest present awoke a wiser and better man in the morning, but without the disagreeable headache which generally accompanies that discovery. I have always considered that that meeting settled, by a decisive and conclusive verdict, the position of Mr. Ainsworth amongst the novelists of his time. . . .”

In his Preface to the *Tower of London* Ainsworth wrote:—

“One important object the Author would fain hope his labours may achieve. This is the introduction of the public to some parts of the fortress at present closed to them . . . to Saint John's Chapel in the White Tower . . . to the noble council-chamber . . . to the vaulted passages—and to the winding staircases within the

turrets. . . . Nor is there stronger reason why the prison-chamber in the Beauchamp Tower, now used as a mess-room, the walls of which, like a mystic scroll, are covered with inscriptions . . . should not likewise be thrown open. . . . Opposite the matchless White Tower—William of Orange by the side of William the Conqueror—is that frightful architectural abomination, the Grand Store-House. It may not be possible to remove this ugly and incongruous structure. . . . It *is* possible to clear the reverend and massive columns of Saint John's chapel . . . from the thick coat of white-wash in which they are crusted,—to sweep away the presses with which its floors are cumbered, and to find some other . . . depository for the Chancery rolls. . . . The visitor to the Tower sees little—and *can* see little of its most curious features. But it is the hope of the writer, that the day is not far off, when all that is really worth seeing will be accessible. In this view, the present publication may not be without use. . . .”

It is therefore interesting to record that since then St. John's Chapel in the White Tower *has* been restored, cleared of its encumbering presses and rolls, and opened to the public; that the Council Chamber is also open to visitors, and is now used as the Armoury; that the vaulted passages and turret staircases of the White Tower, and the much be-carven dungeon in the Beauchamp Tower, are likewise available to the public; and, finally, that the objectionable Grand Store-House was burnt down in the following year—1841—and thus removed for ever. As Laman Blanchard pertinently inquired, should not cant or prejudice, when it traces

robberies to novels, have traced this conflagration to Ainsworth's pen?

A dramatic version of *The Tower of London* (combined with Dumas's *Marie Tudor*), by T. P. Taylor, was produced at the Adelphi in November, 1840. Mr. and Mrs. Yates,<sup>1</sup> the lessees, played the parts of Courtenay and Queen Mary respectively; and Paul Bedford appeared as one of the giant warders—Magog. Another highly melodramatic version was produced by Osbaldiston at the City of London Theatre, which departed very much from the plot of the book: Simon Renard filled the rôle of very wicked villain, and at the execution of Lady Jane Grey “burst into a fiendish laugh”! At the same moment he was shot by Cholmondeley, and yelled in correct melodramatic style: “Ah, fiends of hell! foiled in the moment of my victory!”—and died!!

*The Tower of London*, like all of Ainsworth's best novels, was translated into French, Spanish, German, and Dutch. In England, the sixth edition appeared within five years of the original issue; and the lasting popularity of this fine romance is evidenced by the frequency of new editions at the present day.

It is now high time to deal with Ainsworth's next romance, *Old St. Paul's*, which was planned and commenced before *Guy Fawkes* and *The Tower of London* were completed. Thus, three of the author's finest works, to all of which he was devoting his best powers, were emanating at the same time from his wonderfully active brain, so prodigal of picturesque fancies that the only difficulty was to find time to preserve them on paper. Yet no evidence of the triple labour was visible

<sup>1</sup> The parents of Edmund Yates.

in any of the three stories—no signs of haste or of the mental fatigue one would have thought inevitable in such a tremendous task. Each plot was intricate and entirely distinct from that of its brethren : but all three romances displayed the same power of vivid description, sustained interest, wealth of incident, and skilful utilization of profound historical and antiquarian knowledge.

Although Ainsworth thus, apparently, found no difficulty in the simultaneous composition of three novels, the overlapping of these works renders it no easy matter for his biographer to preserve that strict chronological record of events which it is desirable to maintain as far as possible. In the nature of things, therefore, some retrogression in dates is unavoidable in the most prolific and active portion of Ainsworth's literary life, which we are now examining.

*Old St. Paul's* was written originally on the proposition of the proprietors of *The Sunday Times* that Ainsworth should contribute a story to that journal for publication in weekly instalments throughout the year ; the terms offered were £1000, and the copyright of the work to revert to the author after completion. The offer was accepted, arrangements and plans were soon settled, with the result that *Old St. Paul's* commenced in *The Sunday Times* on 3rd January, and concluded on 26th December, 1841, being, it is believed, the first romance to appear serially in an English newspaper. This was a new feature in journalism, and reflected great credit upon its plucky promoters, who did not hesitate to offer such liberal terms in order to secure the work of the novelist second only to Dickens in popular favour.

*Old St. Paul's* is one of the most engrossing of Ains-



worth's romances ; and is also, perhaps, the best example of how he steeped himself in the history, the traditions, and the literature of a period, and then, after he had grasped the very heart of his subject, evolved a romantic narrative in which the real and the imaginary were so skilfully intertwined as almost to defy separation. Just as in *Jack Sheppard* and *Guy Fawkes*, the fictitious incidents and characters of this book seem as much a reality as the groundwork of historical fact on which they are so firmly engrafted. The history of the Plague is, of course, mainly founded on Defoe's wonderful *Journal of the Plague Year* ; but in *Old St. Paul's* Defoe is infused with actuality, with human interest. As Laman Blanchard observed : " From the insupportable and unredeemed ghastliness of Defoe's astonishing narrative, we turn to this *peopled* story, and discover a vitality amidst the shadows of death, and hope stealing silently on through the desolation and the ruin . . . with what a gentle and reconciling humanity he has detained us amidst what was loathsome to exhibit to us, as it were, the lily in the charnel-house ; and carried us through the pestilence and the flame, to vindicate the severity of human trials, to inculcate salutary lessons of exertion and endurance, and track the course of faith and courage, and happiness, through all."

The imaginativeness which animates *Old St. Paul's*—the power of making the reader actually realize scenes and events of another time—has rarely been equalled. In this book one can *see* the picturesque, narrow, winding streets of old London in 1665, and the tall houses with their high, pointed gables, overhanging stories, and latticed windows ; one can *see* the red crosses painted on

the doors, *hear* the clang of the bell and the rumble of the dead-cart as it collects its grisly load of victims of the plague, and witness the culminating horrors of the plague-pit itself; one can *see* the beautiful Gothic cathedral, the earlier St. Paul's—its aisles thronged with ruffling gallants, apprentices, and vendors of all kinds of goods—and trace the labyrinthine mysteries of the crypt beneath; and one can *hear* the thunderous voice of Solomon Eagle pronouncing the doom of the city, and the clash of rapiers as that gay sinner, Rochester, fights for possession of the fair Amabel. How picturesque, too, is the description of old London and the then adjacent country, as seen from the tower of St. Paul's.<sup>1</sup> The vivid narrative of the Fire of London forms a splendid climax to the living panorama of events which figure in this admirable work. Its scenes seem like realities—things we have witnessed long ago, in another life perhaps, or, rather, in all the weird verisimilitude of a dream. No other romance has so powerfully revived one of the most dramatic epochs of London's history.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Book II, Chapter VI.

<sup>2</sup> Ainsworth's *Old St. Paul's* made a great impression upon, and influenced, the vivid imagination of Mr. William Holman Hunt, when a youth. The distinguished artist permitted me to quote from his *Pre-Raphaelitism* his account of the fascination this romance had for him:—

“At this date Harrison Ainsworth's *Old St. Paul's* was coming out in *The Sunday Times*. It dealt with the beloved city, and treated of all the streets and by-ways that I knew so well. Solomon Eagle was the very figure of tragic romance for a boy, and I came to the end of each instalment of the thrilling story with nervous reluctance. I could not wait a whole week for the progress of the plot, so I set to work to write down what I deemed ought to follow. When the full complement of matter for the next week was finished, it occurred to me that if the author were ill, or in some way hindered from supplying his quantum of excitement to the expectant public, the loss would be one that the world could never bear, and to save it from such a possible calamity, I forwarded my own understudy. When the master's chapters appeared I felt obliged to bow to them as above competition in all but the

It is interesting to compare Defoe's *Journal of the Plague Year* with *Old St. Paul's*; it will then be seen how Ainsworth worked up his story from the briefest details and allusions in the earlier work. For instance, Solomon Eagle is just mentioned by Defoe, and no more; but in *Old St. Paul's* he becomes a living personality.<sup>1</sup> The same with Doctor Hodges, who in Ainsworth's hands becomes an interesting and benevolent character for aiding the victims of the plague, and incidentally plays his part in the plot of the story, like the blind piper who was cast alive into the dead-cart.

It must not be forgotten, however, that Ainsworth was greatly indebted to Defoe for the groundwork of his romance, and not only to *The Journal of the Plague Year*. The description in *Old St. Paul's* of how the Grocer of Wood Street victualled his house, and shut up himself and his family therein for a long period, to escape contagion from the plague, was founded on a rare little volume entitled, *Due Preparations against the Plague, both of Soul and Body*, the authorship of which both Ainsworth and Crossley had no hesitation in attributing to Defoe. It was Crossley, as usual, who sent his friend this valuable work, and suggested the utilization of its details in *Old St. Paul's*. Unfortunately, the precious volume got lost on the journey, and was not recovered until over a month afterwards! The incident throws an amusing sidelight on the remoteness of Kensal Green from London sixty years ago, and the leisured calm and truly rural disinclination to hurry that characterized the startling character of the situations, in which it seemed to me I more than rivalled the original author."

<sup>1</sup> A picture by Poole—"Solomon Eagle and the Plague of London"—was exhibited in London at the time Ainsworth's romance was drawing so much attention to the subject.

carriers who "served" the village in those days. In December, 1840, Ainsworth wrote to Crossley: "I am sorry to tell you the book has not arrived. I have sent three different messengers . . . and can hear nothing of it. Neither the Harrow carrier, nor the Kilburn carrier, nor our omnibus have received it. . . . I will immediately commence legal proceedings against the Railway Office. At present, the clerks refuse to search their books, but I will soon make them alter their tone. . . . I will not rest till I find where the blame rests. . . ." But the fault was not the Railway's, for on 22nd *January* Ainsworth notified Crossley: "Yesterday the parcel reached its destination. It appears that the person who has the charge of the office, in Paternoster Row, detained it till he could find some conveyance, and at last sent it by the Parcels Delivery Co., who transferred it to a carrier, who, again, detained it till it *suited his convenience* to walk out with it from Kilburn to Kensal Lodge. However, here it is. . . . A glance convinces me it is far better than any version I have yet seen of the story. Let me know what you think of the first number in *The Sunday Times*. . . ."

In *Old St. Paul's*, Ainsworth again introduced several descriptive glimpses of the charming country round Kensal Green and Westbourne Green; and he also placed the action of part of his story in Berkshire, which enabled him to describe the down country he knew so well from his visits to Mrs. Hughes. During one of these sojourns he made an expedition to Ashdown Park for the purpose of depicting it accurately in *Old St. Paul's*.

"I had great pleasure," Mrs. Hughes wrote to Mrs. Southey, "in taking Mr. Ainsworth to see Ashdown

Park, the old seat (of the Earl of Craven) described in the second volume. It was a strange expedition of ten miles over a down road—so impracticable that we walked as much, and more, than we drove, and had to scramble in and out of the phaeton incessantly ; but we were repaid for our trouble by the interest this singular old place excited. The weather was perfection—the down air delicious—the larks singing, and as we skirted the high down, the whole Vale of the White Horse lay in blue distance before us. There never was a truer worshipper of God's works than Mr. Ainsworth, and it was pleasant to me to see how he felt the combination of circumstances."

Mrs. Hughes herself makes a brief appearance in the pages of *Old St. Paul's*—under the name of "Mrs. Compton"—in her own home amid the Berkshire downs.<sup>1</sup> Ainsworth very faithfully limned the well-known characteristics of his kind old friend, and did not forget to describe her dogs, her flower-garden, and her charming house, Kingston Lisle, with which some of his happiest memories were entwined.

Many years after the publication of *Old St. Paul's*, Ainsworth received a rather interesting communication respecting a statement he had made in the book. He had there mentioned a certain Greek physician (alluded to by Defoe), Doctor Constantine Rhodoconakis, or Rhodocanaceis, who retailed the "infallible antidote" for the plague ; but added that the doctor had himself died of the pestilence.<sup>2</sup> The latter assertion was erroneous, and in 1865 a Greek Prince—a lineal descendant of Doctor Rhodoconakis—contributed the following in-

<sup>1</sup> Book III, Chapter IX.

<sup>2</sup> Book III, Chapter VI.

formation to *Notes and Queries*, a copy of which he sent to Ainsworth:—

“ Doctor Rhodoconakis : During the year 1667 he returned to his native isle, Chios, where he married the Duchess Henrietta Koressy, his cousin, but whence he was obliged, a few months afterwards, by the Turkish Government, on account of his political and religious opinions, to depart and return to London, where he remained many years always honoured with the friendship of H.M. King Charles II. He died, not in London during the great plague, as an eminent English novelist of the day erroneously stated in one of his romances, but in Amsterdam, the 13th of August, 1689, whence his mortal remains were a few years later exhumed by his nephew, Prince Francis, and his only daughter, transported to the Isle of Chios, and buried in our family mausoleum near his ancestors.”

In acknowledging this statement, Ainsworth replied:—

“ MY DEAR PRINCE,

“ *May 27th, 1865.*

“ On my return from town to-day I found your very obliging letter and its enclosures, and I am delighted to learn . . . that you have completely settled the point as to the time and place of your distinguished ancestor's death. It appears that I was entirely mistaken, and that Doctor Constantine Rhodoconakis lived full twenty-three years after the Great Plague of London. How I came to fall into the error of supposing that he perished of the pestilence I cannot conceive, but I should the more regret the mistake if it had not been the means of leading you to furnish us with a few accurate particulars of the doctor's career. I will take care that my error is corrected in any future edition of *Old St. Paul's* over which I have control. . . . If you could recover any diary

or memoranda kept by the Doctor during the period of the Plague a very curious work might be made out of the material. . . . Pray accept my best thanks for the admirable photographic portrait which you have sent me. . . .”

Ainsworth did not arrange for Cruikshank to illustrate *Old St. Paul's*; why he did not was a disputed point between the two, and cannot be cleared up now. For some reasons it is to be regretted that Cruikshank did not co-operate in this work, as he would undoubtedly, at this period of his art, have found inspiration for magnificent designs in such dramatic subjects as the Plague and the Fire of London when vivified by the genius of Ainsworth. However, the latter chose to engage another illustrator, and an admirable one he found in John Franklin, some of whose rarely effective drawings for *Old St. Paul's* could not have been excelled by Cruikshank himself. Franklin was at his best in his sombre studies of night scenes, and the plates illustrating “The Plague Pit,” and “The Body of Amabel carried to the Dead-cart” can only be compared to Wiertz for power of horrific conception. Franklin’s twenty illustrations to *Old St. Paul's* appeared in the first edition, in December, 1841; for, after the completion of the story in *The Sunday Times*, the copyright, by agreement, reverting to the author, it was published, in three volumes, by Hugh Cunningham, of Saint Martin’s Place, who had taken over Macrone’s business. The book was “Gratefully and affectionately inscribed: To Mr. Serjeant Talfourd—The author of the two noblest tragedies of modern times, *Ion*, and *The Athenian Captive*; the warm friend of all men of letters; and the constant supporter of their interests, and vigilant defender of their rights.”

In the following May, 1842, *Old St. Paul's*, with Franklin's illustrations, commenced its appearance in shilling monthly parts, and the wrappers, as previously mentioned, bore the unsuitable drawing of the modern cathedral of St. Paul's, with accessories, which Cruikshank had designed for the contemplated but unrealized *Lions of London*.<sup>1</sup> It was not until 1847 that the two additional illustrations by "Phiz" were supplied, and these, together with all Franklin's plates, made their appearance in the one volume edition published that year by Parry, Blenkarn & Co., of Leadenhall Street.

*Old St. Paul's* was very well received by all the critics, for the author's commanding position in contemporary literature was now firmly established, and the high tone of his books succeeding *Jack Sheppard* had silenced the envious clamour evoked by that too popular work. Even *The Athenæum*—a journal which Ainsworth always thought hostile to his works—pronounced *Old St. Paul's* to have "great merit."

As previously mentioned, Ainsworth severed his connection with Bentley and *The Miscellany* in the latter part of 1841, for he had now decided to issue a magazine of his own, of which he would be both proprietor and editor. Writing to Crossley on 17th November, 1841, he said:—

"I am just now finishing *Old St. Paul's* and am consequently very busy. . . . I have made all arrangements to start my Magazine at Christmas next, and have engaged Tony Johannot (the artist), who is now at work for me. I went over to Paris for that purpose. . . . *Windsor Castle*, of course, forms the main feature of the design, and I propose commencing the story with Henry the Eighth entering into the Castle on the morning of St. George's Day, 1529, attended by Anne Boleyn and

<sup>1</sup> See *ante*, p. 317.



the Cardinals Wolsey and Campeggio. I intend making Lord Surrey the hero of the story. What say you? Did you hear of Dickens's illness? Poor fellow, he has had to undergo an operation. . . ."

The arrangements for the forthcoming magazine were, however, somewhat altered, for Ainsworth again allied himself with Cruikshank, and secured his aid as illustrator-in-chief of the new miscellany. The services of M. Johannot were to be retained for *Windsor Castle*, but the production of that work was postponed for some months. Cruikshank had been conducting a monthly magazine of his own, entitled *The Omnibus*; but on once more joining forces with his old ally he drove, to use his own metaphor, his *Omnibus* into *Ainsworth's Magazine*. The inimitable partnership of author and artist being once again *fait accompli*, the following announcement appeared in December, 1841:—

"1, St. Martin's Place,  
Trafalgar Square.

### NEW PERIODICAL WORKS

Preparing for Publication by Mr. Cunningham.

#### I.

MR. AINSWORTH'S MISCELLANY,  
illustrated by George Cruikshank.

On the 29th of January, 1842, Price Eighteen pence,  
No. 1 of

AINSWORTH'S MAGAZINE

A Monthly Miscellany of Romance,  
General Literature, and Art.

Edited by W. Harrison Ainsworth, Esq.,

And illustrated with designs on steel and woodcuts by  
George Cruikshank.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The pictorial cover of the magazine was designed by Tony Johannot.

Containing the commencement of a new work of fiction by Mr. Ainsworth, with Two illustrations on Steel by George Cruikshank. With contributions from the most eminent writers of the day."

The coming birth of the new periodical was heralded by a chorus of welcome from its brethren of the press, which burst into a pæan of praise when the merits of the bantling were perceived, directly it appeared.

Ainsworth celebrated his new venture in his usual fashion by giving a dinner, among the guests being Douglas Jerrold, Blanchard, Pettigrew, Martin Tupper, and Albert Smith.

Ainsworth was now at the acme of his career. From the beginning of 1839 to the end of 1841 he had produced four romances—*Jack Sheppard*; *Guy Fawkes*; *The Tower of London*; and *Old St. Paul's*—which had achieved unprecedented success and rendered their author fame and pecuniary returns such as only Dickens could contemporaneously rival. These three years, then, were the most important and memorable of the author's life, the years when he wrote those works to which Macaulay's words may particularly be applied:—

"When I devour the pregnant pages of Ainsworth I am lost in amazement that his wonderful historical novels have not an abiding place in every house. His close adherence to established facts, woven together in such attractive form, renders his series of romances indispensable. . . . He always charms, but never misleads."



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