

THE FARMER'S WEEKLY MUSEUM.

BY ANDREW P. PEABODY.

THE *æstrum* of authorship plies its sting wherever there is any consciousness or pretence of superior intelligence, culture or brain-power. It is not Mæcænas that makes the writer, but the writer that calls out the Mæcænas. Had a Virgil or a Horace loomed up in full radiance through the mists of the dark ages, patrons that could not read would have listened to his song, feasted the bard and paid his copyists. Our great publishing firms now monopolize the office of Mæcænas, and seldom fail to capture a man of transcending genius; though if there be one who eludes their ken or scorns their convoy to fame, he must remain unhonored in his own generation, while some posthumous chance may disinter and revivify him for posterity. In this country there were no great publishers in the last or in the earlier years of the present century. The books printed here were almost all English books, some of them standard works of well-known authors, some of them manuals of devotion, some of them catering for the coarsest tastes and prized for what made them worse than worthless,—a type of literature which found greedy readers in an age perhaps no purer than our own, though with less transparency of evil. An American work was too hazardous an enterprise, unless backed by a list of subscribers that presupposed the very reputation which a new writer had yet to earn. As late as 1816 it was written, and with truth,—“During the rage for English books which now prevails it would be worse than folly to offer the writings of an American author to a community which purchases with eager avidity the most disgusting details of English profligacy, and regards with

indifference the classical beauty, the gorgeous eloquence and the sound sense of an Ames, a Hamilton, and a Harper."¹ Meanwhile the country newspapers elicited, cherished, and to the utmost of their ability subsidized worthy aspirants in literature, and in their columns may be found not only essays and poems of good promise, but such promise fully realized in no small amount of prose and verse of exceptional merit, much of it so cosmopolitan that, if reprinted now, it would seem fresh and new, much of it of equal worth, yet belonging so intimately to its own time that it can be appreciated only by those already conversant with things as they then were, or by those who recognize it as their best guide and interpreter in the quest of knowledge as to society and life a hundred years ago. There might be named several of these rural weekly journals, some issued in places otherwise almost unknown, which were far superior, except in the very scanty item of news, to the best papers in the larger towns, and had, if not a greater, a much wider circulation than they, with subscribers whom they could not reach in twice the time in which we now cross the continent.

The paper which contributed most largely to the literature of its time and to the nurture of American literature in the first half-century of our national existence was the *Farmer's Weekly Museum*, of Walpole, New Hampshire, established by the founder of this Society, and thus having a special claim to record in our proceedings.

July 17, 1770, Isaiah Thomas, in partnership with his former master, Zechariah Fowle, issued in Boston the first number of the *Massachusetts Spy*. Before the close of the year he became its sole proprietor. It was in the interest of the popular party, and was so intensely and efficiently hostile to the administration under the British crown, that just before

¹ Robert Goodhue Harper, a member of the United States Senate from Virginia. An edition of his "Select Works" was published in Baltimore, in 1814. An article in *Blackwood's Magazine* says:—"His writings are energetic, manly, profound, satisfactory. We hold him to be, altogether, one of the ablest men that North America has produced."

the battle of Lexington the editor deemed it necessary for his personal safety to leave Boston. After an interval of four weeks the paper re-appeared in Worcester under the same name, with the addition, "Or, American Oracle of Liberty." It still exists, and is the oldest paper in Massachusetts.

David Carlisle, of an old Walpole family, served his apprenticeship in the office of the *Spy*, and when he became of age, in 1793, Mr. Thomas enabled him to start a paper in his native town, supplying the capital and giving his own name and credit to the firm of Thomas and Carlisle, which opened at the same time a book-store, and did such job and book printing as was called for. Walpole had at that time less than fourteen hundred inhabitants, almost wholly a farming population, which must have furnished few subscribers for the paper or customers for the book-store.

The paper was started April 11, 1793, under the title of *The New Hampshire Journal: Or, The Farmer's Weekly Museum*, but April 4, 1797, assumed the name of *The Farmer's Weekly Museum, and New Hampshire and Vermont Journal*, which it retained, not without several changes, till, after a lingering decline and some brief periods of suspended animation, it expired for lack of patronage, October 15, 1810.

Carlisle seems to have been, if not a ready writer, a wise purveyor; and as it is the token of an accomplished scholar, not that he knows everything, but that he knows where to find whatever he wants to use, so it is the token of the successful manager of a journal or magazine, not that he can write well, but that he knows where to look for good writers. His earliest helper was Rev. Thomas Fessenden, the minister of the town, a Harvard graduate, of superior attainments for his time, of a rather liberal type of theology, and possessed of a vein of wit and humor which he did not hesitate to mine on fit occasions.

In 1795 Joseph Dennie took up his residence in Walpole, and began writing for the *Museum*; early in the year he assumed the entire control of it as editor; and for the three or four following years it is not too much to say that this paper had a larger amount and variety of original matter of a high character than there has been in the same number of issues of any American paper before or since. The *Museum* obtained a circulation extending from Maine to Georgia, and as far west as Ohio, filling weekly a large extra mail-bag.

Joseph Dennie had, in my opinion, and I think in that of the best judges of his own time, no contemporary equal among the prose writers of America. He was born in Boston in 1768. He entered the sophomore class of Harvard College in 1787. His college life seems to have been stormy. Evidently conscious of superior ability, he failed to convert the college faculty to his own opinion of himself, and having been neglected in the assignment of performances at the several exhibitions, he accused them of "a general combination in favor of stupidity." He was reprimanded and degraded for insulting a tutor,—a form of leze-majesty against a *numen* which college administration in more recent times has held inviolably sacred, even when it has made itself supremely ridiculous. Maddened by this normal and perhaps righteous discipline, he chose for declamation such a piece and delivered it in such a way as to incur the charge of premeditated insult on the whole faculty. For this he was suspended, and was restored to his class and to his standing in it, just in time to obtain his degree.¹

¹ Dennie's place of suspension was Groton; the tutor assigned to him, Rev. Daniel Chaplin, H. U. 1772, D.D. 1817. While at Groton, he maintained a frequent correspondence with his classmate Roger Vose, afterward a distinguished member of the New Hampshire bar, and a member of Congress. Twenty of these letters are now in the possession of Thomas Bellows Peck of Walpole, H. U. 1863. They contain a great deal of juvenile fun and humor, a still larger amount of grave and serious thought, and absolutely nothing indicative of bad principles or habits. Indeed, the impression derived from the correspondence, as a whole, is that Harvard could ill afford to lose such a student. I might

Dennie retained through life a contemptuous hostility to the college authorities, and this sentiment was undoubtedly on their part cordially reciprocated. In the old-time relation of mutual antagonism his position with the faculty would have sufficed to make him unboundedly popular with his class; but there were other and better reasons for this. As I look over the names in the catalogue, I feel sure that he was the brightest of his class, probably the only one of whom genius could have been predicated, and second to none of them except President Quincy in abilities that might have fitted him for any position, office or trust, however high, large or arduous. He was Mr. Quincy's special favorite, and according to Edmund Quincy, so long as Dennie lived, his visits were the only occasions of relaxation and festivity on which his father departed from that rigid Spartan *régime* which gave his youth the gravity of age, and prolonged for him far beyond his four-score of years the vigor of youth. Jeremiah Mason, no mean judge, in his seventy-seventh year, and nearly half a century after he had last seen Dennie, wrote of him, "I have never known a more eloquent and delightful talker."

Shortly after graduating Dennie went to Charlestown, New Hampshire, as a law student in the office of Benjamin West, one of the most eminent lawyers of his time. In

quote from the more playful of these letters, were it not that some of the personal allusions in them would demand a knowledge of persons which we no longer possess, to make them intelligible, and others are in disparagement of members of the college faculty who have left worthily honored memories. I will, therefore, merely append to my Report, as specimens of Dennie's style and thought in his novitiate, certain letters of his which contain no references to persons, but relate to subjects of serious interest and moment. My readers will not be surprised that in five years' time the writer of these letters should have become in thought and style second to no then living American author.

There are in this correspondence directions for the transmission of letters, which indicate either the non-existence or the inordinate expensiveness of mail communication between Cambridge and Groton. Vose is asked to "enquire at Reed's or Richardson's if Groton marketers do not sometimes stop at their respective houses," and to "transmit letters by them, to be lodged at Fletcher's tavern." Various other modes of private transmission are referred to, as is also the delay of letters for lack of an opportunity of sending them.

1793 he found himself, without his own seeking, on the verge of the clerical profession. The Charlestown Congregational minister died, and shortly afterward Dennie was requested to occupy the vacant pulpit by reading the liturgy of the Episcopal Church and a sermon. He chose one of Sterne's sermons, and he must have performed the entire service with singular impressiveness; for he was immediately afterward invited to officiate as reader in the Episcopal Church at Claremont. His single Sunday there was followed by an engagement for four months, and that, by an urgent request that he would receive ordination, and become rector of the Church. About the same time similar overtures were made to him by the wardens and vestry of St. John's Church in Portsmouth. He, however, adhered, in show at least, to the law, was admitted to the bar in 1794, and opened an office in Charlestown. Mr. Mason says that he was all the while in self-training for a literary life, that he had studied but one law-book, and that his knowledge of the law consisted mainly of queer and quaint phrases, thence derived, with which he was wont to garnish his conversation and to make fun of his profession. He appeared once in court as an advocate, and then made a plea, elaborate, brilliant and eloquent, before an uneducated rustic judge, who had no idea of what he meant or to what purpose he was speaking, and rebuked him for his waste of words. When asked to make a second appearance, he replied, "I remember the Bœotian judge, and it is the last time that I shall ever attempt to batter down a mud wall with roses." It was said that thenceforward, though he transacted some legal business, he often, and for a long time continuously, kept his office-door fastened on the inside to prevent the entrance of clients.

Meanwhile he had gained no little reputation by a series of papers entitled "The Farrago," printed in country newspapers on the Connecticut, and was induced in 1795 to undertake the publication of a weekly literary journal in

Boston. This appeared under the title of *The Tablet*. It had able contributors, among them Rev. Dr. Gardiner, of Trinity Church. It was read with eager interest and admiration, and in order to its complete success it lacked nothing save subscribers; but because of their paucity it ceased to be at the end of three months.

Dennie now established himself in Walpole, and began for the *Museum* a series of papers entitled "The Lay Preacher,"—a designation suggested, no doubt, by his recent pulpit experience. These were continued weekly, with brief intermissions, for four years. They must have been much better sermons than the author was wont to hear; for they were written just at the time when the Whitefieldian fervor had died out of the New England pulpit, and congregations were fed either on the husks of obsolescent dogmas, or on the trite commonplaces of conventional morality. These sermons of Dennie are not spiritual, but they are thoroughly Christian, and consist, for the most part, in the application—at once sententious and vivid, close and trenchant—of the ethical principles of the Gospel to the actual affairs of common life. There is hardly one of them that does not meet some real need, rebuke some tolerated wrong or evil, urge some neglected item of moral obligation, satirize some reigning folly, or present for devout admiration or reverent awe some familiar, yet else unnoted aspect of the Divine Providence in nature or in life. They always have a scriptural text, almost always quaint and piquant, generally from the Old Testament, often from its biography, with illustrations and comment that indicate an intimate knowledge of the Bible. Though they introduce all sorts of secular topics, and are pervaded by keen wit and unsparing sarcasm, they are never flippant or irreverent. They might be compared with Sterne's sermons, were it not that Sterne can have had no seriousness of purpose, while Dennie evidently meant to do good, and wanted to be felt as a moral censor and re-

former. I should rather put them on a level with Sydney Smith's sermons at once as to their directness and point, their flavor of chastened humor, their sincere purpose of healthful moral influence, and equally as to their lack of unction, in both men perhaps due to their abhorrence of and contempt for sanctimony. These sermons of Dennie were everywhere welcomed with delight and admiration, in part for their transcendent merit of thought and style, in part because the potential connection of religion with the ordinary and even trivial details of every-day life, to us as familiar in thought as it is sadly wanting in realization, was then a novel conception, nay, in the literal sense of the word, a discovery; for it uncovered those teachings of Him who spake as never man spake, which were all homely sayings on the occasions of the passing hour,—fitly generalized by his disciples, yet even more fitly specialized anew, as in these lay-sermons, to meet the altered needs of an altered civilization.

In addition to these papers Dennie procured from contributors, some of whom I shall name presently, articles of a great diversity of merit, yet all of them of merit; for he was a most discriminating and fastidious critic. He also wrote weekly summaries of "Incidents Abroad," and "Incidents at Home," which Mr. Buckingham, than whom we could have no more authentic witness, pronounces far superior to anything of the kind within his very wide range of knowledge. He also had, in each number, "Notes to Readers and Correspondents," which were always amusing and attractive, were written at the last moment, and were made longer or shorter to fill out the vacant space in the week's issue.

Dennie was an ardent Federalist, and his paper was regarded as one of the strong bulwarks of the administration. His services were so highly appreciated that, in 1799, Timothy Pickering, then Secretary of State, gave him the appointment of private and confidential secretary to the

Department. He accepted the office, and in September of that year entered upon its duties, from which he was released in the following May by Mr. Pickering's resignation. On his removal to Philadelphia he entered into a semi-editorial engagement with the *United States Gazette*. Subsequently, toward the close of the year 1800, he began the publication and assumed the editorial charge of a weekly literary journal, under the name of *The Portfolio*, which obtained at once an extensive circulation, had a very vigorous existence under a series of able editors till 1825, and expired in 1827. Dennie took for his *nom de plume* as editor the title of Oliver Oldschool, Esq. The numbers under his editorship have very much the same diversity of articles in prose and poetry that we now see in our monthlies,—the poetry, generally faultless in rhythm, easy to be understood, and with as much of the divine afflatus as could be reasonably expected in four, five or six closely printed columns every week,—the prose, when not Dennie's own, giving ample token of his pure taste and high standard in the choice of materials and contributors. He was still a zealous Federalist, and, of course, a bitter assailant of Jefferson's administration. In 1803 he was prosecuted for a libel on the government; but the trial resulted, according to his own statement, in "a signal victory."

Dennie was natively of a frail constitution, and had contracted convivial habits that preyed upon his health. That in this respect he transgressed, though he doubtless reached the outside limits of what was then called temperance, I find no certain proof, and my examination of every vestige of him that I can trace convinces me that, while this may be an open question, at every other point he was a man of sterling integrity, of scrupulous honor, of stainless purity, of firm Christian faith and strong religious principle. He died after a lingering illness in 1812. The inscription on his monument in the cemetery of St. Peter's church, reminds me of the verse which attributes

"To Berkeley every virtue under heaven."

Dennie had for his most frequent contributor to the *Museum*, Royall Tyler, of the Harvard class of 1776, who won in a subsequent long life of literary labor, public service and private worth, a much better name than he left for many years at Cambridge. He was for a while *Aide* to General Lincoln in the war of the Revolution, and afterward, in the suppression of the Shays rebellion, and was sent by Governor Bowdoin to New York to obtain the extradition of Shays, who had escaped across the State line. While in New York he offered for the John Street Theatre a play entitled "The Contrast," which was the first play of American authorship that ever appeared on any stage. He studied law with Chief Justice Dana and afterward with John Adams, and entered upon the practice of his profession in Guilford, Vermont, removing thence to Brattleborough. He reached the highest distinction at the bar, was Professor of Jurisprudence in the University of Vermont, and was for several years Chief Justice of the State.

Tyler furnished a large part of the comic element for the *Museum*. He had already written for several papers, articles purporting to come from "the shop of Messrs. Colon and Spondee," and under this title he became one of Dennie's regular contributors. His was, as he termed it, "a variety store," and there was hardly anything less grave than the Lay Preacher, which it did not offer for eagerly waiting customers. No small part of the wit in these papers is sarcasm, better understood and appreciated then than now; much of it consists of scornful ridicule for democracy and its adherents, while a great portion of it loses nothing by time, and is as fresh now as it was ninety years ago. The verse under this head is for the most part Della-Cruscan doggerel, and admirable of its kind. I doubt whether in this special vein he has been surpassed by any American writer.

Judge Tyler wrote also the first American novel that was ever reprinted in England, entitled "The Algerine Captive,

or, the Life and Adventures of Captain Updike Underhill, six years a prisoner among the Algerines." This story has so much the air of a narrative of actual experience that it was received, treated and reviewed as such by English critics. The first edition was printed in Walpole, at the office of the *Museum*, in two small duodecimo volumes, in a remarkably clear and broadly leaded type, showing the capacity of the office for the best work of its time. It went through several subsequent editions. I confess that I am not surprised at the English critic's mistake; for the story has throughout a marvellous verisimilitude, and indeed Underwood before his capture is made to visit Philadelphia, where he calls on Dr. Franklin, and relates an anecdote of him so characteristic that I myself feel greatly in doubt whether it is fable or fact.

Tyler's style in essay and narrative is easy, graceful and elegant, yet without the rare refinement and exquisite finish which characterized all that Dennie wrote.

Among Dennie's collaborators a prominent place belongs to Thomas Green Fessenden, son of the Walpole clergyman, and a Dartmouth graduate of 1796, who wrote for the *Museum* a great deal of verse, chiefly in the Hudibrastic style, and who had not the fortune that has befallen many of our American poets, that of outliving their reputation; for in 1836, the year before his death, he issued a new edition of his earlier poems, which, as I well remember, was not uncalled for or unwelcome.

I might almost speak of him as a prose writer; for his principal poems have more than their bulk in annotations, which they certainly now need, and which at this moment give them an historical interest far transcending the poetical merit of their text. Yet the poetry is good of its kind. The mock heroic is sustained with wonderful skill; and I doubt whether the notes were needed before divers topics referred to in the text became obsolete. About that time there was in this country an affluence, I might almost say

an avalanche, of Hudibrastic verse. Barlow, Humphreys and Trumbull owed to poetry of this sort almost as much reputation as they forfeited by their more serious poems. As late as my college days—almost a prehistoric period,—this stilted, comico-heroic type of poetry had still a prominent place in the current literature and was in great favor, and Fessenden bore the palm among the writers of his kind.

Fessenden after graduating studied law in Rutland, Vermont, and utilized his leisure hours by writing for the *Museum* many poems which enhanced the reputation of the paper, and some which gave the writer an extended and not rapidly evanescent popularity. In 1801 he went to London as an agent for the introduction of a newly invented hydraulic machine, which proved a failure, as did another similar enterprise in which he embarked. Weary, dispirited and ill, imprisoned for debts which he seemed to have no chance of ever paying, he much more than repaired his sunken fortunes by a poem written in jail, which had a success till then unprecedented on both sides of the Atlantic. It was first published in London in 1803, and in less than two months a second edition was called for. It has passed through three American editions. Its title is "Terrible Tractoration," under the pseudonym of "Christopher Caustic, M.D., LL.D." The very title may have no meaning for our younger members. It relates to what may have been a premature discovery, or may have been a piece of unconscious and honest charlatany.

Elisha Perkins, a physician of Norwich, Connecticut, undoubtedly both a scientific man and a philanthropist, invented what were called metallic tractors. A pair of these consisted of two sharp-pointed instruments, looking as if made, one of brass, the other of steel, and said to have been fashioned from a peculiar combination of metals. They were alleged to have a galvanic efficacy in the treatment of local inflammations, rheumatism, gout and various other diseases. The tractors, with their points applied to the part affected,

were drawn over it downward rapidly for several minutes. Perkins carried his invention to Europe, and returned to this country with certificates of cures, under the attestation not only of English bishops and distinguished English civilians, but of many physicians of the highest standing, including no less than twelve of the foremost members of the profession in Copenhagen. A Perkinian institution was founded in London for the benefit of the poor, and no less than five thousand cases of cure were reported. Of course, with such a backing the tractors had an immense run in this country, and were still believed in and used by some sensible people in my boyhood. But they had by that time fallen into general discredit, mainly in consequence of cures seemingly wrought by sham non-metallic tractors made to simulate and counterfeit the genuine article. Since I have known so much of the undoubted efficacy of galvanism in local disease, I have been inclined to believe in the curative virtue of the tractors, especially as the kinds of disease to which they were applied are such as in the case of the sham tractors might have been, as they are sometimes now, within the range of mind-cure by an over-susceptible imagination. Perkins died in 1799, of yellow fever contracted in the introduction of what he supposed to be a specific for that disease in a hospital in New York. His tractors, however, attained the climax of success several years afterward, and meanwhile were assailed by large numbers of the medical profession with the intensest bitterness of an immovable conservatism. Fessenden's poem, in four cantos, is in earnest championship of the tractors, and in scornful derision of their *de*-tractors. The notes are a copious miscellany of matters, most of them relating to the subject in hand, and of an incidental value by no means insignificant as illustrating the condition of medical and physical science at the time, with not a few interesting personal anecdotes.

Shortly after his return to America, in 1805, Fessenden published at Walpole, still under the pseudonym of Chris-

topher Caustic, another mock-heroic poem, in several cantos, entitled "Democracy unveiled, or, Tyranny stripped of the Garb of Patriotism." This is a Hudibrastic tirade against Jefferson and the democratic party, spirited, showing a fine ear for rhythm and a mastery of the peculiar style in which it is written, with an intensity of venomous hatred which swells into the dignity of poetic inspiration. This poem too is annotated copiously and virulently. There is hardly a leading democrat who does not, with the President, incur an obloquy more bitter and rancorous than can be easily imagined by those of a younger generation, but which has left distinct traces in my memory, brought up as I was in the heart of Essex county Federalism. Bad stories, with not a particle of probability, are told in these notes, and the worst things are said of men on whom even partisan malice could lay no worse charge than having broken down in a speech in a United States court. We have here an illustration of what I once referred to in a Report before this Society,—the unauthentic character which a history may have if prime reliance be placed on contemporary materials.

Fessenden, after this publication, sometimes practised law, sometimes edited a newspaper, and finally settled down in Boston as editor of the *Farmer's Magazine* and the *Horticultural Register*, useful, respected and honored, and in intimate relation with John Lowell, Peter C. Brooks, Josiah Quincy, and other amateur agriculturists. After his life had taken this practical turn, in 1818, he published a long, elaborate and tedious didactic poem, entitled "The Ladies' Monitor," which in well worded pentameters of faultless measure reads very much as Pope's Essay on Man might, if entirely dephlogisticated.

Another regular contributor to the *Museum* was David Everett. He was a native of Princeton, Massachusetts, early an orphan, and without aid or encouragement in the self-training by which he was enabled in 1791, at the age

of twenty-two, to enter Dartmouth College. Previously, when teacher of a school in New Ipswich, New Hampshire, he had written for Ephraim H. Farrar, a nephew of the centenarian Judge Timothy Farrar, for so many years the oldest graduate of Harvard College, the piece with which thousands of infant orators have made their *début*:

“You'd scarce expect one of my age
To speak in public on the stage.”¹

Everett graduated with a valedictory poem, prophetic of the future glory of his country, prophetic, too, of a literary reputation that might have preserved his name with the Everetts of a later day, but for the stubborn ignoring of native genius by American publishers. After leaving college, while studying law in Boston, he wrote for the *Museum* a valuable series of papers entitled, “Common sense in Dishabille,”—a dishabille more comely than the court-dress of the average newspaper writer of our time. These papers consist of economics and ethics somewhat in the Poor Richard style, and indicate at once literary skill, practical wisdom and a high moral aim.

In 1810 Everett wrote for the Boston Theatre, and published—if at that date American printing could be called publishing—a drama in five acts, entitled, “Daranzel, or the Persian Patriot.” This seems to me a work not unworthy of an Everett, and I can see no reason why it should have passed out of knowledge, except that it was too early for

¹ This genesis of Everett's poem may seem apocryphal, inasmuch as we are accustomed to the line,—

“May n't *Massachusetts* boast as great?”

But the piece was inserted by Bingham in his “Columbian Orator,” which was for more than half a century the chief repertory for school-declamations. Bingham was a Boston man, and I have no doubt that he altered the ill-made line just quoted, from the more euphonious original,

“May not New Hampshire boast as great?”

Ephraim H. Farrar, then seven years old, was in later years a teacher in a school in Boston, adjacent to the Federal street church, and had for pupils, among other distinguished men, Rev. Drs. Tyng, Furness, Young and Lunt, William H. Gardiner, and Ralph Waldó Emerson.

an American work to live. I have found two orations of Everett, in thought and style deserving emphatic commendation, also, an essay "On the Rights and Duties of Nations," with special reference to the affair of the Chesapeake, — a calm, thoughtful, learned, admirably reasoned, statesman-like paper, designed to justify, without attempting to intensify, the sense of wrong as to the treatment of our mercantile marine by the British naval force. Everett, originally a Federalist, became a member of the democratic party, and was Clerk of the House of Representatives when Gerry was governor; but with the full expression of his own opinions, he does not indulge in invectives against his opponents. Indeed one of his orations has for its pervading sentiment the duty of mutual candor and kindness incumbent on the two great political parties.

Everett practised law, for a little while in Amherst, New Hampshire, but before and afterward in Boston, where he edited *The Patriot*, and then took charge of *The Pilot*, a short-lived paper in the interest of DeWitt Clinton, as candidate for the Presidency. He also published an exposition of the Apocalypse, of which I can find no copy, and therefore cannot say how much he thickened and darkened the dense cloud of commentary in which that obscure book is hopelessly enwrapped. In 1813, he closed an honorable, industrious and useful life at Marietta, Ohio, whither he had gone under hopeful auspices, to establish a newspaper.

The only remaining contributor to the *Museum* whom I shall name is Isaac Story, the son of a clergyman in Marblehead, and a cousin of Judge Story. He was of the Harvard class of 1793, was a lawyer in Rutland, Massachusetts, and died in 1803, at the age of twenty-nine. He contributed to the *Museum* a series of poems, which he republished in Boston, in 1801, under the title of "A Parnassian shop opened in the Pindaric style, by Peter Quince, Esq." These poems are generally in the Peter Pindar style which

Wolcott had made popular. Many of them, however, are seriously patriotic, some of them fervently anti-democratic, some of them simply and tastefully sentimental. Story wrote, beside, several longer poems in pentameter, one of them in blank verse, not unworthy of the "Parnassian shop," if we suppose it placed, as a shop naturally would be, at a resting-place on the acclivity, not on the summit of the mountain. He published also an oration commemorative of Washington, and one on the Fourth of July, 1801, neither of which I have been able to find.¹ If Judge Story in an obituary of him does not give him unmerited praise, it was only his early death that forfeited for him an eminence fully equal to his cousin's.

I have examined such of the writings of all these men as I could find, and what impresses me most strongly with regard to all of them, is the purity of their style and their mastery of the resources of their native tongue. They were much better writers than the average of those who, in our own time, are especially praised as good writers. For this there are two reasons. One is that they did not aim at style,—an aim that always misses fire. The other is that they were fed on good books,—on books written while authorship was still one of the fine arts, before book-making became a trade without an apprenticeship. Everyone then read the *Spectator*, and though these men were none of them servile imitators, the prose of all of them has constantly reminded me of my own early conversance with that wonderful repertory of the purest, most euphonious, most graceful English ever written.

The verse of these men is less good than their prose; yet there is none of it that would not replace for the better many of the dreary pages, with else unknown names, in the voluminous collections of British poets.

I cannot close this sketch without mention of Joseph Tinker Buckingham, who was Carlisle's youngest appren-

¹Both of these orations are in the library of the Society.

tice in 1796. As *printer's devil*, he was in daily intercourse with Dennie as the bearer of copy and proof, and he speaks of Dennie's deportment toward the apprentices as "marked with great urbanity and gentleness," and of his conversation with them as "pleasant and instructive." It was undoubtedly in this intercourse and in work on a paper of such surpassing merit, that Buckingham had the initial training which issued in making him one of the best writers that our country has ever produced. His autobiography is unsurpassed in the chaste simplicity and spontaneous beauty of its diction. The death of his father in his fourth year left his pre-eminently saintly mother and her infant children in extreme poverty; and in the whole compass of biographical literature I know of nothing so pathetic as his narrative of their privation and suffering, and of her unfaltering, sublime trust in the widow's God and the Father of the fatherless. I have read the story scores of times, and always with fresh and deep emotion.

Mr. Buckingham was best known as editor of the *New England Galaxy*, which struck with merciless justice at all sorts of shams and pretences, social, political and religious. By sanctimonious purists of every type it was denounced with holy horror, and while everyone wanted to read it, few dared to express for it the esteem, admiration and gratitude which very many felt. Yet the worst that can be said of the paper is that it was far in advance of its time; and it was in great part through its agency that the public mind grew into opinions then disavowed and deprecated. As far as I can recall the paper, which I read till it was discontinued, my belief is that it never aimed amiss, and never missed its aim. The editor was a man of keen moral sensibility, of sincere Christian faith and profound religious feeling, and it was consciously in behalf of truth and righteousness that he did battle. He was best known to a later generation as the founder and first editor of the *Boston Courier*.

It was my happiness to know him with some degree of intimacy, and to know him in the home which he adorned and blessed. One of his sons was and is my very dear friend, and I was often a guest at his house. Therefore, slight as was his connection with my subject, I am unwilling to dismiss it without my tribute of reverence and love to a memory so precious.

LETTERS FROM JOSEPH DENNIE TO ROGER VOSE.

GROTON, May 16, 1790.

DEAR FRIEND:

Nothing affords me more pleasure than your sentiments of the books you peruse. Conscious of your mental independency, of your judgment, and freedom from undue bias, when I peruse your opinions, I am sure to contemplate an exact transcript of truth in the light in which she appears to you. Now one grand design of reading is to furnish the mind with matter on which to ruminate. In a word to give birth to reflexion. Hence the ancients not unaptly denominated study, "pabulum mentis," by this intimating that they considered books as food, by feasting on which the intellect might gain vigor and arrive at maturity. Both of us keeping the above end in view, have recently perused the works of Beattie and Hume. That you have, appears from your opinion of those authors expressed in a late letter, the declaration of which opinion has given birth to the above remarks; that I have, the underwritten may, possibly, prove. I am fully sensible, that by many of the students Hume is admired; of this number I perceive you were a part. I cannot blame you. The scholar, who could not admire the elegance of style and the ingenuity of reasoning for which that author is so eminently distinguished, I should pronounce grossly deficient in taste. To deny him praise as an author would be literary blasphemy, but considered as a philosopher and as a man, I

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