

The Confessions of a Collector

William Carew Hazlitt

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THE CONFESSIONS OF A COLLECTOR

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It is published in the United States by Messrs
DODD, MEAD & COMPANY, New York; but, in
deference to the wishes of Collectors, the
original London imprint is retained.

ERRATUM.

Page [192](#), for *Anderton* read *Anderson*.

THE CONFESSIONS OF A COLLECTOR

BY
WILLIAM CAREW HAZLITT
AUTHOR OF
'FOUR GENERATIONS OF A LITERARY FAMILY,' ETC.

LONDON
WARD & DOWNEY
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1897

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Confessions of a Collector

CHAPTER I

My Antecedents—How and Whence the Passion came to Me—My Father's People—And My Mother's—My Uncle—His Genuine Feeling for what was Old and Curious—A Disciple of Charles Lamb—Books My First Love—My Courtship of Them under My Father's Roof—My Clandestine Acquisitions—A Small Bibliographical Romance—My Uncle as a Collector—Some of His Treasures—His Choice, and how He differed from My Father—An Adventure of the Latter at a Bookstall—Bargains—The Author moralises upon Them—A New View—I begin to be a Bibliographer—Venice strikes My Fancy as a Subject for Treatment—My Want of Acquaintance with It—Mr Quaritch and Mr Ruskin do not encourage Me—I resolve to proceed—I teach Myself what was Requisite to enable Me to do so—Some of My Experiences—Molini the Elder—The London Library Forty Years Ago—What became of My Collections for the Work—Preparing for Another and Greater Scheme.

When one makes in later life some sort of figure as a collector, it may become natural to consider to what favouring circumstances the entrance on the pursuit or pursuits was due. In the present case those circumstances were slight and trivial enough. Although I belonged to a literary family, none of my ancestors had been smitten by the bibliomania or other cognate passion, simply because at first our resources were of the most limited character, and my grandfather was a man of letters and nothing more. He was without that strange, inexplicable cacoethes, which leads so many to gather together objects of art and curiosities

on no definite principle or plea throughout their lives, to be scattered again when they depart, and taken up into their bookcases or cabinets by a new generation. This process, broadly speaking, has been in operation thousands of years. It is an inborn and indestructible human trait.

The earliest vestige of a feeling for books among us is unconnected with Collecting as a passion. My great-grandfather, the Presbyterian or Congregational minister, had his shelf or two of volumes, mostly of a professional cast. We hear of the *Fratres Poloni*, five stupendous folios, brimful of erudition—books which seem, to our more frivolous and superficial and hurrying age, better suited to occupy a niche in a museum as a monumental testimony to departed scholarship—books, alas! which those blind instruments of the revolutionary spirit of change, the paper mill and the fire, draw day by day nearer to canonisation in a few inviolable resting-places, as in sanctuaries dedicated to the holy dead. They will enter on a new and more odorous life: we shall look awfully upon them as upon literary petrifications, which to bygone ages were living and speaking things.

The Rev. W. Hazlitt was, nevertheless, a man of unusually generous sympathies for his time and his cloth; he could relish secular as well as sacred literature, and his distinguished son thought better of him as a letter-writer than as a preacher. But neither engaged in the pursuit of books otherwise than as practical objects of study or entertainment. There was nothing ‘hobby-horsical,’ to borrow Coleridge’s expression, about the matter. Hazlitt himself secured, as he tells us, stall copies of favourite books or pamphlets, devoured the contents, and then probably cast them aside. This I take to have been Shakespear’s plan. I cannot believe the great poet to have been a bibliophile like Jonson. He merely recognised in other men’s work material or suggestion for his own.

I conclude that with my father and the Scotch blood of his maternal progenitors, the Stoddarts and Moncrieffs, a certain share of taste for antiquities, or, at any rate, for memorials of the past in a literary shape, was inherited by the Hazlitts. My immediate paternal ancestor, the late Mr Registrar Hazlitt, undoubtedly possessed a strong instinctive disposition to form around him a collection of books. He was emphatically acquisitive almost to the last; and had he been a richer man, he would probably have left behind him a fairly good and extensive library. My father was deficient in knowledge and insight—I might add, in judgment. He bought the wrong copies, or he allowed the right ones to be massacred by a pagan binder; but he was a book-lover. The nucleus of his collection had been a set of Hazlitt’s works, a few volumes given to him by Miss

Lamb and others, and, of course, his own publications.

His alliance by marriage to the Reynells introduced another stage in our bibliographical evolution. My mother's brother, Mr Charles Weatherby Reynell, of whom I have so much to say elsewhere, was not only a book-buyer on a modest scale, but a gentleman with a vague, undefined liking for anything which struck him as quaint and curious—a coin, a piece of china, a picture, a bit of old painted glass, a Chippendale chair—it hardly signified what it was; but books had the first place, I think, in his heart, and he knew a good deal about such as he had purchased, and thought a good deal about them too, albeit they were, as copies, hardly calculated for the meridian of the fastidious connoisseur. In short, my relative was a disciple of the Lamb school; he selected for merit rather than condition, and his *petite bibliothèque* was part of his very being.

My father and Mr Reynell may be regarded as my bibliographical and archæological sponsors, and they have to answer for a good deal. Instead of becoming a distinguished civil servant, a prosperous trader, or a successful professional man, they contributed, I maintain, to mould me into what I was and am—a bibliographer, a collector, an antiquary.

Books, as they were my father's only, and my uncle's chief, paramours, were my first love. My father often laid out money on them, when I am now sure that he could ill afford it, and when the hour of pressure arrived, it was the books to which we had to bid farewell. How many I have seen come and go, while I was a boy under my father's roof—successive copies of the same favourite work, or little lots of different volumes. Stibbs's, opposite Somerset House, and next door to the *Morning Chronicle* office, is almost the earliest shop of the kind which I remember; a second was William Brown's, originally on the same premises. These two establishments witnessed the flux and reflux of many a brown paper parcel sent home in a moment of impulse, and launched on its backward voyage at a lower quotation in some financial dilemma—a contingency too frequent in the days before relief arrived in the shape of an official post.

I am haunted in all my maturer life by a feeling of remorse, that on two or three occasions I was betrayed into making foolish investments on my own authority, when neither my father nor myself could properly defray the expense. But the *lues* which was, in due course, to assume such enlarged dominion over me, and to branch into so many channels, was already an active agency; and my visits to the shop in the Strand, kept by Mr Brown, bore mischievous fruit in one instance at all events, when I secured for 24s. a set of Singer's *Select Early English Poets*,

in boards, uncut. My father was terribly concerned, not knowing where this sort of fancy was likely to end; but he recognised, perhaps, his own teaching, and eventually the Singer was bound by Leighton in half-blue morocco. It was a beautiful little set, I thought, and brand-new in its fresh livery. The day came when we had to say good-bye to it—not to it alone; and I should have wished never to behold it again. I did, however; I met with it at an auction; it was faded, thumbbed, disreputable. I had not the courage to touch it; it was no longer mine. I mused as I left the place upon its career and its destiny, and it made me really sad.

I have spoken of Mr Reynell as one of my teachers or masters. He was a person who had a genuine love for our older literature, and enjoyed even better opportunities than my father of indulging it. But his purchases were sparing and desultory, and he never attained any distinction as a collector. He had not studied the subject, and he never became wealthy enough to secure the services of competent advisers. In fact, his want of knowledge rendered him distrustful of counsel. The result was that he accumulated, during a very prolonged life, a singular assemblage of nondescript property, of which the really valuable proportion was infinitesimal. It was perfectly fortuitous, that he had picked up an exceedingly rare *Psalter*, in rather ragged state, for 25s., which at his sale, a year or two back, Mr Quaritch deemed worth £24, and a folio *Roman de la Rose*, which fetched a good price, and cost him the same moderate sum. As a rule, he invariably, from want of training and fine instinct, bought the wrong article, or, if the right one, in the wrong condition. He had not the eye of George Daniel, R. S. Turner, or Henry Huth, for form and fitness. Yet he was my instructor in a degree and a sense, and many delightful talks we have had about old books, which one or the other of us had seen or admired. He always listened with interest to my stories of adventures up and down the book-world, of which some are reserved for a future chapter; but he felt his inability, I concluded, to enter into the field with stronger competitors, and he usually returned to the contemplation of his own humble appurtenances with a sense of contentment, if not of superiority.

He was totally different from my father in his ideas about books. He did not, in general, care for the modern side, unless it was a first edition of his life-long friend Leigh Hunt, of Hazlitt, or of some other author to whom he was personally attached. On the contrary, my father never cultivated the older editions or original copies. The best standard text was his line. I had from him a little anecdote which shews him in the light of a book-hunter; but then it was for an immediate and isolated literary purpose. While he was engaged about 1840 in

editing the works of Defoe, he tried to procure a copy of the *Account of the Apparition of Mrs Veal*, and went, among other likely resorts, to Baker of Old Street, St Luke's. That individual derided the notion of finding such a rarity; and my father, turning away, cast an eye on Baker's twopenny box outside. There what should he discover but the identical pamphlet, and he takes twopence out of his pocket, which he hands to the boy, and puts the prize into it, which he carries home in triumph. It was the only bargain of which I ever heard him speak. He was not that way built. I sometimes wish that my experiences had not been infinitely more numerous.

The seeking and winning of bargains constitute an attractive pursuit and an equally attractive topic. You have the power of regaling your less fortunate or unpractical acquaintances with the strange chances, which enabled you to become the master for a trifle of such and such treasures and you gain confidence in your continued good fortune,—

‘When a fool finds a horse-shoe,
He thinks aye the like to do.’

It has sometimes appeared to me, however, that the general public looks with modified respect on this class of venture, more especially as it does not share the profits; and what is absolutely certain is, that the whole system of treating literature from a commercial point of view is narrowing and lowering, and tends to harden, if not to extinguish, that fine sensibility which is proper to the bibliophile. Since I was led by a union of circumstances to look upon rare books as a source of advantage, I have grown sensible of a change for the worse in my nature; yet, I think, only so far as the bare ownership is concerned. The volumes which I loved as a younger man are still dear to me; I keep them in my mind's eye; they stand in no peril at my hands of being degraded into *goods* or *stuff*; I do not hold them, because the outlay or capital which they represent is far more than I can afford to lock up; and in the nature of things I have to content myself with being the recipient of the difference, if not of feeling, that I appreciate the book and know its history better than the man to whom it passes from me.

I should be truly ashamed if I had to confess that with the actual proprietary interest in the literary or bibliographical rarities which I have had through my hands during the last forty years my substantial affection for the subject-matter and the authors began and ended. Thousands of precious volumes, which might be mine, if I had been otherwise situated, are merely as a question of form and pecuniary arrangement in the British Museum, in the Bodleian, or in some

private library; they are one and all before me at any moment, when I choose to summon them. I remember how they are bound, and the story which each tells; but they are in the keeping of others. Should I be happier, were they in mine?

My father was one of the oldest members of the London Library in St James's Square, and I long availed myself of his ticket to frequent and use that highly valuable institution. I consider that this circumstance tended importantly to stimulate and confirm my natural bookish propensity. For whatever besides I have been and am, my central interest, as well as claim to public consideration, is associable with the cause of our earlier vernacular literature. I shall be able to demonstrate with tolerable clearness by-and-by that I have through my quiet, and in a manner uneventful, career busied myself with several other topics, not to mention those which lie outside such an undertaking as the present; but my friends seem to have agreed that it is as a bibliographer that I most distinctly and emphatically pose. I shall argue that point no further.

What is more relevant is that at the London Library I met with Smedley's *Sketches from Venetian History*, which I perused with enjoyment as a novice, and that this acquaintance led to others and to an exchange of ideas with people about the subject and its position in English literature. With no resources of my own, and with very slight aid from my father, I set to work and collected material. My imperfect knowledge of languages was a stumbling block. When I waited on Mr Quaritch in Castle Street and laid bare my ignorance of Italian by asking for Cicognara's work on *Fabrics* instead of *Buildings*, that distinguished personage tellingly reproved me by suggesting that the first thing for me to do was to learn Italian.

My perseverance, however, was indomitable. I had set my heart on writing about Venice. It was enough. I did not, as Mr Quaritch observed, know much about Italian. I had never seen the place. When I wrote to Mr Ruskin respectfully soliciting helpful suggestions, he left my letter unanswered. What could be done? Why, I borrowed the few works which were to be found at our library, bought some which were not, and for others I sent to Italy through Molini. I taught myself French and Italian, and the Venetian dialect. I studied all the views of the city which I could find, and I brought out my first rough draft in 1857, when I was three-and-twenty.

An amusing illustration of my early faculty of inspiring confidence in the minds of those with whom I dealt was afforded by the perfect trust of Molini in my solvency and his unwillingness to allow my father any credit, while the latter

actually discharged both my obligations and his own. The elder Molini was himself of Venetian origin, and of a family which gave more than one Doge to the Republic; he always impressed my fancy as the ideal of a decayed Italian grandee. Not only his appearance, but his deportment, was that of a gentleman. He served me excellently well; but true it is that, in spite of his ducal ancestry and exalted traditions, there was the Lombard beneath and not far from the surface. The representative of Doges, this sovereign prince by inheritance and blood, was the only man who ever charged me interest on an overdue account.

As to my book, it is familiar enough that it was reprinted in 1860 by Messrs Smith, Elder & Co., and is viewed as the standard English work on the subject, so far as it goes. But I contemplate a third and greatly improved edition, which will carry the narrative to the end. My collections for the task are now in the library, to which I partly gave, and partly sold, them a generation since. They included a copy of the much overestimated *Squittinio della Liberta Veneta*, published at Mirandola in 1612.

There are very few now living who recollect, as I do, the library as it originally appeared, when Mr Cochrane was curator, and the institution occupied only the upper part of the house in the Square. I was not a personal subscriber till 1869; but I had the complete range of the shelves *jure patris*, and my loan of an unlimited number of books for an unlimited term was never called in question. I have kept volumes at our house for three years uninterruptedly. In those days there were fewer members, and the demand for the class of publications which I required was extremely limited.

One of the staff at the library, a subordinate dignitary, used to dabble a little in books on his own account, and occasionally offered me his purchases. I think that his more distinguished colleagues gradually learned to do the same. But the first-indicated individual, I remember very well, once had on sale a set of fourteen volumes of some neglected publication, for which he submitted a proposal of eighteenpence. He resided at Hammersmith, while I was at Kensington, and I am sure that I do not exaggerate when I say that he carried this merchandise half a dozen times between his abode and St James's Square before I agreed to take the lot off his hands. I thought of Corporal Nym and the lute-case.

I was even now beginning to be multifarious and polygonal. I have sketched out in my *Four Generations of a Literary Family* my apprenticeship to bibliography. The starting-point was about 1857, when Mr Bohn produced his revision of the

Manual of Lowndes, 1834, of which Mr F. S. Ellis used to speak as a very creditable performance for a drunken bookseller. My haunt in St James's Square again befriended me. I met with the Heber Catalogue, Herbert's *Typographical Antiquities*, and such like. I was unconsciously shifting my ground; yet it was to be long enough before the new departure took form. I allowed myself ample time to ruminate over the matter, to reconnoitre, and to make notes. A copy of the augmented and revised Lowndes became my memorandum book.

The original meagre sketch of the Venetian work had introduced me to Mr Russell Smith the publisher, who undertook it on my father agreeing to contribute to the cost. I acquired the habit of frequenting Smith's shop in Soho Square; I bought a few trifles from him, and in 1858 he took my commission for a book at the Bliss sale—Lord Westmoreland's *Otia Sacra*, 1648—for which my father, to his consternation, learned that I had to give nearly £9. The copy was in the original calf binding, and was one of the very few which were entirely perfect. It was my earliest purchase at an auction. 1858-9-60 passed away—the second edition of the *Venetian History* appeared—and I, after sundry experiments, finally resolved to cast my lot in with antiquarian literature as an editor and a bibliographer.

It is not my present mission to enter into detail respecting my innumerable experiences of a normal character in connection with publishers and booksellers. These are matters of no permanent value or interest to anyone. I have had, in common with the majority of folks similarly situated, my sorrows, my disappointments, my wrongs and my triumphs. *Luctor et Emergo*. I have known what it has been to be unfairly abused and perhaps unfairly commended. I have kept myself proudly and wilfully apart, and under circumstances, of which no other person has ever comprehended or measured the difficulties, I have held my ground, although once or twice the keel of my dingy has grazed the rocks.



CHAPTER II

I survey the Ground before I start—I contemplate a New British Bibliography—Richard Heber—His Extraordinary Acquirements—His Vast Library—His Manuscript Notes in the Books—A High Estimate of Heber as a Scholar and a Reader—He eclipses all Other Collectors at Home and Abroad—A Sample or so of His Flyleaf Memoranda—A Few very Interesting Books noticed—A *Historiette*—Anecdotes of Some Bargains and Discoveries by Him and His Contemporaries—The *Phoenix Nest* at Sion College—Marlowe's *Dido*—Mystery connected with the Library at Lee Priory—The Oldest Collections of English Plays—A Little Note about Lovelace—Heber's Generosity as a Lender—His Kindness to Dyce—Fate of His Rarest Books—How He obtained some of Them—The Daniel Ballads and Their True History—Result of a Study of *Heber's Catalogue* and other Sources of Knowledge—The *Handbook* appears—Mr Frederick Harrison and Sir Walter Besant pay Me Compliments.

I soon learned to divide into two camps, as it were, the authorities available to a student of our earlier literature. There were books like those of Dibdin, Brydges, Park, Beloe, Hartshorne and Lowndes, and the auction catalogues, on the one hand, and on the other there were Herbert's *Ames*, Ritson's *Bibliographia Poetica*, and Collier's *Bibliographical Catalogue*, to be reinforced presently by Corser's *Collectanea Anglo-poetica*. These two classes were widely different and immensely unequal. I began by drawing a line of distinction, and by depending for my statements on the second group and type rather than the first.

But as I discerned by degrees the difference in too many instances between the books themselves and the account of them in works of reference, and as I studied more and more, at my leisure from other employments, the Heber and a few more capital catalogues, revealing to me the imperfections in the treatment of the whole subject, I commenced, just in the same way as I had done in the case of Venice, revolving in my thought the practicability of improving our bibliographical system, and placing it on a broader and sounder basis.

The London Library copy of the *Heber Catalogue* bears unmistakeable traces of my industrious manipulation in years gone by. I conceived a strong regard for that extraordinary, that unique collection and its accomplished owner. Of his private history I have heard certain anecdotes, which indicate that his life was not a very happy one, nor the end of it very comfortable; but as a scholar, as a bibliographer, and as a benefactor to the cause which he so zealously espoused and on which he lavished a noble fortune, he was a man to whose equal I am unable to refer.

I turn again and again to his sale catalogue, and amid much that is dry and monotonous enough I am never weary of perusing the notes, chiefly from his own pen, where he places on permanent record the circumstances, often romantic and fascinating, under which he gained possession of this or that volume. Remarks or memoranda by Mr Payne Collier and others are interspersed; but the interest seems to centre in those of the possessor, which make his personality agreeably conspicuous, and have always struck me as elevating him above the ordinary standard as a collector, if not as entitling him to the highest rank among those of this or any other country. For when we compare his stupendous accumulations of literary memorials of all ages and regions, in print and in manuscript, with those of Harley, Grenville, Miller, Beckford, Spencer, Huth and others, and then set side by side his conversance with the subject-matter in so many cases, and the purely amateurish feeling and grasp of his predecessors, contemporaries, and successors in a vast preponderance of instances, how can we fail to perceive, and forbear to acknowledge, his claim to the first place? I have mentioned elsewhere that Heber was partly instrumental in saving the library of George III. from being sold by the Prince Regent to the Czar.

The *Bibliotheca Heberiana*, in thirteen parts, is a work which it is impossible to open at any page without encountering some point of interest or instruction; but undoubtedly the second, fourth and eighth portions contain the notices and information likely to be most attractive to English and English-speaking persons,

and it entered not immaterially into my earlier life to study and utilise what I found here. No class of anecdote can be more enduringly valuable in the eyes of the bibliophile than those with which the work under consideration is so unstintingly enriched, and I may not be blamed for exemplifying and justifying by some typical specimens my estimate of Heber's scholarship and energy. If there is a less agreeable side to the question, it is the feeling of regret, in examining the catalogue, that he should not have restricted himself to some range, instead of embracing the entire world of letters, instead of aiming at centralising universality. In Heber book-collecting was not a taste, but a voracious passion. His incomparable library, to a private individual deficient, as he was, in method and arrangement, was of indifferent value; as a public one, if he had chosen to dedicate it to that object, it would have proved a splendid monument to his name for all time, especially if the very numerous duplicates had been exchanged for remaining *desiderata*.

My jottings in corroboration of my view are, however, almost exclusively derived from those sections of the catalogue devoted to an account of the early English literature, in which the collection was so marvellously rich. Since this is merely a sort of introductory feature in my little undertaking, and I was desirous of affording some samples of one of my bibliographical primers, I do not deal with technical detail, but limit myself to literary *adversaria*, and to Heber's own personal remarks about his possessions, as distinguished from those of the compilers of the catalogue.

Under 'Bevis of Hampton,' Heber notes, 'For an account of the Romance of Bevis see Ritson's *Dissertation*, prefixed to his *Metrical Romances*,' and he copies out what is found there. To his copy of the edition of *Boethius* in English, printed at the exempt Monastery of Tavistock in 1525, he appends a long memorandum, stating that he had bought it at Forster's sale in 1806 for £7, 17s. 6d., imperfect and ill-bound, and had afterward completed it from a second, which had belonged to Ratcliff and Gough. He refers us to Robert of Gloucester, the *Harleian Catalogue*, and other authorities, states that Lord Bute gave £17, in 1798, for Mason's copy, and estimates his own at about £50. It fetched £63. It might now be worth £250.

On Churchyard's *Discourse of the Queenes Maiesties Entertainment in Suffolk and Norfolk*, there is this commentary: 'This must have been printed in 1577-8, because Frobisher returned from his last journey while this book was printing. I have another copy of this tract, corresponding minutely throughout with the present, except in the dedication.... The Address to the Reader differs also, but

merely in the Typography.’ Of Dekker’s *Bellman of London*, 1608, he says, ‘I have compared this edition with that of 1612, which corresponds exactly, except that six pages of introductory matter are prefixed, and four pages of canting terms are subjoined, entitled “Operis Peroratio.”’ To the ‘O Per Se O’ of the same writer he has attached a still more elaborate account of the readings of various impressions. He appears to have compared all the editions in his hands with remarkable attention and interest.

When we come to Gascoigne’s *Posies*, 1575, there is a historiette which seems well deserving of reproduction: ‘This interesting copy of G. Gascoigne’s Poems, diligently read and copiously be-noted by his contemporary, Gabriel Harvey, came from the ancient and curious Library of the Parkers of Browsholme, hereditary bow-bearers of Bolland forest under the Dukes of Buccleuch. In the first instance, my friend, Thomas Lyster Parker, merely proposed to arrange, beautify and enlarge the family collection, for which purpose he called in Ford the bookseller to his assistance, who gave the greater part of the volumes new Manchester liveries instead of their old, time-worn coats, in which they had weathered centuries under the domicile of their protectors. Subsequent events induced Mr P. to dispose of the whole; a few of the Caxtons were distributed in London to Lord Spencer and others at considerable prices; but the bulk was sold to Ford, from whom I purchased the present and several more. The Manchester shears have, I fear, somewhat abridged the margins. I prize the volume as no ordinary rarity—it affords a curious average sample of the manner in which G. H. recorded his studies in the margins of his books, his neat handwriting, his various learning, his quaintness, his pedantry, and above all his self-satisfied perseverance.’

Gascoigne’s Works, 1587, Heber made a receptacle for collations with other texts, and I may be pardoned for breaking through my own rule by appending a remark by a former owner, George Steevens, ‘This volume of Gascoigne’s Works was bought for £1, 1s. at Mr Mallet’s, *alias* Mallock’s, *alias* M’Gregor’s sale, March 14, 1766. He was the only Scotchman who died in my memory unlamented by an individual of his own nation.

On the flyleaf of Googe’s *Eglogs*, 1563, is a composite note by Steevens, Heber and the cataloguer. Heber, alluding to Steevens’s remarks, says, ‘Mr Steevens had never looked into Thomas Rawlinson’s cat., part vii., sold at London House, March 1726, where a copy occurs (perhaps indeed the present one) among the Poetæ in 8vo. See also Ballard’s cat. of Mr T. Britton, Small-coal man, 1714-15, No. 353.’ The *Temple of Glass*, by Lydgate, evoked the following: ‘I believe

there are three editions of this tract—I. The present in Caxton's types; II. An edition by Wynkyn de Worde; III. An edition by Berthelet, of which there was a copy in Pearson's collection, bought by Malone, and left by him to Bindley, at whose sale it was bought by James Boswell.' Just below occurs the entry of Berthelet's impression, with a memorandum by Boswell, 'The price, £4, 18s. 0d., which this volume had been previously sold for, is marked above. On the 21st of Jan., 1819, I purchased it for £40, 10s.!!!' But as it had been left as a legacy by Mr Malone to Mr Bindley, at whose sale I bought it, I scarcely know how to estimate the *pretium affectionis* of a book which was at once a memorial of two such dear and respected friends. At Heber's sale the copy fetched £14.

A singular assemblage of *Penny Merriments*, published between 1621 and 1675 (Heber Cat. iv., 1743) bears this interesting note of *provenance*, 'This curious collection belonged originally to Narcissus Luttrell, and passed with the rest of his valuable Library to Mr Edward Wynne of Chelsea, on whose decease it was sold by auction at Leigh & Sotheby's, March, 1786 (see cat., lot 23). Mr Baynes was the purchaser for £3, 8s. 0d., and bequeathed the poetical and romantic portion of his Library to Mr Ritson, at whose sale I bought it.'

We enter on a different atmosphere and line of culture, when we scan Heber's note on a small metrical tract by 'Playne Piers' on the clergy, printed secretly in the time of Henry VIII., and mis-described by some authorities as in prose: 'If Maunsell had examined it with due attention, he must have perceived that a large portion of the text (though not the whole) is written in verse, and runs into loosely-accentuated rhyming stanzas and couplets. To say the truth, I am more than half-disposed to ascribe the authorship to the famous W. Roy, of whose poem, *Rede me and be not wroth*, the present composition reminds me both in sentiment and measure. It is worthy of remark that G. Steevens's copy of the first edition of that poem (now in my possession) is bound exactly uniform, and being of precisely the same dimensions, they probably were united in one cover till he separated them. It is plain that he attached equal and considerable importance to both, having bestowed on each his best russia binding, with his initials on the sides, and inscribed his autograph on the back of title and at the foot of the last leaf—infallible signs of his especial favour.'

In the case of a Caxton of extraordinary beauty, the *Hoole Lyf of Jason*, Heber gives an account of the copies known to him, and concludes that his own, in the original binding of oak covered with calf, and with many rough leaves, is the finest. It had been Watson Taylor's. Another very beautiful one occurred at the Selsey sale in 1871, and fetched £670, Mr Walford desiring to see how far Mr

Quaritch would go and seeing accordingly. He was fortunate enough, however, to have it taken off his hands by Mr Ellis, who sold it to an American, I believe, for £800.

Heber, as we all know, was a general scholar, and was at home in foreign no less than in English books. He observes of a very early *Roman de la Rose*: 'This Edition is executed in the Characters of Ulric Gering, the earliest Parisian Printer, and is very scarce. There is said to be a copy in the Public Library at Lyons. See Delandine's catalogue. Gering exercised his art from 1470 to 1520, in which year he died. The present is neither one of the earliest nor latest efforts of his press—perhaps about 1480. It has signatures, but neither catchwords nor numerals. It has also many grotesque woodcuts. The execution and presswork very clear and beautiful.'

Of the romantic accident which threw Robinson's *Golden Mirroure*, 1589, into Heber's hands, I give an account in the Handbook, where I also shew that the author belonged to Alton in Cheshire. Briefly, Rodd the bookseller found the volume of Elizabethan tracts, this included, at a marine store dealer's on Saffron Hill about 1830, and being put into the scales it was found to be worth *fourpence threefarthings*. Rodd sold it to Heber for £50. It was a glorious haul, yet not so good as that of Warton the historian, who picked off a broker's board at Salisbury for sixpence the 1596 edition of *Venus and Adonis*, bound up with several other pieces of equal or even greater rarity. Those were halcyon days, were they not? But how much the cost governs the appreciation! What comes to us cheap, because no one else wants it, we hold cheap, and that is the history of many of the early bargains.

The *Phænix Nest*, 1593, contains the ensuing flyleaf matter: 'I gave Mr Isaac Reed five Guineas for this very scarce book in the summer of 1802.—R. H....' Heber enters into very careful detail as to the authors of the several poems, and where some of them appear in other books. The copy was uncut, and sold at his sale for £31, 10s. I accidentally discovered another very fine one at Sion College, bound up at the end of a common volume, and pointed it out to the librarian, the Reverend Mr Milman, who did not seem to be very strongly impressed by the communication. Had it been a sermon worth twopence, he might have felt otherwise.

Of *Piercesforest*, of which he possessed the edition by Giles Gourmont, 1531-2, in folio, Heber speaks as follows: 'This is a Romance of great Character, value and merit. Mr Warton, upon whatever authority, asserts it to have been originally

written in verse about 1220, and not till many years afterwards translated into prose, an assertion which cannot be confirmed; no MS. of any Metrical Romance under that title appearing to be anywhere extant, and indeed it is probable that he confounded *Pierceforest* with *Perceval*. It is, however, believed to be one of the oldest prose Romances extant, and is mentioned by Caxton in his *Book of the Ordre of Chyvalry*.'

A volume by Spenser receives this perhaps somewhat out-of-date notice; but it demonstrates the habit of Heber in regard to all classes of works of importance in his possession: 'This is the first edition of Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar*, and of extraordinary rarity, not to be found in the most distinguished libraries. Mr Todd was obliged to take a journey to Cambridge to obtain a sight of a copy. The subsequent editions in 4to are rare and valuable, but far less so than the present....'

We have to go back a long way, and cross the sea, before we reach the *patria* of the next sample, the *Historia Naturalis* of Pliny, printed by Jenson in 1469, in rich old blue morocco, from the library of Camus de Limari, at whose sale in 1783 it fetched 3000 livres. Heber has inscribed a MS. note on the flyleaf to this effect. The book sold at his sale for £31, 10s.

We return home at the next specimen, which is Gosson's *Playes Confuted in Five Actions* in the same volume with Lodge's *Reply to Gosson*, and a third tract relating to the theatre. Mr Heber notes: 'The present vol. contains only 3 out of a remarkably curious collection of 8 pieces, bound together soon after the publication of the latest, somewhere about 1580. This may be ascertained by the antiquity of the handwriting, which exactly records them all, on the reverse of the title-page of *Playes Confuted*. So late as 1781 they all remained together in Mr Beauclerc's collection (see cat., 4137), with the exception of Gascoigne's *Delicate Diet for Drunkards*. They seem afterwards to have passed into Mr Nassau's library, who divided them into 5 different vols., which are now all in my possession.

'As to Gascoigne's *Delicate Diet*, it is, I apprehend, the same copy contained in G. Steevens's collection of Gascoigne's Works, now in my possession—in fact, no other is known.' It was on that account, presumably, that the copy sold at Heber's sale for £27, 16s. 6d.

The history of Marlowe's *Dido*, 1594, must not be repeated here, as it is already printed in the *Handbook*. Nobody has ever seen the elegy by Nash on Marlowe,

mentioned by Warton. The copy of *Dido* given by Isaac Reed to George Steevens, and bought at Steevens's sale in 1800 by Sir Egerton Brydges, was transferred by the latter to Heber, at whose sale it produced £39. The Duke of Devonshire's, which had previously been Kemble's, cost Henderson the actor *fourpence*.

A good deal of mystery surrounds the Lee Priory collection, which seems to have at one time contained many dramatic rarities of the first order, most, if not all, of which eventually found their way to Heber. Henry Oxenden of Barham, near Canterbury, is known to have owned in 1647 an extraordinary assemblage of old English plays, bound together in six volumes, and comprising the *Taming of a Shrew* (not Shakespear's), 1594, *Ralph Roister Doister*, *Hamlet* (1603), and other precious remains. What became of them, there is no record; but it has sometimes occurred to me that they might have gone to Lee Priory. At Lord Mostyn's, at Gloddaeth in Carnarvonshire, there is a second series of volumes; but of the contents I have no personal knowledge. To return to the Heber *Dido* for a moment, it may be permissible to transcribe Steevens's note: 'This copy was given me by Mr Reed. Such liberality in a collector of Old Plays is at least as rare as the rarest of our dramatic pieces.—G. S.'

Now and again, of course, Heber is misinformed, or his information has been superseded, as where he alludes to Shakespear's Henry the Fourth, 1608, as a first-rate rarity. His copy sold for £12, 12s. In the note about it he takes occasion to mention that Steevens bought many of the books of the Rev. J. Bowle, whom Gifford called 'the stupidest of two-legged creatures,' but who had a very curious library, of White.

But Heber's insight into the contents and merits of his books is admirable. In his copy of Tatham's *Ostella*, 1650, he draws our attention to the author's Ode to Lovelace on his journey into Holland, and adds, 'It must have been written before his marriage. The Prologue on the removal of the Cockpit has not been hitherto noticed, and on the next page is a mention of a Play called "The Whisperer; or, what you please," of which this is the only record.'

These extracts might be indefinitely extended; but in a volume not intended for merely bibliographical purposes the foregoing citations may suffice to establish Heber's intelligent and painstaking treatment of his books and to explain the stress which I laid on his *Catalogue* in my younger days as one of the leading resources in an attempt to remodel, on an improved and enlarged plan, our national stores.

So long as the original gatherer lived, his books were at the service of all who approached him with a legitimate aim, and more particularly at that of the scholar and the editor. We repeatedly hear from Mr Dyce how greatly he was indebted to Heber for the means of completing his texts of the early dramatists and poets, of whose works the original copies were often nowhere else to be found. Heber was the warm friend and helper of the men of letters of his time, and deserves to be classed among them. Many of his rarest volumes unfortunately passed into hands where they still remain, and where they are not so readily available. I am thinking of the Britwell and other closed private libraries, of which the proprietors are indifferent to literature or jealous of intrusion. The zealous bibliographer blesses them both, and prays for the music of the hammer.

A careful survey of the *Heber Catalogue* leads to the conclusion, from the immense number of rarities there offered for sale for the first time, that the owner succeeded in obtaining a notable proportion of his early books direct from the trade or from private sources by that most powerful of inducements—the known willingness to pay promptly and well for everything brought to him. The note to Thorpe the bookseller, enclosing an order on his bankers for £200 for the Ballads, of which the Daniel volume was merely a selection, is still extant; the money seems to have reached Thorpe's hands before the purchase left them, in consequence of Heber being from home; even he speaks there of being ashamed of himself for his extravagance, and he asks the vendor whether it was the inheritance of the Stationers' Company. He was not aware that the lot came from Helmingham Hall through Fitch of Ipswich, and that it had been milked by Daniel.

My association with the London Library and gradual contact with the British Museum, with collectors, and with the book trade, tended to stimulate a natural affection for old books, while it gradually and, at first, unconsciously gave to the movement a bibliographical and commercial direction. I conceived in my mind, apart from any collateral matters, a grand literary scheme. I saw before me all that former men, Heber included, had achieved toward a BRITISH BIBLIOGRAPHY; and I determined to combine and collate the whole, and make it the nucleus of a New Work. The result was the appearance in 1867 of the *Handbook of Early English Literature*.

I made not only the British Museum, and the Oxford and Cambridge libraries, but Sion College, South Kensington, and Lambeth, pay me toll. I did not at first attend personally at Lambeth; but the present Bishop of Oxford, who was then

librarian, copied such titles as I indicated to him, and his Lordship, I have to say, was very accurate, and wrote a very clear hand. I always found Dr Stubbs extremely kind and obliging in this way. Maitland was before my time.

I did not consider at the time that I had much ground for being ashamed of this performance; it was undeniably a long advance on my precursors; that I had a great deal to learn and unlearn was an experience to be gained by degrees, and at more or less casual opportunities; and it will become necessary to enter into some particulars of the circumstances which led and enabled me to undo piecemeal my maiden essay, and to build up from the ruins such a colossal structure as, on its near completion, no other civilised country can boast of possessing.

Thirty years have passed away. The Handbook has become only one of a series.

In the *Hazlitt Memoirs* I judged it to be high time to expose the ingenious strategy of the Rev. Canon Ainger and Mr Alexander Ireland in respect to my Lamb and Hazlitt labours. I have been, as a rule, fairly reticent and forbearing in these cases, and have refrained from appealing to the press. But I procured the insertion in two journals of protests against the assumption of Mr Frederic Harrison that a bibliography of English history was a novel project, and the apparent claim of Sir Walter Besant, as I infer from a paragraph in the *Globe*, to the rectification of the Whittington legend. I ought to be pleased that so illustrious a personage as Sir Walter thinks so humble an one as myself worth such flattering recognition. Peradventure, if I should reproduce my work, I shall be charged with having borrowed my statements from a great author and scholar.



CHAPTER III

The *Handbook* of 1867 and Its Fruits—Mr Henry Huth—His Beneficial Influence on My Bibliographical Labours—He invites Me to co-operate in the Formation of His Library—I edit Books for Him—He declines to entertain the Notion of a Librarian—My Advantages and Risks—A Few Heavy Plunges—A *Barnaby's Journal*—A *Book of Hours of the Virgin*—The Butler MSS.—Archbishop Laud—Montaigne—Mr Huth answerable for My Conversion into a Speculator—The Immense Value of the Departure to My Progress as a Bibliographer—A Caxton from the Country—Why I had to pay so Much for It—Mr Huth's Preferences—His *Americana*—Deficiencies of His Library gradually supplied—His Dramatic Series—Beaumont and Fletcher and Ben Jonson—Mr Huth a Linguist and a Scholar—His First Important Purchase—Contrasted with Heber—The Drawer at Mr Quaritch's kept for Mr Huth—His Uncertainty or Caprice explained by Himself—His Failing Health becomes an Obstacle—The Fancy a Personal One.

The appearance of the *Handbook* introduced me to the late Mr Henry Huth, and gave me the free range for years of his fine library, with the incidental advantage of assisting in its enlargement, and in the preparation of the catalogue. I had written to Mr Huth in the winter of 1866, soliciting the title and collation of a unique book in his hands, and he wrote back, furnishing the information not quite correctly, but stating that he was always, when in town, at home on Sunday afternoons. This slight incident produced a ten years' intimacy, and was

instrumental in inaugurating a new era in my bibliographical career.

It was when I had reached the letter K in the alphabet that I added Mr Huth to my acquaintance, and thenceforward my book, as it appeared in parts, reflected in its pages the beneficial fruit of weekly visits to that gentleman's house, and his friendly co-operation in an enterprise which more or less interested him personally.

Our constant intercourse and my widening knowledge of certain classes of books, for which we had a common liking, naturally led to Mr Huth, in the most delicate manner, suggesting after a while, that he should be obliged if I would let him hear of any with which I might meet; and during many years I was in the habit of sending to him single volumes or parcels which fell in my way, and which he had the option of rejecting if he did not care for them, or they happened to be duplicates. I very soon, too, persuaded him to allow me to carry out small literary undertakings for him, for the sake of distributing the very limited number of copies printed among his friends and my own. I became sensible of the inconvenience and awkwardness attendant on the completion of his library, as it involved commercial relations distasteful to us both, and I ventured, as soon as I could, to propose to him a yearly allowance for my help and advice. This idea he was unwilling to entertain, however, because he thought that it would involve something like my domestication on the premises, and the library, as usual, was almost personal to himself. I therefore most reluctantly continued to add to his collection on my own terms, and, with the books which I edited for him and for the publishers, and the general exercise of my bibliographical experience elsewhere, I was in a position to develop by steady degrees my large, yet still rather loosely-defined, project for a general catalogue of early English literature.

My *Handbook* was brought to an end in 1867, about a twelvemonth subsequent to the fortuitous meeting with Mr Huth. But every day, when the more powerful motive for book-hunting existed, seemed to do its part in opening my eyes to the illimitable magnitude of the field on which I had entered, and in compelling me to pass my pen through some article which I had been tempted to borrow from a secondary authority. In other words, the *Handbook* was no sooner bound, than I began to convert a considerable proportion of it into waste-paper.

My relations with Mr Huth were, on the whole, as agreeable as they were advantageous. Many and many a rarity in his catalogue passed through my hands, and even when he acquired books elsewhere, he grew into the habit of

asking me to go and look through them before they were sent home. My improving familiarity with his tastes and wants placed me in a favoured position, when I stumbled on items in the book-shops and the sale-rooms. Sometimes I had to incur rather formidable risks, and to buy for the library very expensive works, subject to them being approved, and merely on the certainty that they were not duplicates, and were clear *desiderata*. Such was the case with the extraordinary copy of George Turbervile's *Poems*, 1570, in the original sheep binding, as clean and spotless as when it left the first vendor three centuries prior, and nearly the only one known. John Pearson, of York street, Covent Garden, had obtained it of a retired dealer at Shrewsbury for £30, and he asked me £105, with the proviso that it was not returnable as imperfect. I collated it on the spot, and F. S. Ellis very kindly and liberally lent me the money to pay for it. Luckily Mr Huth took to it, and gave me fifty guineas for my trouble. It is one of the chief Elizabethan gems in a library abounding in them.

I remember being in Boone's shop, in Bond Street, one day, and seeing there a marvellous and matchless copy of Brathwaite's *Barnaby's Journal*, almost uncut, and beautifully bound in red morocco. Boone demanded £18, 18s. for it. I put it in my pocket. The following Sunday I saw Mr Huth, and inquired what sort of a copy of Barnaby he had. He replied that his was as good an one as could be desired, and he opened the case where it lay, and handed it to me. I took mine out, and handed it to him. He smiled. Of course, there was no comparison. His went as a duplicate to Lilly. He did not judge Boone's dear at twenty-five guineas; it would bring twice that sum now.

I was so much accustomed to frequent the booksellers, and I was so well known and trusted that I overlooked the circumstance, in my earlier visits to Bond Street, that I had not dealt quite so regularly or largely there as elsewhere, and one day when Boone shewed me a fine *Book of Hours*, of which the price was £150, I coolly placed it under my arm, and walked out of the place, with an intimation that I should like to have it. I suppose that the firm was reassured when I called, a day or so after, and gave them my cheque for the amount. We became very good friends, and I took several things off Boone's hands for Mr Huth. The *Hours* I have just mentioned was bound in old velvet; and the owner rather unwisely, as I thought, let Bedford give it a new morocco livery.

One offer on the part of this house to me I was unable to entertain—the Butler MSS. formerly in the hands of the poet's editor, Thyer, and containing matter not printed by him. Boone spoke of £250; but I declined. What became of them, I never heard; they were not sold with his stock.

His retirement destroyed a link between the old school and the new. He had many curious stories to relate about those whom his uncle and himself had known—about Libri and Dibdin. He (the younger B.) was fairly shrewd and experienced, but thoroughly straightforward. I recollect picking off his shelf one morning an old tract of no particular value, but, as it happened, not in the British Museum, to which I transferred it, bearing on the title the unrecognised autograph, *W. Bathon*; it was the copy which belonged to Archbishop Laud, when he occupied the See of Bath and Wells.

There was a somewhat parallel incident at the sale of Lord Selsey's books at Sotheby's in 1871. I took down from a shelf at random an old Italian book, and perceived at the foot of the title the signature of Montaigne the essayist. I instantaneously closed it, and put it back, for I saw Mr Toovey approach. I waited to see it sold; it fell to me at 2s. F. S. Ellis came into the room a moment after, and heard of the find. He explained to me that he had a Montaigne client, and wished me to let him have my bargain, which I surrendered for a consideration.

I consider Mr Huth answerable for my conversion from a pure amateur into a commercial speculator in books. He was the prime mover in producing the change in my views and arrangements—one which certainly responded to my convenience in working out my great project as a bibliographer, by supplying me in the interval, where the direct practical result was *nil*, with ways and means, rather than to my natural feeling, which would have kept me outside the market as a buyer and seller. My unconquerable and boundless ambition to become the creator of an entirely new bibliographical system, so far as the early literature of Great Britain and Ireland was concerned, reconciled me, to some extent, to the unwelcome, though profitable, labour of utilising for my own purposes the stores which I accumulated and distributed from year to year, commencing with that which immediately succeeded my introduction to Mr Huth.

I had already fulfilled that gentleman's own express desire, that I should co-operate in the extension of his library in the direction which I was beginning to study in earnest; but my first notable achievement was a purchase which found another destination. Jeffreys of Bristol sent me up, in the winter of 1868, a beautiful copy of Caxton's *Golden Legend*, wanting sixteen leaves, which were supplied from one by Wynkyn de Worde. It was an edition of which the Althorp copy was the only perfect one known. The owner asked £85. I hardly understood why he sent it to me, as I had never had any transaction with him. It was on a Friday. I called at B. M. Pickering's the next morning, and casually stated that I

had had such a book offered to me, and that I intended, on the Sunday, to name the matter to Mr Huth, who did not then possess the volume. Pickering begged to see it first; he came down to my house the same evening, and took it away under his arm at £150. If it had not been for John Pearson persuading Jeffrey to raise his price, I should have had it £40 cheaper. Mr Huth subsequently procured another imperfect copy, and at my request Lord Spencer very kindly forwarded his own to London to enable a facsimilist to complete both.

Mr Huth had some very strong preferences—favourite authors and topics. Anything by Wither or Quarles, with curious woodcuts, on an educational theme, or in exceptionally fine state, was sure game. He did not care for theology, unless it was by such a man as Fuller or Jeremy Taylor; and of folios he was shy, in the absence of a valid reason; there were so many which it was imperative to tolerate, commencing with the four Shakespears. To *Americana* he became at last a convert, but I knew him when he put the question—a pertinent question, too—what he had to do with that sort of book? Henry Stevens, however, and then others, made the interest clearer to him, and he gave way till, in the end, he was master of a fairly good collection, including such capital features as Hariot's *Virginia*, 1588, and such unique *morceaux* as Rich's *News from Virginia*, 1610. I was fortunate enough to enter on the scene, when in numerous respects his shelves were very deficient, and when some of the leading poets of the seventeenth century were conspicuous by their absence. He had not, at the time I refer to, even Beaumont and Fletcher, or Jonson, or Carew, or Lovelace, by way of example. As I run through his catalogue, I notice hundreds and hundreds of volumes which he had been quietly and patiently waiting to receive from someone, as he never went in quest of anything in his life, beyond calling at Lilly's, Ellis's, or Quaritch's, on his way home; and nearly all his dramatic acquisitions, except the quarto Shakespears and other rarities from the Daniel and Charlemont sales in 1864-5, were late additions, obtained for him by myself, as scarcely a second individual would have dreamed of him not having them, or being willing to take them. All his Shirleys, Massingers, Fords, and the rest, came to him at prices which, compared with current figures, make them appear almost nominal. Massinger's *Virgin Martyr*, 1622, cost him most; for B. M. Pickering charged me £7, 7s. for the copy, and I have not met with another since that time.

His Beaumont and Fletcher, 1647, which has been lately trotted up to a startling figure by the Americans, cost me 30s. and is one of the finest I ever saw; one leaf was torn, and a second copy was bought for £1 to make the defect good. In

the same way his Ben Jonson, 1616-31, the most complete one in existence, with a duplicate title and a cancel leaf, was obtained from Stibbs for 36s. It had been Colonel Cunningham's, and was spotless in the original calf binding.

Mr Huth was not a Heber; but he liked to look into his books, and of many he had a fair knowledge. He was a linguist and a scholar, and was led by the circumstances of his origin (his father being a German and his mother a Spaniard) to contract a partiality for the literature of those two countries. The ancient Spanish romance, the early German book with woodcuts, were well represented. One of the former, in its pristine stamped livery, was among his earliest purchases, when he frequented Payne & Foss's establishment with his brother Louis, just toward the close of the career of that distinguished firm, which supplied Heber and his contemporaries—Grenville, Hibbert, the Freulings, and others—and the price was £8. It might at present be £80, if Mr Quaritch were in the right cue.

Although Mr Huth cannot be said to have been a mere amasser of old books, without an interest in their characteristics and literary value, it is curious that he never, so far as I am aware, inserted a MS. note of any kind in a volume, or his autograph, or a bookplate or *ex libris*. He seemed to shrink from asserting his personality in these respects, and was so far the reverse of Heber, whose memoranda accompanied thousands of the items in his immense library, and manifested his earnestness and indefatigability in obtaining and perpetuating information—nothing else. Of conceit or pedantry no one ever had less.

Toward the last, while the catalogue was in course of preparation by Mr F. S. Ellis and myself, an unpleasant *contretemps* produced a coolness between Mr Huth and the writer, and I saw nothing farther of him, although we occasionally corresponded down to the period of his death in 1878, the melancholy circumstances of which I have narrated in my *Four Generations of a Literary Family*. He made additions to his library rather languidly in later years; but he bought here and there to fill up gaps or otherwise, and some of the entries belonging to the earlier letters of the alphabet form an appendix to the above-mentioned work. There used to be a little drawer at Quaritch's, where any book thought to be acceptable to Mr Huth was deposited day by day against his arrival about five in the afternoon. Once it was an unique tract of *King Edward the Fourth and the Tanner of Tamworth*, for which he was asked £16, 16s., and he held it up between two fingers, and exhibited it to an acquaintance with him as rather a dear pennyworth. But he took it, and at the same time he rejected an equally unique and far more curious metrical account of the martyrdom of two

churchmen in the time of Henry VIII., which the British Museum was glad enough to secure. As he has said to me frankly enough, it was a toss up, whether he bought or did not buy; of course it was a mere fancy, and it is only a piece of history at present that one or two of the booksellers, acquainted with his peculiarity, passed on volumes now and then from one to the other, and what had not pleased in King Street, caught the fish in Garrick Street at an advanced quotation.

Mr Huth was not only vacillating in his pursuit of books, and so missed many which he ought to have secured, but his health began to fail some time prior to his decease, and he was either abroad or in a frame of mind unequal to the discussion of literary questions and the transaction of unnecessary business. His library, as it appears from the printed catalogue, is a very different monument from that which he might have left, had he been more consistent or been more willing to repose confidence in others. The precious volumes, which went elsewhere through his periodical apathy or indisposition, are barely numerable, and it was the more to be regretted, since the outlay was immaterial and the grand *nucleus* was there.

I suspect that the cause of wavering was one which is common to so many collectors in all departments, and leads in a majority of instances to the abrupt dispersion of the property. I allude to the almost ostentatious indifference of relatives and friends to the treasures, unless, perhaps, they are pictures or china, which a man gathers round him. In this instance £120,000 had been expended in books, MSS., drawings and prints, and the worthy folks who came to the house, what did they know about them? what did they care? A man might well hesitate and wonder whether there was any good in persevering with a hobby personal to himself.

I do not know whether Mr Huth suspected me of extravagance in the purchase of curiosities, but I remember that he one day, at Prince's Gate, when we were together, rather gravely, yet with his usual gentleness, observed that it was very important to husband one's resources—to use his own phrase. He entered more with me than with any other stranger into trivial and ordinary matters; and apropos of expenditure I recall his allusion to the habit of some of his clerks in the city laying out a larger sum on their luncheons than he did. Possibly they went home, not to dinner, but to tea. I have mentioned in *Four Generations of a Literary Family* farther particulars of Mr Huth, which I of course do not here reproduce. I recollect being at Prince's Gate one Sunday, when Professor —— called, and began to eulogise the palatial residence, the splendid book-room, the

noble cases, and so forth; and I at once saw that he was making our host rather uncomfortable by his *gaucherie*. On some pretext I induced the Professor to accompany me, when I took my leave, and I am sure that Mr Huth was grateful. I do not know that I grudged Huth anything, for he was worthy of his fortune. Perhaps I was a little envious of his knowledge of the notes of birds, which he told me that he possessed, and of which I have the most imperfect and inaccurate idea. I judge that he was reticent even to his family about his affairs, for, after his sudden death, his widow, to whom he left everything, found to her surprise, I was told, that there was more even than she had expected. So that he had acted up to his own maxim. A man may be frugal with £100,000 a year as he may be with the thousandth part of it—more so indeed, as there is a so much wider margin.



CHAPTER IV

Literary Results of My Acquaintance with Mr Huth—The New *Bibliography* in Progress, and the 1867 Book gradually superseded—Some Other Literary Acquaintances—George Daniel—John Payne Collier and Frederic Ouvry, His Son-in-Law—The Millers of Craigentenny—‘Inch-rule’ Miller—He purchases at the Heber Sale by Cartloads—My Efforts to procure Particulars of all the Rare Books at Britwell—I let Mr Christie-Miller have One or Two Items—An Anecdote—Mr Miller’s London House formerly Samuel Rogers’s—His Son—Where They are all buried—The Rev. Thomas Corser—His Fine Library—What It cost and what It fetched—His Difficulties in Forming It—Whither Much of It went—My Exploits at the Sale—Description of the House where the Books were kept—Mr Corser’s Peculiar Interest in My Eyes—His Personal Character—The Sad Change in the Book Market since Corser’s Day—Mr Samuel Sanders—A Curious Incident—Mr Cosens, Mr Turner and Mr Lawrence—Their Characteristics—Some Account of Mr Cosens as He gave It to Me—His Line of Collecting—My Assistance requested—A Few of His Principal Acquisitions and Their Subsequent Fortunes—Frederic Locker—His Idiosyncrasies—His Want of Judgment—His *Confidences*.

My bibliographical pursuits and exigencies, setting aside my concurrent literary

ventures, themselves sufficiently numerous and onerous to have employed a person of average application, had the inevitable effect of making me more or less intimately known to most of the persons who in my time have studied or possessed books. My commerce was with the holders as well as with the buyers and sellers of them. On the one hand I had to face the problem of Life, and on the other that of Title-taking. Of my purely literary work, which is not unknown to a few, I may say that the proportion of *pot-boilers* is not unreasonably large; it might have been larger, had I not chosen as an alternative to turn to account my conversance with old books as a *moyen de parvenir*, but during all the term of my relationship with Mr Huth I was incessantly engaged in storing up notes on the volumes, which came and which went, against an opportunity for publication. That aim and my contributions to literature, such as the *Venetian History*, the Warton, the Dodsley, the Blount's *Tenures*, united to constitute my compensation for the rather distasteful ordeal of espousing the commercial side. The bibliographical toil was enormous, for the few hundreds of articles, which Mr Huth and others acquired, were a mere handful in comparison with the mass which I gradually digested into my system, and reduced to form and method.

I judge it to be the most intelligible plan, with a view to tracing my somewhat peculiar and anomalous career in connection with books, china, coins and other objects of general interest, to proceed, after furnishing the previous sketch of Mr Huth and my participation in his experiences as a collector, with some account of certain other individuals who influenced me and proved more or less valuable as instruments for carrying out my central and cardinal policy.

George Daniel of Canonbury and John Payne Collier were practically before my time; but I corresponded with the latter on literary subjects, and Daniel I occasionally met in the street or in the sale-room. With Collier's relative, Frederic Ouvry the solicitor, I had some transactions; but I found him an undecided and capricious sort of person, who had evidently imbibed from Collier a tincture of feeling for the older literature without having any solid convictions of his own. The best part of his library consisted of books which he had purchased from his connexion by marriage, and which the latter had obtained more or less accidentally in the course of his prolonged career. Ouvry, however, did not get all. For in a note to myself, Collier expressly says that his unique copy of Constable's *Diana*, 1592, was exchanged by him with Heber for 'books he more wanted.' It was he who lent me the fragment of *Adam Bel, Clym of the Clough* and *William of Cloudisle*, more ancient and correct than Copland's text in the British Museum, for my *Early Popular Poetry*, 1864, before I met

with the second and yet more curious and valuable one of 1536 in the hands of the late Mr Henry Bradshaw, which I collated for my *Early Popular Poetry of Scotland and the Northern Border*, 1896.

The name most directly and intimately associated with that of Mr Heber, in a bibliographical sense, is that of Mr William Henry Miller of Craigentenny, near Edinburgh, a gentleman who amassed a fortune by occupations outside his profession as a solicitor, and whom we find bidding at least as early as 1819 for books of price against all comers. Mr Miller made it his speciality to take only the finest and tallest copies, and he thence gained the sobriquet of *Inch-rule* or *Measure* Miller, because he invariably carried with him the means of comparing the height of any book with which he met against his own; and if the new one had a superior altitude, out went the shorter specimen to make room for the more Millerian example. At the Heber sale, this gentleman saw his opportunity, and used it well. The bibliophobia had set in; prices were depressed, so far as the early English poetry was concerned, and Thorpe the bookseller, under his instructions, swept the field—the Drama, the Classics, and the Miscellanea he left to others. Nearly the whole of the rarities in that particular division, set forth in the second, fourth, sixth and eighth parts of the catalogue, fell to Mr Miller; and of many no duplicates have since occurred. The purchaser must have laid out thousands, and have added to his collection positive cartloads.

He died in 1849. Of his successor, Mr Samuel Christy, the hatter of Piccadilly, who assumed the name of Christie-Miller, I saw comparatively little; but I used to hear odd things about him from David Laing and from Riviere the bookbinder. In my ardour for organising my own *Bibliography* on an enlarged and exhaustive footing, I jesuitically availed myself of the periodical consignments of books to Riviere for binding; and, with the leave of the latter, took notes of everything in his hands. Mr Christie-Miller himself vouchsafed me a certain amount of information, and from David Laing I derived many other particulars about the Britwell library, so that with these channels of help and light, and others in the shape of occurrences of duplicate copies of recent years, I flatter myself that there is very little in that rather jealously-guarded repository which I have not put on record in print or in MS.

I have been guilty of extending the Miller library only in two or three instances. The late proprietor coveted more than one volume which he saw in my possession; but I always gave Mr Huth the preference, and as a rule that gentleman never let a good thing go begging. I must relate an amusing episode, which happened in connection with Mr Christie-Miller about 1872. I had called

at John Pearson's in York Street, and found him from home; but I waited for him on the doorstep, and presently he arrived with two folio volumes under his arm. I asked him what he had got there. 'Why,' said he, 'two lots which were sold separately to-day at Sotheby's as "Old Newspapers, etc."' And he handed them to me, as I stood by him outside his shop. I glanced at the contents, and inquired how much he expected for his purchase. He said, 'If you will take the volumes now as they are, twelve guineas.' I did. Riviere broke them up, bound the seventy black-letter ballads in a volume, which I sold to Mr Miller for £42, and returned me the residue, a collection of penny *Garlands*, which went to the British Museum, and some rubbish, which dropped into my waste-paper basket.

Christie-Miller owned the house in St James's Place which had once been classic ground as the residence of Samuel Rogers. I went there two or three times, and met his (Miller's) wife and son. The latter was a mild youth, who had been educated at high-class schools and a university, and who had (like his father) an imperfect acquaintance not only with literature but with grammar. He was phenomenally ignorant and dull, like his parent. All three at present lie seventy feet beneath the ground, near Holyrood, where a monument has been erected to their memory. If the ferocious Socialist hereafter disinters the remains of haughty and purse-proud book-collectors of former times, he will probably not dig down low enough to find the bones of the Millers.

A personage far more in sympathy with Mr Heber was the Reverend Thomas Corser, of Stand, near Manchester, whose acquaintance it was my honour to enjoy from about 1862 to the time of his death. I have taken occasion elsewhere to explain how it was that Mr Corser and myself were bound together in a measure by a community of interest apart from books. While he was as zealous and genuine an enthusiast as Heber, and regarded his acquisitions as something better than shelf-furniture, he was in one important respect totally different from his great predecessor who, as a man of large fortune, had only to decide on purchases and to refer the vendors to his bankers. Mr Corser, on the contrary, was a man of very limited resources, and found it a difficult task now and then to keep pace with the *desiderata* submitted to his notice by the booksellers and auctioneers. I know as a fact that at the Bright sale in 1845, which must have marked a comparatively early stage in his bibliographical career, he was obliged to pay five per cent to the agent (Thorpe or Rodd), who bought for him; and his bill was not far from £1000. Altogether his fine and interesting library cost him, as he told me, £9000; and it realised about £20,000, chiefly owing to the competition of the British Museum, Mr Huth, and Mr Miller. The national

collection made a splendid haul—far better than it would have done, had Mr Huth been better advised. As it was, I secured at my own risk a large number of lots at very high prices, which his agent Lilly had overlooked, or did not duly appreciate. I bought personally, as well as through F. S. Ellis, to the value altogether of £2000 or £3000, and Ellis subsequently congratulated me on my dexterity in giving my commissions to him, and thus removing one of my most formidable competitors. He instanced one lot, which thus went to him at 2s., and for which he would have given £3, 3s.

The Rectory at Stand was a small, detached house near the church, and had no suitable accommodation for such an assemblage of treasures as Mr Corser gradually accumulated within its walls. Nearly all the bedrooms, as well as reception-rooms, had book-cases or cupboards crammed with volumes. I paid repeated visits here, and enjoyed the free range of everything which I desired to examine, provided that my excellent friend could put his hand on it. He had to light a candle on one occasion to hunt for a Caxton in a bedroom cupboard; and latterly, when he was disabled by paralysis, poor fellow! and unable to help me, I had to search as best I could for this or that book or tract, of which very possibly no second copy was to be seen anywhere in the whole world except in that secluded parsonage.

I cherish, with a gratification never to be lessened or forgotten, the memory of this delightful intercourse with one whose people had known my people in the days gone by, and who, besides being a collector of old books, had made himself a master, like Heber, of the contents; and who, as a younger man, enjoyed the genteel recreation of angling, and in his maturer life relished good wine and good talk. When I think of the Rector of Stand, and look at most of the circle which at present constitutes the book-collecting world, and governs the market, I perceive the difference and the fall! And just at this moment the Almighty-Dollar type rules the roost, and makes its caterers and agents look big and reckless at sales, and the disciples of the old-fashioned school, to which Mr Corser belonged, button up their pockets and retire.

One of the last men who collected books for their own sake, and not from mere ostentation and purse-pride, was the late Mr Samuel Sanders, who, as he informed me, had been a buyer from his youth, and who bequeathed his extensive collections to one of the Colleges. I knew him very slightly. But, not long before his death, I was in the room at Sotheby's and expressed to a stranger my regret at having missed the day before an unique Wynkyn de Worde, of which I lacked the true particulars. It was Mr Sanders, and he apprised me that

he was the purchaser through Mr Quaritch, and would bring up the volume for my inspection next day, which he accordingly did.

My gallery of bibliographical acquaintances is not deficient in variety. During a more or less brief period, I saw a good deal from time to time of Mr F. W. Cosens, Mr R. S. Turner and Mr Edwin Lawrence. Of the two latter I have little more to say than I have noted down in another publication. I used to meet Mr Turner at Mr Huth's. His line of collecting was, on the whole, a little outside my speciality or specialities, and Mr Lawrence was mainly associated in my mind as a member of a literary club to which I sometimes went as my father's guest. He was a subscriber to some of my literary enterprises, and I thence learned that he was F.S.A., as those letters accompanied his signature not only in his communications, but in his cheques. He was, like Turner, an ill-hung man; but I have understood that he was very kind and generous, and I know that he was a first-rate judge (like Turner again) of what was the right article, both in books and in other cognate matters.

Mr Cosens was altogether different. He was self-educated and self-helped. His practical conversance with literary affairs was almost *nil*; but he was willing to take a good deal on credit, and had a natural leaning toward letters and art. He introduced himself to me, as Lawrence indeed had done, and invited me to assist him in a scheme which he had rather vaguely formed for collecting together the MSS. remains of our early poets and verse-writers. I was instrumental in procuring for him a tolerably voluminous body of this sort of material, as Mr Huth was indifferent to it, and among much that was of inferior account, from the incessant absorption of valuable MSS. by public libraries, Mr Cosens succeeded in obtaining a fair number of interesting and even important items, particularly an ancient codex on vellum of the *Prick of Conscience*, and a volume of Elizabethan lyrics, which I bought at an auction, unbound, and for which Mr Christie-Miller gave me some Roman parchment to enable Riviere to clothe it in a becoming style. This book contained *Amoris Lachrymæ* and other poems by Nicholas Breton, printed in his *Bower of Delights*, 1591. Boone valued it at £60, but I gave £16 under the hammer, and I thought £45, under the circumstances, not extravagant. Its subsequent history is curious enough. When the Cosens MSS. were sold by Sotheby, the cataloguing was so well done that what I had got for £16 I had knocked down to me for as many shillings, and the lot is now, I believe, in Great Russell Street. Again, thanks to the auctioneer's clever manipulation, the old vellum MS. bought at the Corser sale by Ellis for £70, sold by him to me for £105, and by me to Cosens for £157, 10s., fell to me

at £24. It has found its probably final resting-place in the Bodleian.

Frederick Locker, or, as he subsequently became, Locker-Lampson, was a gentleman to whose bibliographical side I have devoted a fair share of space in the *Four Generations of a Literary Family*. During a few years, and prior to the preparation and issue of his privately-printed catalogue, I saw a good deal of him, and he became the channel for some of my acquisitions which Mr Huth did not require, or when the latter was in a less eager humour for buying.

Locker was very partial to certain books. He aimed at getting all four editions of Davison's *Poetical Rhapsody*, and he succeeded. Over the first one of 1602 he made a tactical blunder by letting one bookseller understand that he wanted the volume when it accidentally occurred, and giving his commission to another. It was a very poor copy indeed, and cost him £60, plus ten per cent. That of 1611 came to him dear enough, too. I had changed Mr Huth's copy, which was not satisfactory, for a beautiful one in the original vellum wrapper, and had the duplicate at £6. I sold it to Ellis for £12, and he charged Locker £21. The latter upbraided me, who had no knowledge of his views, with making him pay £9 more than was necessary! He always struck me as a most unfortunate purchaser; and there was about him a flaccidity, which made him appear inconsistent and insincere. He gave an exorbitant price for a most wretched imperfect copy of Barnfield's *Poems*, 1598, and he actually paid highly for two copies of *England's Helicon*, 1600, both wanting the last leaf, and both otherwise indifferent. Surely these old books, to be interesting and desirable, should be fine and complete. The mere text, where there is no extrinsic feature, such as a signature or a bookplate, you can have in a five shilling or a fivepenny re-issue. Yet Locker found some one to sing the praises of the Rowfant books in strains—well, significant of a *quid pro quo* for recent experience of friendly hospitality.

This gentleman, however, was in his best days as a collector a genuine enthusiast, and might have been occasionally seen at an early hour walking up and down on the pavement, awaiting the arrival of some bookseller, in whose brand-new catalogue had appeared a nugget to his taste. This phase of the book-fancier's career, by the way, has its curious side. Such a thing has been known as for the publisher of a list of old books to lard and season it with a few excruciating rarities which had yet to be acquired, and to bring to his door fasting all the competitors for such matters within a radius or telegrams from the more remote—with a common result.

Locker's *Confidences*, which he made almost a parade, in referring to their

future appearance, in characterising as a publication of absolute necessity posthumous, was, if one may compare small things with great, as perfect a disappointment as the Talleyrand *Memoirs*, so anxiously looked for, and at last printed, only to create a murmur of surprise at the almost total absence of interest and point. The contents of the Locker volume might have been imparted to the public with the most complete immunity from consequences in the writer's life-time—they are phenomenally mild and neutral. From my personal impression of the distinguished individuals with whom the author of *London Lyrics* was connected or associated, I should not have dreamed of him so thoroughly missing the mark, and leaving us a legacy so flat and commonplace.



CHAPTER V

Mr Henry Pyne—His Ideas as a Collector, and My Intercourse with Him—His Office One of My Regular Lounges—His Willingness to Part with Certain Books—I buy a Pig in a Poke, and It turns out well—Mr Pyne's Sale—A Frost—I buy All the Best Lots for a Trifle—The Volume of *Occasional Forms of Prayer* and Its History—Pyne's Personal Career and Relations—His Investigation of the Affairs of a Noble Family—The Booksellers—Joseph Lilly—His Sale—His Services to Mr Huth—The Daniel Books in 1864—Daniel's Flyleaf Fibs—The Event an Extraordinary *Coup*—The Napier First Folio Shakespear knocked down and out at £151—Why some Books are Dear without being Very Rare—F. S. Ellis and the Corser Sale—My Successful Tactics—He lends me Sir F. Freeling's Interleaved *Bibliotheca Anglo-poetica*.

At a lower level than the individuals above mentioned, yet still on a basis which made it possible for me to render them subservient to my all-engrossing design, were Mr Henry Pyne, Assistant Commissioner of Tithes, and two or three minor characters, with whom my contact was transient.

Mr Pyne entered far more conspicuously and materially into my bibliographical and personal history than any person save Mr Huth. I formed his acquaintance while the *Handbook* was on the stocks, and he assisted me to the extent of his power by placing at my disposal his collection of English books, printed not later than the year 1600. He had begun by adopting a wider range; but circumstances led him to restrict himself to the limit laid down by Maitland in his *Lambeth Catalogue*. I worked very hard at Mr Pyne's office in St James's Square, and at his private house, at the stores he had brought together on this rather hard-and-fast principle; to me, as a bibliographer, the extrinsic merits of the copies were

immaterial, and I owed to my estimable and thenceforward life-long acquaintance the means of rendering my introductory experiment of 1867 less empirical and secondary than it would otherwise have been. I cannot turn over the leaves of the volume without identifying many and many an entry with Mr Pyne and his unwearied kindness and sympathy, and in all cases where the book was eminently rare I have cited him as the owner of the copy which I used.

Our relationship grew into intimacy, and as his official functions appeared to be light and unexacting, his spacious room at the Tithe Office was my habitual halting-place on my way home from town. He shewed me any fresh purchase, spoke of what he had seen or heard, and discussed with me points connected with my current literary affairs. I thoroughly appreciated our intercourse, which was less constrained and formal than that with Mr Huth, and I regarded Mr Pyne as my benefactor in his way to an equal extent. The financial strength of the former placed him in a position which was not altogether natural, although I am far from thinking that he failed to fill the rank, to which his wealth entitled him, with dignity and judgment. It was, indeed, due to Mr Huth's half involuntary self-assertion, as a man of great fortune, that we at last fell out, as it was not my cue to yield even to him beyond a certain point, and I had had reason to complain of the mode in which he conducted the editorship of his catalogue, a proceeding whereby he was the sole loser. With Mr Pyne I was at my ease. We never had a word of difference or the shadow of a rupture all the years I knew him.

I have noticed Mr Pyne's law made for himself in regard to his choice of books; but he had kept some of those which lay outside the strict chronological barrier, and they were long under the charge of a bookseller in King William Street, Strand. It was in the full flood of Mr Huth's collecting fancy, and it occurred to me one day to ascertain from Mr Pyne, if possible, how it stood with the property. He said that he was meditating the sale of the boxful to someone. What did it contain? He could not recollect exactly, but there were Civil War tracts, some pieces of earlier date, and so on. How much did he propose to get for them? This he also could not resolve. I had no conception whatever of the nature and extent of the parcel, but I offered him at a venture £15, 15s., and he accepted the sum.

It was a downright little find. Sixty rare pamphlets went to Mr Huth at as many guineas; the British Museum purchased several; and a literary coal merchant, who had just then been providentially inspired with an ardour for the monuments of the Civil War period, gave me £20 for the refuse. But Mr Pyne was once or

twice tempted by my offers for books in his own series, and I had from him, among others, *The Prayer and Complaint of the Ploughman unto Christ*, 1531, and Gervase Markham's *Discourse of Horsemanship*, 1593. I gave him £21 for the first, just double what it had cost him. They were both for Mr Huth.

Pyne informed me one morning at his office, when I called as usual, that at a shop in Marylebone Lane he had seen Cocker's *Decimal Arithmetic*, 1685 (first edition), marked eighteenpence. I went, and bought it. It was a very fine copy. The portrait belongs to the *Vulgar Arithmetic*.

The anti-climax was reached when Mr Pyne's library came to the hammer some years since. It was a two days' sale at Sotheby's; the books were poorly described, the trade was not eager for them, and the British Museum had no funds. My own hands were rather tied by a temporary circumstance; but the opportunity was not one to be thrown away. I gave a long string of commissions to a bookseller whom I thought that I could trust, and he got me at nominal prices all the rarest lots, comprising a few of the gems in the English historical series, and some absolutely unique. I cannot divine how it so chanced; but about £16 placed me in possession of all I wanted. One item my agent missed, and I had to hunt down the acquirer, who gave it up to me at a trifling advance. The Museum soon afterward came into the usual grant, and gave me £116 for what they wanted—nearly everything. I met Professor Arber at the institution in Great Russell Street just after the transfer, and he deplored the loss which the national library had sustained by not bidding for such desiderata. He did not hear from me at that time that they were all in the building. Perhaps he discovered the fact subsequently.

There was one article in the Pyne auction, of which the simple-minded cataloguer had as correct an estimate as Messrs Reeves & Turner, who sold it to my friend. I had seen it in the booksellers' list at £10, described as a quarto volume, two and a-half inches thick, in vellum; but I was not just then in a buying humour; and it passed into other hands. But it was the identical collection of *Occasional Forms of Prayer* of the time of Elizabeth, in spotless state, with the autograph of Humphrey Dyson on nearly every title-page, which had been missing ever since Dyson's time, and which Reeves had picked up somewhere in Essex. I sent a commission of twenty-five guineas for it, and obtained it for £4, 6s. The present was one of my most striking experiences. Where the leading buyers were on those eventful days I cannot even dream.

Mr Pyne used to say that there were three prices for old books—the market, the

fancy, and the drop one—and I imagine that his taste, if not his resources, led him to espouse the last in great measure, so that he never became master of many volumes of first-rate consequence. He told me that the rise in the figures for rare early literature at the Bright sale in 1845 drove some of the existing collectors out of the market. What would they think, if they were now among us, and witnessed £2900 given for two imperfect copies of Caxton's Chaucer?

Pyne had had varied experiences. As a young man, he resided at Gibraltar, and he told me that he had there an intrigue with a Spanish beauty, the unexpected advent or return of whose husband necessitated her lover's desperate leap out of the window. One of his daughters married our Resident in Cashmere, and she was, when I met her in London, regretting the rule by which all presents from the native princes had to be given up to Government, as once, on her return home, the Rajah sent a messenger to meet her with an oblation of a gold teapot.

My old acquaintance had gone into the intricate affairs of the Mostyn family of Mostyn and Gloddaeth, and declared that he found them hopeless. Lord Mostyn owned the moor on which the town of Llandudno was subsequently built; and I have mentioned that he owned a splendid library and collection of antiquities. But when I was last at Gloddaeth, even the flower-garden was farmed. His lordship borrowed £400 of my father-in-law, and repaid him in garden tools.

It always impressed me as a curious trait in Pyne that he possessed so slight a knowledge of the world. He gravely informed me one day, when we were together, that he had gone to a saleroom in quest of an additional book-case, and that a dealer approached him with an offer of his services. He explained his object, and pointed to the article he had come to view. The dealer begged to know his pleasure touching the price, and he named six guineas; and he said to me with affecting simplicity: 'A most extraordinary coincidence! the thing fetched just the money.' Of course it did.

There have been very few book-buyers of the last and present generation of whom I have not known something, but our correspondence was, as a rule, purely bibliographical or incidental. Of the booksellers with whom I have mixed I have already specified the Boones. The other principal houses were those of Joseph Lilly, Bernard Quaritch, F. S. Ellis, B. M. Pickering, John Pearson and his successors, Messrs J. Pearson & Co., and Willis & Sotheran. My transactions with the Wallers, the Rimells, the Walfords, Reeves & Turner, Edward Stibbs, John Salkeld, and some of the provincial dealers, have also been a source of combined pleasure and profit. I may affirm one thing with confidence, that if I

have been asked a price for an article, I have always paid it, and that I should not be accused of procuring books or MSS. below their value, because I happened, perhaps, to have gained a wrinkle more about them than the vendor.

When I first encountered Lilly it was as a simple amateur. I was at that time—about 1863 or 1864—purchasing rare old books, for which my late father unexpectedly discovered that he had to pay; I made my *début* in this charlatan-like course at a shop in Lombard Street, kept by a Mr Elkins; but I never offended again. Lilly then had a place of business in Bedford Street, and when I contracted my humble liability with him, and accidentally brushed elbows with Mr Huth once or twice, neither of them foresaw how strongly I should influence the library of the latter, or how I should find it practicable to select from Lilly's shelves many scores of rare volumes with a view to their translation to his own particular client through me. For, apart from Mr Huth, I do not think that in his later years Lilly had a large circle of customers, and I know that more than once he has begged Mr Pyne on a Saturday afternoon to buy something of him, as he had not sold a single volume during the week. This might have been a joke; but there are not many jokes without a substratum of truth.

Lilly was a bluff, plain-spoken, imperfectly-bred man; but I always found him civil and obliging, and he lent me any book which I required for editorial or other purposes without hesitation. He compiled his catalogues with no ordinary care, and would often take a pleasure in pointing out some little discovery which he had made about an edition or copy of an old writer. He presented me in 1869 with a bound collection of these, and they contain a variety of useful notices. He was no scholar or linguist, yet it was said of him that, if he had a Hebrew or Sanscrit book, he seemed to know whether it possessed value or not. He left behind him a large stock, which was publicly sold, and of which I was a purchaser here and there. It struck me as a curious trait in a man who had much natural shrewdness that he allowed many volumes of the rarest character to remain on his shelves, when they might have been with very slight trouble converted into money. Under the hammer they commanded prices which paid homage to the departed owner's supposed capability of placing everything to the best advantage; the trade hung off a good deal; and Lilly was not popular, besides. The British Museum wanted nearly all that I bought. There was one very early volume of prayers, printed on vellum, for which Lilly had asked £12, 12s.; it came to me at £4, 12s., and I might, if John Pearson had not suspected it to be something valuable, have had it for half that amount. But the odd feature about the matter was that, although I submitted it to Mr Blades, and to everyone

else likely to be able to tell me, no one could say where it was printed. The Museum gladly gave me the sum which its former proprietor had justly deemed it worth without finding anybody to agree with him.

The Daniel sale in 1864 and the Corser one, the latter spread over two or three seasons (1868-70), represented the most profitable and conspicuous incidents in Lilly's career, as they supplied the material, each in its way, which most largely helped to raise the library of his principal, Mr Huth, to the rank which it occupied, and still occupies in the hands of a son. The Daniel books had been collected under specially favourable circumstances. They were selected at leisure during a period of over thirty years from auction-room and book-shop, whenever an item, which struck their proprietor's practical instinct as a safe and desirable investment, occurred; and some of the most important—the quarto Shakespeares, the unique chapbooks, and the Elizabethan poetry, were secured just when a marked depression had set in—Dibdin's *Bibliophobia*, which was to the *Bibliomania* what the anti-cyclone is to the whirlwind; while not a few highly remarkable lots—

The Ballads

The quarto edition of the *Book of St. Albans*

The *Lucrece*, 1594,

The Chester's *Love's Martyr*, 1601,

besides others, no doubt, were obtained *sub rosa* by a mysterious strategy, at which Daniel would darkly hint in conversation with you, but of which you were left to surmise for yourself the whole truth. The general opinion is, that he procured them through Fitch of Ipswich, whose wife had been a housekeeper or confidential servant of the Tollemaches, from Helmingham Hall, Bentley, the Suffolk seat of that ancient family. But when I consider the numberless precious volumes, which have dropped, so to speak, into my hands, coming, as I of course did, at a far less auspicious juncture, I arrive at the conclusion, not that Daniel bought freely everything really valuable and cheap, but that he must have had abundant opportunities, as a person of leisure and means, of becoming the master of thousands of other literary curiosities, which would have brought him or his estate a handsome profit by waiting for the return of the tide.

This gentleman improved the occasion, however, so far as his acquisitions went, by making flyleaves the receptacles of a larger crop of misleading statements than I ever remember to have seen from the hand of a single individual; let us charitably suppose that he knew no better; and the compiler of his catalogue must be debited with a similar amount of ignorance or credulity, since there probably never was one circulated with so many unfounded or hyperbolical assertions, from the time that Messrs Sotheby & Co. first started in business. If the means are justified by the end, however, the retired accountant had calculated well; the bait, which he had laid, was greedily swallowed; and the prices were stupendous. It was a battle *à l'outrance* between the British Museum, Mr Huth, Sir William Tite, and one or two more. But the national library and Mr Huth divided the *spolia opima*, and doubtless the lion's share fell to the latter. The Museum authorities can always wait.

Mr Huth did not want the first folio Shakespear, 1623, as he had acquired at the Gardner sale in 1854 a very good one in an eighteenth-century russia binding, not very tall, but very sound and fine. The Daniel one, which went to Lady Coutts at over £700, came from William Pickering, and cost about £200, as I was informed by a member of the Daniel family. It thoroughly jumped with the

owner's idiosyncrasy to pronounce his copy, whenever he spoke of it, as the finest in existence, which it neither was nor is. One of the best which I have seen was that sold at Sotheby's for Miss Napier of Edinburgh through the recommendation of Mr Pyne aforesaid, who admonished the lady to put a reserve of £100 on it. This was wholesome advice, for it was put in at that figure, and the only advance was £1 from a member of a solid ring opposite to myself, who had looked in from curiosity to see how the bidding went. At £101 it would have fallen a prey to the junto; it was in the old binding; it only wanted the verses; the condition was large, crisp, and clean, the title-page (which had been shifted to the middle for some reason, and was said in the catalogue to be deficient) immaculate; and I was prompted to say £151. Angry and disconcerted looks met me from the enemy's line, and I weighed the utility of pursuing the matter. At £151 it became the property of six or eight gentlemen, and I understood that the ultimate price left £400 behind it.

But the volume even in perfect state is not very rare. It is merely that, in common with the first editions of Walton's *Angler*, the *Faëry Queene*, the *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Paradise Lost*, Burns, and a few more, everybody desires it. The auctioneers have a stereotyped note to the effect that the first Shakespear is yearly becoming more difficult to procure, which may be so, but simply because, although fresh copies periodically occur, the competition more than proportionately increases. There is a steadfast run on capital books, not only in English, but in all languages—ay, let them be even in Irish, Welsh, Manx, or Indian hieroglyphics.

I personally attended the Corser sales, although Mr Ellis held my commissions for all that I particularly coveted. I was therefore a spectator rather than an actor in that busy and memorable scene; I now and then intervened, if I felt that there was a lot worth securing on second thoughts, not comprised in my instructions to my representative. The glut of rarities was so bewildering, that I got nearly everything which I had marked. It was before the day, when Mr Quaritch asserted himself so emphatically and so irrepressibly, and John Pearson was not yet very pronounced in his opposition. I had therefore to count only on Lilly and Ellis, apart from the orders of the British Museum through Boone. By employing Ellis I substantially narrowed the hostile competition to two, and Lilly was not very formidable beyond those lots which Mr Huth had singled out, nor Boone, save for such as he was instructed to buy for the nation at a price—not generally a very high one. The Britwell library just nibbled here and there at a *desideratum*, and had to pay very smartly for it, when it traversed me.

Lilly, Ellis and myself (when I was there) usually sat side by side; neither of them knew what my views were till some time afterward. But I occasionally stood behind. There was an amusing little episode in relation to a large-paper copy in the old calf binding of Samuel Daniel's *Civil Wars*, 1595, with the autograph of Lucy, Lady Lyttelton. Two copies occurred in successive lots, the large paper first; the others did not notice the difference in size, till I had bought the rare variety, and then Lilly, holding the usual sort of copy in his hand, and turning round to the porter, asked him to bring the other. But he was of course too late in his discovery. Mr Corser had given £20 for the book, which was knocked down to me under such circumstances at £4, 6s., and at the higher rate, one endorsed by the excellent judgment of the late proprietor, it passed in due course to Mr Huth.

One of my direct acquisitions at this sale was the exceedingly rare volume of Poems by James Yates, 1582; there were two copies in successive lots; and I suggested that they should be sold together. The price was £31; but most unfortunately they both proved imperfect, so that my hope of obtaining a rich prize for my friend's library was frustrated. By the way, the copy given by Mr Reynardson to the public library at Hillingdon about 1720 has long gone astray.

Lilly did not actively interfere in the book-market subsequently to the dispersion of the Corser treasures. I confess that, if I had had a free hand, I should have bought far more than he did; and if it had not been for my personal offices, the Huth collection would have missed many undeniably desirable and almost unique features in the Catalogue, as it stands. Mr Huth himself was not very conversant with these matters, and his leading counsellor had much to learn. I retain to this hour a foolish regret, that I permitted Mr Christie-Miller to carry off anything, but I am sufficiently patriotic to be glad, that the British Museum was so successful. I have in my mind's eye the long rows of old quarto tracts as they lay together, while Mr Rye, the then keeper, was looking through them preparatorily to their consignment to a cataloguer; and I felt some remorse at having been directly instrumental without his knowledge in making many of them costlier. Poor Mr Huth was not prosperous as an utterer of *bons-mots*. The only one I ever heard him deliver—and it was weak to excess—was that he had bought at the Corser auction a good dish of Greenes.

I apprehend that it was not so very long prior to this signal event in my bibliographical history, that I had regular dealings with F. S. Ellis, then in King Street, Covent Garden. I invariably found him most well-informed, most obliging, and most liberal. While I was finishing my *Handbook*, he volunteered

(as I have said) the loan of Sir Francis Freeling's interleaved *Bibliotheca Anglo-poetica*, on the blank pages of which Freeling had often recorded the sources, whence he procured his rare books at a very different tariff from that prevailing in Longman & Co.'s catalogue. It may not be generally known that this eminent collector, whose curious library was sold in 1836, enjoyed through his official position at the General Post Office peculiar facilities for establishing a system of communication with the authorities in the country towns, and he certainly owed to this accident quite a number of bargains (as we should now esteem them) from Dick of Bury St Edmunds. I must not repeat myself, and I have already transcribed from the volume above-mentioned several of Freeling's memoranda in my own publication of 1867.



CHAPTER VI

My Transactions with Mr Ellis—Rarities which came from Him, and How He got Them—Riviere the Bookbinder—How He cleaned a Valuable Volume for Me—His Irritability—A Strange Tale about an Unique Tract—The Old Gentleman and the Immoral Publication—Dryden's Copy of Spenser—The Unlucky *Contretemps* at Ellis's—A Second Somewhere Else—Mr B. M. Pickering—Our Pleasant and Profitable Relations—Thomas Fuller's MSS. Epigrams—Charles Cotton's Copy of Taylor the Water-Poet's Works—A Second One, which Pickering had, and sold to Me—He has a First Edition of *Paradise Lost* from Me for Two Guineas and a Half—Taylor's Thumb Bible.

Ellis after a while penetrated my pharisaical duplicity in acquiring from him and others, to keep my pot boiling at home, while I amassed material for my barren bibliographical enterprise, every item calculated to fit my purpose; he now and then resisted my overtures; but as a rule he gave way on my undertaking to pay his price. I owed to him a large number of eminently rare volumes, of which he did not always appreciate the full significance. I could specify scores of unique or all but unique entries in the Huth Catalogue, which filtered through me from this source, and ministered to my leading aim—not the earning of money so much as the advancement of bibliographical knowledge.

Some of these prizes came to hand in a strange and romantic manner enough. Two young Oxonians brought into the shop in King Street the copy of Withals' *Dictionary*, 1553, which was not only unique and in the finest condition, but which settled the question as to the book having been printed, as the older bibliographers declared, by Caxton. A correspondent at Aberdeen offered Sir David Lyndsay's *Squire Meldrum*, 1594, and Verstegan's *Odes*, 1601, both books of the highest rarity, and the Lyndsay unexceptionable, but the other

horribly oil-stained. I exchanged the Withals for twenty guineas, and the remaining two for thirty more. The first was in the original binding, and it was not for me to disturb it; but the Scottish book and the *Odes* I committed to Riviere. He made a grimace, when he examined the latter, and asked me if I was aware how much it would cost to clean it. I assured him that that was a point which I entirely left to him, and he restored it to me after a season in morocco with scarcely a vestige of the blemish. He informed me that he had *boiled the leaves in oil*—a species of homœopathic prescription; and I cheerfully paid him seven guineas for his skill and care.

He was a capital old fellow, originally a bookseller at Bath, and was constantly employed by Christie-Miller and Ouvry. He was ambidexter; for he executed a vast amount of modern binding for the trade, and was famous for his tree-marbled calf, which I have frequently watched in its various stages in his workshop.

He was a trifle irritable at times. I had given him an Elizabethan tract to bind, and on inquiring after a reasonable interval it was not merely not done, but could not be found. I called two or three times, and Riviere at last exclaimed: ‘Damn the thing; what do you want for it?’—pulling out his cheque-book. I replied that I wanted nothing but my property, bound as ordered; and he was so far impressed by my composure, that he said no more, and eventually brought the stray to light.

At the Donnington sale in Leicestershire, when the old library removed from Moira House, Armagh, was brought to the hammer, there was in a bundle a particular pamphlet entitled *The Eighth Day*, 1661, an ephemeral poem on the Restoration by Richard Beling, of which Sir James Ware had descended to the grave without beholding a copy. In fact, no one else had. This precious *morçeau* found its way to a stall-keeper in London, who confidently appraised it at one shilling. He had occasional proposals for it, but they never topped the moiety; and he at last carried it to Edward Stibbs in Museum Street, and told him that, if he could not get his price, he would burn it. Stibbs behaved in a truly princely manner by handing him half-a-crown. In a day or two Ellis called, saw the prize, and gave £2, 2s. for it. I happened to catch sight of it on his counter, and he forced me to rise to £12, 12s.—it was intended as a prohibitive demand; but I was not to be intimidated or gainsaid. Mr Huth did not offer a remark, when I sent it to him in the usual way (with other recent finds) at £21. What is its true value?

An odd adventure once befell Ellis without directly affecting me. He mentioned to me that an old gentleman had called one day, and had bought a copy of Cleveland's Poems at six shillings. He paid for it; and shortly after he returned, and beckoning Ellis aside, as there was a third party present, he demanded of him with a very grave air whether he was acquainted with the nature of the publication, which he had sold to him. As Ellis hardly collected his drift, and seemed to await a farther disclosure, he added, 'That is a most indecent book, sir.' Ellis expressed his sorrow, and engaged to take it back, and reimburse him. 'Nothing of the kind, sir,' rejoined his visitor; 'I shall carefully consider the proper course to pursue;' and he quitted the premises. When he reappeared, it was to announce that after the most anxious deliberation he had burned the immoral volume!

Samuel Addington of St. Martin's Lane, of whom there is some account in *Four Generations of a Literary Family*, formed his collections, as a rule, wholly from direct purchases under the hammer. He had no confidence in his own knowledge of values, and liked to watch the course of competition. It was his way, and not altogether a bad one, of gauging the market, and supplying his own deficiencies at other people's expense. But Addington occasionally bought prints of his friend Mrs Nosedá, on whose judgment he implicitly relied, and now and then he took a book or so of Ellis. I was in the shop in King Street one day when he was there, and Ellis succeeded in fixing him with £150's worth of MSS. Of course, it was all whim; and the money was a secondary matter. He pulled out his cheque-book on the spot, and paid for the purchase.

We had many a chat together, and he was obliging enough in one or two instances to lend me something in his possession for myself or a friend. I never heard the origin of his career as a collector. He was somewhat before my time. But I ascribed his peculiarly fitful method of buying to uncertainty as to the commercial aspect and expediency of a transaction; for of real feeling for art or literature I do not believe that he had a tittle.

When I was talking to Ellis in King Street one day, an individual strongly pitted with small-pox presented himself, and asked for a catalogue. He said in a tone, which suggested the presence of a pebble in his mouth, that he was 'Mr Murray Re-Printer.' This person was the predecessor of Professor Arber in his scheme for bringing our earlier literature within the reach of the general reader, who as a rule does not care a jot for it.

Of course it would be idle to pretend that I monopolised the innumerable

curiosities, which Ellis was continually having through his hands. I did not even see the copy of Spenser's Works, 1679, Dryden's MSS. notes, which he sold for £35 to Trinity College, Cambridge, having got it at an auction for £1, where it was entered in the catalogue without a word; nor did I venture to stand between Mr Huth and him in the case of the miraculously fine copy in the original binding of the romance of *Palmendos*, 1589, which Mason of Barnard's Inn brought in by chance. Mr Huth unfortunately re-clothed both that and the Withals in modern russia.

Mason unwisely relinquished his employment as a brewer's actuary for the book-trade, and that, again, for a yet worse one—drink. Many valuable volumes passed through his hands, and he afforded me the opportunity of taking notes of some of them.

I was once—once, only I think—so unhappy and so *gauche* as to incur the serious displeasure of my estimable acquaintance, and it was thus. Dr Furnivall happened to enter the place of business with a volume in his hand, which he was going to offer to the British Museum on behalf of the owner, Mr Peacock of Bottesford Manor, and without reflection I tried, standing on Tom Tiddler's ground, to dissuade him from his project in the hearing of Ellis, and to let me have the refusal for Mr Huth. It was a beautiful little book, *The School of Virtue*, the second part, 1619, and unique. To the Museum it went surely enough; and I was upbraided by Ellis, perhaps not undeservedly, with having thwarted him in his own intended effort to intercept the article *in transitu* with the same view as myself; and I apologised. He was terribly ruffled at my indiscretion; and I was sorry that I had perpetrated it.

Dr Furnivall is my nearly forty years' old friend. He is associated in my recollection only with two transactions, both alike unfortunate: the one just narrated, and a second, which was more ludicrous than anything else. I had seen on his table at his own house a remarkably good copy of Brathwaite's *Complete Gentlewoman*, 1631, and I thought of Mr Huth. I knew Furnivall to be no collector, and I suggested to him that, if he did not urgently require the Brathwaite, for which he had given 6s., I would gladly pay him a guinea for it, and find him a working copy into the bargain. He pleasantly declined, and I was astonished the next morning to receive from him a fierce epistle enjoining me to restore to him instantly the book, which I had taken. I contented myself with writing him a line, to intimate that I had not the volume, and that I thought when he found it, he would be sorry that he had expressed his views in such a manner. I heard no more from him, till, a few days subsequently in my absence, he called

on me, and asked to see my wife, and to her he declared his extreme regret at what had occurred, and announced the discovery of the lost treasure underneath a pile of papers, where he had probably put it himself. The affair was not exactly a joke; but it was just the kind of impulsive thoughtlessness, which distinguishes my eminent contemporary, and to which I dare say that he would readily plead guilty. I made no secret of the business; and it produced no substantial difference in our relations. I understood, rightly or wrongly, that he had gone so far as to advertise the supposed larceny; but I treated the matter with stoical indifference, and I believe that we have shaken hands over it years upon years.

I used to see at Ellis's the late William Morris. He was then in the prime of life, and I recollect his long curly black hair. I do not think that he had yet imbibed those socialistic ideas, which afterward distinguished him, and which one is surprised to find in a person of considerable worldly resources—in other words, with something to lose. I bought a copy of his *Earthly Paradise*, when it first came out; but beyond the smooth versification, and correct phraseology I failed to discern much in it. I have often seen Morris stalking along with his rod and bag in the vicinity of Barnes.

Of his typographical and artistic styles I own that I had a very indifferent opinion, for they seemed to me to be incongruous and unsympathetic. They did not appeal to my appreciation of true work. I regarded them as bastard and empirical; they might do very well for wall-papers. I must not be too sure; but I should imagine that any one, who is familiar with the early printed books illustrated by engravings of whatever kind, would be apt to take the same view. The graphic portion of Morris's publications is intelligible, however, and sane; one can see what is meant, if one does not agree with the treatment. It is not so utterly outrageous as Mr Beardsley's performances.

There were two other personages, with little in common between them, whom I met in King Street—George Cruikshank and Mr A. C. Swinburne. I have come across the latter elsewhere; but Cruikshank whom my grandfather had known so well, a short, square-set figure, who once entered the shop, while I was there, it was not my fortune to behold on more than that single occasion.

I had started as a bookman nearly soon enough to meet William Pickering himself; but with his son, B. M. Pickering, when he opened a small shop in Piccadilly, my intercourse was prompt and continuous. He was a man of rather phlegmatic and unimpressionable temperament, but thoroughly honourable and trustworthy. My earliest dealings with him were on my own personal account,

while I cherished the idea, that I might take my place among the collectors of the day, and I obtained from him a few very rare volumes, including a copy of *England's Helicon*, quarto, 1600, which he had found in a bundle at Sotheby's in 1857, shortly after the realisation of £31 at the same rooms for one at the Wolfreton sale. He gave £1 for this but it was not very fine, and like the Wolfreton and every other known copy, except Malone's in the Bodleian, wanted, as I subsequently discovered, the last leaf. Pickering had it washed and bound in brown morocco by Bedford, and charged me £18, 18s. for it. Perhaps the most remarkable purchase which I ever made in this direction was a copy of Richard Crashaw's Poems, in which an early owner had inserted a MS. text of upward of fifty otherwise unknown epigrams by Thomas Fuller. Pickering marked the volume 15s., and said nothing about the unique feature. Dr Grosart printed the collection from this source.

My relations with the younger Pickering were almost equally divided in point of time into two epochs: from 1857 to 1865, when I bought for myself, and thenceforward till the date of his death, when I added him to the number of those who assisted me in carrying out, through Mr Huth and a few others, my interminable task of cataloguing the entire *corpus*, with very slight reservations, of our early national literature. Pickering never objected to let me become the medium for filling up gaps in the Huth library from his periodical acquisitions; I paid him his price; and I paid it promptly, as I did all round.

Our maiden transaction was a very humble one. It was a copy of a little tract called *A Caution to keep Money*, 1642, and it was a sort of experiment. I had to give 5s. for it, and at the same not very extravagant figure it went to my acquaintance. He eyed it rather wistfully; the low price was somewhat against it; but he accepted it, and fortunately or otherwise he did not take its counsel practically to heart. But I discovered the futility of allowing cheapness to appear as a recommendation in the case of one, who knew comparatively little of the selling value, and to whom cheapness was not the slightest object. The pamphlet in question was the pioneer of many scores of articles of the highest rarity and interest, which found their way through the same channel to the ultimate possessor. Among them was a curious copy in the original calf binding with many uncut leaves of Taylor the Water Poet's works, 1630, formerly belonging to Charles Cotton the angler; it had come from the Hastings library at Donnington, and I paid Pickering £30 for it. A second one, which I had of him, was the only example containing anything in the nature of a presentation from the author, whose autograph is of the rarest occurrence; but unfortunately in this

case the memorandum was written by the recipient. The folio Taylor is one of those books, which has unaccountably fallen in price of late years; and certainly it is by no means uncommon.

I was almost invariably on the acquiring side. Once I sold Pickering, as I have already related, a Caxton, and at another time a first edition of *Paradise Lost*, 1669, in the original sheep cover. I had seen the latter at a shop in Great Russell Street, of which the rather impetuous master, when I put some query to him, seemed undecided, whether he would let me have the book after all for £2, 2s., or throw it at my head. He did the former, and an American agent begged me as a favour to let him pay me double the money, which, as I thought him to be in jest, I declined. I subsequently parted with it to Pickering for £2, 12s. 6d., which was about the prevailing tariff thirty years since. I may take the present opportunity of mentioning that it was at the same emporium in Bloomsbury, that a later occupant apologised to me, in tendering me a beautiful uncut copy in sheep of Taylor the Water Poet's *Thumb Bible*, for being so unreasonable as to want 14s. for the Jeremy Taylor, as he took it to be. I forgave him, and Mr Huth was very pleased to have the volume.

Pickering had, like his father, a singular weakness for accumulating stock, and laying up imperfect copies of rare books in the distant hope of completing them. Yet he held his ground, and gradually enlarged his premises, till they were among the most spacious at the West End. Poor fellow! he lost all his belongings in an epidemic, and never recovered from the shock.



CHAPTER VII

Mr John Pearson—Origin of Our Connection—
His Appreciable Value to Me—He assists,
through Me, in Completing the Huth
Library—Lovelace's *Lucasta*—The
Turbervile—The Imperfect Chaucer—The
Copy of Ruskin's Poems at Reading—The
Walton's *Angler*—Locker and Pearson—
James Toovey—Curious Incident in
Connection with Sir Thomas Phillipps—
Willis & Sotheran—Two Unique Cookery
Books—Only Just in Time—The Caxton's
Game and Play of the Chess—A Valuable
Haul from the West of England—A
Reverend Gentleman's MSS. *Diaries of
Travel*—The Wallers—Lamb's *Tales from
Shakespear*, 1807—The Folio MS. of
Edmond Waller's Poems—An Unique
Book of Verse—A Rare American Item—
The Rimells—I take from Them and sell to
Them—Some Notable *Americana*—The
Walfords—An Unique Tract by Taylor the
Water Poet—John Russell Smith and His
Son—My Numerous Transactions with the
Latter—Another Unknown Taylor—John
Camden Hotten—I sift His Stores in
Piccadilly—The Bunyan Volume from
Cornwall—John Salkeld—My Expedition
to His Shop on a Sunday Night, and Its
Fruit—A Rather Ticklish Adventure or
Two—Messrs Jarvis & Son—My Finds
There—King James I.'s Copy of Charron,
dedicated to Prince Henry—The Unknown
Fishmongers' Pageant for 1590—The
Long-Lost English Version of Henryson's

Æsop, 1577.

I first met with John Pearson, if I remember rightly, when he had a room at Noble's in the Strand. He had sent me his catalogue, and I went to buy a small London tract, for which he demanded £3, 3s., because it had all the three blank leaves; it was in fact a speech delivered to King James I. on his entry into the City in 1603 by Richard Martin of the Middle Temple. Mr Huth sent it to Bedford, who removed the leaves, which constituted the feature; but I did not see the mischief, till it fell to my lot to catalogue the piece years afterward. My good friend was very tiresome and difficult in these small matters, which in bibliography are apt to become great ones. I obtained for him a bipartite volume by Ben Jonson, comprising the description of James I.'s reception in London and his previous entertainment at Althorp, in 1603-4, at two different points, and explained to him the desirability of having them bound together, as the latter portion was named on the first title. They went to Bedford, I suppose, without a word, and were clothed in separate jackets.

Pearson became another of my coadjutors. His intelligence, energy, and good fortune did me excellent service. He dealt of course with many other persons, both here and in America; but a handsome proportion of his prizes passed through me to Mr Huth. The latter at that period—in the seventies—still lacked some of the most ordinary *desiderata* of a collection, which was beginning under my auspices to assume a more general character than it possessed, when I entered on the scene in 1866. Even Lovelace's *Lucasta*, of which I purchased of Pearson George Daniel's copy for £3, 3s., Carew's *Poems*, 1640, of which I met with a beautiful specimen on thick paper in the original binding for 21s., and many others, were absent. It was Pearson's object to come to the front, and I perhaps did my part in making him known to my patron, who eventually added his shop to his places of call, and inspected the articles, which the proprietor and I had agreed to lay before him as suitable and deficient.

The Turbervile above noticed was my most signal gain from this quarter. I shall never forget Pearson's exultation, when I acceded to his proposal; he seemed, as he cried, 'I have made £75 by it,' as if he would have leapt over the counter.

His commercial transactions became sufficiently wide and lucrative, and all my purchases of him did not go to Mr Huth. A curious little piece of luck befel me in the case of a Chaucer wanting the end, which he had kept for years, and at length sold to me in despair. The next week Reeves & Turner obtained a second of the same impression by Thomas Petyt, *wanting the commencement*. Reeves let me

take out the leaves I required for a trifle. I never experienced from Pearson any deficiency of straightforwardness, except that once Mrs Nosedá and he had, I think, a joint hand in passing off a facsimile frontispiece of Taylor the Water-Poet's Works, and I was the victim. I said nothing, but, like the Frenchman's jackdaw, thought the more. He was an exceptionally shrewd and vigilant character, and nearly broke Lovejoy of Reading's heart by getting from his assistant an uncut copy of Ruskin's poems for a shilling during Lovejoy's absence. But Pearson paid the price, which the fellow asked. I was in the shop, when he had just received through a third party a lovely copy of Walton's *Angler*, 1653, in the pristine binding for £14 plus £3, 10s. to the bringer. The last copy in the market in precisely the same condition brought successively £310 and £415. Someone tells me that in both cases the buyer and the seller was one and the same party. Poor Walton! like Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespear, and our other Great Ones, he has been converted into *bric-à-brac*. To your millionaire amateur it does not signify whether it is a book or a tea-pot or a violin, if the price is high enough—better still, if it is higher than was ever given before. That is his intelligent seeing-point. In the present instance the holder of the Walton, if the above-named view be correct, did not meet with a customer so enthusiastic as himself. He was a trifle too much *in excelsis*.

Pearson was almost the introducer of those stupendous prices for really first-rate books or rarities in book-form, which have now gone on ascending, till it is hard to tell where they will stop. Frederic Locker told me that he had asked him fifty guineas for a prose tract by Southwell a few years anterior in date to any recorded. Why not five hundred? With Pearson's successors I have had many years' pleasant acquaintance. *Verbum sap.* The volumes, which have changed hands on that ground, would form a library and a fine one.

With the late James Toovey I never had a single transaction. But Mr Huth often spoke of him and of the *Temple of Leather and Literature*, as his place of business in Piccadilly was jocularly called from Toovey's predilection for old morocco bindings. I do not pretend to know what was the exact nature of this business; but it must have been a very profitable one. Ordinary bookselling made only a small part of it. I always took Toovey to be a Jew, till I found that he was a Catholic; and it was a laughable circumstance that, when the library of Sir Thomas Phillipps of Middle-Hill had to be valued, he was the very person selected to perform the task, although Phillipps had laid down in his will that the house should never be entered, nor the books examined, *by Mr Halliwell or a Papist*.

Willis & Sotheran's in the Strand was known to me by tradition. My father had bought books of Willis in early times, when the latter was in Prince's Street and in the Piazza, before he joined Mr Sotheran. The shop in the Strand united with Pickering's and one or two more to supply me with a handful or so of curiosities, while I remained what is termed an *amateur*. Later, it was one of the marts, to which I regularly resorted with advantage in quest of the wants of Mr Huth or the British Museum. An old-established business, it mechanically attracted year by year an endless succession of private parcels and single lots, which generally rendered the monthly catalogues remunerative reading. It is more than a quarter of a century ago, since I received one of these lists at Kensington, and spied out two unique items in the shape of *Cookery Books* of the Elizabethan period at 10s. 6d. each. I was on the top of the next omnibus going Londonward, and entered the premises with a nervous uncertainty not legible on my countenance. I applied for the lots; *they brought them to me*; they were in splendid state; I clapped them in my pocket, and I left the place with a lightened heart. I met some of my friends, who were coming in, as I walked out, and I guessed their mission. How sorry I was for them! Mr Pyne was one. There came into my thoughts a saying of Mr Huth's elucidatory of the success of his firm: 'We do not profess,' quoth he, 'to be cleverer than other folks; but we get up earlier in the morning.'

Mr Huth owed his copy of Caxton's *Game of Chess* to Willis & Sotheran. An individual brought it into the shop, and offered it for sale. It was in vellum, but wanted A i. and A viii., the former a blank leaf. What the firm gave, I never heard; but when Lilly approached them on behalf of Mr Huth, the demand was £1000. It is always wise to start with a margin. The ultimate figure was £300. It was the second edition, of which Trinity College, Cambridge, the Duke of Devonshire, and Lord Tollemache, have perfect copies.

It was the buyer (Francis), whom Willis & Sotheran employed about 1860, to whom we were all indebted for discovering at or near Plymouth the unique tragedy of *Orestes*, 1567, which went to the Museum, and for a duplicate of which Payne Collier safely offered at the time fifty guineas, and the equally rare copy of Drayton's *Harmony of the Church*, 1610, which was acquired by Mr Corser, and at his sale by Mr Christie-Miller. I have not heard that the West of England has of recent years yielded many such finds as it formerly did. It was long a profitable hunting ground.

Speaking of Drayton, of whose early editions it has fallen to my lot to secure several at different times, I am reminded that in Willis & Sotheran's 1862

catalogue appeared that eminent writer's *Tragical Legend of Robert Duke of Normandy*, 1596, of which only three copies are known; the volume turned out on examination to want a leaf; but luckily in another list issued by the firm there was a second example misdescribed as *Drayton's Poems*, which, though elsewhere imperfect, supplied the immediate deficiency; and the duplicate, which had served me so well, was wasted. I had been about the same time disappointed by missing at a shop in Old Bond Street (not Boone's) the *English Ape*, 1588, in the original binding at £2, 12s. 6d.; and curiously enough the house in the Strand purchased it, bound it in red morocco, and put it in a subsequent monthly circular at £5, 5s. I had to stretch my purse-strings, and go to the higher figure.

I have elsewhere given Willis himself credit for introducing me to a small literary commission, which if it did not yield much money, did not entail much labour. The only other experience of the same class afforded me the labour without any result. It was a parson of independent fortune, who called me in for my opinion on certain *Diaries of Travel*, which he had written, and which he thought (most correctly) in need of editorship. The negotiation came to nothing, and so did my fee. It was not my province to inform the reverend gentleman that his MSS. were waste-paper, nor would the mention of his name be of any utility. He was unconsciously one of those sempiternal caterers for the paper-mill, whose unprinted effusions generally figure in the auctions among the bundles in the wane of the season, and they resemble in their inevitable doom the processions through the streets of the drover's charges on their way to our shambles. Let us pray that from the pulp of this holy man's *derelicta*, swept out by his executors, something worthier and more durable may evolve.

There is quite a group of minor or secondary dealers, whose absolute rank to me was indifferent, and from whom it has been my fortune in the course of my career as a bibliographical huntsman to bring away spoils of the chase neither few nor unimportant.

An odd case of rather shallow misrepresentation occurred, when I went to an emporium in Conduit Street in search of a copy of Stapylton's *Musæus*, 1647. It was marked 5s. 6d. in the catalogue, but, said the owner, 'that is a misprint for 15s.' I put down the larger sum, merely inquiring how the odd sixpence crept in!

The Wallers of Fleet Street, originally next to Saint Dunstan's Church, subsequently higher up, had known my grandfather. The younger was my more particular acquaintance, and helped me to many choice items. I recollect that I

refused a spotless copy of Lamb's *Tales from Shakespear*, in old sheep, 1807, for 7s. 6d., which Waller assured me that Mr George Daniel had seen, and estimated at a guinea; and I regret this more than I congratulate myself on the acquisition of an unique folio MS. of Edmond Waller's Poems, which his namesake had got from a furniture sale for one shilling, and let me have for fifty, of an unknown impression of *A Description of Love*, 1629, tenderly and mercifully swaddled between two imperfect books in a volume, and itself (the sole thing of value) as clean as a new penny, and several other ungratefully forgotten blessings. It was to the Waller volume that the last editor of the poet was indebted for the unprinted and otherwise undescribed dedication to Queen Henrietta Maria, of which I furnished the earliest notice an age since to *Notes and Queries*. By the way, I must not overlook the matchless copy in boards uncut of the *Papers relating to the Colony of Massachusetts Bay*, published at Boston, 1769, for which I tendered Waller 5s., and for which an American house gave £8.

I had not much to do with the Rimells and the Walfords. The former put in my way two or three rarities, and I furnished them with a couple of valuable *Americana* for the Carter-Brown library at New York. The books which I associate with this firm are Philipot's *Elegies on the Death of William Glover*, Esquire of Shalston in Buckinghamshire, 1641, which cost me 4s., and Gardyne's *Theatre of the Scottish Kings*, 1709, both alike scarce to excess. Of neither are more than two copies known, and the Grenville one of the second is mutilated. Mr Christie-Miller would have been glad to possess the Philipot; but it went to the national library; the Gardyne passed into the Huth collection.

The Walfords were instrumental in enabling me to track out a pamphlet by Taylor the Water Poet relative to a murder at Ewell in 1620, of which I had been on the scent for years, and of which a copy at last occurred in a huge pile of miscellanies at Sotheby's tied up together at the close of a season. I found that Walford was the buyer; and when I waited on him, it turned out that it was a commission. For whom? Well, a customer in Scotland. But he did not want the account of a transaction at Ewell! Well; he would write, if I would name my price. I offered 10s. The tract came up; I took all the particulars; and the Museum relieved me of it at £4, 4s. No duplicate has ever been seen, I believe.

John Russell Smith was one of my earliest publishers. I became acquainted with him in 1857 in that capacity, and continued to do literary work on his behalf down to 1869. I subsequently purchased a large number of old books of him and of his son, Alfred Russell Smith, through whose hands passed some very rare articles less highly appreciated by him than by myself. Which was the truer

estimation, I do not know; but Smith now and then ingenuously stated to me that a lot in the catalogue, which I selected, had been ordered over and over again. Such was the case with the *Book of Measuring of Land*, by Sir Richard de Benese, Canon of Merton Abbey, printed at Southwark about 1536 by James Nicholson, priced 15s. in the original stamped binding, and Henry Vaughan the Silurist's *Thalia Rediviva*, marked 25s. Smith said one morning that a party had sent him three tracts, which he shewed me, and wanted 25s. for the lot; and he should expect 5s. for his trouble, if they would suit me. 'Very well,' said I. But the party advanced to 30s. and Smith by consequence to 35s. Still I was agreeable; and at that figure they became mine. Two of them were by Taylor the Water Poet, one unique—the original narrative of his journey to Bohemia, 1620; and it was, as so many of these exceedingly rare items often are, in a perfect state of preservation.

I once went through Hotten's stores in Piccadilly, and found nothing but the copy which Mr Huth had, of Wither's *Psalms*, printed in the Netherlands, 1632, in unusually fine condition, and marked 15s. Hotten had from Cornwall, in a volume, Cowley's Poems set to music by W. King, 1668, and Bunyan's *Profitable Meditations*, the latter unique, and now in the British Museum. I somehow missed that; but I bought the Cowley; it is the identical one described in the Huth catalogue. Hotten had a curious propensity for marking his old books at figures, which might denote the exiguity of his profit—or the reverse. He would not ask 18s. or a guinea, but 19s. 6d.

There was a constitutional and aggravating proneness on his part as a publisher to the pursuit of a tortuous path in preference to a straight one; and I am afraid that he took a certain pride in trying to outwit or overreach his client. Most unwillingly I had in the case of a small book, which he took, to involve him in two bills of costs from his sheer perversity in regard to his engagements; and the curious, but unfortunate sequel was that his successors, in taking over the interest, repudiated their balance of liability, and exposed themselves to a farther superfluous outlay. What was a poor author to do?

When he was in Orange Street, Red Lion Square, I saw a good deal of John Salkeld, a north-countryman, whom I always found perfectly satisfactory and reliable. He never had occasion to carry out the practice on me, as I was a most exemplary paymaster, especially in those cases, when I thought that the money was at once an object and an encouragement; but Salkeld often spoke to me of less punctual clients at a distance, whom he should like to *hug*. My most notable adventure in connection with him was the result of a catalogue, which he sent to

me, so that I got it the last thing on a Saturday night. There was a Wither's *Emblems*, Daniel's *Works* and *Panegyrick* in a volume on large paper, and one or two other matters. They were not very cheap; but they were worth having, thought I. I knew that Salkeld resided over his shop, and on the Sunday evening I walked up to town from Kensington, proceeded to Orange Street, found my man at home, and carried off my plunder in triumph. What charming books they were! For no better a copy of the Wither Mr Huth had paid Toovey £40. Both wanted the pointers to the dial.

Like so many other of my doings in the book-market, the solitary experience which I had of a person named Noble was with an immediate eye to Mr Huth. He (Noble) had come into possession of a handful of scarce old English tracts, including a volume containing several by Lady Eleanor Audley, a very rare item in the series of George Chapman's poetical works—his *Epicede on Prince Henry*, 1612, absolutely complete with the folded engraving, and Joshua Sylvester's *Elegy* on the same personage, so difficult to procure in such condition as Mr Huth always desired. These treasures I converted for Noble into cash, and was immediately afterward favoured with a casual suggestion elsewhere, which led me to take them to Riviere to be measured for new coats, except the Lady Audley volume, which I deposited at Great Russell Street. I had paid Noble £2 for it, thinking it must be worth £3; but before I reached Bloomsbury, I thought that it might not be too dear at £7, 7s.

The only other misadventure of the kind—if it may be so termed, as no unpleasant consequences ensued—was in connection with a book, which some one stole from Stibbs in Museum Street, and sold to Salkeld, who sold it to me. I was apprised by the original owner that he had traced it to my hands; but I pointed out that I had purchased it in good faith in open market, and for the rest I referred him to the Trustees of the national library, where it had found a resting-place.

Messrs Jarvis & Son succeeded during my acquaintance with them in stumbling upon a variety of bargains and prizes, which I usually appropriated. One was a splendid copy of Greene's *Pandosto*, 1592, the only known one of that of 1588 in the Museum being imperfect. A second acquisition was the copy, which had belonged to James I. of the long-lost first edition of Lennard's translation of Charron *De la Sagesse*, dedicated to PRINCE HENRY; and a third was a singular metrical tract by John Mardelay, Clerk of the Mint to Henry VIII. called *A Rueful Complaint of the Public Weal to England*, printed under Edward VI., and completely unknown.

There was a remarkable coincidence between this Mardelay piece and an equally unique little volume by Thomas Nelson, 1590, which I purchased elsewhere about the same time, that both were folded in a precisely similar manner, as if the old owner grudged the space, which they occupied in a drawer or a box. They were perfectly clean and very much as they had left the printer's hands. The Nelson was the hitherto undiscovered pageant of the Fishmongers under the mayoralty of John Allot, Lord Mayor of London, and Mayor of the Staple, and was six-and-twenty years anterior to any of which the company was aware. It was not published, but privately issued to members. I held this to be a great find, and I reproduced the text in the *Antiquary*, before I parted with the original to the Museum. The printer could not make out the meaning of *staple*, and in the first proof put *steeple*.

There was one more striking episode in my temporary contact with Jarvis & Son. I saw in a catalogue of miscellaneous books sold at Sotheby's in 1890 a lot, which fixed my attention as a bibliographer. It was the English or Anglicised version of Henryson's *Æsop*, printed at London in 1577, and of which David Laing, in his edition of the old Scottish poet, 1865, speaks as having been seen by him in the library of Sion College, when he visited that institution about 1830. He mentions that he wished to verify something at a later date, and that the volume had disappeared. I found on inspection that this was the identical book, no other being known anywhere, and I bought it under the hammer for £6, and let Jarvis & Son have it for £12, 12s. They sold it to Lord Rosebery. It had probably been a wanderer above half a century, since it quitted the College in the pocket of some divine of elastic conscience or short memory.



CHAPTER VIII

Messrs Reeves & Turner—My Literary Work for the Firm—My Advantageous Acquisitions Here—Cheap Rates at which Rare Books were Formerly Obtainable—The Large Turn-over of the Business—Wake of Cockermouth—An Unique Wynkyn de Worde—A Supposed Undescribed Shakespear in a House-Sale at Bognor—Tom Arthur—The Wynkyn de Worde, which I secured for Another Shilling—Arthur and Sir Thomas Phillipps of Middle Hill—The Bristol Book Shops—Lodge's *Rosalynd*, 1592—Mr Elliot Stock—My Literary Work for Him—One Volume Unexpectedly Productive—Mr Henry Stopes—My Recovery for Him of a Sarum Breviary, which belonged to an Ancestor in Queen Mary's Days—His Wife's Family and Sir Walter Scott—A Canterbury Correspondent and His Benefits—Two More Uniques—A Singular Recovery from New York—Casual Strokes of Good Luck in the Provinces—The Wynkyn de Worde at Wrexham—A *Trouvaille* in the Haymarket—Books with Autographs and Inscriptions—A Few Words about Booksellers and Publishers.

My much-respected publisher and acquaintance, Mr Reeves, of the firm of Reeves & Turner, was in business in St Clement's Churchyard, when I first met with him about 1873. He succeeded Mr Russell Smith as my publisher, and acted as my agent for some books, while others he entrusted to my editorship. The most important in the latter category were the Dodsley and the Montaigne, to the latter of which I contributed only the Introduction, my father revising the text for me, and seeing the proofs, as I was at this juncture extremely busy with all sorts of ventures, and was, above everything else, intent on a new bibliographical departure. Thousands of volumes had been in my hands during the last few years, had answered my questions, and had gone on their way, leaving me wiser

and not poorer. The toll, which they paid me, had placed me in a position to pursue a vast Quixotic undertaking; and I had no other means of executing it.

Messrs Reeves & Turner's premises were a favourite haunt of bargain-hunters in days gone by. Mr Reeves frequently attended outside and country sales, and bought many private lots; and every morning certain members of the trade made the place their first destination. I am not going to allege that I never participated in the advantages myself; but my gains were occasional and accidental; although I was long an habitual caller at the shop, the necessity for consulting Mr Reeves about some current literary affair making such visits imperative.

I have noticed the somewhat strange absence of perception and training which led Reeves to sacrifice an incalculable amount of valuable property, constantly passing through his hands in former years, and often going to others, who knew better how to turn it to account, where I describe the unique collection of *Occasional Forms of Prayer* of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and the statement of the sagacious cataloguer that the volume containing them was so many inches thick. But it was ever so. There was no discrimination. At one time I bought an important first edition of Heywood, 1605, for half-a-guinea, and a theological tract worth a couple of shillings was marked at the same price. They had only just come in, and not to draw undue attention to the Heywood, I tendered a guinea for the two. On another occasion, a lovely little copy of Donatus *De Octo Partibus Orationis*, an unknown ancient impression, four leaves, octavo, fell to me here at 4s. But I should make too long a story, if I were to set down all the *trouvailles*, which I owed to my excellent friend's omission to employ a capable assistant, or to look into these details himself, I might grow monotonous, unless the circumstances happened to be salient or peculiar.

Reeves, when he was in business in St Clement's Churchyard, must have for some years done an enormous volume of trade, for he shewed me one day in the early eighties his bank-book, where it appeared that in a year he had paid in £21,000, exclusively of small amounts, which were used as cash. Yet sadly too little came of all this exhausting labour. He parted at too trivial a profit; he was too eager to turn over; and his assistants have told me that he often sold out of the open window for sixpence, items which had cost a couple of shillings. The auction-room in Chancery Lane did not, it is to be feared, contribute to his welfare. No man, however, was more honourable or trustworthy. He once remitted £50 to a person, of whom he had purchased a lot of books, on finding them more profitable than he had expected. Someone spoke of him to me as 'a nobleman who dealt in books'—an improvement on Johnson's definition of Tom

Davies.

Wake of Cockermouth, a member of the Society of Friends, who deals in every conceivable and inconceivable object of curiosity, but is a highly deserving and industrious man, sent me on one occasion at £4, 10s. a tract of six leaves from the press of Wynkyn de Worde—the *Stans puer ad Mensam* of Sulpitius. It was an edition of 1515, earlier than any on record, and the British Museum paid me £12, 12s. for it. The curious part was that some months later Reeves had a very bad copy of the Grammar of the same author from the same press—a thick volume in quarto, marked £6, 6s., and I took a note of it, and left it. Wake, shrewdly calculating that as I had given £4, 10s. for the little tract of six leaves, I could not hesitate to take this one of at least sixty at £10, 10s., bought the lot on speculation, and reported it to me. I returned him my thanks. His deduction was arithmetically, but not bibliographically, accurate.

I had put into my hands at Reeves's one day the catalogue of a house-sale at Bognor, There was a single lot in it: 'Shakespeare's Poems, 8°, 1609.' No such book was known; yet it was perfectly possible that it might have been printed. Reeves thought that it might be worth my while to go down, and inspect it. I did, and had a day at the seaside. The volume was a Lintot! The auctioneer apologised; but he did not offer to defray my travelling expenses.

There are many among us, who remember Arthur in Holywell Street. He was a singular character, and had been a porter, I think, at one of the auction-rooms. My purchases of him were very numerous; and they were always right and reasonable, or I should not have been his client. He left £400 to Mr Ridler his assistant, who, called in Reeves to appraise the stock, and obtained it within that amount. While Arthur was in business, there was a grammatical tract in English printed by De Worde in his catalogue at £3, 3s. I went in to ask for it, and Ridler said that I could not have it. 'Is it out of the house?' I enquired. 'No,' said he; 'but it is put aside for a gentleman, who always gives me something for myself.' 'What does he give you?' said I. 'A shilling,' quoth he. 'I will give you two.' The lot left the shop in my pocket.

I acquired several curious articles from Ridler himself. He was, as a rule, reluctant to sell anything except through the catalogue. But he made an exception in my favour by pulling out of a drawer on one occasion a very fine copy of the very book which Wake of Cockermouth had previously offered me; and I agreed to give £8, 18s. 6d. for it. It is now in the Museum. In a second case he sold me, with a stern proviso that it was not returnable on any account

whatever, a defective copy of John Constable's Poems, printed by Pynson, 1520, which nearly completed the Museum one—only two copies, both imperfect, being known! The Constable was bound up with a foreign tract of no value in such a manner as to mystify our good friend.

He no longer honours me with his catalogue. I ceased to find much in my way, and perhaps I was not worth the postage. Ridler it was, who once signalled a volume as 'difficult of procuration.'

It was Arthur who had the only copy ever been with the colophon of Slatyer's *Palæalbion*, 1621; he got it for a few shillings of Lazarus in the same street, and sold it to Sir Thomas Phillipps of Middle Hill for £15, as Ridler informed me many years ago.

The last mad freak of Phillipps was the transmission of an order to Arthur to send him one of his catalogues *en bloc*. Some of the lots had been sold; but the remainder was duly shipped to the Broadway, Worcestershire; and a pretty parcel of rubbish it must have been! This is *book-scavengering*. You only require a besom and a purse, and a block of warehouses.

With the exception of Jeffreys and George of Bristol and Wake above named, I have not known much of the provincial dealers. Jeffreys sent me the *Golden Legend* by Caxton, as I have said, and a few other rare things, and with George my transactions were limited to just one. Mr Pyne had returned from these parts, and had seen at Jeffreys' or Lasbury's (as he thought) Lodge's *Rosalynd*, 1592, at £3, 10s., bound up with an imperfect copy of Lyly's *Euphues*. He declined it, but on his arrival home he reconsidered the matter, and wrote to the wrong man. I dropped in, just as he was deliberating whether it was worth while to write to the right one; but he concluded by giving up the volume to me. I had to pay £5 for it, George stating that a party had assured him it was quite worth the higher sum. I did not dare to dispute the point; I bound the Lodge, for which Mr Huth gave me £42, and let Mr Pyne have the Lyly. The only other copy known of the *Rosalynd* is in the Bodleian, and the single antecedent impression (1590) exists in an unique and imperfect one. The book, as it is familiar to most people, has the foundation-story of *As You Like It*.

The mention of that drama reminds me that Rosalind and Rosaline were rather favourite names with our early poets. Spenser introduces Rose Daniel, the writer's sister, into his *Faëry Queen* under that designation, as he had done another lady in his *Shepherd's Calendar*. Shakespear himself has Rosaline in

Love's Labours Lost and *Romeo and Juliet*, and Thomas Newton wrote a poem no longer known beyond its registration in 1604, entitled: *A pleasant new History; or, a fragrant Posie, made of three Flowers: Rosa, Rosalynd, and Rosemary.*

I edited a few small books for Mr Elliot Stock, and had the opportunity of taking notes of one or two very rare volumes in that gentleman's private library. I met in the shop one day my friend M——, who told me that he had come to buy the new English translation of the *Imitatio Christi*. I expressed surprise. He explained that it was to give away. I still expressed surprise. 'Well,' said he, 'you see it is the fine style.' I had thought that that lay in the original Latin; but I scarcely presumed to hint such a thing. I passed for one who had long laboured under a very grave misapprehension, and who was at length undeceived.

I did not grow very rich out of Mr Stock's commissions; they were, as I have mentioned, little undertakings; perhaps they did not sell very well—I fancy that the general editor of the series gave me to understand that his own contributions were the only ones which did. But one of them—the *Old Cookery Books*, introduced me to a city gentleman, whose library I assisted in completing. He was a very good fellow, who had been spoiled by companies and company-mongers. He had conceived, before I met him, the design of collecting everything in all languages relative to fermented liquors and the processes of their manufacture. He was not fastidious as to condition, though he preferred a good copy to a bad one; and I left his shelves fuller than I found them. He unconsciously made up the deficiency in Mr Stock's cheque; and my researches on his behalf were bibliographically useful to me, as they brought under my notice a variety of pamphlets and other ephemerides illustrative of a by no means uninteresting topic. Besides, he threw in my way editorial work worth £700 or more.

A rather curious incident evolved from our temporary acquaintance. Quaritch had in his catalogue just then a Sarum service-book, which purported to have belonged in Queen Mary's days to one *L. Stokes*; I looked at it; and I saw that the name was *Stopes*, and I concluded that the old proprietor was the same Leonard Stopes who printed an *Ave Maria* to the Queen in or about 1555. The book also bore the signature of his brother, James Stopes. Leonard was of St John's College, Oxford. The point was, that my casual correspondent was Henry Stopes, and was a descendant of Leonard or James. He was hugely delighted by the discovery; and he purchased the *Breviary*.

It was his wife, a very pleasant and accomplished Scottish lady, daughter of Mr Carmichael, clerk to Sir Walter Scott as Sheriff-Depute, who wrote the almost superfluous confutation of the claims set up on behalf of Bacon to the authorship of Shakespear's plays.

Had it not been for my intuitive surmise, that the inscription in the volume was mis-rendered, a piece of family history, valuable at least in somebody's eyes, might have been overlooked.

Bohn of Canterbury helped me to a good thing or two. That is a neighbourhood formerly most rich in early English books; and a good deal of obscurity hangs over certain incidents connected with the books once belonging to Henry Oxenden of Barham and to Lee Warly, and to the hand, which Sir Egerton Brydges seems to have had in obtaining some of the rarest for the library at Lee Priory. A sale of the residual portion of the Lee Warly collection took place *in situ* many years ago, and a few remarkable items found their way to Mr Huth, particularly Oxenden of Barham's MS. *Commonplace Book*, 1647, in which the original proprietor had written a list of his old plays bound up together in six volumes. I copied out this inventory for the Huth catalogue; but it was one of the numerous omissions made by Mr Ellis *to save space*. Bohn met with a fair number of curious tracts, some of which he sold to me. Two of them were *The Metynge of Doctor Barons and Doctor Powell at Paradise Gate*, printed early in the reign of Edward VI. and in verse, and the *History of King Edward the Fourth and the Tanner of Tamworth*, a black-letter ballad in pamphlet form with woodcuts, both unique. Mr Huth declined the former, God knows why, but took the latter.

Through the late Mr Sabin I once sent a couple of commissions to New York for as many unique items, which had been sold at Sotheby's in 1856, a little before my time, among the Wolfreston books. They were the *Cruel Uncle*, 1670, the story of Richard III. and his nephews, and *A Map of Merry Conceits*, by Lawrence Price, 1656. I secured the latter only for £5, 5s., and it went to the national library. This was my sole transatlantic experience in the way of purchases.

I have now and then of course laid my hand on a stray volume or so in some unexpected corner, as when I was in Conway in 1869, I ran through a local stationer's humble stock, and discovered Paul Festeau's *French Grammar*, 1685, a phenomenally rare book, of which I never saw more than two copies, and those of different editions. It cost me sixpence and the labour. The author was a native

of Blois, where, says he, ‘the true tone of the French tongue is to be found by the unanimous consent of all Frenchmen.’ At another time, a bookseller at Wrexham had attended the house-sale of the Rev. Mr Luxmoore’s effects in the vicinity, and among the lots was Richard Whitford’s *Work for Householders*, printed by Wynkyn de Worde in 1533—the unique copy which had been Sir Francis Freeling’s. The buyer had marked this £3, 3s., without finding a customer; I basely offered him £2, and he accepted the amount. It is the copy described in the Huth catalogue. It reached Mr Huth through Ellis, who estimated it to me at £12.

The Luxmoore books were represented to me as having been thrown out on a lawn, and sold at random; and the same story was related of a second haul, which I once made of a Mr Fennell in Whitefriars, including an unique copy of Chamberlain’s *Nocturnal Lucubrations*, 1652.

I have never been a stall-hunter. I do not rise sufficiently early; and, sooth to say, it has grown by report a barren quest. At Brooks’s in Hammersmith, which I mention more particularly below, I would turn over dreary lots of volumes which he had carted away from some house-sale for a song; but I never laid out anything there or elsewhere. I always found the cheapest books were to be obtained at the auctions, or at Mr Quaritch’s, or at Mr Ellis’s. To be sure, Brooks once had uncut cloth copies of the first editions of Tennyson’s *In Memoriam*, *Maud*, and *Princess* at ninepence each, or two shillings the three; but I passed them.

A sensible proportion of my discoveries was thus turned to good account; but such was not invariably the case. I have, on the contrary, now and then ordered a book or books from a country catalogue, simply because it or they were undescribed by me, and when I had done with them, I was often obliged to be satisfied with reimbursing myself. Again, it sometimes occurred that I transcribed the full particulars in a shop, and went no farther. One of my latest adventures in this latter way was at Messrs Pickering & Chatto’s in the Haymarket, where I have always met with the greatest kindness and consideration. On information received, as the policeman says, I proceeded to the premises, and there, surely enough, I found a dilapidated and imperfect copy, yet still a copy, of the First Part of the First Edition of Johnson’s *Seven Champions of Christendom*, 1596. The Second Part, 1597, was in the Heber sale from Isaac Reed’s collection, where it fetched 17s. But no trace of the First was discoverable, till this one turned up, dog’s eared, torn, and deficient of three leaves at the end. It was in the original vellum wrapper, and must have been

reduced to its actual degradation by excess of affection or of neglect. It has been my fortune to rescue from oblivion many and many an item in our early literature, of which only just so much survived as was absolutely needed to make out the story; and I have known cases, in which it has been requisite to employ two or even three copies, all defective, to accomplish this.

So far I have presented a sketch of my life-long touch with the collectors of books and the dealers in them, and have shown that to a certain extent I am entitled to rank in both categories, my own share in the commercial side being due to the exigencies, to which I have adverted, rather than to choice. I think it not improbable that during the period from 1868 to 1878 the regular trade might have been prepared to raise a handsome subscription to send me and my family to a distant colony. Yet I exercised an influence beneficial rather than the reverse on their businesses, since I paid them their prices, and relieved them of large numbers of volumes, which they might have kept on their shelves. There was a jealousy, however, and a natural one.

Of books with autographs and inscriptions I have published in more than one periodical rather copious particulars and varied examples, ranging in date from the monastic era to our own days. I have generally found no difficulty in judging as to the character of entries in books by private owners; and considering the large number of surviving volumes which contain matter of this kind, fabrications are certainly uncommon, as well as fairly self-convicting.

Yet it cannot be a source of surprise, that the less experienced book-hunter falls into occasional traps. It is so pleasant and so tempting to be master of some copy which has once been consecrated by the fingers of a king or a queen, or a king's lady, or a queen's favourite, or a renowned soldier, poet, or whatever it may be, that we do not always pause to weigh the decent probabilities, do we?

The worst thing of all to do is to trust to ordinary catalogues and dealers of the commoner type. The latter have constantly by them specimens of the libraries of Queen Elizabeth, Mary of Scotland, James I., with imposing lateral, if not dorsal, blazons, and autograph attestations of proprietorship or gift. An eminent member of the trade once offered me a copy of May's *Lucan*, in which the translator, quoth he, had written, 'Ben Jonson, from Thomas May.' I recollect an early Chaucer with *Thomas Randolph* on the title; of course the vendor avouched it to be the signature of the poet. Joseph Lilly had a black-letter tome with the name *George Gascoigne* attached to it, and advertised it as a *souvenir* of that distinguished Elizabethan writer; but unluckily the writer died, before the book

was printed. There was similarly more than a single W. Shakespear just about the same period of time; but we have not come across any sample of his cunning in caligraphy. Perhaps he wrote better than the dramatist. That excessively interesting *Florio's Montaigne*, 1603, in the British Museum carries the impress of former appurtenance to our great bard, and its history is much in its favour; but some question it (do not some question everything?), not that the inscription belongs to a namesake, but that it does so to a disciple of Mr Ireland junior.

As an illustration of the manner, in which one may be misled without remedy by an auctioneer's catalogue, a copy of Cranmer's Bible, 1549, was offered for sale a few years since, and, says the cataloguer, 'on the second leaf occurs "Tho. Cranmer" in contemporary handwriting.' In fact, some one at the time under the line of dedication to the Archbishop of Canterbury had inserted his name, to shew who he was. But there was no unwillingness on the part of the auctioneer's assistant—or the auctioneer himself—to catch a flat. Alas! that the world should be so full of guile!

Henry Holl and myself were once parties to a mild practical joke on a fashionable bookseller and stationer named Westerton near Hyde Park Corner, who engaged to procure for his clients at the shortest notice any books required. We drew up between us a list of some of the rarest volumes in the English language, and one or the other took it to Westerton's, desiring the latter to let him have them punctually the following day. We did not go near the shop for some time after that, I remember. Of course we never heard anything of our *desiderata*. The fellow woke up probably to the hoax.

There is not the slightest wish on my part to disparage the qualifications of the bookseller as a type; but it has always struck me as unreasonable, looking at the large number of persons, whose subsistence is wholly derived from this pursuit—and often a very good one, too—to represent the calling as an indifferent and an uncommercial line of industry. For there must be thousands earning livelihoods by it, although very few realise the El Dorado of £500 a year, which I have heard Mr Quaritch cite as a kind of minimum, which it is in the power of any poor creature to make out of books. Moreover, it is to be recollected that many and many, who have chosen the employment, would scarcely be capable of discharging the duties of any other; it is recommendable for variety and liberty; and it brings those engaged in it into contact with celebrated people and interesting incidence.

Imprimis, as of every other calling, there are too many booksellers. Within my

memory their ranks have sensibly increased. They are not dealers in the sense in which Mr Quaritch is one; their training has been slight and superficial; and their stocks are of the thinnest and poorest quality. Still, in town and country alike, they maintain a sort of ground, and when you pass and repass their places of business, you wonder how they live, and conclude that the occupation must be profitable even on the smallest scale. For the bargain-hunter—from his point of view—there is nothing to be got out of these outlying or minor emporia nowadays; the whole actual traffic in valuable commodities centres in two or three London auction-rooms and half-a-dozen West-End houses. For all the rest it is a scramble and a pittance. I have almost ceased to look at ordinary shop catalogues; and the stall was a thing of the past before my day. If I wanted a cheap book, I should go to Mr Quaritch or to a sale-room. Your suburban and provincial merchant in all kinds of second-hand property is desiccated.

Much the same appears to be at present predicable of the publisher. He tells you that it is a poor vocation, a slender margin for himself, yet the number of houses devoted to the business was never greater, and of some the experience and capital must be equally limited, as the printer and paper-maker can tell you.

A curious, almost comic, side in the question of literary earnings, is the habitual propensity for embracing one of two extremes. A. is coining money; his publishers are all that a man could desire or expect; he has taken so much in such and such a time from them on account of his last book. You listen to his tale with jesuitical reticence; you have just parted from a member of the firm, who has told you exactly how many copies have been sold, and you can do the rest for yourself. B., on the contrary, never makes any appreciable sum by his efforts; all publishers are rogues; and the public is an ass. How much in both these views has to be allowed for temperament and imagination? Perhaps B. does nearly as well as A.



CHAPTER IX

At the Auction-Rooms—Their Changeable Temperature—My Finds in Wellington Street—Certain Conclusions as to the Rarity of Old English Books—Curiosities of Cataloguing and Stray Lots—A Little Ipswich Recovery—A Narrow Escape for some Very Rare Volumes in 1865—A Few Remarkable Instances of Good Fortune for Me—Not for Others—Three Very Severe ‘Frosts’—A Great Boom—Sir John Fenn’s Wonderful Books at last brought to Light—An Odd Circumstance about One of Them—The Writer moralises—A Couple of Imperfect Caxtons bring £2900—The Gentlemen behind the Scene and Those at the Table—Books converted into *Vertu*—My Intervention on One or Two Occasions—The Auctioneers’ World—The ‘Settlement’ Principle—My Confidence in Sotheby’s as Commission-Agents—My Three *Sir Richard Whittingtons*.—A *Reductio ad Absurdum*—The House in Leicester Square and Its Benefactions in My Favour—Change from the Old Days—Unique A.B.C.’s and Other Early School-Books—The Somers Tracts—Mr Quaritch and His Bibliographical Services to Me—His Independence of Character—The British Museum—My Resort to It for My Venetian Studies Forty Years Ago—The Sources of Supply in the Printed Book Department—My Later Attitude toward It as a Bibliographer—The Vellum Monstrelet and Its True History—

Bookbinders—Leighton, Riviere, Bedford,
Pratt—Horrible Sight which I witnessed at
a Binder's—My Publishers—Dodsley's
Old Plays—My Book on the Livery
Companies of London—Presentation-
Copies.

I now proceed to speak a few words about the two auctions, with which I have been familiar—Sotheby's and Puttick & Simpson's. Both these distributing agencies repay careful study. You must consider the circumstances, and bear in mind Selden's maxim, *Distingue Tempora*. The rooms are very variable in their temperature. Now it is high, now low. It is not always necessarily what is being sold, but what is being asked for. For instance, just at the present moment there is a desperate run on sixteenth and seventeenth century English books and on *capital* productions, because a few Americans have taken the infection; they know nothing of values, so long as the article is right; and therefore the price is no object. It is merely necessary to satisfy yourself that your client wants the book or books, and you may without grave risk pose at the sale-room table and in the papers as a model of intrepidity. But the game does not usually last very long; the wily American soon grows weary or distrustful; and the call for these treasures subsides, and with it the courage of the bidders. The market resumes its normal tranquillity, till a fresh fad is set afloat with similar results. No prudent buyer loses himself in these whirlpools. He watches his opportunities, and they periodically recur amid all the feverish competition arising from temporary causes.

At Sotheby's my finds have been endless. It is in those rooms that ever since 1861, when I made notes at the Bandinel sale, I have figured as an inevitable feature in the scene, when anything remarkable, either bibliographically or commercially, has been submitted to the hammer; and I have not often had reason to lament oversights on one score or the other. When I have missed a lot, of which I desired the particulars for my collections, it has illustrated my conviction of the immense unsuspected rarity of a preponderance of the national fugitive literature. This accident occurred in the case of a tract called *The Declaration of the Duke of Brabant* (Philip III. of Spain) *proffering a Truce with the Netherlands*, 1607, and I have not since met with a second copy. It is over twenty years ago. I have occasionally registered the title of a piece, which I have found in the warehouse in the hands of a cataloguer; and it was fortunate that I did so as regarded *A Farewell to Captain* (afterward Sir Walter) *Gray*, on his

departure for Holland, 1605, as the article was never again seen. There has been a good deal of this sort of miscarriage. Quite at the outset of my bibliographical career, the most ancient printed English music-book, 1530, was bought for the British Museum at the price of £80; it was only the *Bassus* part with that to *Triplex* bound up at the end; and the cataloguer *had put it into a bundle*. Attention was drawn to the mistake in time, and the lot was re-entered with full honours. On the other hand, I have been repeatedly indebted to Sotheby's staff for useful and valuable help. Mr John Bohn never failed to point out whatever he supposed to be of service, and in 1891 Mr A. R. Smith shewed me a small volume printed at Ipswich by John Owen about 1550, entitled *An Invective against Drunkenness*, so far known only from Maunsell's catalogue, 1598.

In quite the earlier portion of my experience here occurred the disastrous and destructive fire of 1865, which made a holocaust of the Offor library, and proved fatal to much of Lord Charlemont's. It was a most fortunate circumstance that just at the moment Halliwell-Phillipps had some of the rarest of the Charlemont books on loan from the auctioneers at his private house in Old Brompton, and they were thus saved.

I was away, when Mr Bolton Corney's books were sold at Sotheby's, and did not see them. But one was returned by the buyer as imperfect; it was Drayton's *Odes and Eglogs* (1605), and was said to want two leaves. I examined it, and found that it was complete, and had two duplicate leaves with variations in the text. I bought it for £1, 11s., and sold it to John Pearson on my way home for £8. 8s. A somewhat analogous incident befel me at the Burton-Constable auction in 1889, where a volume containing the *Theatre of Fine Devices*, 1614, the only copy known, and several other rare pieces in the finest state, was sold with all faults, because a copy of Wither's *Motto*, 1621, at the end, was slightly cropped. I left a commission of £8, 8s. for this, and saw it knocked down for £1, 12s. I put the Wither in the waste-paper basket, and divided the rest between the British Museum and Messrs Pearson & Co. There were two other dispersions of curious old books, which I may exemplify. At the Auchinleck sale the prices were not low, but were extremely moderate, considering the character of many of the early Scottish tracts there offered; but the other instance, where a gentleman had with the assistance of John Pearson and others formed a collection of early English poetry, making the *Bibliotheca Anglo-poetica* the nucleus, was a deplorable fiasco. Books went for fewer shillings than they were worth pounds. I bought Drayton's *Mortimeriados*, 1596, *clean and uncut*, which Mr Quaritch had acquired for the late owner for £17, for 16s. No one particularly wanted that

class of books just at the moment, and the field was open to the opportunist. The proprietor, who was living, must have been gratified. I never witnessed a more thorough frost than this except at the Pyne sale already described and at those of the dramatic libraries of Mr Kershaw and Dr Rimbault, although I believe that the firm is steadfastly persuaded that the most signal collapse, in recent times at least, was the two-days' auction of Prince Lucien Bonaparte's philological stores, which realised £70! The Kershaw and Rimbault affairs were rather notable as yielding a large crop between them of old English plays, which were not in the Huth library, and which dropped to myself at nominal prices. The slaughter of Rimbault's property took place on a Saturday afternoon. I recollect the buzz in the room, when Shirley's *Lady of Pleasure* was carried to 14s. I bought nearly everything worth buying.

Then there was the other side of the picture, as when the Frere, or rather Fenn, books came to the hammer at Sotheby's in 1896. As nothing in the before-mentioned auctions seemed too low, so nothing here seemed to be too extravagant. There was a kind of mysterious halo round the affair. People had heard of such books being in existence, and longed to put the report to a practical test. Herbert, in his revision of Ames, had quoted Sir John Fenn, the John Fenn Esquire of his day, as the owner of certain rarities, of which nothing absolutely reliable was known. But the items really material to myself amounted to no more than twenty, of which several were mere verifications.

Mr Quaritch was in great form. He made himself master of all the principal lots, as any one can do by bidding long enough. A copy of Herbert's *Typographical Antiquities* with an extra volume of original specimens, of which the chief portion was of very slight significance, produced £255. A volume of tracts, of which nearly all the title-pages had been mutilated by Fenn for the sake of the printer's marks, and of which the central interest lay in the first edition of Greene's *Groatsworth of Wit*, 1592, fetched £80. The first might have been worth £40 and the second (with the defects indicated) £15. A really valuable lot, which belonged to Sir John Fenn, and which had gone somehow equally astray, was subsequently offered for sale at another room, and brought £81. It was Nicholas Breton's *Works of a Young Wit* (1577), and was one of my bibliographical *desiderata*. I took a full note of it of course, and should have willingly gone to £42 as a matter of purchase. Mr Quaritch trusted to the prevailing American boom, and was there to win the day against all comers with the feeling that those who opposed him had with him only a common market. Failing one or two wealthy enthusiasts, the volume might lie on his shelves, so

long as he lived, at that figure. This is what Mr Quaritch himself has characterised as a species of gambling. What is to be said or thought of the two imperfect copies of Caxton's first edition of the *Canterbury Tales* bringing in 1895-6 £1020 and £1880 respectively? All that can be argued is, that the worth is positively artificial, and that to the individuals, for whom Mr Quaritch destines them, money is a drug or a form of speaking.

Then there was the second folio Shakespear which fetched the unheard-of price of £540, and the third, to which I presently advert. The disregard of precedents in such cases brings a certain type of early literature within the magical circle of *objets de vertu*, when economic laws cease to operate, and books seem to lose their true dignity in the hands of the virtuoso. Beyond a certain financial altitude there are no *bonâ fide* bookmen.

A sale, which might in its way deserve to be classed with the Frere-Fenn one at Sotheby's, fell to the lot of the Leicester Square house in 1894. It was bipartite, and rather on the incongruous principle discountenanced in the Horatian *Epistle to the Pisos*. For the first division consisted of MSS. and printed books formerly belonging to Thomas Astle the antiquary, and chiefly relating to Suffolk, the Tower, and America; while the second was a series of autograph letters, particularly a small parcel addressed by Mottley the historian to Prince Bismarck between 1862 and 1872. The auctioneers looked on the day's sale as worth £150; it realised four times as much. A single lot of *Americana* brought £216. The Mottley correspondence was highly interesting, and indeed important, and some of the allusions were almost droll from their homely familiarity. The nine letters were knocked down *en bloc* for £60.

The first item in this remarkable series, written from Vienna, the Hague, and London, found the Prussian statesman at a watering-place in the South of France, and at that time the two men appear to have been well known to each other; for Mottley subscribes himself 'Always most sincerely your old friend;' and the next of 1864 starts with 'My dear old Bismarck.' There was evidently much cordiality and sympathy. A good deal of pleasantry arises out of some photographs of the great German's family and himself, which were a long time in arriving. But a singular interest centres in a letter of 1870, urging the desirability of mediation between the two then belligerent Powers; it is marked *Private and Confidential*; and I do not imagine that anything came of it.

The day's sale embraced another lot of a somewhat mysterious character, as regarded a portion of the contents. I refer to two letters from Sir Christopher

Hatton in his own hand to a lady, couched in most familiar and affectionate terms, and subscribed with the same fictitious signature as Hatton employed in corresponding with the Queen herself.

It is so usual to associate the ownership of a library in middle-class hands with a single generation—scarcely that very often—that events like the Auchinleck, Astle, and Frere sales strike and impress us, and often, indeed generally, produce results gratifying to the beneficiaries; and so it was with the Berners Street and Way affairs. Volumes, which were known to exist somewhere, at last emerged from their places of concealment. Mr Swainson had bought many of his books at the sale of George Steevens in 1800; the Way lot belonged to about the same date. Among the latter were such prizes as the original editions of *Arthur of Little Britain* and *England's Helicon*. The Berners Street business took place on the premises; there was of course a settlement; and John Payne Collier, who looked in, could get nothing. I was offered, some time after, a rare little treatise, which I declined; and I subsequently heard a queer story about a copy of it (? the same) having been removed from Joseph Lilly's tail-pocket, while he was attending the auction. I put this and that together.

It was certainly much the same thing at the Osterley Park, Beckford, and Fountaine sales. The quotations are suggestive of lunacy, not on the part of the immediate purchasers, who are middlemen, but on that of the ulterior acquirer behind the scenes. What could be more childishly extravagant or absurd than 610 guineas for Henry VIII.'s *Prayer Book* on vellum, 1544, with MSS. notes by the king and members of his family? What could be indeed? Why, the £435 paid for a third folio Shakespear, 1663-4, with both titles—a book which has been repeatedly sold for £60 or £70, and which the auctioneers misdescribed, as if it had been something unique and unknown. The Beckford books realised perfectly insane prices, and were afterward resold for a sixth or even tenth of the amount to the serious loss of somebody, when the barometer had fallen. The Thuanus copy of Buchanan's *Poems*, 1579, which was carried to £54, was offered to me in October, 1886, for £15. Of course there have always been inflations of value for special articles or under particular circumstances here and elsewhere; and I must confess to an instance of *malice prepense* at one of the Corser sales at Sotheby's, when I made Ellis pay £100 for Warren's *Nursery of Names*, 1581, by sitting next to Addington at the table, and whispering in his ear the praises of the book and its fabulous rarity. He left it at £99. There was no other competitor within a fifty-pound note's distance. The Museum could not have gone beyond £30 or £35.

I stood behind Quaritch at Sir John Simeon's sale in Wellington Street, and when it came to two lots, the first being the *History of Oliver of Castile*, printed at York in 1695, and the second one of David Laing's publications, I told him that if he would let me have the first, I would not bid on the second. He was so amiable as to assent, and the almost unique little volume fell to me at 7s. Unhappily some one else opposed him for the Laing, which realised its normal value. I looked as grieved as I could, when he good-humouredly turned round to inquire what he had got.

I have said that 1861 marked the date, when I graduated at Sotheby's as a bibliographer. As a private buyer to a sparing and experimental extent I had known that house since 1857, when I was baulked, as I have elsewhere related, in my attempt to obtain an unique copy of the Earl of Surrey's English version of the *Fourth Book of Virgil's Æneid*, which was unique in a second sense—in being the only lot of value among a mass of rubbish.

The auctioneer's world is classifiable into two sections: Buyers and Sellers. If you do not belong to one of these divisions, the profession scarcely knows where you come in in the economy of nature. You enter into the nondescript species. The man with the hammer views his commission as the elixir of life, as the sole object, for which men and women are born and exist; he has no other motive or seeing-point; and he does not expect others to have it. Your friends, as a rule, estimate you according to the house, in which you live, and the undertaker by the order, which he gets for your funeral; but the auctioneer appraises you by your value to him as a bidder at his table and by the marketable quality of the property, which you leave behind. If it happens that you are only a scholar, occasionally picking up a cheap lot, or a bibliographer, taking notes for the benefit of others without profit and without thanks, he eyes you with a mixture of commiseration and surprise, and has a private feeling, perhaps, that there is a percentage somewhere. And so there is—in Fame, for which he cares nothing except as an advertisement for his business; and it is natural enough, that the staff takes its cue from the principal, and unless you distribute *largesse*, sets you down as a troublesome nondescript.

I think that I am right in saying that it was the member of the firm of Walford Brothers, who attended the sales, who was referring at the table to the knock-out system, and Mr Hodge, who was in the rostrum, disclaimed any knowledge of such a thing, whereupon says Mr Walford to him, 'You are the only person who does not know about it, then.' The other day at the sale of the Boyne coins nine continental dealers were counted—*confrères* indeed. Had it not been for the

English competition, the result would have been absolutely disastrous.

Thus much may be confidently affirmed of Sotheby's. As commission-agents they are implicitly trustworthy. I have had a long and large experience, and where I have not been able, or have not deemed it politic, to attend in person, I have found that I could depend on the discretion of the auctioneer. Let one instance suffice. In 1882 there appeared in a catalogue published by the firm *The Famous and Remarkable History of Sir Richard Whittington*, octavo, 1656, a mediocre copy, but twenty years earlier than any on record. I left a commission of five guineas, and the lot fell to me at as many shillings. Only three copies are known, all of different issues: and every one has been in turn mine. Two are now in the British Museum; the other, from the Daniel sale, is in the Huth library.

There was an imperfect copy of the first edition of the *Paradise of Dainty Devices*, 1576, in a catalogue issued by the firm in 1889. It was described as probably unique, as wanting A 4, which had been supplied from the next earliest edition in the British Museum, and as bound by F. Bedford; it was further stated, that every possible search had been made for a second copy without success. This was a tissue of romantic inventions on the part, not of the auctioneer, I apprehend, but on that of the ingenious and candid owner, who was rewarded for his pains by seeing his property fetch £100!

Some time before, Mr Burt the facsimilist came up to me at the Museum, and shewed me the copy, asking me whether I could refer him to another, whence the missing leaf might be supplied. I did so; but he eventually took it, not from the next earliest issue, which was not in the library, but from that of 1596. Bedford was dead, when the volume was bound. I leave the *judicial* reader to sum up!

At one of the Scotch sales at Sotheby's—David Laing's, I think—Kerr & Richardson of Glasgow bought against Quaritch at an utterly extravagant price some specimens of old Scotch binding, but thought better of it afterward, and the next morning Richardson went to Piccadilly, and offered to lose the last bid, if Quaritch liked to have the book. 'No,' replied the other; 'I thank you; I was mad yesterday; but now I have come to my senses again.'

I have recorded in a previous page an anecdote connected with the Simeon sale at Sotheby's. I may take the present opportunity of adding that Sir John Simeon was a resident in the Isle of Wight, and a friend of Tennyson, who met Longfellow under that roof. There is a curious story of Wilberforce, when he was at Winchester, making one of a picnic party at Simeon's, and, the guests

strolling about, as they pleased, the bishop was discovered sitting down in a field alone, with a handkerchief over his head as a sunshade, one foot in a rabbit-hole, and in his hand a bottle of champagne.

To the house in Leicester Square I feel myself under considerable obligations for acts of courtesy and kindness. In former years I bought there rather largely; and it was very possible, even in a full room, to obtain bargains, such as do not go many to the sovereign. I remember that it was here that I got the Fishmongers' Pageant for 1590, a tract of the utmost rarity, the *Merry Devil of Edmonton*, 1631, a prose version of the story far scarcer than the play, and mistaken by some of those present for it, till it was knocked down to me, and a volume of early pieces relating to murders, accidents, and other cognate matters in the finest state. There seemed to be no voice lifted up for them beyond a bid, which I could easily cap. One of the most remarkable early grammars in the British Museum occurred here, and fetched only 44s. although it was in the highest preservation and wholly undescribed. Another work of this class, which led to a certain amount of inquiry, was an *A B C* printed on paper like linen at Riga in Russian Poland for the use of the German children there, who preponderate in number, about 1700—perhaps the oldest example of the kind. It was very appropriately lotted with Thomas Morton's *Treatise of the Nature of God*, 1599! The two did not bring more than 12s. The Riga Primer was, I conclude, a find, as the British Museum sent down an individual to my house to procure information about it and similar productions in connection with some task which he had before him.

There was a singular little upheaval, so to speak, at Puttick & Simpson's a few years ago, when certain tracts, so far known only from report or the Stationers' Register, occurred. I took memoranda of them all, but somehow omitted to bid for them. What became of the others, I do not know; but an extraordinarily rare Elizabethan pamphlet respecting Edward Glemham, 1591, fell to Mr Quaritch, and from him passed to me at 36s. My intimacy with the market-value of these relics inspired my eminent acquaintance by degrees with a distrust of me, and led to a cessation of his catalogues. I own that I should have looked from such a quarter for greater magnanimity. He sold me a small piece by Ralph Birchensha on Irish affairs, 1602, for £6, 6s., less ten per cent. for cash, and subsequently wrote to demand for what consideration I was willing to surrender it. But both purchases were bespoken: the former for the British Museum, the latter for Mr Huth.

It was on this ground that I had the bad luck to fall into a trap laid by myself. In

some sale a copy of Dekker's *Belman of London*, 1608, occurred in a volume in old vellum with the same author's *Lanthorn and Candlelight*, bearing the same date as the first piece, and so far known only in a re-issue of 1609. I committed the stupid and double blunder of fancying that it was the former and less important article, which was imperfect, and of suggesting to the auctioneers, that the book should be sold with all faults. Even then I had to give £5, 2s. 6d. for it, and it turned out that the missing sheet in the middle was in the *Lanthorn and Candlelight*. I separated the two pieces, and sold the *Belman* to Smith; and the other, when I had kept it a twelvemonth or so in the vain hope of completion, I handed over to the Museum. I just saved myself.

Nothing is much more remarkable than the jetsam, which chance brings up to the surface here and in Wellington Street alike. Some of the rarest books and pamphlets in our early literature have fallen under my eyes in Leicester Square. Once it was a parcel, I recollect, including, among others, Drayton's *Shepherd's Garland*, 1593; but the lots were uniformly, in point of condition, hopeless; and I had to leave them to others.

But the most signal acquisition on my part was the series of the SOMERS TRACTS in thirty folio volumes, which had belonged to the famous chancellor, and had passed through several hands, but were still in the original calf binding. This set of books and tracts comprised some of the rarest *Americana*, especially the *Laws of New York*, printed there in 1693-4, and probably one of the earliest specimens of local typography. I forget what I left with the auctioneers; but the price, at which the hammer fell, was £61. A single item was worth double that sum; and there were hundreds and hundreds. I spoke to Mr Quaritch after the sale, and begged him to say why he had not bidden for the article. I apprehend that he overlooked it—at all events its peculiar importance. What a lottery!

Now alike in Wellington Street and here all is changed. A new school has arisen, and every article of the slightest consequence is carried to the last shilling—and beyond. The highest bidder never despairs of finding, when he gets home, somebody more enthusiastic or more foolish than himself. I sometimes look round, while a sale is proceeding, and nearly all the faces are strange. They are those of young men, who represent firms, or who speculate on their own account. There are no cheap lots, save to the preternaturally knowing or lucky.

I have reserved to the last the name, which should by right, perhaps, have come first in order—that of Mr Quaritch, because he co-operated with me in the enterprise, which constituted throughout my motive for mingling in the

commercial circle, and has enabled me to preserve from the risk of destruction a vast body of original matter. Mr Quaritch cannot have realised any appreciable advantage from publishing my *Bibliographical Collections* from 1882 to 1892; and he left me a perfectly free hand with the printer, saying that his share of the business was to pay the bill and sell the books. I waxed tired of the practical side, when I lost £140 by a single volume of the series.

But, while he associated himself with me in a variety of ways, some more mutually profitable than this one, our practical transactions were, comparatively speaking, not so important or heavy as might have been expected. Mr Quaritch used at one time to have cheap books as well as dear; and I suppose that I gave the preference to the former. I saw a copy of *Fortunatus* in English in his window one day, marked 12s., and I went in to buy it. He was just by the door, and when he learned my object, 'Ah,' said he, 'I have kept that book so long, that it is 15s. if you want it,' and the higher figure I had to pay. There was never any remarkable event in my life immediately identifiable with these classic premises. I fear that I was suspected of knowing too much. I was not like the good folks, to whom, when he had bought the first copy of the Mazarin Bible, he exhibited an ordinary early printed specimen on their application for leave to inspect the real article. They were just as happy and just as wise. How many thumbs it saved!

I shall always cherish a sentiment of gratitude toward Mr Quaritch for his valuable aid during a whole decade in putting it in my power to present in instalments the fruit of my labour at the auction-rooms and elsewhere, and in agreeing to defray the entire cost of the *General Index* to a large portion of it. I look forward to the possibility of carrying on the task piecemeal, till it embraces the entire *corpus* of our earlier national literature in all its branches, each item derived from the printed original, and illustrated by such notes as may appear desirable and appropriate.

Thousands of new titles await the printer.

It was through this medium that Lord Crawford was pleased to honour me with a proof of his lordship's catalogue of *Proclamations*, thinking that it might be of service; but I had to return the copy with a message by the same channel that the descriptions were drawn up on a different principle from mine, and that I never accepted information at second-hand, if I could possibly avoid it.

After what I had seen of Lord Crawford's bibliographical discernment, I was

rather distressed to hear that his lordship is regarded as one of the best-informed men on the Board of Trustees in Great Russell Street. But the qualifications of an *ex-officio* member cannot be always satisfactory.

I conclude that it is, except among the general public, an open secret that Mr Quaritch has been during quite a long series of years eminently indebted for his success to the varied and extraordinary erudition of his adviser, Mr Michael Kerny. Mr Quaritch was accustomed to say to me: 'I am a shopkeeper; Mr Kerny is a gentleman;' and there was a degree of truth in this remark. Yet the former is something more than *le grand marchand*; his enterprise and pluck are marvellous; and they are the outcome, for the most part, not of foolhardihood, but of genius. A man, who buys blindly, soon reaches the end of his tether. That Mr Quaritch for divers reasons has often made unwise purchases, and has missed his mark, may be perfectly the fact; but in the main he has obviously struck the right vein; and he pursues his policy season after season, witnessing the departure of old clients (or, as he would rather put it, customers) and the advent of new ones. He despises popularity, and has ere this given umbrage by his *brusquerie* to supporters of long standing and high position; and he leaves them to do as they please to seek other pastures or to return to their former allegiance. He is a striking example—the most striking I have ever seen—of a man, who knows how to accommodate unusual independence of character and conduct to commercial life.

The successive authorities in the Printed Book Department of the British Museum have earned my cordial gratitude by their uniform deference to my somewhat peculiar and somewhat exacting requirements. They soon formed the habit, when it was found that I was an earnest and genuine worker, of waiving in my favour, so far as it was consistent with reason and propriety, the hard and fast rule of the establishment, and even under the now rather remote and quasi-historical keepership of Mr Watts.

It was as a simple student that I in the first place sought the British Museum, and in the old reading-room initiated myself in the learning requisite to qualify me, as I imagined, for becoming the English historian of Venice. I was self-complacently happy in the unconsciousness of my own intense ignorance of the magnitude of the task and of the fact that, at a distance of forty years, I should still have merely reached a more advanced stage of my labours. It at any rate speaks for my perseverance and resolution, that my interest in the topic is unabated, and my desire and intention, to see the project of my youth completed on a suitable and satisfactory scale inflexible.

I ventured into type in 1858 and 1860, and since then I have printed farther instalments destined to fall into their places, when the time arrives. But accident directed my steps and thoughts about the same time into a different groove, and I turned my attention to book-collecting and bibliography, at first vaguely and desultorily, and by degrees on a more systematic principle; and cogent circumstances—that necessity for living, which Dr Johnson ignored—finally drove me into the market as a speculator. My conversance with old books was very special and defective; of many classes I knew next to nothing; but I gradually gained a fair insight into the value of those, for which I had contracted a personal liking—the early poetry and romances—and I tried my hand as a hunter for specialities. I naturally turned to the Museum as a channel; for I was not acquainted with many of the booksellers, and I had yet to meet with Mr Huth.

It may not be, indeed is not, generally known, how wide a diversity of persons offer their possessions or acquisitions to the national library. There are great differences of opinion respecting the questions of rarity and value, and the authorities are most unconscionably plagued by a host of individuals of imperfect bibliographical attainments, who shoot parcels of old volumes in Great Russell Street in the expectation of a more or less rich harvest, in which they are apt to be more or less disappointed. Here and there a real treasure is netted. The Bishop of Bath and Wells brought a small octavo volume from Ickworth, comprising the *Prophete Jonas* and other tracts of singular scarcity and importance. A gentleman from Woolwich introduced a quarto volume in old vellum of poetical compositions of the middle of the sixteenth century, including the *Scholehouse of Women*, the *Defence of Women*, the *Seven Sorrows that Women have when Their Husbands be dead*, etc., with the autograph on a flyleaf of ‘John Hodge, of the Six Clerks’ Office 1682.’ Such prizes atone for a vast amount of annoyance and rubbish.

But Mr Maskell, Mr Halliwell, Mr Henry Stevens, and myself have probably, apart from purchases made direct from the sales and the shops, contributed of late years most largely to supply *lacunæ* in the Early English Department, and supersede the three-volume catalogue.

At the Bodleian the late Dr Coxe and the Rev. Mr Madan have always done their best to help me, and at Cambridge the late Mr Henry Bradshaw was a host in himself. These relations, however, were purely bibliographical; while those with the Museum were of a more mingled yarn, and my connection with that institution, both as regarded printed literature and manuscripts, was in fact part

of the system, which I have above fully explained.

I did a good deal *con amore*. A strange story reached me about a copy of Monstrelet's Chronicles in French, printed on vellum, for which Mr Quaritch was not willing to give as much as the owner desired, in fact throwing discredit on the genuineness of the book. Whereupon it was carried to Great Russell Street, duly inspected, and as to the price—the authorities were prepared to hand over all the cash in hand, about £700. Mr Quaritch was stated to have been very wroth, when he found that he had missed the lot, and declared that his ground for scepticism was the fact that the only copy in the market or likely to occur for sale was in Russia; and he then learned for the first time, that the present one had been obtained at St Petersburg. I called on Mr Garnett, and inquired what were the actual circumstances, so far as the Museum was concerned; and it appeared that the book did come from Russia, and consisted only of vols. 2 and 3; but the library already possessed vol. 1 (wanting one leaf only) in an incomplete set formerly belonging to King Henry VII.; and the purchase was arranged. The keeper referred to the accounts, and found that the transaction took place in 1886, and that the sum given was £375.

My experiences of bookbinders have been tolerably manifold, and not exempt from the sorrows, with which the employers of this class of skilled labour are bound to become familiar. The earliest of my acquaintances was Mr Leighton, who executed a great deal of work for Sir William Stirling-Maxwell—in those days known as William Stirling of Keir. There was a stupendous copy of Maxwell's *Cloister-Life of Charles V.*, published at a few shillings, which I understood Leighton to say had cost with the illustrations and elaborate Spanish binding about £1000. I saw the book in Brewer Street, but not the value. Leighton's speciality was Spanish calf, as Riviere's was the tree-marbled pattern. I had a considerable amount of work done for me here, while I filled the *rôle* of a collector on my own account in a humble degree. But when I had occasion, at a later period, to put volumes into new liveries, and their condition demanded nice handling, I employed Riviere, whom I found very satisfactory and punctual. His place of business in Piccadilly adjoining Pickering's shop was during years one of my not least agreeable resorts, and I profited, with the concurrence of the principal, by the constant presence on the premises of undescribed books or editions consigned for binding. Of Bedford I saw very little. He was a true artist, and a very unassuming, pleasant fellow, whom I occasionally visited at his address in or near York Street, Westminster. My first call was in consequence of Mr Huth having given me leave to take notes of some rare volumes, which were

in course of treatment. Bedford was more reliable than Riviere, who could bind well, if he liked; but he sometimes left too much to subordinates. Pratt, who had been a workman at Bedford's, was a respectable binder, but an indifferent cleaner and mender, two very essential features, where the slightest neglect or oversight may prove disastrous. It is trying to look in casually, and perceive that the tender title-page of a quarto Shakespear has parted with one of the letters of the poet's name or a figure of the date, and that one of these is floating on the surface of a tub of water; and such thrilling episodes have occurred.

If it is in some cases an advantage to take your acquisitions to a binder, and have them separately clothed, it is in others, and perhaps for the most part, one to buy ready-bound. It saves expense, delay, and annoyance.

Of my publishers I am scarcely entitled to speak in a volume devoted to the collecting side beyond such works as directly arose from my pursuit as a book-lover pure and simple between 1857 and 1867. But, when I look closely at my professedly literary undertakings, I discern more or less in nearly all of them a bibliographical spirit and training. My Venetian labours included the formation of a fair representative collection of books relating to the subject and a study of the MSS. within my reach. My pronounced taste for method and minutiae in early English literature extended to Italy, when I was endeavouring to concentrate on the history of the Republic all the direct and collateral light, which I was enabled to gather from various sources; and the same thing may be truly predicated of the commissions, which I executed for several publishers, beginning with Russell Smith and Reeves & Turner. Mine have been chiefly enterprises, where a knowledge of detail and a familiarity with extant or available material were apt to prove of eminent service; and such was especially the case with the *Early Popular Poetry* and the *Dodsley*. Disciples of the *belles-lettres*, who entertain less respect for the extrinsic side or part of their tasks, may be wiser than myself; but it strikes me, that it is difficult to do justice to a subject without surveying the entire ground occupied by it.

Two very mortifying illustrations of the soundness of this view occurred to me at different times. In my collected edition of Randolph, I collated everything with the original editions except the *Aristippus* and had the satisfaction of discovering, when it was too late, that all but the first issue were incomplete in many places, in one to the extent of omitting a line. In my reconstructed and enlarged Dodsley, in *fifteen thick octavo volumes, containing eighty-four dramas*, I have a table of *errata* of *thirty-six items*, many very trivial and even dubious; and of this total *five-and-twenty* occur in one play, which I neglected to

compare with the old copy deposited in an inconvenient locality, and gave from the Shakespear Society's text. I attach greater blame to myself, that I should have forgotten, when I reprinted in 1892 my Suckling of 1874, to set right the stupid mistake in the song from 'The Sad One,' of *dawn* for *down*.

I shall remain highly pleased, that I succeeded, in the volume entitled *Tales and Legends*, in putting in type my long-cherished ideas about Robin Hood and Faustus; and I adopted a sort of old-fashioned, vernacular style throughout the book, apparently not unsuitable to the nature of the topics treated. Both the stories just mentioned were there for the first time presented in an English form and text agreeably to my view and estimate of the facts relative to two of the most remarkable characters in romance. The accumulation of absurdities round those heroes of the closet and the stage prompted me, years and years since, to endeavour to reduce the legends to a shape more compatible with evidence and probability. Yet I am informed that some of the critics wondered, what the aim of the volume was. It struck others, as well as myself, as fairly clear; indeed the undertaking was strictly on recognised lines. But I had unfortunately omitted to graduate as a specialist and to add myself to the roll of the faithful.

Another venture, which involved the writer in a slight temporary *imbroglio*, was the monograph on the *Livery Companies of London*. I was most unhappy in the season and circumstances of launching this work. It was a tolerably hard six months' task, and I hurried it forward, inasmuch as I knew that a rival scheme was on the stocks. Considering that it is a big book with numerous illustrations supplied by the editor, it is perhaps not much worse than it might have been, had it proceeded from a pen writing *superiorum approbatione*. The rumour arose that, as soon as the real work on the subject appeared, the attempt of an outsider would sink into merited oblivion; but the real work did not appear, and its proposed author had to content himself, in the presence of his disappointment, with sending me an anonymous communication, based on erroneous intelligence, that the word *Gild* ought to be spelled with a *U*, as it is in *Guildhall*, *Gild* signifying *to face with gold*.

A far more serious misadventure, however, was occasioned by an unlucky clerical oversight. In the account of the Cutlers' Company I stated that there had been, many years before, a defalcation by the Clerk, whereas I should have said 'by a clerk;' the wrong article and the capital letter drew down on me the ire of the party, who still occupied the position of Clerk to the Gild, and who pleaded damage to his reputation by the misprint, pointed out to him by the frustrated compiler aforesaid. There could be no sustainable plea of injury, and the large

amount lost rendered it obvious that there must have been neglect by superiors; but the publishers thought it better to agree to cancel the leaf, which was done in all copies unsold or recoverable. The Clerk was in fact the responsible officer, and although he might have had no hand in the misappropriation, he must have exercised a very imperfect control over the accounts, to render such a thing possible.

Owing to the unlucky retention in my agreement for the Livery Companies' book of certain clauses, I involved myself in an unpleasantness, which made me anxious to get rid of the entire business. Accordingly, the moment that I was advised by the firm, that they had (without previous consultation with me as a royalty-holder) converted themselves into a limited company, I solicited a cheque in settlement of all claims, and obtained it. I have very possibly set a precedent, by which others might not do ill to profit.

I know that to my more recent acquaintances and auxiliaries I must have appeared rather niggard of presentation copies of my publications. But I used to be generous enough in distributing such things, till I was thoroughly disheartened and disgusted. Some stopped short of acknowledgment; others might without much disadvantage have done the same. I sent a privately-printed volume worth several pounds as a gift to a reverend professor at Cambridge, and he wrote back on a card: 'Thanks. Curious.' My former schoolmaster at Merchant Taylors had only to say that I had left out a Greek accent in a quotation, and a female relative, after two years' deliberation, apprised me that I was guilty of printing the wrong article in a French maxim. When I forwarded to Mr William Chappell direct as from myself an important volume edited for Mr Huth, he pointed out to the latter, leaving me unrecognised, that I had made a slip in a particular place. An official at the British Museum, who solicited one of my books as a memorial, which would be cherished as an heirloom in his family, forthwith passed it on to a bookseller, who priced it in his catalogue at £12, 12s., and Mr Huth, till I explained the circumstances, imagined that I was the culprit.



CHAPTER X

As an Amateur—Old China—Dr Diamond of Twickenham—Unfavourable Results of His Tutorship—My Adventure at Lowestoft—Alderman Rose—I turn over a New Leaf—Morgan—His Sale to Me of Various Objects—The Seventeenth Century Dishes—The Sèvres Tray of 1773—The Pair of Japanese Dishes—Blue and White—Hawthorn—The Odd Vase—My Finds at Hammersmith—Mr Sanders of Chiswick and his Chelsea China—Gale—The Ruby-backed Eggshell—A Recollection of Ralph Bernal—Buen Retiro and Capo di Monte—Reynolds of Hart Street—The Wedgewood Teapot—The *Rose du Barri* Vases—My Bowls—An Eccentric Character and His Treasures—Reminiscences of Midhurst and Up Park—The Zurich Jug and My Zurich Visitor—The Diamond Sale.

In crossing over from the literary to other fields, where I have instructed and amused myself and a few others by my studies, I pass to ground, where I occupy a somewhat different position—that of an absolute, incorruptible amateur. I see clearly enough that, whatever advantage may attach itself to the commercial side in these matters, the genuine pleasure lies in purchasing for oneself, even if the price is here and there such as to ensure loss on realisation; for there is the sense of patronage and superiority. I never descended to petty transactions; but where an appreciable amount was involved; I would far liefer have stood aloof, or have acquired for myself. There was only the sovereign motive in the background, which conquered my instinctive repugnance to the conversion of literary monuments into a commodity and of my hardly-acquired knowledge into a mint.

Outside Books, I have conceived, as I proceeded, and as I mingled with other hobby-riders, an interest in such matters of secondary human concernment as

China, Coins, Plate, Postage Stamps, Pictures, and Furniture. The two former have occupied in my thought a station not much less prominent than that of literature; and as I abandoned the practical inquiry into the first subject after ten years' devotion to it, I shall commence by giving some account of my observations and experiences in that particular market, which, like all others, offers its peculiarities and idiosyncrasies.

There is hardly a triter remark than that we are slaves to our passions; and the genuine collector certainly is unto his, whatever his line may be. Where there are ample resources, it signifies less; but the servitude presses very heavily on the more necessitous or more moderately endowed. It is in vain to say that a man ought not to buy luxuries, if he cannot afford them; he will have them, as another will drink alcohol or chew opium. To secure something which he covets he is capable of pawning his coat or 'dining with Duke Humphrey.' Had I been exempt from fancies, I might have spared myself the ordeal of going into the highways and byways in quest of that doubtful benefactor a publisher; I might have dispensed with ingratiating myself with booksellers and bookbuyers; I might have enjoyed the pleasures of reading and thinking amid some sort of *paterna rura*. But as a citizen, who leaves London only for the sake of the satisfaction which it yields to return to it (for your Londoner, if he likes to see and *feel* the country must *live in urbe*), I naturally contracted certain pleasant and costly vices incidental to a metropolis, and became an unthrift and through my unthriftiness a hireling. I often resolve to break my fetters; but I lack the courage. The tastes, in which I have graduated, have sweetened my life, and enlarged my vision, if they have trenched a little on my freedom; and I even think that they have tended to humanise me, and subdue a not too tractable temper to the harder and sterner uses of the world.

I have not the least objection to avow that, when I accidentally acquired in 1869 at Llandudno an example or two of Oriental ceramic art, I was deplorably ignorant of the bearings and merits of the pursuit, and had, as usual, no idea that I had embarked in one. A good-natured and well-informed relative, who was always ready and pleased to serve and flatter me, suggested that my Eastern porcelain was *Brom'ichham*. Of course an English factory could not, in the first place, have produced the things at the price. I received a good deal of encouragement and sympathy from those near and dear to me just about this time; my extravagance was censured; and my early insolvency considered probable.

Through my father I became acquainted about that time with Dr Diamond of

Twickenham House, the possessor of one of the most extensive and miscellaneous assemblages of porcelain and pottery of all ages and countries ever formed in this country. Who had first bitten the doctor, I never heard; I found him, on my first introduction, the owner of a mass of examples, good, bad and indifferent, of all of which, however insignificant and obscure, he could tell you the pedigree and place of origin. He had many other tastes; he was curious about photography, books, pictures, prints, coins, and plate; his house was a museum, of which he was the curator and showman; but I think that during the last years of his life old china and plate kept the ascendancy.

My personal progress was at first leisurely, for I do not recollect that I made any farther investments till 1872 when, happening to be at Lowestoft where Alderman Rose, brother of James Anderson Rose, also a collector, was then staying, he and I were equally seduced by the attractions of a shop kept by a person named Burwood. It was extremely fortunate for the latter that Rose and myself had nearly all our knowledge to learn; we bought largely and not too well, and Burwood was so exhausted by the drain on his stock, that he announced his intention of travelling down into Herefordshire, in order to buy some very valuable bits reported to him from a farmhouse in that rather distant shire. There was a second depôt in the same watering-place, kept by an old man and his wife, with whom it was a favourite phrase, when their stock ran low, to say that they must 'take a journey.' In short, I amassed a large hamper of ware on this occasion, and brought it home. Diamond, as soon as he was apprised of my new foible, exclaimed, 'God help him!' and I suspected that there must be something in it, when I called at a place in Orange Street, Red Lion Square, and ascertained that that and the Herefordshire farmhouse were one.

I soon made a second discovery, which almost discouraged me from prosecuting the fancy any farther. Diamond had knowledge and feeling; but I now saw that he was deficient in taste. I had naturally modelled my small collection on his plan or want of plan; I fell in with one or two dealers, who opened my eyes; and the Lowestoft cargo was thrown overboard. A Jew named Moss had a whole tableful of crockery in exchange for a good plaque of Limoges enamel of the earlier epoch. He once let me have at a moderate price an old Sèvres plate painted with a pastoral scene, and with a rich amethyst blue and gold festooned border. I continue to think favourably of it. He brought it and a number of other pieces, all rubbish, in company with a co-religionist, to my house at Kensington in the evening. He was so discouraged by my frugal selection, that I lost sight of him. He was not miserly in his warnings against his professional contemporaries.

This is a common trait.

I began to work on a new principle—to buy fewer and better things, studying condition, to which the doctor was more or less insensible; and I found myself about 1880 the owner, even on such a basis, of a multitude of wares which threatened to compete in the early future with the Twickenham prototype.

This was all the more serious, so to speak, inasmuch as while I drew from very few sources, the doctor was a mark for everybody, while he continued to buy with zest and avidity. All sorts of people came to the high iron gates, bringing every variety of article for sale; and few carried their freights back. Even those who were on the list of private guests occasionally shewed their good taste by drawing out of their breast-pockets at dessert some object for Diamond's approval and purchase. There was Major —, one of Her Majesty's messengers, who was an habitual offender (as I thought) in such a way. But in the eyes of our common host the end in those days justified the means. It was all fish.

I dealt in chief measure with a house in Hanway Street (Morgan), Gale in Holborn, Brooks at Hammersmith, and Reynolds of Hart Street, Bloomsbury. I seldom left these tracks, and met there with only too much to tempt me. Morgan sold me a few pieces of Sèvres and some very fine Oriental. It was curious that, just after my purchase of three or four large porcelain dishes, the 'china earth' of the Stuart era, a gentleman of old family from Newcastle-on-Tyne looked in at Morgan's, and observing a broken specimen of the same lot, mentioned that at home he had some precisely similar, which had belonged to his predecessors since 1650. A very beautiful Sèvres tea-stand of small dimensions, with a circumference representing a tressure of six curves, has the marks of the maker, the painter, and the gilder, and belongs to 1773; I gave him £23 for it; Morgan tried to get the companion cup and saucer; but it brought £86; and was bought, I think, by the late Mr Lawrence, F.S.A.

He had a rather prolonged and troublesome negotiation in one instance on my behalf. The executors of some gentleman offered him a pair of superb Japanese dishes, 24 inches in diameter and of a rare pattern and shape, for £140. I declined them at that figure, and heard no more of the matter, till he informed me that his correspondents had modified their views, so as to make it possible for me to possess the lot for £85. I took them; and the vendor has repeatedly applied to me, asking if I have the dishes still, and care to part. He sold me a few other rather costly articles—costly in my eyes.

Morgan initiated me in the true facts about Blue and White, and helped me to steer clear of the blunders, which many of my contemporaries perpetrated over that craze. I have a small cylindrical bottle, white and ultramarine, which illustrates the matter as well as a dearer example, and shews the pains which the Chinese took to prepare their paste and pigments during the best period—the seventeenth century. Both are most brilliant, and it is alike the case with Chinese and Japanese ware of this class, that the ancient appears to a superficial or inexperienced observer more modern than that made in our own time, of which the ground and the decoration are faded and weak.

I likewise gained an insight from the same source into the mysteries of Hawthorn, which seems to be rather Plum-blossom. I handled a goodly number of specimens; but I encountered scarcely any, which awakened a very strong interest. Really fine examples are of the rarest occurrence, and it is still more difficult to obtain pairs of vases or jars with the genuine covers or lids. They are generally false or wooden. Odd pieces are not wanted. You must have either a couple or a set of two, three, five, six, according to circumstances.

A collector had long cast a longing eye on a very beautiful vase in a London shop, but would not have it, because it was odd. He kept a sharp look-out for the companion, and at last he found it to his immense satisfaction at Newcastle, and brought it up to town. On inquiry at the dealer's there, he found that the latter, despairing of getting rid of his piece, had consigned it to a friend at Newcastle in the hope of meeting with a customer.

This was agreeable to the circular system, by which curiosities go the round of the watering-places and spas in quest of homes. I saw a Worcester jug at Bournemouth, which had visited nearly every resort in the kingdom, and still awaited an admirer.

I very soon abandoned the idea about Lowestoft porcelain. Gillingwater in his *History* of the place (1790) merely mentions that they had clay, suitable for making pottery, in the neighbourhood; but there was no material for fine china. Very possibly certain pieces of Oriental were shipped thither in the white, and locally decorated. But I have yet to see an important example of so-called Lowestoft, which was not really of Chinese origin.

At the place of business long kept by Brooks I was an habitual caller, and used to meet Mr Sanders of Chiswick, whose collection of Chelsea porcelain was probably one of the finest ever brought together. It comprised many large

examples in figures and *nefs* seldom seen and of great importance. It was Sanders, who related to me the anecdote of a singular find at Antwerp of Chelsea figures in a confectioner's establishment. The proprietor or his family once belonged to Chelsea, and had taken these pieces with them as part of their trade fittings or decorations; and he willingly exchanged them for others on payment of a reasonable difference.

Sanders and myself occasionally met also at Sotheby's. He must have been a person of no mean resources; but his ways were mysterious, and his home, I fear, uncomfortable. Perhaps he found the neighbouring Sign of the Hoppoles more congenial for this reason; he found it, poor fellow, only too much so.

I possess numerous memorials of my transactions with Brooks. He had, besides china, occasional pictures on which I may have sometimes looked with extravagant distrust; and he was in fact an omnivorous buyer and not an injudicious one. I recall a tall Chelsea cup and saucer with a stalk handle, painted with fruit, and marked in puce, which my good acquaintance had obtained from a small house-sale in Chiswick—the sole treasure of the establishment. It was in the finest state. 'They thought me a fool,' remarked Brooks, 'because I gave £10, 10s. for it.' 'And what would they say of the person,' I put to him, 'who took it of you at a profit?' He grinned, and informed me that a medical man in the neighbourhood would jump at it. This frightened me, and I closed with him at £14. I owed many another prize to the same agency, particularly, in a small way perhaps, an old Dresden plate with a crimson and gold border, painted with a bird and foliage, the prototype of the Chelsea pattern, of which examples have fetched £35. Brooks had this lying in a drawer, and one day I disinterred it, and took it home at 25s. My Hammersmith man was not invariably so discreet in his consumption of liquor as he ought to have been; and I have to confess with some shame and contrition, that I priced, not for the first time, a very fine Cambrian ware mug marked (as usual) in gold, when he was a trifle festive, and he let me have it for 35s. He had two; the other was badly cracked; and I saw it in another shop some time after, valued at £7, 15s.

There were two examples of ceramic ware in his hands at different times, protected and (as I thought) disguised by old black frames. I asked him to take them out for me, that I might be satisfied as to their condition, which he did. One was a Wedgwood plaque, light blue, with figures in relief; the other an original Capo di Monte one, literally hidden under accumulated dirt. It was of the second period, in the *alto rilievo* style, and represents the Bath of Diana, I believe. The sharpness of the impression was a strong contrast to the modern copies from the

moulds. Brooks asked £6 for it; I took both.

He was *ultimus Romanorum* in the sense that he left no successor in Hammersmith with a stock of the kind worth regarding.

Brooks was an odd-looking small man, and he and his wife resembled Mr and Mrs Johnson in the Vauxhall song. I once spoke to him of his *confrères* in the trade, and as to his relations with them, more particularly in the old china line, and his less explanatory than sententious rejoinder was: 'I knows them, and they knows me.'

Gale, who lived in Holborn, where I regularly visited him, was the brother of the County Court judge. He was an intelligent fellow, but not very speculative, nor did I ever, save once, carry away from him anything very notable. He set before me, however, on one occasion a splendid pair of ruby-backed eggshell plates painted with quails, and said that the price was £6. I felt slightly nervous, lest he should have made a mistake; but I agreed to his terms, asked him to pack the things up, and departed. I nearly broke them by a collision on the pavement, but eventually landed them in safety, calling *en route* at Reynolds's in Hart Street, who told me that a customer would give him £60 for them, if I would let him have them at a figure below that. They are as thin and transparent as paper. It may be just worth noting that a cup and saucer of Capo di Monte of the first type, the paste opaque and the decoration Spanish, was sold to me by Gale as Buen Retiro. It is painted in the same taste, and has the same mark—*M* for Madrid; but I have always regarded it as of Italian origin, and as the work of the operatives who migrated from the neighbourhood of Madrid to Capo di Monte. The real Buen Retiro resembles eggshell.

Ralph Bernal had formerly dealt with Gale, who was fond of narrating anecdotes of the great collector's hesitation and nearness. There was a particular Sèvres cup and saucer, which brought a heavy sum in his sale, and which he got for £5, 5s., after a palaver with the holder of some months' duration.

Reynolds allowed me to make his premises in Bloomsbury one of my regular lounges. I did not altogether take a great deal off his hands, as he paid attention to Wedgwood, bronzes, ivories, and jade, rather than to china; and as I grew wiser, I also grew more exclusive, from a persuasion that one or two subjects are amply sufficient for any single madman, especially a rather poor one.

I have stated that my range of sources of supply was limited. I was now and then attracted by an object in a strange window, and might go in, and demand the

figure expected. It was the height of the run upon Chelsea, when I did so in Holborn, and the owner, in response to my appeal, proceeded to disengage from a hook an old Chelsea plate valued by him at £14, 14s. Unfortunately the poor fellow lost his balance, and let the plate go; it was broken into I know not how many fragments. I shall never forget his astonishment and dismay. What could I do? A neighbour of his once fixed me with a Nantgarw plate, and was lavish in his eulogy. 'Why,' he exclaimed, allusively to its lustrous brilliance, 'it laughs at you.'

My acquisitions at public sales have in thirty or more years been limited to two: a Derby mug painted with a military subject, which I gave away, and a large Dresden plaque in a rich frame, which occurred at Sotheby's ever so long ago, when sales were occasionally held in the warehouse downstairs. The piece was an exquisite copy of the painting by Rubens of his second wife and their child on her knee. Although there was no picture or china buyer present, it fetched £12, 12s., and F. S. Ellis pronounced it a bargain at that figure. I verily trust it may be so (Ellis named such an amount as £50); for it has hung in my study ever since, and owes me some interest.

Time was, when the bijou tea-pot held me in bondage. I have two of that very soft paste made at Mennecy in the department of the Seine, and a third of the finest Dresden porcelain, painted with landscapes (even on the lid), and with the spout richly gilt.

I was tempted, side by side with the Mennecy pieces, by a milk-jug with a silver hinge of Sceaux-Penthièvre, of which the paste is also remarkable for its softness. It was a factory conducted under the patronage of the Duc de Penthièvre. Its products are very rare.

A Welsh clergyman obliged me with a present of a few specimens of china, including a small octagon blue and white dish with *Salopian* impressed in large characters on the bottom. I value it the more, because the authentic early Salopian is most difficult to procure, and it is the fashion to ascribe to this manufactory the Worcester marked with an S.

I look upon the Nantgarw, of which I relate a trivial anecdote, the Swansea, and the Colebrooke Dale groups, as rather cold, insipid, and tawdry. The first-named is common enough in plates, dishes, and shaped pieces; but I possess a cup and saucer most exquisitely painted in roses with their stalks and leaves, but without a mark, which I have always attributed to this source. I never saw another

similar.

But I did take from Reynolds from time to time a few articles: a Wedgwood tea-pot of solid green jasper, a small Chelsea dish of the Vernon service with exotic birds and the gold anchor, a pair of *rose du Barri* tulip-lipped Sèvres vases, 6 inches high, painted with cupids, and so on. I deemed the tea-pot dear at £7; but the vendor, who had studied the particular branch of the subject, reassured me by offering to buy it back at any time at the same price; and he put this in the receipt—not to great purpose; for he died years ago. For the Vernon dish he asked £20, and took £11. The pair of *rose du Barri* vases, which belong to the Louis XVI. epoch, he picked up at a Lombard's for a trifle, and paid me the compliment of charging me £10 for them. But their quality was excellent, and in their gilding there was that free hand, which distinguishes the early work, and is charming from its very informality. The rich gold scrolls and foliage on either side do not correspond, as they would in pieces of modern fabric.

I appear, as I look back, to have been thrown from my early manhood among curiosity hunters and dealers. I was once very dead on the Bowl, when it offered special attractions of any kind. I have one, which is *jewelled* round the border inside and out, but of which the drawback is that it has in the heel an extremely unconventional painting. The jewellery is in the manufacturing process, and was imitated at Sèvres. A second came from Scotland, and is remarkable for the presence of a Christian legend in the base of the interior, derived from the teaching of the Jesuits in China. I negotiated it at a marine-store dealer's at North End; but he thought so well of it or of me, that he would not surrender it under £3, 3s. The most expensive specimen I possess cost me £9. It has a turquoise ground, is very richly decorated inside and out, is of large size, and of course absolutely perfect. But I was vouchsafed the sight of one at Deal in the hands of a private owner, for which a matter of £50 was expected. I preferred my own.

The Palissy, Henri Deux, and other costly *faïence* I never acquired. There was a fellow at Hammersmith, named Glendinning, who had on sale during countless years a specimen of Palissy, for which he suggested a cheque for £250, and which was a palpable copy. This strange character, who was a sort of commercial Munchausen, never wearied of spinning the most outrageous yarns about the goods, which he had, or had had, for sale, and would repeat conversations between the 'Prim'er' (Gladstone) and himself, no doubt as thoroughly *bonâ fide* as everything else about him. The works of Correggio were to be seen only on his first floor; but you might inspect copies in Trafalgar Square and the Louvre.

There was a pair of modern French decorative vases at this establishment, said by the proprietor to have been obtained by him at the sale of the effects of a great lady in Hyde Park, a *chère amie* of His Majesty Napoleon III. His Majesty, quoth my friend, paid eighty guineas for the objects, which were manufactured expressly for his lady friend in 1869. The vendor judged his purchase with all this imposing provenance rather reasonable at thirty guineas; nor did I contradict him. I did not order the vases to be sent home; but they arrived on approval; and there they remained. I repeatedly invited him to fetch them away, as, however cheap, they would not suit me at the price. He eventually sacrificed them and himself, and his family, by accepting £7, 10s.

When I was at Midhurst in 1877, I had a glimpse of the splendid collection of porcelain formed by the late Mr Fisher. I had arranged with a common friend to go to Up Park, Harting, not far off, to view the Sèvres purchased in or about 1810 by the Featherstonhaughs for £10,000, and which is shortly to be dispersed under the hammer, because the heir is obliged to strip the house to enable him to keep it up. Besides the china, they had a great deal of plate, which was allowed, till the family was warned, to lie about the house, and superb antique furniture. One of the Rothschilds offered, I was told, £1500 for a single Florentine table. It was something of the same kind, which a West End dealer found in a lodging-house at Hastings, whither he had taken his family for the air, and purchased for £500 after a prolonged negotiation with the landlady. He sold it for £300 more.

I once obtained of Brooks a 4-inch vase with a *gros bleu* ground and painted with birds, without a mark, and sold to me as Worcester. I took it to be Sèvres from the peculiar unctuous appearance of the paste and the method of treatment; and I remain of the same opinion. Mortlock shewed me two cups, asking me not to look at the marks, and to tell him what they were. One was Sèvres and the other a Staffordshire copy. The paste and the bird on the latter betrayed its origin.

It seems strange that the Sèvres of a certain epoch should be valuable beyond all comparison with other porcelain, that of France included, and that the modern manufacture, indeed the whole of this century's work, should be so slightly esteemed. But the skill and taste lavished on that of the Louis Quinze, or even Seize, period are immense. It is different with Chelsea, Derby, and Worcester, of all of which you may have examples of early date of poor, as well as of fine, quality. The Sèvres and Vincennes seem to have been more especially destined for rich patrons.

Brooks was an excellent judge of china, and fairly reasonable. But he sometimes, like most of us, committed mistakes, and sometimes overshot the mark as to price and value. He long had on view a cup and saucer with the gold anchor, which he had probably bought as Chelsea, and for which he demanded £12. It was a *contrefaçon* by the wily Flemings of Tournay. I eyed with much longing a beautiful jug of Plymouth ware, but unsigned, which he estimated at the same figure; but I deemed it too high, and Brooks was not the man to give way as a rule. After his death, Reynolds of Hart Street obtained the piece, and sold it to me for a third of the amount.

With respect to Chelsea, Derby, and Worcester china it is necessary, as I have just hinted, to be aware that much of the early work is of poor paste and decoration, and that the date is not a guarantee or criterion. Of all these factories there are abundant specimens of coarse execution and cheap fabric, though undoubtedly of original and genuine character. The Chelsea figure of Justice, 12 inches in height, is, for instance, of two distinct types: the first very inferior to the later, which exhibits the result of the introduction of Italian, perhaps Venetian, workmen. The mark on this porcelain seems to be borrowed from Venice, and is common to the ware made in that city.

Somehow—perhaps in exchange—Mr Quaritch had on sale in the seventies a fine pair of old cylindrical Japanese jars, such as in the common modern ware they use as stick or umbrella stands; I cast amorous glances at them; but the holder demanded sixty sovereigns; and I retired. They were the only objects of interest and value in the lot.

Her Britannic Majesty's Consul at Zurich had been advised by some one, that I was in possession of an old Zurich jug mounted in silver, and solicited leave to inspect it, as he was engaged on a history of the porcelain factory at that place. I let him see my piece, which was not silver-mounted, but was far more interesting and important, because it had the original china hinge. My visitor averred that he had never met with any similar example, and expressed his anxiety, if I cared to part with it at any time, to become the purchaser. I mentioned that I had been foolish enough twenty years before to give £6, 10s. for it. He stated his readiness to pay £10, and would, I dare say, have doubled the offer; but I declined.

While Waller the bookseller was still in Fleet Street, knowing me to be interested in old china, he shewed me one day upstairs in his private apartments a French cup and saucer, which had been given to him in Paris, and which, according to the donor, had formerly belonged to that misconstrued enthusiast Robespierre. It

struck me, I own, as of somewhat later date; it was uninscribed; and of course relics of this class are unlike books in not carrying on their face any valid or satisfactory evidence of their origin and prior fortunes. Waller meant kindly in letting me see his curiosity, and I offered no comment. Credentials I discerned none.

An unhappy acquisition here was one, which I owed to my indiscreet interference with things, which I did not understand. I bought of Waller for £5 a series of plaister casts of medals in a box, and subsequently parted with the lot for precisely as many shillings. I fared nearly as ill in a case, where I took of Stibbs of Museum Street a worm-eaten xylographic block, which placed it in my power to convert five guineas into two; and I fear that the buyer at the lower figure did not bless me. It was some modern fabrication ingeniously executed on a riddled square of ancient wood.

I saw the last of the Diamond collection, when it was offered at Sotheby's. There was a considerable attendance; but the company was not a strong one, nor was the property. The doctor had preferred *multa* to *multum*. There was a large mass of specimens, curious and quaint, and a few handsome pieces, but nothing capital, no productions, which bore accentuation. The affair was the converse of the Fountaine one, where the quantity was limited, the quality magnificent, princely. Naturally the quotations corresponded. The best price was obtained for a lot, which was not in the category of porcelain or pottery. It consisted of a couple of Gothic crowns of Victoria, 1847, which, as Diamond told me, had been presented by Wyon to him, and which were in the original case. They were proofs, but of the ordinary type, and they realised eighteen guineas. If they had belonged to one of the rare varieties, that of 1847 with the *décolletée* bust, or the one dated 1853, they would have still been extravagantly dear.

I remember Cockburn the Richmond silversmith mentioning to me that a customer, who owed him £6, begged him as a favour to take the amount in Gothic crowns, of which he handed him twenty-four unused. There was a ridiculous notion, that the *graceless* florin was rare, and Diamond inquired about it of Hugh Owen, author of the monograph on Bristol china, and cashier of the Great Western Railway. The following Sunday Owen came down to Twickenham with a small cargo of them.

CHAPTER XI

The Stamp Book—A Passing Taste—Dr Diamond again—An Establishment in the Strand—My Partiality for Lounging—One of My Haunts and Its Other Visitors—Our Entertainer Himself—His Principals Abroad—The *Cinque Cento* Medal—Canon Greenwell—Mr Montagu—Story of a Dutch Priest—My Experience of Pictures—The Stray Portrait recovered after Many Years—The Two Wilson Landscapes—Sir Joshua's Portrait of Richard Burke—Hazlitt's Likeness of Lamb—The Picture Market and Some of Its Incidence—Story of a Painting—Plate—The Rat-tailed Spoon—Dr Diamond smitten—The Hogarth Salver—The Edmund Bury Godfrey and Blacksmiths' Cups—Irish Plate—Danger of Repairing or Cleaning Old Silver—The City Companies' Plate.

I have to retrace my steps to Reynolds, because he was quite fortuitously instrumental in inoculating me with a new weakness—the Postage Stamp. He was a man in very indifferent health, and during two years or so was laid up, so that he was unable to attend to his regular business, and beguiled his leisure with a study of Wedgwood and philately. The former proved sufficiently profitable to him, as soon as he was strong enough to attend to work; the latter was a mere passing amusement, and fructified only to the extent of placing him in possession of an album, formed by the consolidation of a number of others purchased and broken up. This he had by him, and did not propose to sell.

I remarked it on a shelf once or twice; the topic was beginning to awaken interest; and I elicited from the owner, that he might be tempted by £50. He was ultimately tempted by £16. There were about 3500 stamps; and the collection has since been greatly enlarged and entirely rearranged. I relinquished the pursuit, because I was advised that the liability to deception was excessive, and

there my book lies, a record of a foolish passion. I sincerely believe, that Diamond had a finger in drawing my attention to stamps; for he had an important collection, which he shewed to me at Twickenham and which he sold, I understood, to a public institution for £70.

The frequenters of the Strand, where it is a gorge toward St Clement's, must recollect the morality in metal-work over the premises of a stamp-merchant there. It represented a deadly combat between him and a figure of more stalwart proportions personifying the evil genius of the collector—the stamp-forgery. This ingenious and impressive piece of mechanism was illuminated at night, and attracted the attention, which it so well deserved. But the police inconsiderately suppressed the spectacle, merely because it blocked the traffic at a difficult point, endangered human life, and was misconstrued into an advertisement.

I am persuaded that the sole chance of securing certain old issues in a few series is the acquisition of a genuine collection, as it stands, and the sale of the *residuum*. I made an effort in this direction one day some time since at Puttick's; but the album contained a good deal that I did not want, and some forgeries; and it fetched £66.

I mention it as a flattering mark of confidence on the part of Messrs Sotheby & Co., that a very valuable album, which was to be sold in a few days, was lent by them to me for the purpose of examination at my own house. But I did not bid for it, after all.

My varied tastes necessarily brought me into relations with many individuals, to whose superior training and experience I have been indebted for much useful information and much entertaining anecdote. I have during too large a proportion of my life played the part of a loungeur and a gossip. How much I should have to deduct from my career, if I were to leave out of the reckoning the time spent in curiosity-shops! Spent, yet not wholly wasted; for I hang the fruit to ripen, and it has rendered some of my pages less dull and some of my statements less imperfect than they might have been. Instead of being dependent on book-learning, I have handled the objects, into which I proposed to inquire, and have mixed with the wise men of the West, who had grown up amid them.

At the English agency of Rollin & Feuillant of Paris I have passed, I should think, months in the aggregate. I have had opportunities of examining there antique jewellery, gems, bronzes, porcelain, medals, coins; and there I have met men, who sympathise in my predilections, and whom I have been enabled to

emulate only at a distance—Canon Greenwell, Sir John Evans, Mr Murdoch, Mr Montagu, Lord Grantley, and more. I have seen a duke enter the room, hat in hand, to sell a bronze to the firm. I have seen the *soi-disant* representative of the Gonzagas of Mantua come to arrange a small pecuniary transaction. I have passed on the stair a Turkish gentleman, who might have been mistaken for the Grand Signior, on his way down from turning something or other into currency. It was on those very boards that Ruskin knelt to examine the Cypriot antiquities of Cesnola.

The effect and success of the great Montagu sale, now nearly completed, were rather spoiled by the aim of the late owner at exhaustiveness; and the result was that numerous lots occurred, containing coins in poor state, which had been acquired for the sake of rare mint-marks. They not only fetched, as a rule, little themselves, but exercised an unfavourable influence even on other items, which happened to be in their neighbourhood. If the collection had been restricted to fine examples, the prices would have been much higher. How often and how long will it be necessary to reiterate the warning that coin-fanciers cannot fall into a more serious and costly error than the sacrifice of other considerations to technical *minutiæ*, which do not strictly concern them in the way of ownership?

Montagu was rather weak or incomplete in British and Saxon, till he bought Addington's collection *en bloc*. Mr Whelan mentioned to him one day, that he ought to strengthen himself in this direction, and he spoke of Addington. 'But,' said M. 'he would not sell, would he?' Whelan asked his leave to put the inquiry; A. agreed; and the price was £7000, on which W. took five per cent., and the vendor made him a present of £100. Montagu subsequently parted with the Scottish portion to Mr Richardson for £2000.

Canon Greenwell most powerfully and favourably impressed me. He was a churchman with the most liberal views and a scholarly archæologist. He was very intimate with Mr Whelan, and stayed with him, when in town. We had good talk over the topics, which interested us in common; but with Mr Whelan himself my intercourse, spreading over many years, has been most regular, as it has been most agreeable and instructive. He was born in the business, and has been largely employed by the British Museum and by the auctioneers as an expert. He of course attended some of the country sales, and his experience could not fail to be singular. I called on his return from Staffordshire. He had been unlucky on a visit to the same neighbourhood; all the world was there, and heavy prices ruled. Undaunted, he made a second attempt, and got an extraordinary haul of *cinque cento* bronze medals, which went for about 30s.

each. The auctioneer knew nothing about them, and Whelan drew up an *extempore* catalogue, by which they were sold—mainly to him. His principals struck me at first, I confess, as rather *laissez aller* folks; but while they do not disdain petty traffic, their profits chiefly arise from transactions, where there is a nabobish margin of £1500 or £2000. It comes to what F. S. Ellis used to say, that it is of no use to clear 100 per cent., if the amount is only eighteenpence; nor is it a great deal better to do as Mr Quaritch has ere now done, to lay out nearly £3000 on a volume, keep it a year or two, and then sell it at £25 advance.

Whelan told me a funny story of a Dutch priest, who once smuggled 600 cigars into London. He related the affair to Whelan in this way in his broken English. ‘I bring over six hundred cigar. They ask me in English at custom house, “you have any thing to declare?” I shrug the shoulder. They ask me in French same thing. I shrug the shoulder. They ask me in Jarman. I shrug the shoulder. They ask me in Hollands. I do same. Then they hold up board with writing in six language. I shrug the shoulder again. “What devil language,” they say, “do this man talk?” and I go forth on my way.’

A few family portraits and miniatures descended to me by reason of two of my foregoers having been artists; and one of the former, a likeness of Hazlitt in oils by himself, met with a curious adventure. Before the Exhibition of 1851 a sculptor borrowed it of my father on the plea that he desired to execute a bust for that great event; and we lost sight equally of him and it, till I received one day from Mr Frederick Locker a catalogue of a sale at Christie’s, where our long-lost picture formed a lot, against which Locker had placed a mark, to draw my attention. I represented the circumstances to the auctioneers, but finally bought back the property.

I once purchased a couple of Richard Wilson landscapes in the original frames, with the painter’s initials and the date 1755; and I have dabbled a little in water colours. But, on the whole, I have been only an onlooker, with an hereditary feeling for art and a consciousness of total incapacity for it.

I was at Althorp in 1868, just when Lord Spencer had acquired the portrait by Sir Joshua of Richard Burke for £100; and I happened to be in conversation with Mr Christie-Miller at St James’s Place, when some one delivered at the door as a present (I believe) an original drawing of the Right Honourable Thomas Grenville.

Without being aware that the National Portrait Gallery possessed the real

likeness of Charles Lamb by Hazlitt, which had been purchased for £105, I was led a few years since to go to Hodgson's rooms in Chancery Lane by the entry in a catalogue of what was alleged to be the Lamb painting. My father approved, subject to my opinion, of the purchase at £50 or so. I at once dismissed the notion of bidding, because I felt sure, that there was something wrong; and the late Mr Macmillan became its possessor at £60. A visit to South Kensington and an interview with the curator of the Gallery, where I beheld the fine, if rather bizarre, work itself, confirmed my judgment and my distrust.

It is notorious enough, that the picture-market is a man-trap of the most signal and treacherous character. Whatever may be true of books, manuscripts, coins, or stamps, paintings and prints are the greatest snare and pitfall of all. I have frequently gazed with private misgivings, which I might have found it difficult to explain or justify, at a portrait in a broker's shop, and as I passed and re-passed the place have speculated on the real history of the production. I know full well that the preposterous sums realised for the artist in fashion—at present it is Romney—are explainable on principles, which would make me hesitate to enter the field as a competitor under any circumstances.

At Sotheby's, many years ago, they had to put into an auction a portrait, to which a curious misadventure had occurred. It was a likeness of Charles the Second in the first instance; but an ingenious person, judging that the Martyred monarch was more negotiable than the Merry one, and unwittingly oblivious of the discordant costume, had painted in a head of Charles the First.

Brooks of Hammersmith once bought a portrait by Sir Francis Grant, P.R.A., which he could sell—not to me—at 50s. It was not long after Grant's death. The President, when some one mentioned to him the name of Hazlitt as an art critic, declared that he had never heard of him. Whose fault was that?

I was told a neat anecdote of a celebrated and prosperous adventurer in this particular field of activity, where for the right sort of things the margins of profit are far better than in books or even in china. A party came into his shop, and wished to know if he would buy a picture by so-and-so. He intimated indifference, but on second thoughts asked the price. £100. The work of art changed hands, and was laid on an easel. Client appeared. What a charming picture! Yes, just bought it. Price? £750. Work of art changes hands again. Client reappears. No wall-room; most unfortunate. Oh, no matter; cheque for the amount; picture fetched back, and reinstated on easel. Second client enters. His eye catches the object, placed at the point most likely to accomplish that effect.

He demands the figure. The actual cost; the vendor has not long left the premises with a cheque for £750; and, well, ten per cent. commission. Could anything be more moderate? Clever! A sort of commercial legerdemain.

The unsceptical acquiescence of the less experienced West-End picture dealer in the appropriation of an anonymous work of art is perhaps more particularly characteristic of the Leicester Square expert. My uncle Reynell was, I remember, passing a shop in that vicinity, and noticing a portrait suspended near the entrance, with a humble assessment in chalk, said to himself, but in the hearing of the proprietor, 'Rather like so-and-so.' The next time he passed, he observed the addition of a ticket, on which was paraded his *sotto voce* suggestion in an amplified form—'A very fine portrait of so-and-so (I forget the name which Mr Reynell mentioned) by so-and-so, price £2.' The enterprising shopkeeper had found an artist to go with a casual passer-by's speculative identification of the sitter, and had readjusted the figures accordingly.

I am unable to plead that I never went in for prints or drawings. For I looked on, an age since, at Sotheby's, and saw a lot going for 5s. The firm was not quite so proud at that time, as it has since become, and accepted sixpenny bids. I offered 5s. 6d., and was dismayed when the property fell to me; for it was a bulky portfolio, containing sketches in sepia and water-colour and other matters. There were some signed examples, however, by Stanfield, Sandby, Nasmyth, and Varley, and so I bore up against my fate. *Apropos* of sixpenny bids, I once wanted a copy of Bacon's *Sylva Sylvarum* to cut up for a literary purpose, and offered that amount to Mr Hodge, who insisted on having a shilling at one bound. I refused, and had to go round the corner, and buy another copy for double the higher figure. I tried to punish the auctioneer's pride, and punished my own folly.

I have never personally (for the best of all reasons) trodden the somewhat insidious and evidently very seductive path which leads to the conversion of a share of your estate into ancient gold and silver plate. But I have lived side by side with more than one enthusiast of this type. Diamond contracted in later days a fancy for Queen Anne silver, and grew enamoured of the rat-tailed spoon; and a second friend, whose employments took him all over the country and into provincial towns, before the great change occurred, and everything gravitated to London, has related to me a series of stories of his fortunes as an occasional collector.

In the case of the doctor, the old textbooks on Porcelain and Pottery became of

secondary account, and his little lot of early and curious volumes was consigned to an American agent for disposal in the States; but I think that I stumbled on them shortly after at an auction in Leicester Square. Chaffers on *Hall-Marks* superseded Chaffers on the less favoured topic, and Cockburn's shop in Richmond and other depôts supplied the material for gratifying the new taste. When one went to Twickenham House (now no more), one was introduced, not to a fresh dish, or cup and saucer, or ceramic knick-knack, but to a rat-tailed spoon of special merit, or a silver mug with an inedited mark. It was growing toward the close of the scene; whatever the plea might have been for the prior line, it was at any rate pursued with ardour and consistency; the owner's heart and soul were in it; it was a sort of religion with him; he believed in it, as his associates believed in him, and identified him and his name, and his home, with the subject. But the more recent foible was deficient in depth and sincerity; his set had been educated—educated by him—in a different school; and they looked wistfully and languidly at the objects, which their entertainer submitted for their criticism or approbation.

It was in truth a passing whim, an old man's infection with the prevailing epidemic for what can scarcely be of real interest or importance to private individuals except where there is hereditary association or in the shape of works of reference. Friends noted an abatement in the enthusiasm; pieces mysteriously disappeared; nearly the whole accumulation, never a very large one, melted away; and the master was not long in following.

My remaining friend was imbued with a liking for old silver rather because he was fond of seeing it about him and on his table than in connection with any systematic plan. He was not guiltless of an affection for bargains, and never, I believe, went higher than 10s. an ounce. In the old days—in the forties and fifties—some tolerable examples were procurable at that rate, especially in the provinces; but latterly he found the market too stiff for him—not for his purse, but for his views. Many a desirable lot he has missed for sixpence in the ounce. A large salver engraved with masks by Hogarth, which Lazarus the dealer offered him at 7s. 6d., he lost, because he remained immoveable at 7s., and had the satisfaction of hearing that it eventually brought about four times the money, passing from hand to hand.

My friend acted on a different principle from that, which I should have followed with ample funds at my command. I would have secured a few first-rate examples, as he did, to some extent, in china. He had bought Chelsea figures, when they were at reasonable prices, and he gave only £3, 10s. for a set of four

(out of five) beakers of the same porcelain, painted with exotic birds on a dark blue ground. Benjamin bade him £50 for them; but he quietly remarked: 'If they are worth that to you, they are worth as much to me.' This was a favourite saying of his; he would draw out the expert, and then shut him up so. He never ceased to lament the Lazarus salver.

At a sale at Christie's a young man present heard a valuable piece of plate going for 15s. (as he thought), and it struck him that it would be a nice present for a young woman of his acquaintance; and at 16s. it was his. The auctioneer's clerk forthwith solicited a deposit of £20. There was a gesture of impatience from the salesman, accompanied by a general titter, and the lot was put up again.

£10 per ounce may be regarded as a maximum figure even for fine early work; but this limit is constantly exceeded; it was the other day, when some *cinque cento* example reached £22. The Edmund Bury Godfrey tankard realised £525 in 1895, and weighed only 35 oz. 18 dwt. The Blacksmiths' Cup, once belonging to that Gild, has been more than once sold under the hammer. It was bought by Ralph Bernal about sixty years since at £1 per ounce; but on the last occasion it exceeded £10. The cup weighs 35 oz. The Irish collection of Mr Robert Day, of Cork, dispersed at two intervals, the last in 1894, eclipsed the normal standard of value, as it embraced some of the finest extant specimens of the workmanship of the silversmiths or hammerers of Cork, Youghal, and other Irish localities.

Antiquities in metal-work have their share of romance. Bargains fall to the vigilant or the experienced seeker. We have all heard of the solid silver picture frames at Beddington, the seat of the Carews, as black as ink, and bought by the Jews at the price of ordinary material; and not so long since there was a house-sale at Wimbledon, where the trade acquired among them ornamental objects of solid gold, described in the auctioneer's catalogue as silver-gilt.

There is no problem in commerce or in morality more difficult of solution than that, which is involved in the question of right on the part of persons, who in the first place make it their study, and in the second their livelihood, to outstrip and outwit the rest of the world in a particular sphere of industry, to combine together for their own profit and the defeat of what is termed legitimate competition. The contention on the other side is that these specialists are to waive their superior information for the benefit of proprietors, in whom they have no interest, and to whom they are under no obligation.

It awakened my personal attention to the cogent need of exercising the utmost

care in sending plate to the cleaner and repairer, when a tankard of the George I. period returned home to me with part of the hall-mark obliterated. The piece had at one time been in daily use, and was slightly dented; and in straightening it the maker's symbol suffered from encroachment. Sending your treasures of this class to the doctor's is as parlous as committing a book or tract in old parchment or sheep to the mercy of the uncanny bibliopegist or a piece of unblemished porcelain to the duster of a charwoman.

The marks in the works by Chaffers and Cripps are not implicitly reliable, and a *Manual* furnishing actual facsimiles of them is still a deficiency. The same criticism applies to the monograph of Chaffers on Porcelain and Pottery. I was led to look into the question of hall-marks on old silver plate by seeing a spoon of Henry VIII.'s time with the leopard's head, the animal's mouth open, and the tongue protruding. This was also a mint-mark on some of the Anglo-Gallic money and on the groats of Henry VII. with the full-faced portrait.

My volume on the Livery Companies of London laid on me, among innumerable other duties, that of making the circuit of the Companies' Halls, and of studying the admirable monograph of Mr Cripps. I had an opportunity, owing to an old friend being a past master, of reproducing the illustrations from the Clockmakers' book of the plate belonging to that Gild; and I followed the same course with one or two others in a more limited measure. When I was dining at Merchant Taylors' Hall one evening, I observed immediately in front of me at table a large silver salver, which I felt sure I had recently seen somewhere; but I only regained the clue, when I remembered that it was one of the examples engraved in my own work.



CHAPTER XII

Coins—Origin of My Feeling for Them—
Humble Commencement—Groping in the
Dark—My Scanty Means and Equally
Scanty Knowledge, but Immense
Enthusiasm and Inflexibility of Purpose—
The Maiden Acquisition Sold for
Sixteenpence—The Two Earliest Pieces of
the New Departure—To Whom I first went
—Continuity of Purchases in All Classes—
Visit to Italy (1883)—My Eyes gradually
opened—Count Papadopoli and Other
Numismatic Authorities—My Sketch of
the Coins of Venice published (1884)—
Casual Additions to the Collection and
Curious Adventures—Singular Illusions of
the Inexperienced—Anecdotes of a
Relative—Two Wild Money-Changers
Tamed—Captain Hudson—The Auction-
Thief—A Small Joke to be pardoned.

I started as a numismatist by the merest accident in 1878, at the precise juncture when, owing to the sudden death of Mr Huth, I was concluded by my well-wishers to be on the brink of ruin. My son, who was then quite a little fellow, had had a first-brass Roman coin presented to him by a gentleman, whose intentions were excellent; and shortly after a relative, who had kept by him in a bag a number of 'butcher's' pennies of George III. and a few other miscellaneous pieces, and who was profoundly anxious to throw them away, made a free gift of the whole collection to the same recipient. I was naturally led to examine our *treasure trove*, not by the light of experience of coins, of which I had absolutely not a tittle, but by that of my knowledge of collateral and analogous matters, in which several years' training had developed certain conclusions; and I soon formed a private estimate of the twofold donation unfavourable to the judgment of the late proprietors.

The youthful owner himself was not the master of any definite views on the subject. There was the bag and there its contents; and they remained for some time inviolate, while I was deliberating and instituting inquiries at intervals, myself a sheer tyro. I believe that in my strolls about the suburbs I added to the cabinet without greatly improving it. Mr Huth was no more; and the future was

not reassuring. My early acquisitions went many to the shilling. I was not more than a lesson or so ahead so far of my boy and his kind friends. Of works of reference, despite my acquaintance with books, I knew nothing. Of those, who could have put me on the right track, I was equally ignorant. I do not think that I had heard of such an institution as the Numismatic Society. It was new ground, and I stood on the edge of it contemplatively, bag in hand—the bag not even strictly my own—with a wavering sentiment and with decreased resources—resources likely to decrease yet more. One morning chance led me, as I passed, to linger at the window of Messrs Lincoln & Son in New Oxford Street; and after a pause I went in. The result was momentous in this sense, that I saw at the shop mentioned a ‘butcher’s’ penny, which bore the same relation to the inmates of the bag as an immaculate copy of a book or a faultless piece of china bears to the most indifferent specimens imaginable; and I handed half-a-crown to Lincoln for his coin, which I took home with a rather full heart. We compared notes, and I privately meditated a *coup*. A few days after, our sixteen ‘butcher’s’ pennies and sundries just realised what I had given for the cornerstone of a New Collection; and I may say that at a distance of nearly twenty years I yet keep that piece, which has become a very difficult one to procure in unexceptionable state—far more so than the twopence of the same type and date.

My son and I thus acquired an assemblage of numismatic monuments represented only by an unit. But it was not very long, before I revisited Lincoln’s, and doubled the collection at one bound by buying a half-crown of Queen Anne for eight shillings and sixpence. These two were my earliest investments, when I seriously began; but I must explain that I was not only fettered by lack of courage and the apprehension of contracted means, but by the fact of being in partnership with my son in the venture. His pocket-money and savings partly contributed to the revised and enlarged scheme; and in the earlier stages I am sure that progress was hesitating and slow. In the end, the estate of my partner was swallowed up; and whatever funds were required came from the other member of the firm.

In the case of what was a pure hobby at first and long after its original commencement, it is impossible to lay down the exact chronological lines or the order, in which certain coins or series were acquired. The English and Roman long united to monopolise my attention; my son ceased, as he grew older, to manifest an interest in the subject; and I found myself invested with a paramount discretion, held in check only by very slender means of exercising it. I may as well add here, that I deemed it best, under the circumstances, to return the

amount, which the retiring sharer in the concern had sunk in purchases; and I was thus at liberty to do as I pleased.

I am speaking of a period, which seems nearly prehistoric. It was about fifteen years since, that I took over the entire responsibility in this affair, and found myself in possession of coins of various kinds, chiefly selected at the emporium in New Oxford Street, and representing a considerable outlay. I had discerned the errors of others in collecting, but I had not failed to commit one or two myself. I conclude that it is a very usual oversight on the part of the novice to neglect to measure his ground, and lay his plan, beforehand; it was so with me; I bought rather at random coins, medals, and tokens; and even under these wide conditions I vaguely calculated that from £150 to £200 would place me in possession of a cabinet, capable of vying with most of those in existence.

It has been from no wish to exaggerate the importance of the initiative taken in 1878 under a casual impulse, that I have written down the foregoing particulars. But as I have uninterruptedly persevered from that date to the present in enlarging and improving the collection, and in communicating the fruits of my researches to the public, it appeared worth while to put on record the facts connected with the formation and development of the new taste. There have been men, who have gained a rank as numismatists far higher than any to which I can aspire or pretend, whose beginnings at least were not less humble and not less fortuitous.

When I affirm that a single season suffices to exhaust the patience or enthusiasm of many an amateur, it will supply some indication of my earnestness, when I state that at the end of three years I had barely emerged from my novitiate. I still retained my loyalty to Lincoln, but I made occasional investments elsewhere. I had abandoned the ambitious notion of comprising medals and tokens in my range, but on the other hand, through the miscellaneous nature of Lincoln's stock and his large assortment on sale of foreign coins, I conceived the possibility of admitting a few chosen specimens of the various Continental series. I resembled a ship without a compass; I had never had under my eyes any guide to this family of monuments, and I could only estimate its extent and cost from the selection put before me. How necessarily imperfect, nay fragmentary, that was, I did not learn till long afterward. The foreign section of the New Oxford Street stores constituted my Continental side in its first state, not so much as regarded condition, as variety and completeness. For somehow my furnishers began to understand my views touching character and preservation, and although I have throughout my career felt bound to change specimens from time to time, I

apprehend that the preference for fine coins set in with me unusually early, and saved me from a good deal of loss and annoyance.

Under the auspices of the same firm I extended my lines to Greek coins. Lincoln happened to have placed on view about 2000 pieces in silver, and I took all that struck me as being within my standard—I forget how few. About the same time I added to them some in gold and copper. I thenceforward, during many years, was in the habit of selecting from the series immediately in hand whatever interested me, and this is another way of saying that my possessions were growing considerable. My grand safeguard was my peremptory principle of rejecting everything, no matter how rare or otherwise valuable, which did not rise to my fastidious qualification; and the greater the choice submitted to me, the more stringent became my application of the rule. It was in pure self-defence. My pocket-money, so to speak, was extremely limited; and I thus closed the door against a deluge of rubbish or of mediocre property. I laid down for my own government the paradoxical maxim, that if a poor man buys at all, he can afford to buy only the finest things. That is to say, he should never acquire what does not represent the outlay or, if possible, a profit on it. I felt myself sinking deeper and deeper into a quicksand, and I saw no other practicable outlet in the event of realisation.

I farther satisfied myself that it was highly imprudent to engage in the purchase of Greek and Roman coins at inflated quotations, especially Greek silver and Roman second and third brass, in the face of the continual finds, which forced the prices downward, and reduced a specimen, perhaps, from £20 to £2 at a jump. There is absolutely no security for the buyer within these lines, and I make it my policy to wait, and complacently look on, while lots are adjudged to others at figures beyond my estimate. In the Greek copper and the Roman first brass in fine patinated state, one is tolerably safe. Of all the series I am fondest of the former, and indeed any early money in that metal, whether classical or continental, is my weak point, provided that it is as nearly *fleur de coin* as may be. An immaculate first brass of one of the more interesting Augusti or (better yet) *Augustæ*, with a picturesque reverse, rejoices the eye; and it is no prejudice to it, if it is rare!

I remember that it was not long, before I rebelled in my own mind against the not uncommon practice of placing the Greek and Roman money on a footing of equality, and appreciated the discernment of those, who limited their researches to the former. For it struck me that, if you take out of the reckoning the republican series, which is really Hellenic in its origin and style, and a few early

aurei and first and second brass recommendable by their personality or their interesting reverses, there is not such a great *residuum* of solid importance left behind. The mere rarities of the later period I do not count; they correspond to the Greek coinages, when the latter merge in the Asiatic types. But of the Greek of the fine and finest epochs alone there is more than enough to satisfy and impoverish half a dozen such collectors as myself, if we merely selected our favourites.

I had added to my cabinet a tolerably large number of foreign specimens, when I paid a short visit to Italy in 1883. Five years had passed since the episode of the butcher's pennies, and since the day when I made my maiden purchase of Lincoln, and he with commendable discretion extended his hand for the money, before he surrendered the coin. We have learned to understand each other a little better, and he does not object to a running account.

I did not enjoy the opportunity of making exhaustive researches; but the localities, of which I gained experience, yielded little enough for my numismatic purposes. The Italian impressed one with the notion, that he not merely laid no stress on preservation, but did not comprehend to the full extent what it signified. I have a remembrance of having recrossed the Channel with a handful of examples, which I might better have left behind me, and which I have long since renounced. Some came from Milan, where I met with a most urbane individual, whose stock was principally Milanese, and very poor Milanese, too. At Venice I ascended a very dark and mysterious staircase leading out of the Piazza, with the highly unpleasant sensation that a poniard or a trap-door might be in reserve for me, when I was ushered by my conductor into an apartment, where I was invited to sit down and inspect sundry trays of gold coins. But the light was so dim, that I could not distinguish the state, hardly the type, and I ignominiously retired, putting down two *lire*, by way of footing, for a silver *teston* of Henry IV. of France.

Otherwise there was exceedingly little of any note, so far as my observation went. I obtained a coin or two at a *depôt* on the Piazza and one or two knick-knacks at another, where there was the usual apocrypha about the total ruin of the seller by the acceptance of rather less than a moiety of the original demand. Venice is in this respect slightly Oriental. Sir Robert Hamilton gave me an entertaining account of his experiences at Constantinople, where he was asked the equivalent of a guinea for something, and at the conclusion of a protracted negotiation, crowned by a cup of coffee, the price descended to the clown's ninepence.

It was three-and-twenty years, since I had posed as the historian of the Republic, and the sparing degree, in which I had been in the meantime enabled to secure specimens of its coinage, partly prepared me for the apparent difficulty of procuring this class of money in good state. I brought away from Venice itself absolutely nothing beyond a silver *soldino* of the fourteenth century doge Giovanni Dolfino; but at Milan and Bologna I succeeded in finding a couple of early gold ducats. I did not visit the Museum, nor was I so fortunate as to find Count Nicoló Papadopoli at home.

I scarcely recollect how it happened; but I had heard of the Count as a prominent Venetian numismatist, and I threaded some of the less agreeable thoroughfares of the city, including the clothes-market, in search of his palatial residence on the Grand Canal. Both the Cavaliere his secretary and himself were absent; but I left my address, and ever since he has honoured me with his interesting and valuable publications on the theme, which he so well loves.

A jeweller in Bologna, of whom I took two or three pieces, offered me a double gold crown (*doppio di oro*) of Giovanni Bentivoglio II., the type without the portrait, for 150 *lire*. It seemed to me too dear. I was right. A year or two after, I got it in Piccadilly for less than half.

Some one referred me to Schweitzer's exhaustive work on the Coins of Venice, and, Count Papadopoli sending me periodically his numismatic labours, I was encouraged to draw up the sketch of the 'Coins of Venice,' which appeared in the *Antiquary* in 1884, as part of a scheme for reproducing my History on an improved basis.

The advance of the subject by stealthy degrees to the foreground and to a conspicuous place in my studies and employments, had its agreeable and its serious aspect. It was a pursuit, which consumed time, and while it entailed endless outlay, yielded no return. Still I had such a genuine relish for it, that I did not allow myself to be disheartened. It may give some idea of my disinterested, perhaps enviable, ardour, if I mention that I revisited Milan, at the expense of a long detour, to get a silver coin of one of the Medici, which I considered on second thoughts worth having at nine *lire*. It served me a good turn, for when a London dealer seemed disposed to shed tears on discovering that an assistant had sold me a similar piece for the same money (7s. 6d.), I exhibited my prior purchase, and he was consoled. It exemplifies the singular nicety of appreciation among the experts, that a third and fourth came to me at a subsequent date at 8s. each. With others I have not been quite so happily placed. A party bought a

scudo of Ferdinando I. de' Medici, 1587, in his cardinal's dress, in a lot at a sale, and gave it up to me as a favour for 15s., which made him a present of the residue; I was the obliged, and said not a word. He assured me that the other items were worthless, yet he did not throw them in. I bowed and withdrew. I have ever found it so.

All my successive departures in this as in other doings have depended on chance. Both at home and abroad I have often stumbled unexpectedly on the means of filling a gap, and have quite as often congratulated myself on the command of just knowledge enough to avoid mistakes and snares. Not always. For I once found myself at St Peter's, Guernsey, with nothing to do, and visited so often the only place in the town, where there was any semblance of coins, that I felt bound to pay my footing, and gave 10s. for a silver London penny of Ethelred II.—a very fine specimen, but a very common piece. I subsequently bought another of a different mint in London for 4s. I added the Guernsey acquisition to my travelling expenses, with a private determination to avoid for the future these pitfalls.

I never committed myself very seriously. At Brighton, strolling about I fell in with a Jew, who had a very fine early rupee, which on reference to his scales he estimated at eighteenpence. I bought elsewhere a greater rarity—a double rupee of the last century—for four shillings. One of the finest Anne farthings of the common Britannia type, 1714, which I have seen, was the fruit of a visit to a *depôt* in Hastings, and the demand for it was not unreasonable—twelve shillings. At a corner shop in Bournemouth, the Hebrew proprietor was from home; but his consort waited on me. 'Any old coins, madam?' 'Well, no,' she thought not—yet, stay, she would *shew* me a shekel or two—family relics, and not for sale. She retired, and presently produced them. I told her that they must be of great and peculiar interest to her and her husband, and I disappointed her, I think, by not seeming eager to possess them. She muttered something *sotto voce* about seven guineas; whether that was a figure at which she would risk Mr ——'s displeasure by parting with each or all of the heirlooms, I do not know. They were all false.

The shekel, which belongs to my collection, once had a rather startling adventure. An acquaintance, a clergyman of the Establishment and an University man, asked leave to see it. I handed it to him, and as if he had cabman's blood in his veins, he instantaneously placed it between his teeth. A significant gesture from me arrested his action. On taking his farewell he mentioned that he should shortly send one of his sons to look through my coins. I bowed, and I

subsequently declined the proposed honour in writing. How could I tell that the teeth of the offspring might not be sharper than those of his intelligent papa?

The ignorance of the average man in everything, which does not concern his immediate calling, is well-nigh inconceivable. I held in my pocket an unusually well-preserved example of a bell-metal piece of the First French Revolution, when I was calling on a friend, who by training and descent should have acquired a tincture of conversance with such matters. He paid me the compliment of begging to be permitted to see the coin, eyed it for a moment, and then threw it across the table to me.

A relative, who was distinguished by his fulness and variety of information, and who, if he sinned, did so in the direction of not under-estimating the few relics which he personally owned, used to be fond of telling me, that he possessed a complete numismatic history of the Revolution in France, and when I appeared in the first instance curious on the subject, he displayed a handful of defaced copper or bell-metal pieces which, had they been better, represented only an instalment of a very large series.

The same gentleman had similarly acquired in the vicinity of Leicester Square at prices, which struck him as favourable to the buyer, some very rare and desirable examples of Greek numismatic art, including a Syracusan medallion or dekadrachm. On being informed with suitable delicacy that his purchases were forgeries, he was almost equally balanced between a sentiment of wrath against the vulgar broker, who had swindled him and a stealthy suspicion that his informant desired to wheedle him out of really valuable possessions.

He cherished some old halfpence of the early Georges, which he found in his boyhood in a hollow tree in Kensington Gardens. So far, so good. They were not coins; it was a strictly personal association. The interest died with him.

But two of the drollest accidents, which ever happened to me, succeeded each other on the same morning. I entered a money-changer's in Coventry Street, and inquired for old coins. The bureaucrat was as short in his address as he was in his stature. 'What did I want?' 'I did not know till I saw them.' 'He had no time to waste on such matters.' I apologised for my intrusion; he looked at me, and then he pushed a bowl of money toward me. In a minute or so he joined me in a search, and we somehow entered into conversation. He found that I was literary. 'Had I ever heard of Hazlitt's *Life of Napoleon*? It was his favourite book.' I handed him ninepence, shook hands with him on the strength of his revelation,

and departed, labouring to look grave.

I had no sooner emerged from that singular experience, than I encountered another. A party in Wardour Street had a similar inquiry put to him, and he laid before me an assortment of metallic monuments, which I investigated for some time without meeting with a solitary item worth pricing. On intimating so much in a polite manner, the owner impressed me with a persuasion that he intended to spring over the counter, and seize me by the throat; but I met the crisis by demonstrating the impossibility of purchasing duplicates and of always finding *desiderata* even in the choicest stocks; and his phrensy began to abate. He seemed a decent fellow—a watchmaker by his calling; and I pulled out my watch, and invited him to examine it. It required cleaning and regulating. ‘Clean it, and regulate it, then,’ said I, ‘and I will call for it in ten days.’ We parted on the best terms.

I have certainly obtained in the by-ways here and there, at home and abroad, occasional plums. I owed to a silversmith in London my £5 piece of Victoria, 1839, with a plain edge, without the Garter, and with the original reading. It cost me £8. 5s. But I have slowly arrived at the conclusion that the orthodox merchant is the most satisfactory on the whole—the safest and the cheapest.

When I was a boy, the Kenneys introduced me to Captain Hudson, a retired East India commander, who resided in one of the best houses at Notting Hill, while that locality was sufficiently agreeable and select. Hudson stands out in my retrospective view as the donor of some very special Guava jelly, and as the proprietor of a £5 piece of Victoria—of course of 1839. He shewed it to me as a great compliment one day, and it made me look upon him as a personage of unbounded wealth. Yes; it was very good on his part to let a little lad like me take it in his hand. I often think of Captain Hudson, and wonder, whether my specimen and his are the same.

The auction-thief is only too familiar a feature in the sale-rooms, where portable objects of value are exhibited. At one establishment there is a standing notice, inviting information as to more or less recent larcenies of property, which it becomes the privilege of the auctioneer to make good at a fair assessment. Books are perhaps the commonest and safest game, as the room is more frequently, prior to the commencement of the sale, left to take care of itself. But coins have been occasionally appropriated by enthusiasts, whose impatience precluded them from waiting, till the time came. One person used, during quite a lengthened period, to select with unerring judgment from every sale in Wellington Street the

best lot, and when he was at last detected, his genuine ardour was shown by the fact, that the whole of his selections were found at his residence intact. It was really hard on the offender to place before him treasures, for which he might on demand have been prepared to sacrifice his little finger, and expect him to incur the risk of some one else carrying them off, unless he secured them beforehand. The firm dealt tenderly with him—no doubt, on this ground, and merely offered him a piece of advice, which was that he should not throw himself again in the way of temptation. The delicacy of the circumstances was appreciated by Messrs Sotheby and Co.

At one of the coin-sales in Wellington Street four successive lots were purchased by Lincoln, Rollin, and *Money*, the last a term applied, where cash is paid down at the time. Lincoln bought the second as well as the first, and in the catalogue the entry was *Do*. Some one reconstructed the sequence, and made it run:

Lincoln
Do
Roll
In
Money.

I crave pardon for this undoubted ineptitude.



CHAPTER XIII

My Principal Furnishers—Influence of Early Training on My Taste—Rejection of Inferior Examples an Invaluable Safeguard—I outgrow my First Instructors—Necessity for Emancipation from a Single Source of Supply—Mr Schulman of Amersfoort—His Influential Share in Amplifying my Numismatic Stores—My Visit to Him—The Rare *Daalder* of Louis Napoleon, King of Holland—My Adventures at Utrecht and Brussels—Flattering Confidence—In the Open Market—Schulman's Catalogues—MM. Rollin & Feuarent—Their English Representative—Courtesy and Kindness to the Writer—Occasional Purchases—The Late Mr Montagu—Discussion about an Athenian Gold *Stater*—An Atmospheric Experiment—My Manifold Obligations to Mr Whelan—Mr Cockburn of Richmond allows Me to select from His English Collection—I forestall Mr Montagu—Messrs Spink & Son—Their Prominent Rank and Cordial Espousal of My Interests and Wants—Development of My Cabinet under Their Auspices—My Agreeable Relations with Them—Their Business-like Policy, Liberality and Independence—The Prince of Naples—We give and take a Little—The Monthly *Numismatic Circular*—The Clerical Client.

My numismatic haunts and providers have not, especially of late, been numerous. I once took a small lot of a house in Rathbone Place—a silver

medaglia of Marguerite de Foix, Marchioness of Saluzzo, 1516, which came from Lyons, and a bronze piece of Ragusa in Sicily, found in the island of Sardinia, with others. But Messrs Lincoln & Son were my earliest furnishers, and they, with MM. Rollin & Feuarent of Paris, Messrs Spink & Son of London, and Mr Schulman, of Amersfoort, have mainly contributed to build up my unpretending cabinet.

The influence of Messrs Lincoln & Son in forming my taste was more or less considerable. Their stock was miscellaneous, and I perhaps incautiously suffered it to reflect itself in my collection. The firm indeed, after a while, thought that my lines were too general, for whatever series they put on view from time to time gave up its choicer elements to me; and eventually my good friends perceived that, although I was certainly not a specialist in one sense, I was in another. I took only the best; and this proved an invaluable safeguard.

For, by making a hard and fast rule, that no coin whatever shall be admissible in the presence of a defect or of imperfect condition, one shuts out the bulk of the objects submitted to notice. A thousand average lots in a dealer's hands are not apt to yield above five per cent. of eligible purchases, which are not duplicates. In a continental stock the proportion would be much lower. The gold coins do not so signally fail; it is in the inferior metals, especially the billon and copper, that the difficulty lies.

I emerged, it is fair to own, from my researches and selections at the Lincoln establishment without serious damage or trouble, considering that I entered into relations with the house as a perfect stranger, and was in my numismatic infancy. They began, as time went on, to see that I was in earnest, and would at length scarcely allow me to buy any article likely to appear on farther examination unsatisfactory; and by a few exchanges of early acquisitions, on which they were generous enough to let me lose nothing, I stood in the end better than I perhaps deserved. Mr Lincoln has told me that he started on his numismatic career by advertising on the back page of the catalogues of his father, who was a book seller, a short list of coins on sale by him at the same address.

The strength and spirit, which the father infuses into his child, the latter is now and then prone to use against the giver; and I am afraid that I have appeared ungrateful to my original source of supply—in fact, my dry-nurses—inasmuch as I outgrew by insensible degrees their power of satisfying my wants, and directed my attention elsewhere.

Messrs Lincoln & Son filled in the groundwork of my scheme, and continue to fill up gaps at intervals; but it was impossible for me to shut my eyes to the fact, that the rate of progress, which my numismatic studies were attaining, rendered a restriction to a single firm out of the question. I could never have committed to writing my Notes, imperfect as they may be, on the Coins of all countries and periods with certain exceptions, had I not left the original groove, and entered the market, prepared to avail myself of every particular, which was to be gleaned both at home and abroad, alike in the shape of information, correction, and addition.

It was through the Lincolns I became acquainted with Mr Atkins, author of the two works on Tokens and Colonial Coins, and he introduced to me the name of Schulman of Amersfoort. This was about ten years since; and the result was that Schulman thenceforward sent me periodical consignments for selection and his well-compiled catalogues. From this quarter I derived, rather contrary to the expectation which I had been led to form, a highly valuable assortment of coins at fair prices. I surmise that a considerable proportion of my correspondent's picked acquisitions has found its way to me. His parcels from season to season embraced an alarming and chronic percentage of hopeless specimens, notwithstanding my exhortations to him to be more select; and I am persuaded that this circumstance proceeded from the sender's inability, in common with all the continental dealers, to distinguish and appreciate condition, as he has often offered a proof at a slight advance on the figure asked for an ordinary and mediocre example.

Schulman has been during his career in the constant habit of falling in with a variety of continental coins, which are scarcely ever seen in England; and as a rule his tariff is moderate enough—not quite so moderate, perhaps, as it used to be, especially the fine early copper, since he discovered my partiality for it.

But I feel nevertheless that my collection owes a great deal to my Amersfoort correspondent. Our business has been necessarily conducted by letter. In 1889 I was at Utrecht, and went over to his place. I had previously called, when I was at Amsterdam, at Bom's, and there I was shown the priced catalogue of a quite recent local auction. Against a silver daalder of Louis Napoleon, King of Holland, of an excessively rare type, I observed my friend's name as the purchaser for 105 gulden, and the first object which met my eyes in Schulman's room was this very piece. I took it in my hand. 'Ah!' cried he, 'that won't suit you; I want 150 gulden for it.' I laid it down again, implying in my manner a sort of apology. I made a few purchases, and left him.

He subsequently inserted the *daalder* in a catalogue at 135 gulden. He had tried the higher sum without success. I did not take any notice, and forgot all about it, till in a parcel sent on approval this was one of the items, the price 100 gulden. Allowing the usual discount, the piece remained with me at 90. I always cherished a suspicion that it was put into the sale in the Spuistraat by Master Schulman himself, and bought in.

My good friend acquired for me at Amsterdam a $\frac{1}{4}$ *stuiver* of Batavia, 1644 which he reported to me as *beau*. When it reached my hands, I was not altogether satisfied, nor did he reassure me, when he stated that my specimen was far finer than those in the museums at the Hague and at Batavia. The $\frac{1}{4}$ is considerably rarer than the $\frac{1}{2}$. Schulman once advertised an example of the former at 10 gulden or 16s. 8d., describing it as '*de toute beauté*'; but I missed it.

I have had repeated arguments both with Schulman and Bom on the subject of a rather numerous and important class of Dutch coins, which almost habitually present themselves *fleur de coin*. I used to contend that these are re-strikes; but I have been assured over and over again that the Netherlands Government will not suffer any of the ancient dies to be employed for this purpose, and that they are jealously guarded at Utrecht. Schulman added, that he had endeavoured in vain to prevail on the authorities to allow him to take a few impressions of certain patterns of Louis Napoleon, which were never issued, and are almost unknown.

Like many of his foreign *confrères*, Schulman undertakes the compilation and conduct of sales by auction, and favours his clients with the catalogues. I have taken the line, under these somewhat delicate circumstances, of simply mentioning that if such or such a lot answers the printed description, and fetches so much or thereabout, I shall not object to it. I put no questions as to ownership; they do not concern me at all. I listen to a variety of tales about artificial sales and fictitious names; but the grand point is, that a coin is a coin, and if it is sold under unpropitious surroundings, it is likely to prove cheaper, and where it is misdescribed, it returns whence it came.

It was while I was at Utrecht, that I hunted through a huge mass of rubbish in the shape of obsolete currencies, and found at the conclusion that my bill only came to three-halfpence for a most beautiful *double liard* of Maria Theresa, struck for the Austrian Netherlands in 1749.

I had an interview at Brussels with a very pleasant fellow, who keeps, or at least kept, a curiosity-shop near Ste. Gudule. He had a few patterns and other pieces

belonging to the first French revolutionary era, which I was glad to secure, and some bracteates, for which he asked £5, and as to which my courage failed me a little. I feared that they were too dear. He wrapped them up carefully, and said, 'Take them with you, and if you do not care for them, let me have them back again.' I had to return them with my acknowledgments, which were sincere. My misgivings were correct.

Once for all, it is well to explain that any ostensibly egotistical details, which are here given, have for their motive the guidance and enlightenment of new enterers on the scene, with which the writer has during nearly twenty years been agreeably and profitably familiar. If I had not exercised discretion in my relationship with foreign houses, I might have been overwhelmed by an avalanche of worthless rubbish, the refuse of the auctions. But by keeping a watchful eye and a tight hand over myself, as it were, I have retained only a limited *residuum*, which answers my purpose best on every account. The plan affords me illustrations in the best state of all the European schools of numismatic art, ancient, mediæval, and modern, no less than medallic portraits of the most celebrated men and women of all ages; and I ask the question advisedly: What advantage accrues to a private collector from possessing every minute variety of type, every mint-mark, and every date? The idea is surely a fallacy. The Mint and other public institutions may fitly preserve them for reference and record; but for individuals they appear to be surplusage.

Schulman obliged me with a set of his catalogues, about thirty in number, issued between 1880 and the present time, and I found them fruitful in suggestions. They are not bare lists, but, where it is needful, carefully annotated; and in the unavoidable absence of some originals I have experienced from them and other similar compilations the greatest assistance. The method, which the continental houses pursue in drawing up their accounts of the property on sale by auction or otherwise, constitutes the result a work of permanent reference and authority. Such is especially the case with those specified in the Bibliography to the *Coin Collector*, 1896. They are of course secondary evidences; but where one cannot describe a coin from the coin they are admirable, and in general trustworthy, substitutes. Our English numismatic catalogues are improving, but still lack the profuse and laborious detail, which is extended on the continent even to lots of minor significance.

I was brought into contact with the English representative of the Paris firm of Rollin & Feuardenet in a perfectly accidental way. I had detected in a forthcoming sale at Sotheby's, among a heap of miscellanies in a bag, a well-preserved

double in piedfort of Henry III. of France. I pointed it out to Lincoln; but he missed it, and Mr Whelan was the acquirer. It was destined for a client, and I did not secure it; but the matter made Mr Whelan and myself acquainted, and we have been very pleasantly so ever since. His father was in the same line of business before him, and knew Edward Wigan and other men of that generation. I have already observed that the Agency in Bloomsbury is the resort of well-nigh all the most eminent hunters, not only for coins and medals, but for antiquities of every description.

It is not that I am able to speak of myself as a conspicuous figure in the circle, which frequents this spot, or as an appreciable element in the large mercantile transactions, which are conducted here and at headquarters. But I am indulgently tolerated, and now and then I find a trifle or two to my liking. Mr Whelan stands in due awe of my excruciating and almost outrageous passion for *state*, and looks upon me (with much good-nature) as a most difficult party to please and to fit. He is fully aware, how narrow my means are, and seldom tenders me, except as a compliment or for numismatic purposes, his grander *bijoux*. Yet in all my series there are some few, which I highly prize, and which came to me thence; and I may particularise a very rare British copper coin of Cunobeline, which brought £7, 17s. 6d. at the Montagu sale, but cost its former possessor £40, 10s. This fact did not appear in the catalogue.

The last time I met Mr Montagu was at Mr Whelan's. I shewed him two pieces which I happened to have just had from Schulman; one was the Campen imitation of the gold sovereign of Mary I. of England, and far scarcer than the original; and Montagu admired them both. A few weeks, and he was no more. We had met at the Numismatic Society's Rooms, where I attended a meeting as a guest; and I recollect Montagu pulling out of his pocket for my inspection a coin he had exhibited that evening to the members and others present. It was the unique *half George noble* of Henry VIII. discovered by Curt the dealer at Paris, sold by him to the Rev. Mr Shepherd for £90, and at the Shepherd sale in 1885 acquired by its late owner for £255.

The Montagu cabinet was naturally rich in pedigree coins, and had, I believe, all the English, although not all the Greek, rarities. It even possessed the five-broad piece of Charles I. by Rawlins, which fetched the extraordinary sum of £770. Spink & Son secured it at that price, and sold it to the British Museum for 10 per cent. profit. I was tempted by the Edward VI. half-crown and threepence, and by the James I. silver crown of the *Quæ Deus* type, which had been Bergne's and Bryce's, and which I preferred to the *Exurgat* one as superior in tone, while it

was nearly equal in preservation.

The five-broad piece is said to have been given by the King on the scaffold to Archbishop Juxon; it is a pattern, and apparently unique. The type resembles that of the ordinary broad, of which there are impressions in silver. I have one of unusually medalllic fabric.

I heard an odd story of a F.N.S. to whom some ignorant correspondent offered the *noble* itself—a piece of great value—and who pronounced it worth 6s. 8d.—the current rate at the time of issue, about 1528. The Forster example in 1868 fetched £17, 17s.

A rather distressing incident occurred to ‘Pedigree’ Wells of Piccadilly during his absence one day from business. He had in his window a coin advertised as ‘a three-pound piece of Charles I.’ to which the astute owner attached no price, leaving that detail to be regulated by the circumstances. A person entered the shop, and saw Mrs Wells, who was unversed in numismatic subtleties, and laying down £3, said, ‘I will take that coin in the window,’ which accordingly he did, greatly to Wells’s satisfaction, no doubt, and to the promotion of domestic harmony.

The hero of this small anecdote owed his *sobriquet* to his fertility of resource in providing his fine-art acquisitions with a genealogical tree.

We had a controversy in Bloomsbury on one occasion about a gold Athenian *stater* sent to me on approval. All gold Athenian *staters* are *ipso facto* doubtful. Whelan condemned it. Canon Greenwell, who was present, was not sure. I shewed it to Dr Head; and he supported Whelan. The coin was returned. At another time I obtained from a dealer who avouched, and still avouches, it to be absolutely genuine, a gold ἡμίεκτον of the same State; and at this Whelan equally shook his head. But I took it to be right, and retained it. The fact is, that the Athenians struck gold very sparingly, and there have been modern attempts to supply the deficiency.

One leading inducement to fabricate pieces lacking in series or of signal rarity has been the cheapness of labour and the more limited conversance with the discrepancies between originals and copies or absolutely fictitious examples, partly arising from the absence of means of communication among numismatists in various countries. These inventions or *contrefaçons* were calculated, again, for different markets. The false gold *staters* of Nicomedes II. of Bithynia, which are executed with unusual skill, and the far less clever imitations of the Athenian

gold, could only answer the purpose, where they found an English or French customer able to pay a handsome price for the means of supplying a hopeless or almost hopeless lacuna in his Greek cabinet. But those of such common coins as the tetradrachms of Athens or Alexander the Great appealed rather to still more inexperienced buyers, whom a low figure was apt to tempt; and these even occur plated or washed with silver.

Whelan once amused me and himself by submitting to atmospheric treatment a large copper coin of the Two Sicilies—a 10-grana piece of Ferdinand IV. 1815. He offered it to me, and I declined it, because the surface was unsatisfactory in my eyes. He said nothing; but about three months later he brought it to me from a window sill, where it had been taking an aërial bath of rather prolonged duration; and the effect was certainly surprising. All the repellent aspect of the superficies had vanished. I took it, and laughed, when he told me that there was only a shilling to pay for a quarter's incessant scientific manipulation.

I have been studiously frugal in my adoption of Oriental coins, because, frankly speaking, I have no faith in them as an investment. But I have retained a few early acquisitions, including a square gold *mohur* of the Emperor of Hindostan, the famous Akbar, and a *dinar* in the same metal of the good caliph, Haroun el Reschid. Whelan helped me to both these. The latter formed part of a parcel of such pieces, the property of a Parsee at Calcutta, and sold in London. The *dinars* of El Reschid were rather numerous, and were not recognised. The British Museum got several, and I got the finest. How were the public to guess that they were connected with so celebrated a personage, when the catalogue described them as of *El Reschid*?

There also remains with me a gold *dinar* of the 13th century, of the last Caliph of Bagdad. My learned friend, Mr Michael Kerny, deciphered for me many years ago the inscriptions in the older Arabic character in the inner circle on either side. They read: *Praise to God Mohammed the Apostle of God God bless him and protect the Imān there is no God but God only He has no Peer al Mustansir b—illah Prince of the Faithful by the grace of God.*

An ill-starred Swede visited England, or rather London, several years ago, and endeavoured to find a customer for a rather weighty package of old currency of the Northern Kingdoms, which he had borne with him across the sea, and after fruitless essays elsewhere he tried Whelan. The latter did not see his way, and the stranger re-embarked for his native country with his burden, so to speak, on his back. On the floor in Bloomsbury Street, however, he left two small pieces

(*schillings* of Christian IV. 1621 and 1622), which, as Whelan had no idea who he was, or what his address, he presented to me.

He gave me, too, a fine 5-*lire* piece of Napoleon I. 1808, struck at Milan. What a gain it is to be thought poor and deserving!

Many have been the good turns, many the valuable hints and items of information, and many, again, the pleasant hours, which I have spent in Bloomsbury Street. There is a huge black cat there, which is very friendly with habitual visitors; it used to make a practice of squeezing itself into Sir John Evans's bag, and remaining there, while he stayed.

At Bloomsbury Street is one of my numismatic libraries of reference, to which I have long enjoyed free access. The custodian is not only well versed in coins and other curiosities, but is a reader and a repository of much entertaining literary and theatrical anecdote. I know that I take more than I give; but Whelan now and again consults me about an old book or a continental coin, which he does not happen to have seen.

I owed to my excellent acquaintance my introduction to Lord Grantley, whom I first met under his roof and from whom I have received kind help in my work and otherwise. His lordship, however, does not quite follow the same lines as I do. He is understood to be engaged in deciphering and elucidating the Merovingian or Merwing series—one, about which we have learned a good deal of recent years, and have a good deal more, I apprehend, to discover.

I knew the late Mr Cockburn of Richmond in consequence of having met him at Dr Diamond's at Twickenham House. He was a Fellow of the Numismatic Society, and when I first became acquainted with him possessed a small cabinet. He hinted at an intention of discontinuing the pursuit, and even of realising. He next offered me the collection for £800. I had to let him understand that I had not so much money to spare; but I ascertained that he had been a buyer in bygone years, and had certain desirable items in his hands. I timidly inquired whether it would be possible to select a few *desiderata*, and Mr Cockburn agreed to that proposal. He had many coins in poor state, and many which were duplicates; and by concentrating my strength, such as it was, on the best things, I procured for about £70 nearly all that I wanted. Two Anglo-Saxon pennies which puzzled me a little, and as to which the British Museum authorities did not give me a reassuring opinion, I unfortunately missed. The residue Cockburn sold *en bloc* to Montagu, and when the latter parted with the said two pennies in a sale of

duplicates, I had the satisfaction of seeing them printed in the catalogue in capital letters! They might have come to me at £2 the couple. I thanked the British Museum, and applauded its discrimination.

It appears, by the way, to be almost going too far to say that the portrait on the later groat and on the shilling of Henry VII. is the earliest resemblance of an English king as distinguished from a conventional representation; for surely the bust on the groats of Richard III. makes a distinct movement in the same direction; and even on the money of Edward IV. there is discernible a commencing tendency to realism.

Apart from the English coins, Cockburn had purchased in the course of time about eighty Roman second brass, which he insisted on selling in the lump, although I frankly told him, that very few would suit me. I gave him £5 for them, selected a dozen or so of the finest, and let Lincoln have the remainder for £4, 7s. 6d.—his own valuation.

Cockburn did not seem to sell for profit, and I admired his independence. He professed to pass on to me at cost price. For the sovereign of Edward VI. (4th year) he had paid £5 to Lincoln; it was f.d.c.; and for an equally fine Biga farthing of Anne he charged me on the same principle 26s. Other pieces, as the half-groat of Mary I. at £8 and the pattern shilling and sixpence of the Commonwealth by Blondeau at £16, struck me as dear enough. For eight varied *cunetti* in mint-state he charged 16s. His Anglo-Saxon pennies were not unreasonable; Harthacanut at £3 was the highest; a halfpenny of Edmund of East Anglia was judged to be worth £1.

Had not Montagu swooped down on the quarry, I might have left yet less behind me in a few weeks. I was snugly nibbling at it.

The name, which deserves on some grounds the greatest prominence in these numismatic memorials—that of Spink & Son—not inappropriately crowns the list of my auxiliaries and caterers. I cannot recollect the precise circumstances, under which I first approached the firm—then in Gracechurch Street only; but I quickly discovered its enterprising spirit and friendly sentiment. It was a house, which had not at that period—about 1886—long devoted special attention to the numismatic side; and through the possession of capital it rapidly came to the front. The stock of coins of all kinds grew in a marvellously short time only too varied and abundant, and under the auspices of Spink & Son, who behaved toward me as a person in humble circumstances with the utmost generosity and

kindness, my collection developed in such a degree as to become almost serious, considering that this was another new outlet for my limited funds, and the largest of all. I had originally conceived the notion, which soon enough proved itself a chimerical one, that by investing my pocket-money to the extent of £150 or so over a course of years in these instructive relics of the past I should satisfy all reasonable requirements, and pose as the owner of a rather conspicuous cabinet. My riper conclusions pointed to £4000 as the *minimum*, under the most advantageous and careful management, for a representative gathering like mine in first-rate state, an amount equivalent with good husbandry to £10,000 under normal conditions, where folks exercise too little circumspection, or are in too great a hurry. The moral may be, that no man should mount a hobby in the dark. I have persevered, where many would have, I am sure, despaired. But I imagine that the motive for early relinquishment is not by any means the unexpected outlay so often as the distaste arising from errors of judgment and the annoying sense of imposition. The cost to myself in labour and thought has been quite equal to that in cash; but I have thus steered clear of the dangers, which beset inexperienced and desultory collectors. If you lean upon other people's knowledge, you have to buy two articles instead of one.

This thesis has no immediate bearing on Spink & Son, who never urged me to purchase anything against my judgment, and were always prepared to exchange a coin, if I altered my mind about it. They certainly put aside all pieces likely to be of interest to me, but the interest was not invariably commercial. It might be an example, which I desired to register, just as I was in the habit of doing with Early English Books; and when I had taken my note, and did not care to invest, the bargain was open to the next comer.

A signal feature and facility in transactions here I have found to be the prompt exhibition with the marked price of every purchase and all purchases within the briefest possible interval. Coins are no sooner acquired, than they are placed on view with the exception of certain specialities, which are temporarily laid aside, till one or two clients have had the opportunity of seeing them. I have long rather undeservedly been on this favoured list; and I believe that no coin, thought to be in my way, has been sold during some years past, till I have refused it. I had the unexpected good fortune to meet here with the thaler of Nicholas Schinner, Bishop of Sion, 1498, absolutely f.d.c., and the Kelch thaler of Zurich, 1526, nearly as fine. The Zurich thaler of 1512, with the three decapitated martyrs, was reported from Germany, and alleged to be in mint state; but when it arrived, I identified it with the indifferent example in the Boyne sale, and of course

rejected it accordingly. Such coins as these have a future.

I had put in my pocket, and taken home, just prior to the issue of the monthly catalogue, a gold Russian coin attributed to the reign of Ivan the Terrible, one of the numerous suitors of our Queen Elizabeth; but it was a century later. Still I might have liked it, had not a telegram from Russia arrived, and induced me to surrender the piece to some one, who evidently felt a peculiar interest in it. I was less considerate to the Prince of Naples, who is forming a private cabinet, and who ordered a rare *grosso* of the Roman republican era (13th century), which I had forestalled. It was *fleur de coin*, and I could not make up my mind to let it go, even to so exalted a personage. The most striking point is, that I had merely signified my wish to have the coin, and that Spink & Son might have sent it to the Prince, on the plea that I had not actually bought it.

I occasionally have the pleasure of making my good friends a slight return for their consideration. They had obtained at a sale for fifty shillings in a lot two examples of the very rare *mezzo scudo* struck in 1530 in the name of the Florentine Republic with the monogram of the Standard-Bearer for the year, just prior to the establishment of the Medici family in power. They shewed both to me, and permitted me to select the better for 30s. I then pointed out that at the Rossi sale in 1880 one had fetched £10, 5s., and recommended them to mark the remaining specimen £7, 10s., at which figure a foreign dealer jumped at it. At the Boyne sale in 1896 a third was carried to £8, 10s. by the same individual. The piece is remarkable as the heaviest denomination so far struck in Florence in silver.

Piccadilly, to which the Coin and Medal Department has been transferred, constitutes my second library of reference, as Spink & Son have spared no cost to bring together all the most valuable and important numismatic books and catalogues in all languages. This has formed a largely serviceable and welcome element in my connection with the firm, and has conferred on me without the slightest expense all the advantages attendant on the personal possession of the volumes. The English collector of foreign coins has, as a rule, as slight an acquaintance with these rich sources of information as I should have had in the absence of such facilities.

The monthly *Numismatic Circular* has tended in a direct and an indirect manner to draw Spink & Son into closer touch with holders and purchasers of coins everywhere; and the prospect of being able to examine, if not to acquire in all cases, an incessant volume of these interesting monuments seems to me likely to

go on improving. I shall return to the subject of the Circular in a succeeding chapter.

A characteristic injustice was perpetrated on this firm by a divine, who honoured it with an order for a certain early English silver penny, and to whom, though a stranger and in the country, the coin was sent, packed up in the customary manner, on approval. The reverend gentleman reported in due course that it arrived at his address broken in half, and declined to pay for it. There was no absolute plea of negligence in the method of enclosure; the client authorised its transmission to him; and he did not even propose to defray the cost or part of it. The dealers took him before the magistrate, and the latter decided in favour of the client on the ground that the coin was a very old one, and had lasted long enough. Verily, as there are land thieves and water thieves, there are paid magisterial owls as well as unpaid.



CHAPTER XIV

The Coin Sales—My Stealthy Accumulations from Some of Them—Comparative Advantages of Large and Small Sales—The Disappointment over One at Genoa—The Boyne Sale—Its Meagre Proportion of Fine Pieces—My Comfort, and what came to Me—Narrow Escape of the Collection from Sacrifice to a Foreign Combination—Trade Sales Abroad—A New Departure—Considerations on Poorly-Preserved Coins—I resign Them to the Learned—I have to Classify by Countries and Their Divisions—My Personal Appurtenances—Suggestions which may be Useful to Others—The Great Bactrian Discovery—Extent of Representative Collections of Ancient Money—Antony and Cleopatra—Adherence to My own Fixed and Deliberate Plan—The Argument to be used by Any One following in My Footsteps—Advice of an Old Collector to a New One.

From the very limited nature of my resources I have been forced to content myself with being a casual buyer. I have witnessed the dispersion of all the finest assemblages of coins, which have come to the hammer or into the market in the course of nearly twenty years, and have involuntarily played the part of a spectator and note-maker, where it would have delighted me to compete for the best with the best.

I have not attended auctions as a buyer either of china or of coins save in one or two instances at the outset, and I have subsequently rejected these acquisitions as indiscreet. The principal sales, which have fallen under my observation, were those of Lake Price, Shepherd, Whithall, Marsham, Rostron, Webb, Carfrae, Ashburnham, Montagu, and Bunbury, 1884-96; these were limited to the English, Greek, and Roman series; and I presume that some filtered unrecognised into my cabinet. Of the foreign collections, or those into which the continental element entered, I took more particular note and more direct cognisance. There were the Rossi, Remedi, Ingram, Leyster, Dillon, Samuel Smith, United Service Institution, Boyne, and Durazzo, between the year 1880

and the present time.

The latter group immediately or eventually contributed a really large body of additions. From the Ingram sale came the double gold *scudo* of Pope Julius II. by Francia, which I mention only, because it was, I think, my earliest heavy purchase of the kind. The Leyster affair was antecedent to the serious competition of Spink & Son for such property; and the bulk went abroad. From such purchases as Lincoln & Son effected I took anything, which passed my standard; but too many of the lots were poor, and not a few were fabrications. It was a vast collection formed by a gentleman in Ireland at a distance from any centre and without much apparent taste or discretion; and the German houses very probably did well over it.

Lord Dillon's coins yielded a few items, which I was glad to get—one or two Polish gold pieces, a Venetian 12-ducat one, and so forth; and among the silver there was a half *dick-thaler* of Sigismund, Archduke of Austria, for the Tyrol, 1484, which Mr Schulman assured me did not exist, and which I engraved in my *Coins of Europe*, 1893. I have since met with a second. It is hard to determine which is the superior market, a big sale or a small one. At the former items may be overlooked; the latter does not attract buyers so freely. To Mr Samuel Smith of Liverpool I was indebted, when he parted with his comparatively limited acquisitions, for the finest specimens which I have seen of the Bern thaler of 1494, and the Lorraine one of 1603, at a far more moderate tariff than inferior examples have brought before or since. Then in the entire sale not more than three items altogether excited any interest on my part. It was just the same when the Royal United Service Institution submitted its numismatic property to public competition. It was in the main a mass of rubbish; I picked out one or two silver pieces and a lot of about thirty *selected* copper, of the latter of which I kept less than half. The unselected copper numbered 3000 or so, and were only eligible for the melting-pot.

The Durazzo Collection, sold at Genoa, was a singular disappointment. The catalogue was rather sumptuous and very detailed. A rumour prevailed at the time that the alleged *provenance* of the collection was not strictly veracious, and that the property actually belonged to Vitalini the Italian dealer. As a numismatic amateur during almost a score of years I have experienced a good deal of this kind of personation; but I argue that it matters little whence a coin comes to one, so long as the character and state are right, with the added advantage that in passing from an inferior to possibly a better atmosphere the purchase improves in value.

There were about 6500 lots, of which the majority consisted of Roman and Greek; the remainder was continental. Many of the Italian rarities were included; and Genoa and Monaco were very strongly represented. I knew that Spink & Son had sent commissions, and I augured well for the result; but I had not indicated my views personally, and indeed the catalogue did not reach my hands, till it was too late for me to intervene. I had never before known such a series of the money of Monaco to be offered simultaneously.

When no news in any shape came to my ears, it transpired on inquiry that a few Papal coins, recently acquired by me, belonged to the collection, and that the prevailing feature of the latter was a state of preservation so utterly hopeless, that some of the company retired after the first day. The actual metallic records were there, I presume; but they did not harmonise with the estimates of the too romantic cataloguer. Even now, after the event, who ought to feel surprise, if whatever there may have been of any merit, should ultimately drift to these hospitable shores, and—?

The dispersion of the cabinet of the late William Boyne in London interested me uniquely, for it was particularly rich in the Italian series, and the incident differed from those, which had preceded it within my remembrance, inasmuch as the property was brought within reach of inspection, and one could sit at a table in Wellington Street, prior to the commencement of operations, and examine the coins, catalogue in hand. It was a ten-days' affair, and it was computed that there were 25,000 items. Still I resolved to go through with my project for seeing every lot, which I had marked, and judging whether it was a desirable acquisition.

I read between the lines of the catalogue with the aid of one or two of my numismatic acquaintances, who warned me against expecting too much; for they were familiar with my idiosyncrasies. Taking tray by tray, I actually saw far more than I contemplated; nearly the whole property passed before me in review; and I was grievously disappointed. It was an indiscriminate assemblage of coins of all sorts, evidently bought at random or *en bloc*, and poverty of condition preponderated in a lamentable measure.

There was one consolation. I was enabled to concentrate all my pecuniary forces on the few objects, which struck me as exceptional; and I succeeded in making myself master of nearly all the specialities among the Italians, which I coveted, and several *desiderata* elsewhere.

The competition was sensibly mitigated by an *entente cordiale* among a portion of the company, and the bulk returned to the continent. Had the collection been equally attractive and important to myself from a numismatic and a commercial point of view, I should have found much more than I could have possibly grasped; but the prevalent state conformed to the normal continental definition of *beau*, which in English signifies *crucible*.

There was little enough in the Boyne catalogue, which I had not learned from a careful previous study of those of all the great Italian, German, and French collections, which had been published or privately printed. But the occasion supplied me with a precious opportunity of holding in my hands coins, which, whatever might be their value or want of value as possessions, were and are in many instances of immense rarity, and seemed, when in direct contact, additionally substantial and authentic.

Four or five bidders saved the issue from being a *fiasco* in a financial sense. But the selection of London as the scene may tend to accelerate a little the recognition in Great Britain of the ancient money of the continent as at all events an appropriate chronological sequel to that of Greece and Rome, while it represents in itself a body of material of inexhaustible curiosity and value to the historian and the artist.

I purposely abstain from classing with the sales of explicit or professed private properties those, which, as season succeeds season, are dedicated by the trade everywhere to the object of converting their surplus or unrealised stock into money. One feels an almost painful delicacy in handling this part of the subject; and I propose to restrict myself to the criticism that it is possible to secure many absolute bargains at a reduced price by making an offer to the party who, for anything one knows, may be a kind of trinity in unity—owner, cataloguer, and auctioneer. Coins are speculative goods; and if a lot or so misses certain expected channels, it is sometimes a lodger with the proprietor long enough to make him tired of looking at it. Then, when he is in his most despondent vein, comes the moment for the opportunist, and there are twenty-four pence in every shilling.

The auction-rooms among ourselves and abroad, wherever there is a volume of business in coins (and in other second-hand commodities), appear to be vehicles, however, more and more for a systematic organisation, by which the dealer sells his goods under the hammer instead of over the counter. Foragers are observed collecting in one market by virtue of their special knowledge lots suitable for

disposal in this way in another or others; and they have a machinery adapted to their peculiar requirements. Their stock is always a floating one. Thousands of pounds pass through their hands in a season. There are not many in the line, for it demands some capital, some credit, and some courage. There is one house, which avers that it carries on this system for the public good—in order to diffuse a conversance with numismatic science. We have more heroes and philanthropists than we dream of, have we not?

As I mentally or otherwise glance through my at length not so very inconsiderable accumulation of ancient or obsolete currencies, I strive to think how my own experience is capable of serving those, who have the starting-point nearer within view. It seems at first sight to be regretted, that not merely such large sums of money, but so much time and labour, should be expended in perpetuity in the stereotyped process of gathering up the wrong things, gradually detecting their character, and retrieving the error by casting overboard the original lot, and beginning anew on a truer basis.

The cause of numismatic archæology of course imperatively demands the preservation of every item of every mint, no matter how degraded may be its state, or how insignificant its individuality, so long as it is of that high degree of scarcity, which entitles it to monumental regard. I may more emphatically specify, as falling within such a definition, the examples engraved and described by my correspondent, Count Nicolò Papadopoli, in his *Monete Italiane Inedite*, 1893, the major part of which come very far short of my personal ideas of works of art, but of which the affectionate custody by posterity becomes a duty on historical grounds. At the same time, as my aim has been necessarily a narrow one, and as I elected at a very early stage in my experience to figure as one of the apostles of Condition, I cheerfully resign these records to others, and am quite satisfied with engraved reproductions of them. On that precaution I lay the utmost stress.

In my first apprenticeship to numismatics I believe that I was unusually ignorant of a subject, which the works of reference introduced since my school-days have rendered so much more accessible and intelligible. But I was industrious and observant, and was not deficient in taste. I began to collect at a period of life, when I was able to discern the fallacy of the penny-box principle; my level was never very low, if it was not in the earlier years so high as it ultimately grew; and I no sooner perceived a mistake, than I hastened to rectify it. An appreciable interval elapsed, however, before I found myself in possession of a sufficient body of coins to make a distribution into countries or sections of any service.

There were so many specimens; the metals were unequally represented; and I recollect that gold resembled the plums in a school pudding.

It was a gala day, when I received my first cabinet home, and entered into a rudimentary and tentative phase of classification; and it was then, too, that not my opulence, but my excessive poverty and humility, as a collector was revealed to me. Providentially, these shocks are generally broken by some circumstance, and in my case it was my still most empirical acquirement of the full bearings and scope of my adventurous enterprise.

The cabinet stood half empty; I felt the reproach; and I proceeded not only to fill it, but to gather tenants for a second—and a third, with an overflow capable of furnishing one or two more. Such a development might have had comparatively slight significance, because a coin, which is worth a penny, may occupy a larger space than one, which is worth £10; but in a parallel ratio with the increase in number was the rise in the qualifying standard, or, in other words, I was constantly and heavily adding to my stores, and putting in rigorous force the principle of exclusion. There could be only one result.

Now, in the hope, that certain general particulars, which have cost the writer an infinite amount of trouble to collect for his own benefit and instruction during a series of years, may be acceptable and useful to others, proposing to embark in the same undertaking, I shall reduce the fruit of my own efforts to a summary, indicative of what has seemed to me, after long and deliberate consideration, to be adequate to the purposes of anyone of moderate views, who seeks to assemble together a fairly representative *corpus* of the various chronological monuments of European rulers and regions and of the successive schools of numismatic art. Completeness in any given series is by no means essential to the mastery of a competent idea of its character and merits from all ways of looking; and the study of mints and mint-marks is a mere technical detail, which owes its leading interest to its incidental illustrations of topography and of the careers of engravers—many of them otherwise distinguished.

Many persons start with the Greek or Roman, or perhaps both, from a belief that they are the most ancient and the most instructive. My first Roman coin was a most disreputable specimen of a very common first brass of Hadrian, handsomely presented to my son by a captain at a watering-place, and my first Greek a forgery of one of the numberless tetradrachms of Alexander the Great. I was in the *berceaunette* stage; but I was not quite so long in it as some are. I am indebted to Lincoln & Son for having conferred on me the rudiments (if not

something more) of my education in these two very important divisions of every cabinet of any pretensions whatever; and I may at last presume to offer myself as a counsellor of others, who may be situated as I was in my nonage.

It entirely depends on the breadth of a new collector's plan, which is usually influenced by his resources, how far he proceeds in his selection of the Greek coinage, for under any circumstances a selection it must be. No individual, no public institution, can boast of possessing a complete series in all metals. I resorted to the principle of choosing under each coin-striking region of ancient Hellas a sufficient number of pieces in electrum, gold, silver, and copper or bronze to represent a chronological succession of its products, and I also observed the rule of comprising, if possible, all such as exhibited the portraiture, or at least titles, of rulers of personal eminence. A numismatist pure and simple attaches, very justly attaches from his special point of view, emphatic weight to many examples, of which the sole attraction and value are their accidental rarity without regard to their intrinsic interest; this is not a wise policy for the private amateur, whatever his fortune may be. Such relics ought to find their resting-place in a public repository, and a full record of them should be preserved in one of the learned Transactions for general reference. How immensely one was pleased to learn that Sir Wollaston Franks had fallen in with a Bactrian dekadrachm; and the satisfaction, so far as I was concerned, was augmented by the news, that he had presented it to the British Museum. If it had been submitted as a purchase or even gift to myself, I should have declined it, as it fails to respond to my postulates. It is merely a voucher.

It is my impression, based on a long experience, that about three hundred Greek coins of all varieties and types will be found to embrace everything of real note, and will provide the possessor with numismatic specimens in all metals, of every region, of every period and style, of each denomination, and of all such great personalities as are known to have struck money, not only within the limits of European Greece, but in the countries and colonies subject to its sovereigns in their varied degrees of power and prosperity or by its cities from their first rude development to their zenith in political influence and commercial wealth. A proportion of gold is highly desirable, particularly the Athenian, Syracusan, and Egyptian; the copper must be very fine and patinated; the silver is the easiest to find, except in certain series. I succeeded in furnishing myself with the majority of typical examples alike in silver and bronze, and indeed (except under Attica) in the most precious metal. I could never meet with more than a single Athenian specimen—a ἡμίεκτον; but the most beautiful and fascinating productions are

the gold tetradrachms and octodrachms of the Ptolemies, so rich in their portraiture, costume, and design. Three or four of these gems suffice for a moderate programme. I found fifty pounds inadequate to the purchase of even three. There is a particularly charming one of Ptolemy III., and no one must forget that great, if not very good, lady, the Cleopatra of history, whose portrait appears both on her brother's and her own coins in Egypt and on those of Mark Antony in the Roman consular series. To any collector aiming at the not unreasonable object of securing her likeness it may be useful to mention, that her veiled or deified bust accompanies certain bronze pieces of moderate price and excellent quality.

The writer has attentively scrutinised the catalogues of all the sales of Greek and Roman money, which have taken place in his time, and the conclusion to be drawn from the descriptive accounts and the realised figures is so far a consolatory one for the great majority, who cannot afford to go beyond a comparatively low figure. For it becomes clearly apparent that the costliest pieces are not the most powerful in their appeal to us on historical or artistic grounds. Remember that we have to take into account these points of interest: history, with which is closely embodied religious cult, biography, topography, and art. A thoroughly well-meaning dealer exclaims, if you challenge the quotation for some indifferent specimen of a not too remarkably executed *tetradrachm* or *drachma*:—‘But look at the rarity! the last one sold for so much.’ And I am sorry to say, that this plea too frequently prevails. I have always turned a deaf ear to all attempts to induce me to acquire on any terms coins, which were not highly preserved, whatever their scarcity of occurrence might be. I preferred to examine them in other hands, or even to contemplate engravings derived from superior examples.

Let a person in my position lay down for himself this principle for his guidance:—My space is limited; my means are the same; the material or means of supply, as time goes on, is infinite and inexhaustible; no collection in the universe is complete; therefore, incompleteness being a relative expression, I will take here and there, from this sale or that, from this or that place of business, just as many coins as serve to gratify my love of the beautiful, my reverence for great names, my curiosity to hold in my hand pieces of currency which, alike in the case of Greece and Rome, united with their monetary import and use symbols of an earnest religious faith and proud records of national achievements by sea and land.

To possess an even extensive assemblage of such monuments I found in my own

experience, and others may do the same, that a man has not to be quite a Cræsus; nor in truth is it peremptory to insist in such extreme measure as I have on faultless beauty of state. I may have been too luxurious, too dainty. At any rate, all which contributes to render coins of all periods and kinds serviceable and agreeable is within the reach of individuals of very straitened purchasing powers. But it is necessary to guard against disproportion, which is very likely to arise in all sections from the occurrence of the products of *trouvailles* in tempting condition at a modest tariff.

My recommendation is to avoid even the semblance of duplicates, where the sole difference is the date or the mint-mark, or possibly a slight variation in the legend. My natural sympathy is with the poorer collector, who has perchance to exercise a little self-denial to enable him to carry out successfully and profitably his hobby; the rich have only to buy and to pay; and those, who may choose to follow in my footsteps more or less, will soon discover, as I did, that to arrive at a satisfactory result under pecuniary disadvantages is a task demanding knowledge, discretion, and patience.

Of the passions of the human mind that which directs us to a certain object or aim, if not to more than one, with irresistible vehemence, and holds us bound within its range as by a spell, is one of the strongest, most ancient, and most unreasoning. My own life during the past thirty or forty years, or in other words the best part of my career, has been mainly engrossed by the pursuit of two or three fancies; the serious business of existence seems to have been a secondary question; and the most substantial testimony to my earnestness of purpose and (I have to own) my thorough subjection to the influence of the taste, is to be found in my irresponsive surroundings and my sacrifice of other interests to what my less sentimental friends would call an *ignis fatuus*.



CHAPTER XV

Literary Direction given to My Numismatic Studies and Choice—The Wallenstein Thaler—The Good Caliph Haroun El Reschid—Some of the Twelve Peers of France who struck Money—Lorenzo de' Medici, called *The Magnificent*—Robert the Devil—Alfred the Great—Harold—The Empress Matilda—Marino Faliero—Massaniello—The Technist thinks poorly of Me—My Plea for the Human, Educating Interest in Coins—The Penny Box now and then makes a Real Collector—How I threw Myself *in Medias Res*—First Impressions of the Greek Series—My Difficulty in Apprehending Facts—Early Illusions gradually dissipated—What Constitutes a Typical Greek and Roman Cabinet—And what renders Great Collections Great—Redundance in Certain Cases defended—Official Authorities except to My Treatment of the Subject—Tom Tidler's Ground—The Technical *versus* the Vital and Substantial Interest in Coins—My Width of Sympathy Beneficial to Myself and likely to prove so to My Followers—Outline and Distribution of My Collection—Autotype Replicas and Forgeries—Romantic Evolution of Bactrian Coinage and History—Caution to My Fellow-Collectors against Excessive Prices for Greek Coins—Wait and Watch—Mr Hyman Montagu and His Roman Gold, and the Moral—The Best Coins not the Dearest—Our National Series—Its Susceptibility

to Eclectic Treatment—A Whimsical Speculation—An Untechnical Method of Looking at a Coin—A Burst Bubble—The Continental Currencies—Their Clear Superiority of Interest and Instructive Power—The Writer's Attitude toward Them.

My own sectional arrangement obeyed my doubtless peculiar training as a man of letters rather than a numismatist, and side by side with my peremptory instruction to myself as to quality I kept steadily in view the importance and charm, as it seemed to me, of comprising in my plan all those coins, which existed in the various series relating to celebrated historical personages and events. The dealers ignore this aspect of the question; they merely concern themselves with what is rare or common, dear or cheap. I negotiated a thaler of Wallenstein; the price was rather high; but I agreed to take it on account of the celebrity of the man. The vendor had never heard of him; he knew it only as an uncommon piece! You purchase a small gold coin of 'El Reschid'; the hand, which is held out to receive the money for it—not so much over the metal—is not conscious that it may have been actually through those of the striker, the hero of the *Arabian Nights*, nor forsooth does he care. No one will probably offer a shilling more for it for such a reason.

It may occur that an insignificant, ill-struck coin of base metal appertains to Milon of Narbonne, or Roland, nephew of Charlemagne and the Orlando of the poets, or to Richard of the Lion Heart; one examines its credentials, and yields it a place of honour. I obtained in a lot of Italian copper a small quattrino, as it is called, with *Lav. Medices Dux* on one side and *Pisavr* on the other: what was it but money issued in 1516—and that year alone—by Lorenzo de' Medici, called the *Magnificent*, as Duke of Pesaro? It may be equally predicated of Arthur of Bretagne, the possible prototype of the hero of Romance, Arthur of Little Britain, and of Robert of Normandy, called *Le Diable*, that their personal surpasses their numismatic distinction; for in the latter way they survive only in monuments of the poorest material, aspect, and style. Nor is it very different with the coins of Alfred the Great, of Harold, who fell at Hastings, of Henry Beauclerc, of Stephen, of the Empress Matilda, in the English series, and with such continental celebrities as the hero-Doges of Venice, Enrico Dandolo, Marino Faliero, and Francesco Foscari; or as King Robert of Sicily, Gaston de Foix, Joanna of Naples, Massaniello.

Yet, on the contrary, there are splendid medallic evidences of others both in ancient and modern times; and it appears to redeem a cabinet from the imputation of being a portrait-gallery of Illustrious Obscure, if we leaven its contents with the effigies of men and women, whose names are familiar to all fairly educated people.

This principle, then, collaterally influenced me in my selection, and made me anxious to omit no record of consequence illustrating a historical individual or incident. I aimed at approximating to a collection of medals, as far as the Coin would permit. I also affected the earliest examples of each country, bearing a note of the year of issue and of the current value; and altogether my project became quite powerfully tinctured by my prepossessions and lessons as a book-student. I looked with comparative lukewarmth at the technical side, and I apprehend that I enjoy an indifferent repute among my more learned contemporaries, who pride themselves on their familiarity with mechanical and official details. All these points are excessively important and interesting in their way; and I have entered into them a good deal in my two numismatic publications. I was disposed in my private capacity to regard the human constituents of these remains of former ages; and I promise that it will repay the trouble of investigating the illustrated works of reference, in default of possessing the objects themselves, by shewing how similar motives have swayed rulers and States from the outset in regulating the costume of their coinage, how they have habitually made it a political vehicle, and how the annals and fortunes of the country are to be read on its changing and varying face as in the pages of a volume.

It is the more to be lamented on that account, since it may not suit everybody to collect coins, that the pictorial feature in nearly all numismatic undertakings is the most imperfect and misleading and in the old-fashioned or cheap books amounts to little better than caricature. I grant that there is the proud lust of ownership; but the discs of metal are of no real relevance outside the story, which they are able to tell us, if or when we are qualified to read it. All the rest, in a high sense, is but bullion, is it not?—and the criticism emphatically applies to heterogeneous assemblages of obsolete currencies, formed without taste, and held without fruit.

This feeling, and the persuasion that the most extensive and long-established collections in the world are more or less incomplete, actuated me, so soon as I had graduated far enough to lay down regulations for my own use and to decide once for all on treating Condition as primary, and historical and personal interest

as covetable *succeedanea*, which lightened and seasoned the rest.

Most of us have heard, among the famous Greeks and Romans, of Philip and Alexander of Macedon, Darius of Persia, Pyrrhus, Cleopatra, Julius Cæsar, Mark Antony, Augustus, Nero, and the Antonines; and it is customary for school-boys to explore the recesses of the penny box in shop or on stall in quest of pieces of bronze bearing the effigies of these ancient celebrities. School-boys have done this during centuries, and many of them have done nothing more. But here and there the child is father to the man, and the proprietor of a celebrated cabinet has it in his power to range over a life-long past wealthy in profitable and pleasant recollections, and to exhibit to his friends as a curiosity the humble piece, which first seduced him.

In the present case the pursuit dated from a maturer period, and I was debarred from such a privilege. I have learned much from coins; but I came to the study with a fair tincture of preparatory knowledge, and while I entertained becoming reverence for the great names of antiquity and of the Renaissance associated with it, I was old enough to be aware how many other claims it had on our attention and regard.

I turned to the ancient Greek series, I recollect, with the vague impression that it consisted of objects, which appealed to all persons of taste—an impression, which had been experienced by thousands before me, and which is perhaps generally due to conversation with more erudite acquaintance rather than to books. Works of reference come later. They did so with me. I had overheard talk of the grandeur and charm of design, the antiquity, the familiar names and myths; and perhaps someone let me see one or two, which struck me as curious, or some engravings of the school, which preceded autotype and other allied processes.

The end of it was that I bought a few inexpensive examples of Lincoln, and afterward, when it came to the turn of the Roman money, I was attracted by the beauty and cheapness of the Family or Consular series and by the ease, with which the second and third brass were obtainable. But it demanded a longer time than I care to own to enable me to perceive the affinity between the republican silver *denarii* and the productions of the professedly Hellenic school. If I had mingled with collectors, or consulted books or experts, I should have learned far more quickly and perfectly my self-set lesson. But I have never been gregarious or clubable; and I pursued my own way with the result that I committed an abundance of mistakes, yet not half so many as I deserved from my unbending

persistence in depending on my personal researches and judgment.

This dogged opinionativeness and hard tone of mind have proved disadvantageous through life. I quitted school much more ignorant, I dare say, than I needed to have done, because it was not my cue or bent to comprehend what the teachers delivered, or to relish the methods, which they pursued; and the single point, which I brought away from my attendance at a twelve months' course of lectures on Law and Jurisprudence at the Inner Temple, was the persuasion that in a particular line of argument, in which I happened to follow the lecturer, he was wrong. I hold a very kind note from Dr Phillimore, thanking me for my correction.

One of my numismatic illusions was the uniform low rate, at which the Roman consular *denarii* and other coins of that class, as well as the imperial currencies, could be secured in course of time. I soon found that a piece had only to be rare, or in gold, or rather exquisitely patinated, to stand out in high relief, and make a serious inroad on one's resources. I have been fairly watchful and enterprising during the best part of twenty years, and my Greek and Roman collections still await several clear *desiderata*, not because those *desiderata* are scarce and expensive, but because they are typical. I possess about 400 pieces, perhaps, in all metals; five-and-twenty more would render my two series substantially representative. I shall get what I want by waiting. What I have suffices meanwhile to gratify my sense of that artistic and ideal genius, for which my elders had prepared me, so far as the Greek and Roman consular go, and my feeling for all that Rome has left behind it in grand personalities, splendid achievement, and records of thought and custom.

It cannot be fruitless or irrelevant to repeat that the magnitude of the most famous collections is chiefly owing to the presence of numberless varieties and sub-varieties of coins—even of unimportant ones. A man makes a principle of accumulating every year of the bronze money of the present reign, or farthings of every conceivable description, or maundy money. *Cui bono?* This is a course of policy which should be reserved for the public institution and the numismatic chronicler. I have a gold *stater*, perhaps of Philip of Macedon, an electrum one of Cyzicus or Lampsacus, a silver tetradrachm of Alexander the Great, and another of the Athenian Republic; I do not covet all the more or less slightly variant examples, which may exist. It is different, where the coin is remarkable in itself, and the type is distinct, as, for instance, in the contemporary and posthumous money of Alexander of Macedon, in the progressive improvement in the currency of Athens, in the specimens of Syracusan medallic art, which

shew the stages, through which it passed; and in the pieces, which have preserved to us the likeness of such celebrities as Cleopatra, Julius Cæsar, Mark Antony, and which vary in certain physiognomical details. Here there is a more or less intelligible plea for repetition or redundancy. But in avoiding the admittance of practical duplicates I flatter myself that I have avoided a troublesome and costly error, which punishes you in two ways—when you acquire and when you realise. I have sometimes speculated why it is that *I*, for one, shut up books on coins after a short consultation and turn to the things themselves—the tangible realities. There must be somehow a cross with the magpie in one's blood. The only kind of publication of a numismatic complexion, which strikes me as endurable, is that which is written on sympathetic lines, in a broadly appreciative temper and spirit. The dry calendars compiled by official experts, and the catalogues of auctions, are hard reading. They are mere lexicons or printed transfers.

Yet when I endeavoured to follow in the footsteps of one or two earlier writers, who gave wise prominence (as I thought) to the human and living interest resident in coins of all ages and countries in former times, I was reproved by the learned as too *literary* in my style, although in my larger book I afforded ample scope to the technical aspect of the question, and merely asserted my view by making it an independent section in distinct type. But the true cause of offence or disagreement was and is my presumption as a layman in trespassing on the preserves of Tom Tiddler.

It has been objected to my unusual width of range that it precludes full justice, as it is the fashion to call it, to any of the series. The reply to this, however, is obvious, and has already in fact been given. Unless a private cabinet is formed with a special eye to the official study of a group of coins or of the monetary products of a region, the object should be, not exhaustive treatment, which in the first place is impossible, but eclectic, which tends to familiarise the holder with the policy and progress of all nationalities in all parts of the globe from time to time in rendering *media* of exchange objects of interest, instruction and beauty, as well as of use.

A man emerges from the latter plan with a clearer and broader appreciation of the subject and its manifold bearings than he does, if he draws the line at a country, at a period, or at a type. It may be a just source of pride to be able to say that you are the existing repository of so many examples or varieties, of which no one else can boast the ownership; but, looking at the ultimate aim, it is not clear where the solid advantage lies.

My appurtenances in this direction embrace: 1. Greek and Roman; 2. Continental; 3. English and Scottish; 4. American; 5. Oriental. The last-named occupy a space proportionate to the narrowness of their appeal to my sympathy. The money of the ancients, more especially that of Greece, when one casts one's eyes on its portraiture, symbols, legends, fabric, and costume, I treasure as everlastingly impressive testimony to the force of soil, climate, and social and religious conditions, and as the basis of every essay of any pretensions in collecting. The difficulties and dangers are unusually great, as the disparities of estimated value are great; and the liability to error and deception are manifold. The wholesale official system at home of multiplying autotype copies of rare and valuable pieces originated in a sound idea; but has been carried too far, and forms an inducement to impose reproductions on inexperienced persons already perplexed by encountering casts and other forgeries; and then, again, the Greek and Roman series are a constant mark for the ingenious foreigner, who has busied himself, as we have all heard, ever so long since in fabricating for enthusiastic admirers of the antique the almost unfailing *lacunæ* in their cabinets. Some classes of coins are more subject to falsification than others. The Athenian gold and the Bactrian silver are very favourite game for the Gentile, the Jew, and the Mahometan alike. They forget their religious antagonism in a fraternal community of aim.

I have referred to the Bactrian coinage as having been extensively forged. But there has strangely accumulated, since those days, when the surviving number was almost computable on the fingers, a vast chronological monument, disclosing to our eyes a marvellous Oriental legend of mighty rulers and long, prosperous reigns, coins their only historians. I was favoured by the Museum authorities with an early glance at the magnificent purchase from General Cunningham of his Bactrian numismatic collection for £3000, by virtue of a special parliamentary grant; and this has at once placed our national cabinet in a most satisfactory and enviable position in this respect.

Of the money of upward of thirty kings of this region—the ancient Affghanistan—the silver is now copiously represented, but not so the gold or the copper. I tell the story of the 20-*stater* piece, in the most precious metal, of Eukratides, King of Bactria, in my *Coin-Collector*. Of the copper or bronze I have long owned a very beautiful example, probably of Heliocles; in *my* state these latter productions are peculiarly rare. Never was such a case of Time drawing Truth out of a well; and we have not reached the end of the matter yet. There will be further discoveries.

Here is a conspicuous instance of the peril attendant on giving extravagant prices for coins of supposed rarity. There are among the Bactrians silver tetradrachms and smaller denominations, which can be bought for fewer shillings than they once commanded sovereigns. My obolos of Demetrius, for example, cost 15s.; it is valued by Mionnet at £16. But you must exercise particular caution in this direction for the reason, which I have assigned. I shall be entirely satisfied, if I succeed in procuring a selection affording a competent idea of the prevailing character and costume of the whole, of which the earlier reigns are immeasurably the more desirable; a complete sequence is out of the question; even the British Museum under the most favourable conditions does not possess it—perhaps never will.

I really think that with the poorer coin-collector it is the same as with his analogue in the book market. The most beautiful and most interesting objects in the Greek and Roman coinages are well within his means of attainment, if he chooses to wait and watch, provided that he cares to do what the present deponent did, do his best to eke out his deficiency of resources with acquired knowledge and discrimination. In that case he may rise one morning the owner of an assemblage of these delightful and educating remains, and may ask himself the question, in what manner and degree it differs from those most famous and most frequently quoted in our numismatic records. He will find that what he lacks in common with all, who have not bottomless purses, are just the rare denominations or values, or types, of which he may probably possess examples substantially identical—perhaps in superior condition.

Take the Roman gold of the late Mr Hyman Montagu. That gentleman suddenly conceived it to be his mission to become master, not merely of all the really interesting coins in that metal and series; but it was peremptory that he should outdo everybody else, and be able to proclaim that he had every gold piece struck by every obscure and insignificant ruler down to the fall of the empire; and I believe that he was gratified. He could plead nothing for his project beyond its completeness; and that very feature was its weak point. Think how infinitely preferable it is to select the best; they are to be had at moderate prices; they appeal to everyone, who has a fair degree of culture; and they occupy less room. The rarities are usually of poor work and fabric as well as of princes, who reigned just long enough to stamp their names and effigies on a circular disc of gold. Mr Montagu, however, felt bound to draw a broad line of distinction between humbler aspirants and himself; and he erected this monument to his memory.

It is much the same thing with the Greek in all its varieties and ramifications, of which, no less than of the Roman, I furnish a comprehensive sketch in my *Coin-Collector*. The money of ephemeral rulers and governments, or high and unusual denominations, like the Syracusan medallion or 10-drachma piece form the trying part and aspect of an undertaking. I soon discovered that I could command even with a slender purchasing power all that was essential to enable me to comprehend the monetary story of the most remarkable, and one of the greatest, empires of the ancient world. When I turned over the pages of the Carfrae, Ashburnham, Montagu and Bunbury catalogues, it was easy to perceive how these grand collections assumed such bewildering and fatiguing proportions; and I saw to my surprise that, rather than forego a particular item, condition was often waived.

I thought that I discerned, for private connoisseurs as distinguished from great institutions like the British Museum, a radical error of judgment and policy here, and I congratulate myself on having avoided it. Condition, on which I shall have something more to say by-and-by, I could and can understand; and as I have never regretted losing a dear coin, I have never regretted letting a poor one pass. But I have seen with complacency my rich friends snatch out of my hands some things, which I should have been content to have at my estimate; and if I am patient they will fall to me another day. I take what comes, and am thankful. At one of the numerous Montagu sales a piece realised £2, 10s. I dare say that it passed through one or two hands; but it became mine at last for half-a-sovereign.

I must change the scene. I was never led away in respect to the money of the United Kingdom, not even by patriotism, so far as to find funds and accommodation for every constituent part of every series within these lines. If I were not an Englishman, I should declare unreservedly that a less interesting, more monotonous, and worse executed body of material than the coinages of England, Scotland, Ireland, and their dependencies, with certain emphatic exceptions, does not exist. It has asked all my loyalty to overcome an instinctive repugnance to the uncouth abortions struck as currency by our British, Anglo-Saxon, and many of our Anglo-Norman, progenitors. You may contemplate the entire gallery and succession in numismatic books, with autotype reproductions of these caricatures. A heavy proportion of them are barbarous and feeble imitations of Greek, Roman, and mediæval patterns. Perhaps in art and style they resemble most closely the Gaulish and Visigothic series. If we reserve one or two types of Offa of Mercia and Alfred the Great, the commonest are the best, because they were struck under the authority of sovereigns, whose power was

established. I put to myself the question at a very early stage, how many representatives was it necessary for me to assemble before me of these classes or schools of production? The answer is readable in the presence of fifty or sixty Britons, Saxons, Danes, and Normans; and I have no courage to swell their ranks. When I look at them, I can find nothing to justify the cost of their maintenance but the weak little sentiment, that these pieces of gold, silver, copper, or tin passed from hand to hand, when the part, where I am a dweller, was a dark, swampy forest, with a few squalid huts dotted here and there, and that one or two of these bits of money may have been in the pouch of Cymbeline, or Krause (*vulgo* Carausius) or Alfred. In fact, I have a silver penny of the royal Cake-Burner, which weighs two grains more than any other known; it was Colonel Murchison's; but possibly it had previously belonged to the king himself!

Seriously speaking, our native currencies acquired their value and rank only, when the French and Low Country types began to attract notice and emulation; and I should be satisfied with drawing the line at Edward III. as a commencing point and at Anne as a finishing one. The view is by no means original; I have met with several, who averted their eyes from the peculiarly humble and uncouth beginnings of the British people in this way; and the late Mr Montagu parted long before his death, on the ground of their dearth of interest, with the whole of his Hanoverian collections.

Between these extremities there is undeniably a rich field for choice. Numismatists have always, I apprehend, regarded me as a heretic, for the simple reason that I attached, in the absence of some specific ground, no importance to mint-marks or to minor differences. I have accustomed myself to take a coin in my hand, and estimate it on its merits. I am able to see what ruler or State it represents, its period, its style, its value. It may bear on its face a striking portrait of some illustrious personage—a potent sovereign, a distinguished soldier, a great lady—of whom the lineaments are nowhere else extant. It may be money of necessity, narrating to us, as fully as it can, a tragic or a noble story. It may be the first piece which was struck by a famous individual or place, or the last—perchance out of church or college plate with the original border of a dish remaining to commemorate a crisis. All these and other similar characteristics are broad and clear. But I have always been impatient of the stress laid by experts on an inverted letter in the legend, an added or omitted dot, or some such fantastic and puerile refinement.

These *minutiæ* do not constitute the primary use and significance of the coin as a

source of study and instruction. A cabinet formed on a practical principle yields the best and most lasting fruit. You have only to scan the pages of the numberless printed works of reference to become aware that in the English and Scotch series the slight variations among products of the same issue are interminable, and individuals are found to enter with avidity and at a lavish outlay into such trivialities. Not I. From the remotest period of our own history we have coined in England itself only seventy denominations in all metals; and I computed in my *Coin-Collector* that about 1530 pieces would substantially represent all the different reigns and clearly distinct types of the United Kingdom, not including the Anglo-Gallic money which is not very voluminous.

Whatever may be thought of the practice of acquiring virtual duplicates in the more ancient currencies, its extension to the Georgian and Victorian eras is absolutely unreasoning and futile. There is no plea for it on the score of art, history, or curiosity. It is only the other day, that patterns and proofs of George III. and IV., William IV. and her present Majesty were carried to prices, which would have secured in the aggregate some of the finest and costliest examples of Greek workmanship or the great rarities and *desiderata* in the English series itself—the Oxford and Petition crowns, the florin of Edward III., the triple sovereign of Edward VI., or even the half George noble of Henry VIII. But the bladder has been pricked, and the nonsensical craze has visibly subsided. It had its rise, no doubt, in competition among two or three wealthy, but poorly informed, gentlemen, who soon grew tired of a desperately expensive and foolish amusement. Naturally the artificial quotations brought to light hoarded specimens; and supply and demand changed places.

My British division follows the same system as the others. The chief part, requisite for my plan, is in hand; a small residuum has yet to come; and I must wait for it.

That side which took, and has held, my fancy more powerfully, was the Continental. What impressed me was its infinite interest, diversity, and curiosity; what recommended it was its unfamiliarity and comparative cheapness even in the choicest condition. There was a time, when the foreign dealers, and some of our own, were prepared to part with nearly all the coins in the respective metals at a tariff, which was far more consonant with my means than the tall figures ruling elsewhere through the generous rivalry of my affluent contemporaries; and a five-pound note still stands one in better stead on this ground than on the English and Scotch; but I hold a certificate of approbation in the shape of a slowly upward tendency on my own special lines, and I rejoice that my wants

grow fewer.

Between the relative merits of the British coinage and that of the European continent there is no actual standard of comparison, especially when it is borne in mind, that some of the best of our native examples were produced by foreign engravers. I confidently anticipate that in the early future the money of the various political divisions of Europe will appreciably usurp the position at present almost monopolised among ourselves by our own money or that of the ancients. I hear it objected, that the continental class is so immense and so fathomless. True, it is; but when you regard condition, that difficulty ceases to operate, for you have only to stand by, and pick the best, and you will find that about 1 in 50 is the proportion of pieces worth having. The total in the Boyne sale (1896) was estimated at 25,000; and I doubt whether there were 250 real prizes (duplicates excepted) from beginning to end.

The coins in the two superior metals laid side by side with those of Great Britain of the same period almost invariably excel ours in every respect, and there is an abundance of high denominations both in gold and silver, which the continental houses know fairly well how to appraise: grand old pieces of 5 and 10 thalers in silver and of 10, 20, 40, and 100 ducats in gold. I have generally viewed these *bijoux* from a respectful distance. But as a beginner I was forcibly struck by the magnificent copper coins of early date and careful execution, which now and then occur in irreproachable state at rates, of which no one can reasonably complain. At the price, which was commonly demanded a short while since for a pattern halfpenny of George III., you might have half a hundred of them in course of time. I have personally experienced a far larger measure of trouble in meeting with satisfactory specimens of all epochs than in the English or even Scottish sections; but it is such a much vaster field, and some countries are more difficult than others. Where expense is not a consideration, a system of correspondence with all the leading centres and occasional visits in person are to be recommended; but consignments on approval form a tolerable substitute, and are rather exciting—with a tendency, I have found, to disappointment. The happiest moments are apt to be between the receipt of the parcel and the disclosure of the contents. Yet I have to confess myself very greatly indebted to Mr Schulman of Amersfoort for his supplies. London is of very slight use; you must keep in touch with the continent; and unhappily, within the last few years, the continent has grown sensibly dearer for fine copper. The quality of indifferent stock held by the trade everywhere must be incalculable—I must have waded through a ton or so.

The Italian copper series, taking up the thread, as it were, where the Roman and Ostrogothic rulers let it fall, is customarily regarded with special tenderness and respect, and is certainly entitled to rank high, as the work, during the finest period of art, of celebrated engravers. But the other sections set before us very persuasively their claims to attention; and it was this rather perplexing competition for notice and choice, which led me—which leads me to-day—to accord admission only to the bearers of the highest testimonials. That is a very drastic method of exclusion.



CHAPTER XVI

The Question of Condition considered More at Large—How One most Forcibly Realises Its Importance and Value—Limited Survival of Ancient Coins in Fine State—Practical Tests at Home and Abroad—Lower Standard in Public Institutions and the Cause—Only Three Collectors on My Lines besides Myself—The Romance of the Shepherd Sale—Its Confirmation of My Views—Small Proportion of Genuine Amateurs in the Coin-Market—Fastidious Buyers not very Serviceable to the Trade—An Anecdote by the Way—The Eye for State more Educated in England than Abroad—American Feeling and Culture—What will Rare Old Coins bring, when the Knowledge of Them is more developed?—The Ladies stop the Way—Continental Indifference to Condition—Difficulties attendant on Ordering from Foreign Catalogues—Contrast between Them and Our Own—*D'une Beauté Excessive*—Condition a Relative Term—Its Dependence on Circumstances—Words of Counsel—Final Conclusions—Do I regret having become a Collector?—My Mistakes.

Condition, with the majority of coin-collectors, does not rule at all. A man wants a particular piece for the sake of study or of possession; and so long as the type is there, he is satisfied. That is the general religion of amateurs.

With a second section this quality becomes a merit; if the coin is a good one, so much the better, if it is not too dear. With half-a-dozen per chance in each generation, if with so many, the state is a postulate; the purchaser of the item depends on that above everything else; and the price is secondary.

I have known very few persons in my time, who seemed thoroughly to understand what a fine coin was. It is not sufficient that it is well-preserved or

even *fleur de coin*; for it may have been badly struck, or it may be damaged by a flaw or by the cleaner. It should be well struck, perfectly preserved, and unsophisticated. If there is a tone or *patina*, that should be pure and uniform.

The value and force of condition in coins are not fully recognisable, till one is fortunate enough to accumulate a body similar in style and rank. In a collection of first-rate examples each new-comer enhances the rest, and is enhanced by them, and the converse is true of the presence of inferior productions, which demoralise and deteriorate their companions. It seemed to me that this was signally demonstrated, where at Sotheby's rooms a ten-shilling piece in silver of the Oxford Declaration type, 1643, occurred among an assortment of poor material, and brought £14. It was in mint-state, and in a sale with others of similar stamp would have doubtless attracted wider attention, and commanded at all events twice the money. I exchanged it with Lincoln for an indifferent one in my possession, which had cost me five guineas, and for which he allowed me eight, so that it came to me at about ten per cent. on the auction price.

My undeviating experience is that the survival of really fine old coins, except in the Greek and Roman series, where continual finds operate to shake values, so far as all but the Roman first brass and the Greek copper are concerned, is very small. I have repeatedly put this point to a practical test. Mr Whelan once overhauled on my behalf at Paris some 3000 coins, and brought over with him *sixteen*, of which I rejected *eight*. Messrs Lincoln & Son several years since placed on view about 2000 Greek silver pieces; of course many were duplicate specimens; but I failed to discover more than about a score within my rather exacting and trying lines. At the sale of the United Service Institution in 1895 there were fully 3000 copper coins; from these thirty or so were selected as likely to suit me; and I reduced the number on a final scrutiny to half. When the Boyne cabinet of old continental money was offered for sale, the series being so peculiarly on my lines, I carefully marked the catalogue, and in due course examined the collection. There were by estimation 25,000 pieces, more or less; it was a heavy task; but my object was numismatic as well as commercial. I aimed at taking notes no less than at venturing on a few purchases; and I found the same thing. The items had been over-described as regarded condition; and I could not see more than twenty or thirty, which were likely to be of advantage to me in augmenting my small gathering without detriment to the prevailing quality. Even in the Montagu sales of Greek silver, where such high prices ruled, and of which so much was made in the papers, the proportion of first-rate pieces was inconsiderable. I went through the whole; and the apology tendered by the

exhibitor before the auction was that many of them were so rare.

This plea may hold very good for a public repository like the British Museum, which is supposed to possess an example of every existing piece of ancient currency (by the way, it by no means does); but I maintain that it is no argument for a private collector, unless it happens that he is closely studying a particular section of numismatics. Under ordinary circumstances, the coin, and for that matter the medal also, is to be treated as a work of art or as a curiosity by its owner or seeker, and it appears to be inconsistent with the nature of the case to amass a huge assemblage of numismatic monuments, which are not required for use, and which are not suitable as ornaments or *chefs d'œuvre*.

The prevailing standard in our own and in foreign public institutions is not usually high, because they have been largely indebted to gifts and legacies in days when preservation was not even so much regarded as at present. I am persuaded that a fine sense of the constituent features of a good coin has always been, and remains, a signal exception to the general rule.

I cannot remember in the course of the eighteen years, which I have dedicated in partial measure to these interesting objects of inquiry and regard, more than three instances, in which my *beau idéal* of a cabinet has been fulfilled. But I must be careful not to omit to note that I did not see the Montagu collection of English coins so largely derived from those of Mr Addington and Mr Bryce. The cases, to which I refer, were those of Mr Lake Price, Mr Shepherd and Mr Rostron, who observed the principle recommended by me, and carried out most scrupulously in my own selection. The result in all instances was that high, and even extraordinary, prices were obtained. The quality was uniform; there was *bona fides*; and the names helped. There was, of course, nothing strange or singular in the realisation of £255 for a *half George noble* of Henry VIII.; but what illustrated, as well as any example, the force of a favourable prejudice, was the advance of a shilling of Charles II. of 1673 (a common date) to £11, because it was marvellously fine, and was in that atmosphere. I procured an exact duplicate the same day for 14s. The Shepherd cabinet was remarkable for beautifully struck Anglo-Norman halfpennies and farthings in silver, some of them of the highest rarity, if not unique; and, then, Mr Montagu was in the field. Everything concurred to render the Shepherd affair a great success.

I had not waited for this notable event (it took place in 1885) to come to the conclusion, that quality was to be preferred to quantity. At an early stage in my numismatic career, I began to follow exactly the same rule at a distance—that is,

so far as my resources would allow me; and I vexed the spirit of one at least of the firms, with which I chiefly dealt, by making it the shoot for my inferior duplicates. I must in this way have weeded my trays of hundreds of pieces, which satisfied me at the outset, tolerably fastidious as I was; and I feel the relief and the benefit.

But how completely a hobby of this or any other kind, when it is pursued as a serious business, engrosses time and attention, and becomes part of one's life—perchance the greater part, I did not realise for some time after my entrance into the arena, or I should have hesitated to proceed. A sensible proportion—almost a preponderant one—of collectors resemble windfalls; they never arrive at maturity; they commit mistakes, which dishearten them, or they discover the hopeless magnitude of the scheme, and abandon it after a season or two, nay, after a single transaction, over which they chew the cud, with the result that the lot returns to the vendor at a reduced figure.

The members of the trade are fully aware, that those who are genuine amateurs, and who never swerve from their undertaking during life, may be counted on the fingers. The bookseller may have a large number of customers; but he lives by a very small one; and it is so with all dealers in luxuries and fancies.

The student of condition in coins and medals is by no means the frequenter of his premises, whom the numismatic expert most delights to see, although he may be of the private opinion, that his policy is the right one, for he is necessarily a difficult person to suit and to please; the man, who wants the coin, so long as it is authentic and legible, is the more welcome visitor. He acquires at lower quotations; yet the attendant profit to the vendor is probably more, because for mediocre property the competition is so much less severe. Of all clients in the world, those, who are content to take examples otherwise with no future before them but the crucible, are the most valuable; they deserve to be bowed in and out. The rare phenomenon, who knows more than the master of the shop, and touches nothing but what the foreigner calls *pijoux*, is a questionable god-send, for he has too keen a nose for rarities, and only carries away what is sure money and has no determinable value.

A vexatious incident happened to a leading house in this sort of way. Doubtless every dealer has had his experience of letting prizes go without being aware of it; and it is a distasteful aggravation of the annoyance to notify a great bargain to the party concerned. In a window in New Oxford Street the story goes, that a foreign silver coin was exhibited for sale, the price 15s. A gentleman of

continental origin went in, and asked to see it. 'Was that the lowest price?' 'Yes.' 'Ah! well, it was a nice coin, but rather dear. Say twelve shillings. No, fifteen it must be.' But the proposed buyer continued to look at the piece, and to lament the impossibility of securing it at so high a tariff, till the owner, impatient at the loss of his time, agreed to accept the reduction. Our friend put his purchase in his pocket, and laid down the amount and then, as he turned to leave the shop, he held up his finger, and with a pleasant smile observed, 'That co-in worth one hundred pound.'

The feelings of the victim were probably homicidal. He scarcely forgave me, I fear, for purchasing for £3, 10s. a very fine thaler of Wallenstein, 1632, of which an inferior example just afterward realised a far higher figure, but which was itself one in a lot sold under the hammer for £1, 14s. It is true that it was badly catalogued.

The English dealers have certainly a superior eye to those abroad for what I term *state*. There may not be many, who lay so great a stress on this aspect of the matter as those, whose collections realised in consequence abnormal prices, and enjoy a classical celebrity; but the mean average among us is, no doubt, higher than it is either in America or on the Continent.

The American Coin-market is in a totally different stage of development from that in Books; our transatlantic cousins have not that local and technical experience so essential in the study of numismatics; and they can scarcely be said to compete seriously so far for the rarer and more important objects. They have in the course of the last fifty years made very considerable progress, as we all know, in literary antiquities and in works of art. But the coin and medal have their turn to come. There is not, perhaps, any one living, who will witness the vast revolution in prices, when the wealthier citizens of the United States become our rivals for what is finest and scarcest in this remaining field.

One obstacle in the way of coins coming to the front is the inherent necessity for keeping them out of view; they are not so showy as pictures, china, furniture, or even books; and they demand on the part of an amateur, desirous of accomplishing equally satisfactory results, a larger amount of study and caution. The ladies frequently influence these things: they prefer ornaments, which set off their *salons* and corridors to advantage; and the numismatist meets with discouragement, unless he is unusually resolute or impassioned. Nay, it is so in the old country, where tradition looks farther back, and is more deeply rooted; and the dealer never cares to see a client enter, accompanied by his wife or

daughter. They operate as refrigerators.

On the Continent with its past infinitely remote, and with its immense area abounding with centres of culture and inquiry, the general feeling for high preservation in coins is certainly not so pronounced as among ourselves. Setting aside, as mere commercial parlance, the phrases employed by the foreign houses to denote condition, collectors themselves are comparatively insensible or indifferent to the matter. I have had frequent occasion to return with a feeling of disappointment specimens sent me on approval from abroad, and even purchased on commission, where my agent was the cataloguer, and in my judgment misdescribed the lot; and a new snare has been prepared for the unwary in the form of illustrated lists, where, if you select an item which has been engraved, the auctioneer seeks to hold you to your bargain on the plea that you have had an opportunity of seeing the coin in the plate. But the fact is that the coin and the representation of it even by some photographic process are not necessarily identical, and I should recommend any amateur giving his orders to a continental establishment to ignore the illustrations as tests or *criteria*. Several articles in a Paris sale, which appeared very fair in the letterpress account and in the *planches* accompanying it, came over to me; and I peremptorily refused to take them as being at variance with the catalogue, to which the agent stood at once in the relation of compiler and owner.

The foreign houses court English support, and although they are fully aware that their clients at a distance wholly depend on trustworthy descriptions, they habitually misrepresent the circumstances, and expect the buyer to bear the brunt of their want of care or faith.

On the other hand, the neglect to convey the full or exact truth may often arise from ignorance or absence of taste and judgment. For I have observed the relative valuation of poor, tolerable, fine, and superb examples of a particular coin in the hands of this or that dealer. An English house would be glad to get rid of the former two categories at any figure, or would melt them; the third he would expect to reimburse him for the first and second; and the *fleur de coin* or proof he would hardly know how to estimate too highly. His foreign contemporary acts very differently; he has a scale, it is true; but between the worst and the best the financial distance is surprisingly small. For a distinctly bad example he asks you a *franc*, for a finer one, two, for a really first-rate specimen, four, and for a proof, six. In the case of one of the English sources of supply, the difference would be, that for the fine piece you would have to pay ten *francs* or their equivalent and for the proof not impossibly five-and-twenty.

This corroborates my statement, inasmuch as it shews that condition does not form so influential a factor abroad in determining values, as it does at home. The ‘numismatiste et antiquaire’ complacently schedules his property as *assez beau*, *beau*, *très beau*; all these notations are practically worthless; the experienced buyer knows beforehand what he will get, if he sends for the items; and it is wise to limit oneself to such prodigies of excellence as are shadowed under the terms *f.d.c.*, *superbe*, and *d’une beauté excessive*. When you receive your parcel, you find that you have what Lincoln or Spink would offer as a fine coin. Schulman of Amersfoort had my commission in the sale of the local find a year or so since to obtain for me a gold *zecchino* of Ercole I., Duke of Ferrara, which the aforesaid averred to be ‘*d’une beauté excessive*,’ but a representative of the British Museum attended in person, and bought it over me. I afterward examined it in Great Russell Street, was very glad that I had missed it, and procured a better one in the Boyne sale for less money.

Condition is, after all, a relative term. It depends, 1. on the metal; 2. on the fabric. Gold and electrum are subject to ordinary wear and tear in common with the inferior materials used for coinage, and are more liable to clipping and sweating for the sake of the intrinsic value; but these products do not suffer corrosion; the only superficial injury which is noticeable has arisen from their deposit in certain soils, as in the sand of Egypt, where the effect is to blister or speckle the surface. The Russian platinum series appears to be sensitive to nothing but friction and use, and as it has not been an ordinary circulating medium, it occurs as a rule unworn.

As regards the lower metals, silver, copper, lead and tin, the money struck in these naturally follows the laws, to which they submit; but it also exhibits the results of imperfect preparation and alloy. The finer the silver, the less difficult it becomes to procure specimens in a satisfactory state; but scarcely any are exempt from oxidisation, which is apt in course of time to destroy the surface and the type. A peculiar tarnish, which it is not easy to remove, is found on particular coins—for example, shillings and sixpences of George III. 1816—and in metal of low standard an expectation of improvement from cleaning processes is generally illusory. The presence of chemical decomposition in copper, lead or tin pieces ought to be sufficient to deter the fastidious collector from entertaining them as purchases. Copper is heir to all sorts of ills: *verdegris*, rust, corrosion, and blisters, and where the defect has been of long duration, there is no really effectual remedy, as the recognised appliances may not succeed or, which is almost worse, may succeed only in part.

Then, secondly, the circumstances of issue, as in obsidional pieces and other money of necessity, have been so hurried and incomplete, that the discovery of a faultless specimen is impossible, and it is for the seeker to decide whether he will tolerate a flaw, which is inseparable from the acquisition, or dispense with it. I do not of course allude to the vendor's expression, 'fine for the coin,' but to certain cases, where a real difficulty exists in every series, especially where *billon* prevails in currencies.

So much depends, first, on the skill or care, with which the amalgam was originally made, and, again, on the subsequent treatment of the example in passing from hand to hand. The coating of white solution in the older pieces has almost invariably disappeared; it is something, if the type is irreproachable.

There is a perpetual confusion in the catalogues between copper and mixed metal from the failure of the plating operation; but the value is an almost sure clue. For this reason the 12-*grossi* piece or *fiorino* of Monaco, 1640, should not have been sold in the Boyne auction, 1896, as copper. But certainly the cataloguer misinterpreted the *G. xii.* on the piece into 12 grana. That august Government was not in the habit of giving four shillings for sixpence. These plated currencies are a terrible plague to the numismatist, as 99 specimens out of 100 have parted with their white coats.

Where a really valuable and important coin is concerned, it is a subject for careful deliberation, whether it is best to let it pass, to keep it as it is, or to restore it. If the foreign matter is merely a loose incrustation or *stratum*, there is no great uncertainty or danger; where the mischief is more deeply seated, the risk of failure grows fearfully. I have a silver crown of Queen Elizabeth in almost perfect state, but as black as ink; I shrink from touching it. I applied ammonia to a first brass of one of the Roman emperors, and spoiled it, although the dirt seemed to be recent and tractable. A *testone* of one of the Medici of Florence was perfectly discoloured and disfigured; the most simple of all remedies acted like an enchantment; it emerged *fleur de coin*; and whatever objection may be said to exist to these experiments, the forbearance from employing chemicals, and the natural action of the atmosphere, gradually bring back the tone and the age.

Where one is able to meet with early *billon* money, which has miraculously escaped all deteriorating agencies, it is a real pleasure to contemplate the mixture of bloom and *patina*, which time has lent to a piece. But this can hardly occur, unless the proportion of fine metal is sensible.

In the Greek and Roman series, as well as in those of more modern days, there are various forms of deception and danger, against which I have had occasion to guard. Of course no one, who is out of leading strings, buys a Roman first or second brass, which has been polished with brick-dust, a lot which had befallen an entire cabinet sold at an auction within my remembrance. But there are less obvious sources of degradation due to various causes and motives, amongst which tooling for the purpose of creating an artificial bloom or *patina*, and plugging in order to disguise a bore or piercing, are the most usual.

The strangest feature about sophistication and forgery seems to be the elaborate trouble, which it must have cost to spoil a genuine coin or to fabricate a false one, where the original in good state is not difficult to procure. This may be ascribed to perverted ingenuity; but it is literally vain to attempt to trace to their parentage these phenomena. The systematic manufacture of Roman money is more understandable, because it flourished just when that money was most eagerly sought.

After all, the perils which beset the path of the collector, lend a fillip to the pursuit. Were there not such occasional contingencies, a career would be really deficient in anecdote and excitement, just as, without its rocks, quicksands, and sharks the sea would be less adventurous and less interesting.



I have personally come, and I trust that I may have been so fortunate as to bring some of the perusers of this small book, to the threefold conclusion under all the heads which I have discussed: 1. That for all ordinary buyers for their own pleasure and instruction the Eclectic principle is the best; 2. That Condition is a primary requirement; 3. That it is thoroughly practicable for an individual of very moderate fortune by persevering study—in itself a recreation—to form an extensive and valuable assemblage of whatever description of artistic property he prefers on terms, which will secure on realisation the return of the capital with interest.

This appears to be the only aspect of the Collecting question worth considering. Wealthy men, who indulge a taste for Books, Pictures, China, Coins, or Plate, do not commonly sympathise with the poorer sort, who have to deliberate over a heavier purchase, and to wait years, perhaps, for a dearly-coveted acquisition; and I pique myself a little on having achieved under serious drawbacks a

creditable degree of success in the matter of Coins. If I had attempted the same task in other directions—almost in any other direction, I should have failed, inasmuch as books, pictures, plate, and china of an equal or parallel quality go too few to the £1000 to have suited me; and even postage stamps are in an unreachable altitude for a different reason—it is one of the enterprises, where exhaustive treatment seems to be an essential feature in the programme; while the interest is serial and concrete, rather than individual. One misses the perspective, the art, the sentiment, so omnipresent in genuine antiquities. As a sort of grown-up child's hobby-horse it might be well enough, I thought; but when it acquires its own literature and Society, and, before you can see completeness in the near distance, locks up the purchase-money of a considerable estate, that fantasy and myself take different turnings. So that the Coin, rather even than the Book—not looking, of course, at the practical side—is the most manageable species of property, for supposing outlay to be a governing principle, all the other classes of objects of art are more or less *vertu*; and certain books have of late become so through the entrance into the field of the Fortunatus type of *bibliophile*.

The diversity of paths is wonderfully great, whether the means of acquisition are abundant or scanty; and for either contingency, as regards extent, there is a plea and a defence. The man, who possesses a miniature cabinet with a few hundred samples is apt to wax tired of surveying his property, even if they are all favourites with little histories of their own; and his friends share his tendency to indifference and defection. On the contrary, when the collection is very extensive and constantly growing, the personal attachment is transferred to the newest comers. It is like the mother with her last child; and the owner of a really large assemblage of coins resembles that of a great estate, who does not see portions of it from year's end to year's end. He occupies a parallel position to the master of a grand library, and is a curator with the power of sale rather than a proprietor and *an intimate*.

My personal tastes are fairly steadfast, and I have never been enabled to soar into the regions, where some of my distinguished and opulent acquaintances, such as Captain P—— and Lord G——, disburse more in a twelvemonth than I have done in a lifetime. But I have been truer on the other hand, to the plan, with which I set out. I felt certain that I should have to exercise a great deal of self-restraint and self-denial; I turned away with a sigh from many a prize, which might have been mine; and there has been this recompense—if it is one—that I have seen those coveted objects change hands more than once in several cases,

while I pursue year after year—nay, decade after decade—my humbler programme and flight, till ultimately I may perhaps succeed, just as I am making my bow, in the part of the tortoise in the fable.

Some people are supremely happy without books, except the Family Bible, the *London Directory*, Bradshaw, and a handful of cheap printed paper in book-form, without china, without coins, without anything except tables and chairs. Do I wish I were as these? Not, as I now look at life, but perhaps, if I had, like them, been an eight-days' puppy-dog—then, well, yes. One of the Huths, with whom I was debating this point, agreed with me that tables and chairs were very excellent things, but something more was to be desired, to be cultivated, if possible. But it is as human to go to extremes, as it is to err in other ways; and some men (I know one myself) make what ought to be the secondary consideration the first. I do not mean that I sit on the floor, and eat my food with my fingers; but the little *additamenta* to a home preponderate and overflow somewhat; one must take warning in time from gentlemen, one's predecessors, who at last could barely find their tables and chairs.

Seeing that I have been up and down the market during a decently long succession of years, I am perhaps entitled to pay myself a few compliments on the singular rarity of occasions, which have found me on the losing and victimised side. Thrice have I suffered for my sins; for it was always my own fault. I handled things, which I did not understand; it is an error, against which I should urge every one to guard most strenuously. If you engage in the purchase of a strange commodity lying outside your own experience, it is marvellous in how many a way you are liable to the trumper. It is provoking to note the studious politeness, the almost brotherly interest, with which your friends will point out to you your sad mistake, when you have made it. For mysteries, to which you lack the key, *noli tangere* is the maxim. There are plenty of objects always in the market, which are fair to the eye, but bitter in the proof. How grateful I was to the enthusiast in his teens, who, when I had wasted a five-pound note on a worm-eaten xylographic block, put down a couple of guineas for it, and left me only poorer by the difference!



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