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**'THE GROVES OF ACADEMUS':**

**A Study of Hedge Schools and their Reading Books 1694-1831**

**Volume 2**

By

Antonia McManus

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND  
EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR  
OF PHILOSOPHY



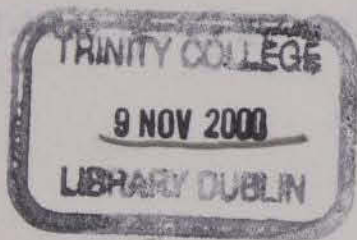
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THE GROVES OF ACADEMY

A Study of Budge classes and their history

Volume 1



Thesis  
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James McManus

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## Chapter Three

### The Individualistic Approach to Education and the Curriculum in the Hedge School

#### Introduction

The education provided in the hedge schools was unique in several respects from that on offer in the protestant parish schools, charter schools, the bible society schools or indeed the catholic parish schools of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. A hedge school education was not a well structured, orderly system with rules and regulations or a strict code of conduct or discipline. On the contrary the structure was loose, haphazard and remarkably free of rules. Visitors to hedge schools were immediately struck by the alertness of the students, their high spirits despite their poverty and above all by the happy atmosphere which prevailed.

It wasn't a regimented system, children weren't taught in a mechanical fashion with monitors following the master's instructions as they set about teaching the younger children. There was no place in a hedge school for the Bell or Lancaster monitorial method of teaching.<sup>1</sup> Irish parents expected the master to teach each child individually and they were prepared to pay fees to him to do so. Few teachers today would agree that this method of teaching is either practicable or feasible especially in a large class of students of mixed ability, spanning all age groups. Yet it is true to say that amidst the 'enlightened chaos'<sup>2</sup> which must inevitably have resulted, children were taught numeracy and literacy skills and sometimes much more than that, depending on what parents could afford. The curriculum in the hedge schools was only as broad and as liberal as the

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<sup>1</sup> First Report of the Commissioners of Education 1825 (xii). App. p. 821. Evidence of Rev. Henry Cooke, 5<sup>th</sup> January, 1825.

<sup>2</sup> D.H. Akenson. *The Irish Education Experiment*, p. 53.



talents of the master permitted. The professional abilities of the master depended on his own standard of education which ranged 'from bare literacy to inflated pedantry, to genuine scholarly achievement'<sup>3</sup>.

The hedge schoolmasters set up their schools on private speculation, and as a result they were in constant competition with one another. It was only those who could impress parents by their store of learning and by their teaching skills, who could hope to attract students, and stay in business. It was parents who decided on the curriculum to be taught, the books to be read and it was they who passed judgement on which hedge schoolmaster had achieved a level of expertise in his profession to warrant a title being conferred upon him, such as 'the Great O'Brien par excellence'.<sup>4</sup>

With so much parental involvement it was to be expected that a homely, family atmosphere would be re-created in the hedge school, therefore play was encouraged both inside and outside the classroom. Visits by local dignitaries such as the priest, the doctor, or retired hedge schoolmasters broke the monotony in a school day as they were expected to examine students in various branches of learning and to reward them appropriately. The occasional absence of the master from the classroom was another occasion for light relief as was the spelling lesson where prizes of brass pins and honorary titles could be won by the best spellers.<sup>5</sup>

Hedge schools were of necessity run along democratic lines and consequently complete liberty of reading was allowed, but what might come as a surprise to modern educators was the sheer extent of the reading material read, which included the classics of English literature, [Ch. 5] and the wide range of subjects taught which included Latin, Hebrew

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 54.

<sup>4</sup> William Carleton. *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry*. (William Curry, Jun. & Co., Dublin, 1843), Vol. I.

*'The Hedge School'*, pp. 275-276.

<sup>5</sup> William Carleton. *The Autobiography of William Carleton*. (London: MacGibbon & Kee Ltd., 3, Upper James's Street, Golden Square, 1968), p. 33.

and Greek, Astronomy and the liberal arts. In a utilitarian age the liberal hedge school education ran completely counter to the philosophy of the time and was in stark contrast to what was happening in most other schools offering an education to the poor in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

William Collins, a hedge schoolmaster from the 1790s, and Patrick Peters, a schoolmaster from the 1820s, were up to date with the most advanced pedagogical ideas of the time. Collins, who wrote a treatise on the art of teaching and the hedge schoolmasters who were involved in the system, and Peters, who wrote a treatise on the art of teaching, were both up to date with the most advanced pedagogical ideas of the time. Collins, who wrote a treatise on the art of teaching and the hedge schoolmasters who were involved in the system, and Peters, who wrote a treatise on the art of teaching, were both up to date with the most advanced pedagogical ideas of the time. Collins, who wrote a treatise on the art of teaching and the hedge schoolmasters who were involved in the system, and Peters, who wrote a treatise on the art of teaching, were both up to date with the most advanced pedagogical ideas of the time.

Footnote 1: The Hedge Schoolmasters' Association, 1820.  
Footnote 2: The Hedge Schoolmasters' Association, 1820.  
Footnote 3: The Hedge Schoolmasters' Association, 1820.  
Footnote 4: The Hedge Schoolmasters' Association, 1820.  
Footnote 5: The Hedge Schoolmasters' Association, 1820.



(i) The individualistic approach to education in the hedge school

**The Groves of Academus - what was Plato himself but a hedge schoolmaster?<sup>6</sup>**

**In the Middle Ages, there were everywhere little groups of persons clustering round some beloved teacher and thus it was that man learned not only the humanities but all the gracious and useful crafts. There were no State art Schools, no State technical Schools ... It was always the individual inspiring, guiding, fostering other individuals: never the State dispensing education like a universal provider of readymades, aiming at turning out all men and women according to regulation patterns.<sup>7</sup>**

William Carleton a hedge schoolmaster from the 19th century and Patrick Pearse a schoolmaster from the 20th century, drew an analogy between the great educator philosopher Plato (c. 427-347 B.C.) who originated the idea of a child centred education and the hedge schoolmasters who were one of the earliest and finest exponents of this progressive educational philosophy. It should be remembered that the hedge schoolmasters were continuing a tradition that had been passed down to them from early christian times from the monastic schools 'when a Kieran or an Enda or a Colmcille gathered his little group of foster-children (the old word was still used) around him'<sup>8</sup>. In the 17th and 18th centuries, Irish parents selected the hedge school of their choice, based on the master's reputation for learning, the strength of his personality and his dedication to his calling. This too was part of the Irish tradition 'Always it was the personality of the teacher that drew them there. And so it was all through Irish history. A great poet or a great scholar had his foster-children who lived at his house or fared with him through the country.'<sup>9</sup> Long after the Battle of Kinsale (1601) when Queen Elizabeth's forces defeated the Gaelic chieftains and put an end to the Gaelic way of life, and the patronage which the chieftains had provided for the Gaelic poets,<sup>10</sup> 'Munster poets had their little

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<sup>6</sup>William Carleton. *'The Hedge School'*, p. 318.

<sup>7</sup>Patrick Pearse. *The Murder Machine*. (The Mercier Press, 4, Bridge Street, Cork, 1976), p. 15.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., pp. 15-16.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>D. O'Leary and S. Noonan. *The Age of Renaissance and Reformation*. (School and College Publishing Ltd., Taney Road, Dundrum, Dublin 14, 1976), p. 115.



groups of pupils'<sup>11</sup> as many poets became teachers. It should come as little surprise then to note that 'Nearly every Irish poet of the 18th century and early 19th centuries appears to have been a schoolmaster',<sup>12</sup> Pearse was therefore correct when he stated that 'the hedge schoolmasters of the nineteenth century were the last repositories of a high tradition'<sup>13</sup>.

Many features of the child-centred education suggested by Plato and developed by Rousseau (1712-1778) and later adapted by educators such as Pestalozzi (1746-1827), Froebel (1782-1852), Dewey (1859-1952) and Dr. Maria Montessori (1870-1952) were in evidence in the hedge schools. As these were fee paying schools, the master was no doubt anxious to ensure that all his pupils were happy and contented and given the individual attention that parents expected. A wide variety of activities could be taking place in the classroom at any given time because all age groups were catered for in the hedge schools, ranging from junior level right up to university level. Brian Friel, the 20th century playwright captured the atmosphere in a hedge school very well in his play *Translations*<sup>14</sup> when he portrayed a typical classroom scene with Jimmy studying his Greek and talking aloud, Bridget practising her headlines, Maire learning her tables and Sarah receiving speech therapy from the master's son Mahon. It would appear that 'enlightened chaos'<sup>15</sup> often ensued where 'The schoolmaster, like the head of any one-room school, had to be ringmaster of myriad varieties of intellectual animals'<sup>16</sup>. Two written accounts of hedge schools also bear this out, one by William Carleton in his short story '*The Hedge School*'<sup>17</sup> and the other '*An Irish Hedge School*'<sup>18</sup>, written by a constant visitor to the hedge schools of Wexford, spanning a period of over fifty years. Both writers provide a pleasing account of this haphazard but creative approach to classroom

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<sup>11</sup>Patrick Pearse. *The Murder Machine*, p. 16.

<sup>12</sup>P.J. Dowling. *The Hedge Schools of Ireland*, p. 118.

<sup>13</sup>op. cit.,

<sup>14</sup>Brian Friel. *Translations*. (Faber & Faber Ltd., 1981), p. 11.

<sup>15</sup>D.H. Akenson. *The Irish Education Experiment*, p. 53.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>17</sup>William Carleton. *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry*. (William Curry, Jun., & Co. Dublin, 1843), Vol. I.

\_\_\_\_\_ '*The Hedge School*.' pp. 271-324.

<sup>18</sup>Dublin University Magazine. '*An Irish Hedge School*', November, 1862, pp. 600-616.



management where a happy, industrious climate prevailed. Foreign visitors, like the German writer J.G. Kohl, were impressed by what they saw in the hedge schools. Eventhough there was awful poverty in evidence, Kohl noticed that the children looked very cheerful, smart and bright-eyed in appearance as they poured over their studies. He remarked 'when their poverty, their food, their clothing are considered, this may appear surprising, but it is the case with all Irish children and especially those in the open country'<sup>19</sup>. John Howard, the philanthropist, found the children in the hedge schools 'much forwarder than those of the same age in the charter schools'.<sup>20</sup>

In general, discipline wasn't too severe in the hedge schools. Carleton believed that 'a master should be a monarch in his school, but by no means a tyrant'<sup>21</sup>. He had many progressive ideas on education as he advised teachers not to send children 'in quest of knowledge alone, but let him have cheerful companionship on his way'<sup>22</sup>. He recommended greater freedom for children to behave like children, and he warned teachers that they should never treat children like adults:

**We shall never forget that they are children: nor should we bind them by a system whose standard is taken from the maturity of human intellect. We may bend our reason to theirs, but we cannot elaborate their capacity to our own.**<sup>23</sup>

Carleton expressed his contempt for the monitorial system which was used by rival educational societies. He considered it to be a crude, mechanical system of educating children and he condemned it in the strongest terms:

**Bell or Lancaster would not relish the pap or caudle-cup three times a day; neither would an infant on the breast feel comfortable after a gorge of ox beef.**

He advised them to 'put a little of the mother's milk of human kindness and consideration into their strait-laced systems'<sup>24</sup>. Irish parents had an aversion to this system also,

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<sup>19</sup>J.G. Kohl. *Travels in Ireland*. (London: Bruce and Wyld, 84, Farringdon Street, 1844), p. 125.

<sup>20</sup>P.J. Dowling. *The Hedge Schools of Ireland*, pp. 36-37.

<sup>21</sup>William Carleton. *The Hedge School*, p. 307.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>William Carleton. *The Hedge School*, p. 308.



according to the evidence given by the presbyterian Moderator, Rev. Henry Cooke, on the 5<sup>th</sup> January, 1825, before the commissioners of education for that year. He informed them that

**the people look at them there with great prejudice; they think they are useless; they think that the master must teach the children himself, and that his inspecting the monitors is not teaching the children; and the prejudice is so strong as almost to render them inefficient.**<sup>25</sup>

Ironically, it was the alleged mechanical methods of instruction employed in the hedge schools which were to elicit the sharpest censure of contemporary writers. In 1810, the protestant clergyman Rev. Horatio Townsend denounced the mode of instruction called 'rehearsing', or oral repetition, whereby 'all the boys gabble their lessons together, as loud and as fast as they can speak'<sup>26</sup>. William Shaw Mason reported on the prevalence of rehearsing in the schools of Kilmanaheen, Co. Clare 'these are all called public schools, and are on an old established plan, reading aloud or humming together'<sup>27</sup>. Townsend considered that the masters seemed to rate levels of progress by 'the scale of vociferation'<sup>28</sup> as they enforced a greater crescendo in volume, on seeing anyone approaching the school. In Carleton's short story 'The Hedge School', Mat instructed his pupils to rehearse, in order to impress the passer-by:

**Silence, back from the door, boys, rehearse: everyone of you, rehearse, I say ... till the gentleman goes past.**<sup>29</sup>

This process had little to do with teaching method. It was merely showmanship, a form of advertising, to display the spirit of industry that prevailed within their schools. It had the added merit of training students' memories which helped to compensate for the lack of printed material at this time, especially in the Irish language.

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<sup>25</sup> *First Report of the Commissioners of Education 1825 (XII), App., p. 821.* Evidence of the Rev. Henry Cooke, 5th January, 1825.

<sup>26</sup> Rev. Horatio Townsend. *General & Statistical Survey of the County of Cork.* (Cork: Edwards & Savage, Castle St., 1815), p. 97.

<sup>27</sup> William Shaw Mason. *A Statistical Account or Parochial Survey of Ireland.* Vol. I. (Dublin, Hibernia Press Office, 16, Lr. Ormond Quay, 1816), p. 495.

<sup>28</sup> *op. cit.*

<sup>29</sup> William Carleton. 'The Hedge School', p. 279.



Play was allowed in the classroom while the master was busily engaged with another group of students, a practice Plato and much later Froebel would certainly have approved of:

**the younger children ... amuse themselves in corners with straws, or pebbles, or slate and cutter games of 'Fox and Geese' and 'Walls of Troy'**<sup>30</sup>

and 'games of marbles'<sup>31</sup> were sometimes played. Their lunch break lasted for an hour, the time being ascertained by 'a peep at the sundial in the yard, or the shadow of a certain tree, or an angle of the chapel' all of which 'announced to the master the welcome presence of noon'<sup>32</sup>, during which the children of Rathnure hedge school in the year 1811, played a variety of games. The girls played Jack-stones (five in number) which was a juggling game with stones. Boys were included in a game called High Gates or Thread the Needle, which necessitated 'catching hands in a circle, and one chasing another in and out under the linked arms of the players'. The boys played Heck-a-beds, which was commonly known as Scotch-hop in Dublin, as well as Pillar the Hat and Hunt the Fox.<sup>33</sup>

Eventhough senior students of nineteen to twenty-four years of age attended the same school as young children, the Wexford writer noted with gratification that 'their treatment of the younger folk was most considerate and good natured. They played all sorts of pranks on each other, but a quarrel among them was unknown'.<sup>34</sup> Dr. Maria Montessori favoured the age mix in classrooms and would have been very edified by what took place in the hedge schools. No doubt children did learn much from observing the older students at work and from listening to the master instructing them. The social interaction between them would have pleased Dewey who believed in education for socialisation. Pestalozzi wished to re-create the happy loving atmosphere of a home in the classroom and this was precisely what the hedge schools achieved with their homely atmosphere as each day was punctuated by visitors calling to the master. Carleton mentioned many

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<sup>30</sup>Dublin University Magazine, Nov. 1862, p. 610.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 607.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 607-608.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 613.



callers from the local priest to Mrs. Doran, who wanted Mat to write a letter for her, to the neighbouring gentry and travelling schoolmasters. In Wexford the schools had visits from prospective pupils, parents and a colourful local character by the name of Dr. Kelly, who assumed a medical title, being in possession of a cure for ordinary maladies, as he was the seventh son of a seventh son. He set a series of mathematical mind teasers for the students, after which he extended a generous invitation to them to visit his orchard.

**Now, master, I must make some amends to these brave boys and girls for keeping them idle so long; so I'll expect to see every son and daughter of them at the orchard gate next Saturday, at one o'clock, to see if they like the taste of the apples this year.<sup>35</sup>**

The actual daily routine in the hedge school classroom was well documented by the Wexford visitor in particular and to a lesser extent by Carleton. The first chore the master undertook each morning, after 'hearing the tasks' was to make or mend the pens for the students in the writing class. Very few of them could afford Cumberland lead-pencils, so the master improvised with 'the end of a broken lead spoon, or a piece of the metal run in the shape of an ordinary pencil, being the equivalent'. Bits of soft slates, found anywhere, did duty as pencils. Another favoured writing implement was a quill pen 'many of the quills having been extracted from gander or goose's wing that very morning'<sup>36</sup>. The paper used was ordinary pott in the native length, unruled and stitched in a brown paper cover.<sup>37</sup> The ink was home produced also, being made from the root of the bramble or sorrel.<sup>38</sup> The writing class commenced as the master 'set the headlines, the pupils surrounding him in a ring, and each bearing away his own book with a 'Thankee, Sir', as soon as the headline was completed'<sup>39</sup>. Copying headlines was the common practice in hedge schools according to Edmund Grace<sup>40</sup>, a Christian Brother from a hedge school in Callan, Co. Kilkenny, a contemporary of Edmund Ignatius Rice, who verified that 'Writing meant

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 606.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 605.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>P.J. Dowling. *A History of Irish Education*, p. 91.

<sup>39</sup>Dublin University Magazine, Nov., 1862, p. 603.

<sup>40</sup>Daire Keogh. *Edmund Rice*, p. 126.

copying headlines set by our teacher<sup>41</sup>. We have the complimentary words of an anonymous contemporary commentator to prove that handwriting was well taught as he commented on the high standard of writing among the Irish poor.<sup>42</sup>

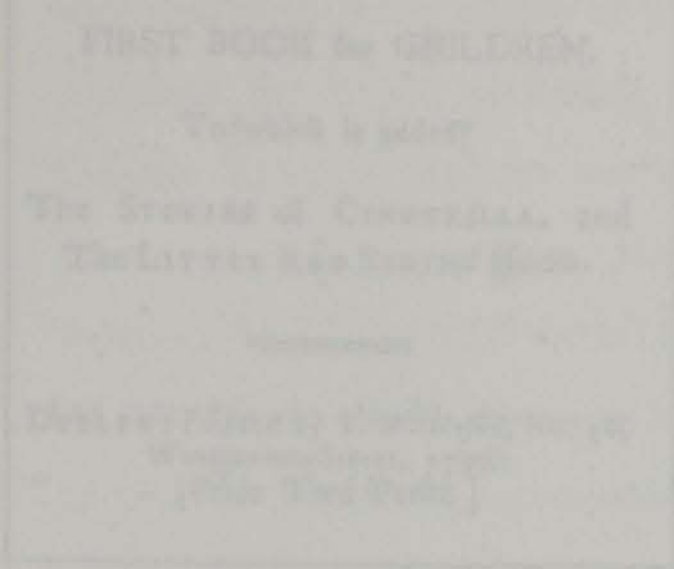


Fig. 21

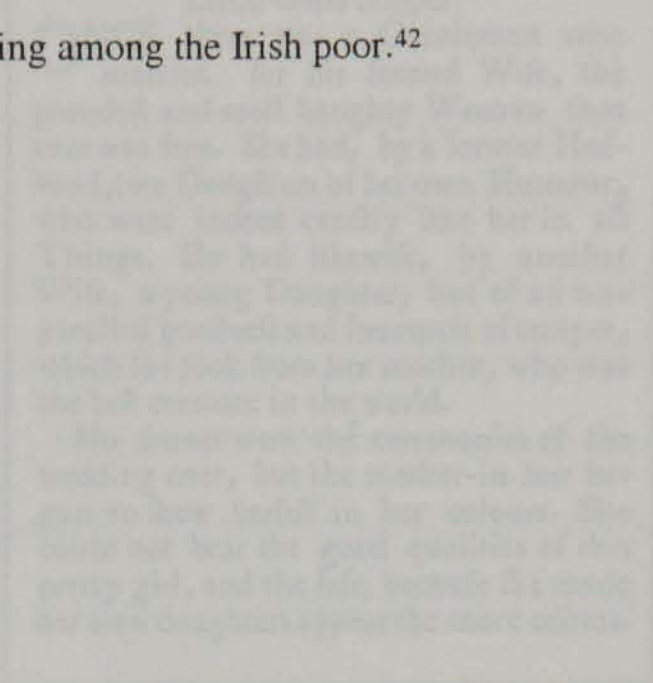


Fig. 22

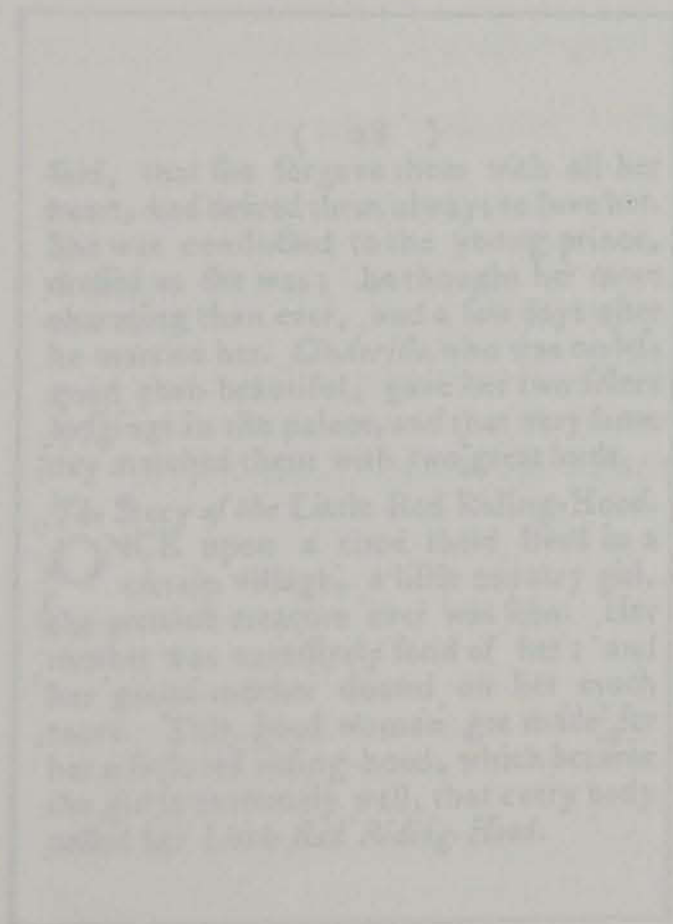


Fig. 23

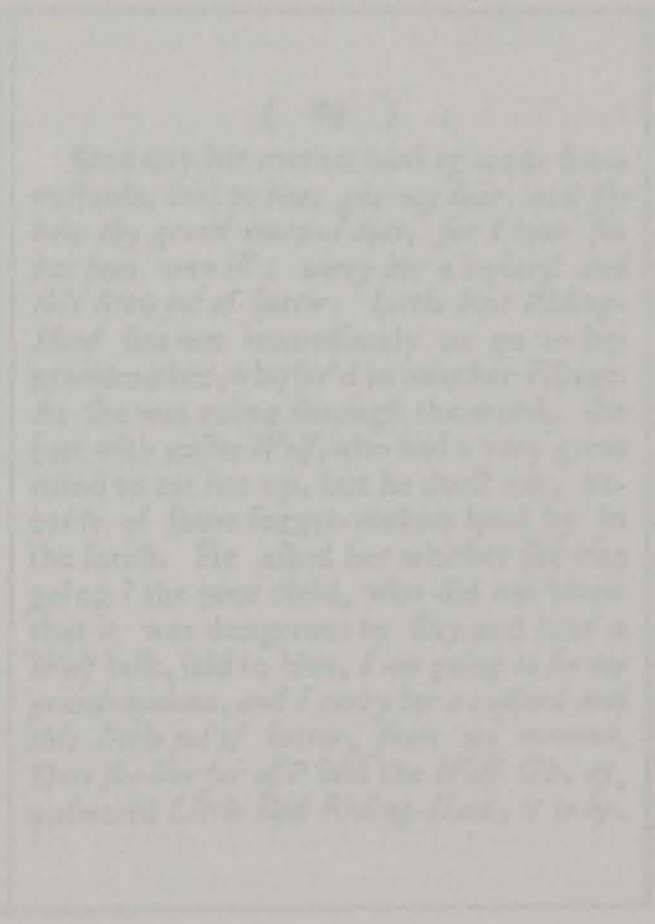


Fig. 21 Title page from *The Child's New Spelling Primer, or First Book for Children*. (1799)  
 Fig. 22 Page from *The Story of Cinderella, or, The Little Glass Slipper, from the Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm*.  
 Fig. 23 Page from *The Story of Cinderella, or, The Little Glass Slipper, from the Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm*.  
 Fig. 24 Page from *The Story of Cinderella, or, The Little Glass Slipper, from the Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm*.

<sup>41</sup>A Christian Brother. *Edmund Ignatius Rice and the Christian Brothers*. (M.H. Gill & Son Ltd., 1926), p. 97.  
<sup>42</sup>The Irish Monthly, Vol. LX, No. 705, March 1932, p. 164.



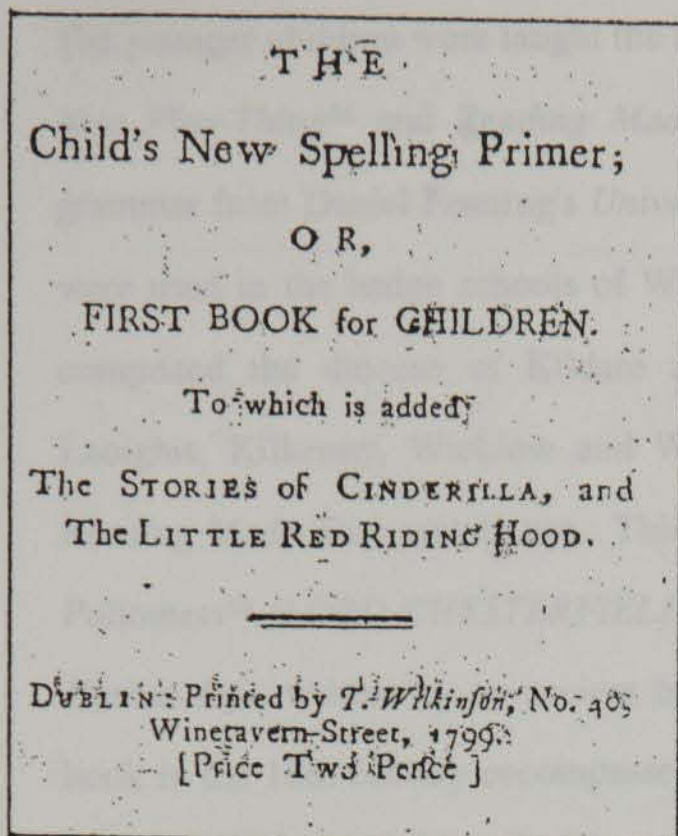


Fig.2.1

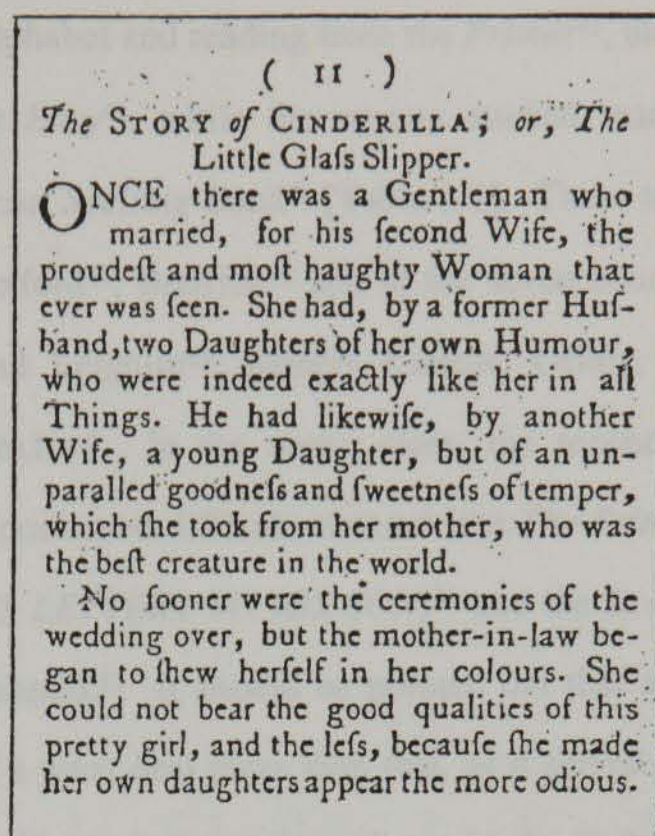


Fig.2.2

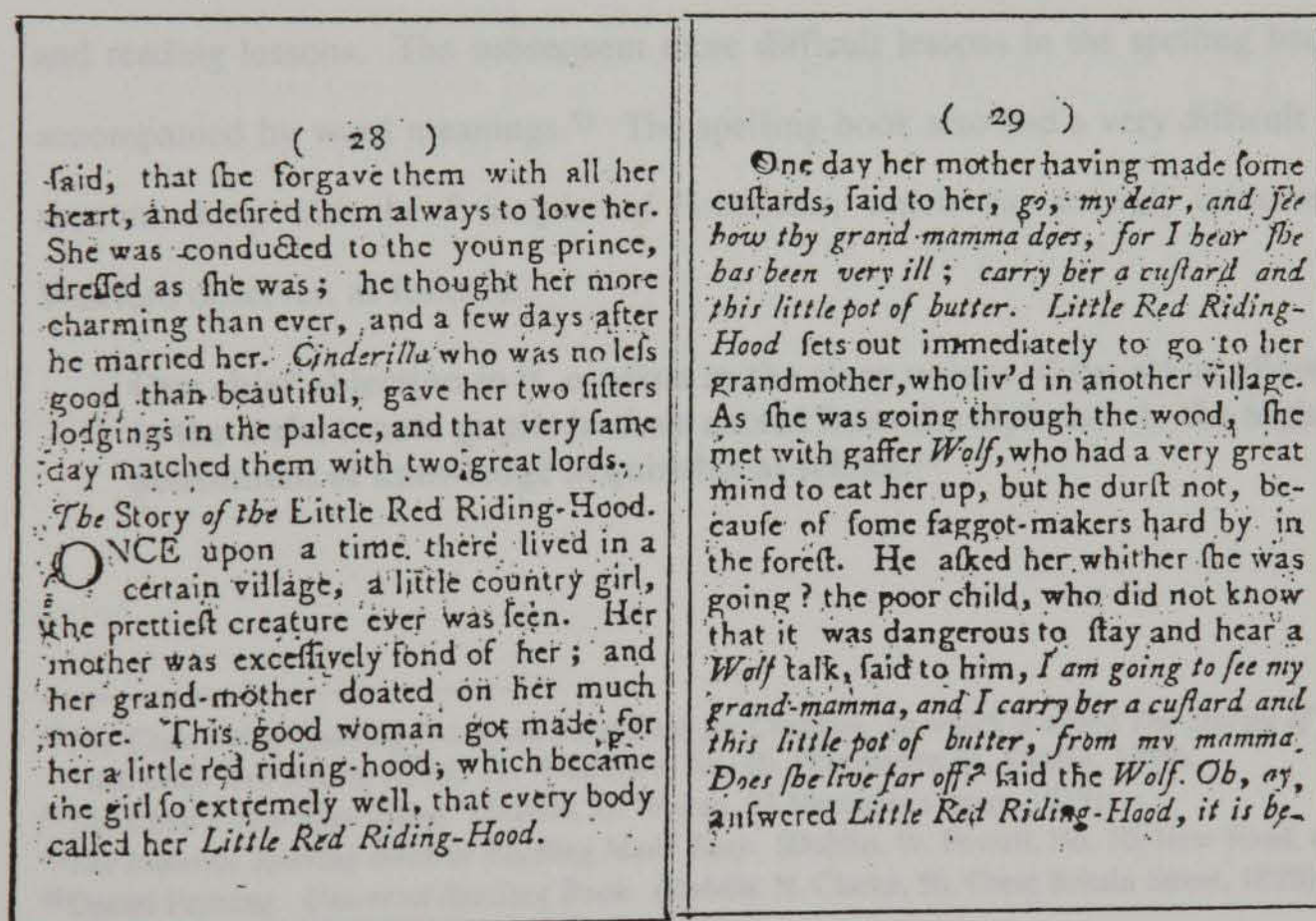


Fig.2.3

- Fig. 2.1 Title page from *The Child's New Spelling Primer; or First Book for Children*. [1799]
- Fig. 2.2 Page from *The Story of Cinderilla; or, The Little Glass Slipper*, from *The Child's New Spelling Primer*.
- Fig. 2.3 Pages from *The Story of the Little Red Riding-Hood*, from *The Child's New Spelling Primer*.



The younger children were taught the alphabet and reading from the *Primer*<sup>43</sup>, the *Child's New Play-Thing*<sup>44</sup> and *Reading Made Easy*<sup>45</sup>, while the seniors studied reading and grammar from Daniel Fenning's *Universal Spelling Book*<sup>46</sup> [Table 3.1]. These textbooks were used in the hedge schools of Wexford<sup>47</sup>, Breiffne<sup>48</sup> and in the seven counties that comprised the diocese of Kildare and Leighlin<sup>49</sup>, namely Carlow, Offaly, Kildare, Laoighis, Kilkenny, Wicklow and Wexford. In the senior class, the second part of *Reading Made Easy* was in use. This contained difficult material like *The Principles of Politeness*<sup>50</sup> (*LORD CHESTERFIELD'S LETTERS TO HIS SON*)<sup>51</sup> and the *Economy of Human Life*, written by an ancient brahmin.<sup>52</sup> It should be pointed out that a spelling book in the 18th century encompassed a great deal more than that, as it served also as a reader, a grammar and a dictionary. The primers and spellings books had a similar format. The alphabet was followed by lessons in monosyllables, both in spelling columns and reading lessons. The subsequent more difficult lessons in the spelling books, were accompanied by word meanings.<sup>53</sup> The spelling book also had a very difficult grammar section, along with the *Principles of Politeness*, which was strongly criticised by the Wexford observer, as follows:

**Our chief objection to it, consists in the steep nature of the stairs allowed to the unfortunate pupils in their ascent from the alphabet, to the highest attainment of knowledge acquirable at school.**<sup>54</sup>

<sup>43</sup>*The Child's New Spelling Primer or First Book for Children*, to which is added *The Stories of Cinderilla and Little Red Riding Hood*. (T. Wilkinson, No. 40, Winetavern St., Dublin, 1799).

<sup>44</sup>*The Child's New Play-Thing*. (Dublin, D. Wogan, 28 Merchant's Quay, 1819).

<sup>45</sup>*The Imperial Spelling Book or Reading Made Easy*. (Dublin, W. Powell, No. 10, New Road, n.d.).

<sup>46</sup>Daniel Fenning. *Universal Spelling Book*. (Dublin, N. Clarke, 50, Great Britain Street, 1820).

<sup>47</sup>Dublin University Magazine, Nov. 1862, p. 600.

<sup>48</sup>Philip O'Connell. *The Schools and Scholars of Breiffne*, p. 413.

<sup>49</sup>Martin Brenan. *Schools of Kildare and Leighlin, 1775-1835*, p. 11.

<sup>50</sup>Philip D. Stanhope, 4th Earl of Chesterfield. *The Accomplished Gentleman, or Principles of Politeness*. (Belfast, J. Smyth, 1827).

<sup>51</sup>Philip D. Stanhope, 4th Earl of Chesterfield. *Letters Written from the Earl of Chesterfield to his son*. (Dublin, E. Lynch, 1775).

<sup>52</sup>Royal Commission of Inquiry into Primary Ed. (Irl.) (c6.-11. H.C. 1870, XXVIII, PT. III, Vol. III, p. 505). Reports of Assistant Commissioners.

<sup>53</sup>Sr. Eileen T. Whelan. *Primary School Readers in Ireland 1800-1870*. (Unpublished M.Ed. Thesis, University College Cork, 1976), pp. 46-47.

<sup>54</sup>Dublin University Magazine, Nov. 1862, p. 601.



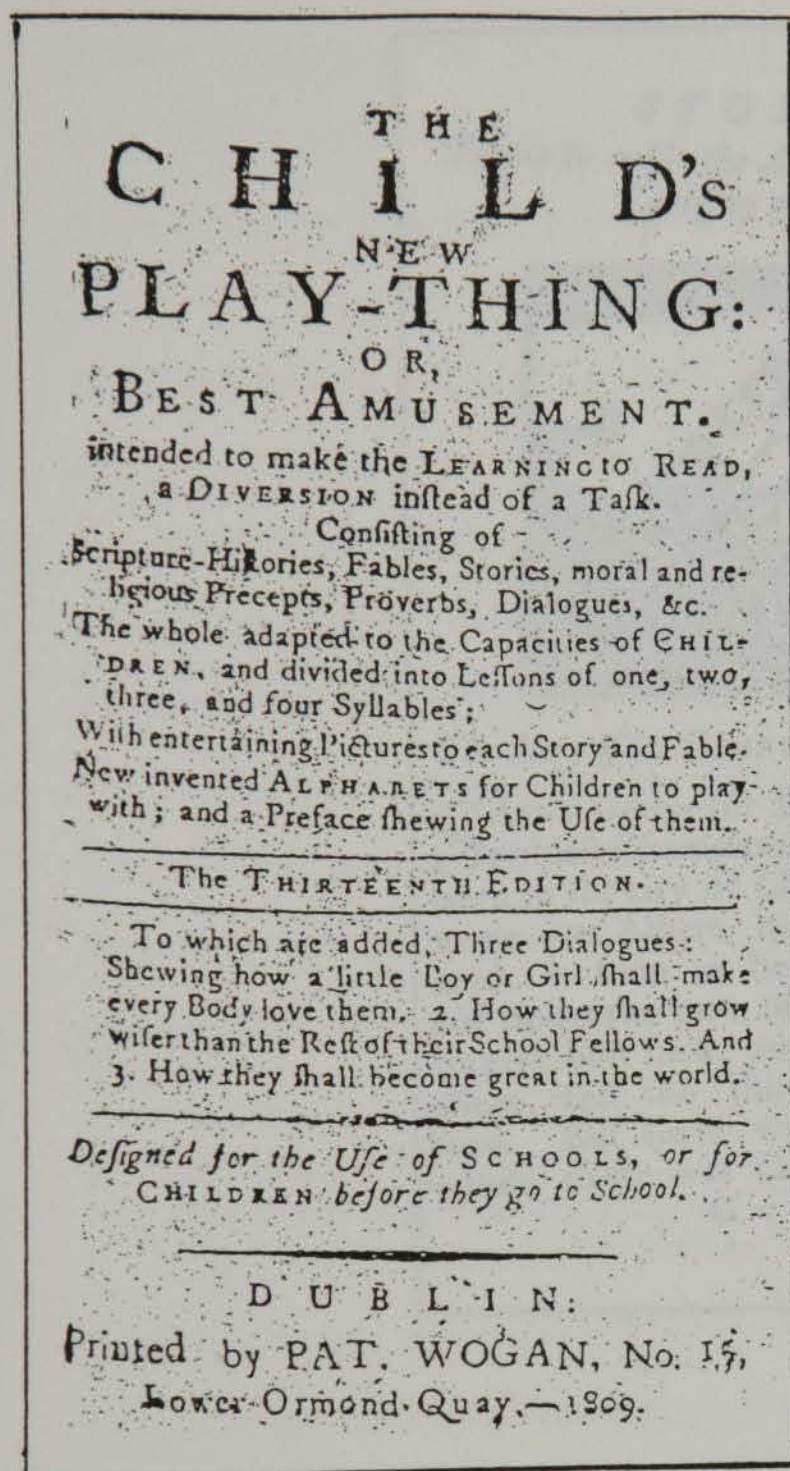


Fig.3.1

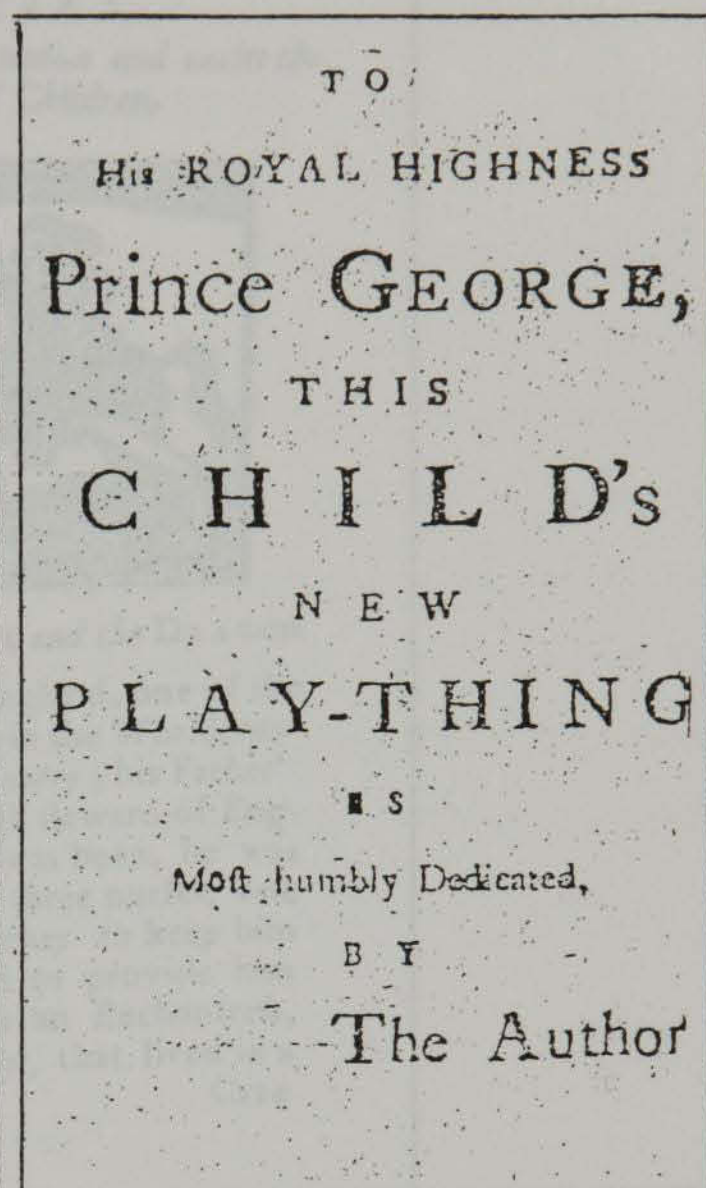


Fig.3.2

Fig. 3.1 Title page from *The Child's New Play-Thing; or Best Amusement.* [1809]. 13<sup>th</sup> edition.

Fig. 3.2 Dedication from *The Child's New Play-Thing; or Best Amusement.*

*STORIES,  
 Proper to raise the Attention and excite the  
 Curiosity of Children.*



*The Story of St. GEORGE and the DRAGON*

**S**AINTE George for England, one of the  
 noblest Champions in the World, wa  
 born in the city of *Coventry*; his Father'  
 name was Albert, high steward of Eng-  
 land. As soon as he was born, he was  
 put under the care of three nurses, one  
 to give him suck, another to keep him  
 asleep, and the third to provide him  
 food. But there was an Enchantress,  
 whose name was *Calyt*, that lived in a  
 G 2 Cave

**Fig. 3.3** Page from *The Story of St. George and the Dragon*, from *The Child's New Play-Thing; or Best Amusement*.



However, it must be remembered that this *Universal Spelling Book* of Fenning's, which was first published in 1754, was in nationwide use in the hedge schools, despite its prohibitive cost at 1s 1d. Not only that but it was 'one of the popular and widely used early spelling texts'<sup>55</sup>, in America, being re-printed many times, up to 1810. Despite its flaws, it was one of the best spelling books available at this time.

Some enterprising Dublin, Cork and Limerick printers assumed the responsibility for supplying these textbooks to the hedge schools. Two Dublin printers, Pat Wogan of Merchant's Quay and William Jones of 75, Thomas Street, took a personal interest in educational matters. They were the self-appointed 'educational and miscellaneous Alduses of the day, and considered themselves as lights burning in a dark place for the literary guidance'<sup>56</sup> of their people. The personal commitment was obvious from the frontispiece of some editions of the spelling book as it showed a tree of knowledge, laden with fruit, each piece marked with a letter of the alphabet and it showed the ardent climbers plucking away. Beneath the tree they had placed this doggerel inscription:

**The Tree of Knowledge, here you see,  
the fruit of which is A.B.C.  
But if you neglect it like idle drones,  
you'll not be respected by William Jones.<sup>57</sup>**

Jones and Wogan were well aware of the poverty of parents and out of concern for their obvious needs, they employed some cost-cutting measures when producing the English textbooks. In order to economise, they printed and bound two of the books as one, and as an alternative, they produced three of the books in one bound edition.

**The 'Reading Made Easy' (pronounced Readamadaisy)  
included the Primer.  
The Universal Spelling Book included the Primer and  
the Reading Made Easy.<sup>58</sup>**

---

<sup>55</sup>Charles Carpenter. *History of America School Books*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1963), p. 149.

<sup>56</sup>J.J.M. 'Irish Chap Books'. In *The Irish Book Lover*, Vol. I, No. 12 (July, 1910), p. 157.

<sup>57</sup>J.J.M. 'Irish Chap Books', p. 157.

<sup>58</sup>Dublin University Magazine. Nov. 1862, p. 601.



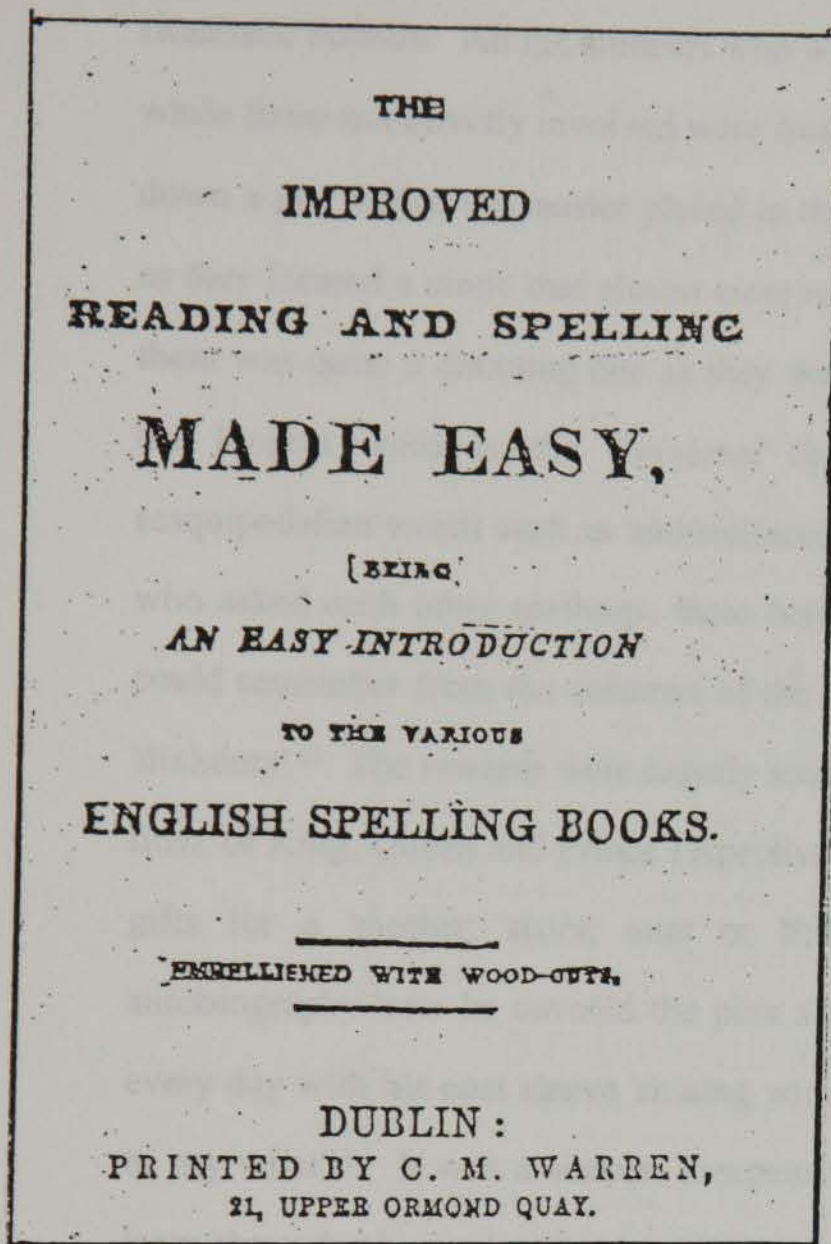


Fig. 4.1



Fig. 4.2

Fig. 4.1 Title page from *The Improved Reading and Spelling Made Easy*.

Fig. 4.2 Frontispiece from *The Improved Reading and Spelling Made Easy*.



The highlight in the school day was the spelling lesson, which was performed in a ritualistic fashion. All the students who were capable of spelling were put into the 'class', while those not directly involved were free to enjoy their games. Each student had to put down a pin, which the master placed in the spelling book, then they all took their places as they formed a circle that almost went round the whole school.<sup>59</sup> The challenge facing them was quite a daunting one as they were not allowed to read unless they could spell the longest word in the *Universal Spelling Book*. This book contained many sesquipedalian words such as 'antitrinitarians' and 'coessentially',<sup>60</sup> and it was the students who asked each other spellings, these being of 'the most out-of-the-way word he or she could remember from the columns of the 'Universal', or Entick's or Jones's oblong little 'dixhenry'.<sup>61</sup> The rewards were eagerly sought after. They consisted of the honorary royal titles of King, Queen and Prince respectively, as well as brass pins, which made suitable gifts for a 'mother, sister, aunt or little sweetheart'.<sup>62</sup> Carleton recalled in his autobiography how he coveted the pins all for himself and returned home from school every day with his coat sleeve 'shining with the signals of my triumph from my shoulder to my wrist'<sup>63</sup>. It was a simple, inexpensive reward system that motivated students to learn through play and amusement 'Great was the triumph of the little boy who won the pins',<sup>64</sup> wrote the Wexford visitor, and for the others there was always the hope that they would win tomorrow. He considered that this was a worthwhile exercise and that 'no plan devised could have been more effective in making good spellers'.<sup>65</sup> This was a view shared by an anonymous commentator who remarked upon the spelling ability of the 'poorest of this class' whose 'attainments in orthography and perspicuity of style, have frequently, to my knowledge, excited the amazement of strangers'<sup>66</sup>.

---

<sup>59</sup>William Carleton. *The Autobiography of William Carleton*. (London: MacGibbon & Kee Ltd., 3, Upper James's Street, Golden Square, 1968), p. 33.

<sup>60</sup>op. cit., p. 603.

P.J. Dowling. *The Hedge Schools of Ireland*, p. 62.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 610.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid.

<sup>63</sup>William Carleton. *Autobiography*, p. 33.

<sup>64</sup>Dublin University Magazine. November 1862, p. 160.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid.

<sup>66</sup>The Irish Monthly Vol. LX, No. 705, March, 1932, p. 164.



LINDSEY'S IMPROVED EDITION.

THE UNIVERSAL  
**SPELLING BOOK;**

OR, A

NEW AND EASY GUIDE  
TO  
THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE:

CONTAINING

Tables of Words in one, two, three, four, five, six, and seven Syllables; with natural and easy Lessons adapted to the capacity of Children; comprehending a Variety of Passages both on moral and divine Subjects; as also Fables, and pleasant Stories, in order to improve the Mind and Understanding.

A Collection of near 5000, of the most useful Words of two, three and four Syllables, viz. Nouns, Substantives, Adjectives, and Verbs, (placed alphabetically under their respective Heads,) accented and explained for the Instruction of Youth and the Information of such Persons as would know the meaning of what they read and write; being a useful instructor for the School, Shop or Counting house.

Many useful things necessary to help the young beginner, and inform the grown-up youth.

BY DANIEL FENNING,

Author of the Use of the Globes, Practical Arithmetic.

To which are added, Select Lessons in prose and verse, and Twenty-four Portraits, in alphabetical order, representing the habits and dress of different nations of the world.

FERMOY:

PRINTED BY

J. LINDSEY, AND BROTHERS,  
KING-ST.

Fig. 5.1

Title page from *The Universal Spelling Book*.  
[Daniel Fenning].



MORAL.

SINCE NO ONE KNOWS WHAT MAY BEFAL HIM, NOR WHAT MAY BE A MEANS OF SERVING HIM, IT IS THE HIGHEST WISDOM TO BEHAVE KINDLY AND CIVILLY TO ALL MANKIND.

TABLE XIX



STORY I

THE BOYS THAT WENT INTO THE WATER, INSTEAD OF BEING AT SCHOOL, OR AT HOME.

There were several boys that used to go into the water, instead of being at school; and they sometimes staid so long after school time that they used to frighten their parents very much: and though they were told of it time after time, yet they would frequently go and wash themselves. One day four of them, Smith, Brown, Jones, and Robinson, took it into their heads to play the truant and go into the water. They had not been long in before Smith was drowned. Brown's father followed him and lashed him heartily while he was naked; and Jones and Robinson ran home half dressed, which plainly told where they had been. However, they were both sent to bed without any supper, and told very plainly they should be well corrected at school next day.

Fig. 5.2 Page from *Story 1*, from *The Universal Spelling Book*.



In teaching English, the hedge schoolmasters paid close attention to the rules of grammar, as many of them were classical scholars.<sup>67</sup> One such was Carleton, who used a fictional creation, a character called Denis O'Shaughnessy, from his short story *'Denis O'Shaughnessy Going to Maynooth'*<sup>68</sup>, to express his own views on the rules of grammar. Denis, according to Carleton was one of those 'grammatically minded preceptors'<sup>69</sup> who held the rules of grammar sacrosanct and he was greatly irritated by the way his father flaunted the rules of English grammar.

**Father, I condimnate you at once - I condimnate you as being a most ungrammatical ould man, an' not fit to argue wid any one that knows Murray's English grammar an' more espaciously the three concords of Lilly's Latin, one - that is the cognation between the nominative case and the verb, the consanguinity between substantive case and the adjective and the blood-relationship that irritates between the relative and the antecedent.**<sup>70</sup>

An illustrious past pupil of a hedge school, John Tyndall, who was born in Carlow in 1820 and was elected Fellow of the Royal Society in 1855, declared in later life that he had received an invaluable education in the study of English grammar. He gave credit for this to the hedge schoolmaster John Conwill of Ballinabranagh. Addressing students of University College, London, he stated:

**The piercing through the involved and inverted sentences of Paradise Lost, the linking of the verb to its often distant nominative, of the relative to its transitive verb of the preposition to the noun or pronoun which it governed, the study of variations in mood or tense, the transpositions often necessary to bring out the true grammatical structure of a sentence, all this was to my young mind a discipline of the highest value and a source of unflagging delight.**<sup>71</sup>

---

<sup>67</sup>Philip O'Connell. *The Schools and Scholars of Breiffne*, p. 413.

<sup>68</sup>Thomas Flanagan. *The Irish Novelists 1800-1850*. (Greenwood Press Publishers, Westport, Connecticut, 1976), pp. 286-287.

<sup>69</sup>op. cit.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid.

<sup>71</sup>R.B. McDowell. *Social Life in Dublin 1800-45*. (Mercier Press, 6, Bridge St., Cork, 1976).

David Kennedy. *'Education and the People'*, p. 58.



THE

# Pentaglot Preceptor;

OR

## ELEMENTARY INSTITUTES

OF THE

ENGLISH, HEBREW,  
LATIN, AND  
GREEK, IRISH,

### LANGUAGES.

FOLLO  
CONTAINING  
A COMPLETE GRAMMAR  
OF THE

# ENGLISH TONGUE

For the Use of Schools, and peculiarly  
calculated for the Instruction of  
such Ladies & Gentlemen,  
as may wish to learn  
without the help  
of a Master.

---

BY PATRICK LYNCH.

---

Sic postquam quoniam suavis miscetis odores.  
VIRGIL.

CARRICK:  
PRINTED BY JOHN STACY  
M, DCC, XCVI.

Fig.6.1

TO be published with all convenient speed  
the remaining four volumes of

## THE PENTAGLOT PRECEPTOR,

Containing

### ELEMENTARY INSTITUTES

OF THE

Latin, Greek, Hebrew and Irish  
LANGUAGES,

ON A PLAN ENTIRELY NEW

Comprehending by way of Text, and  
be printed with a larger Type, the necessa  
ry Definitions and Rules, reduced to  
small a number, as seemed consistent with  
perspicuity; and composed in concise yet  
unembarrassed and familiar COUPLETS.

To which will be subjoined suitable ex  
amples, illustrative of the Rules, with criti  
cal remarks, explanatory notes and etymo  
logical derivations.

A Work peculiarly calculated, as well by  
the methodical arrangement of the subject  
matter, as by the expeditious attainment, and  
tenacious retention of Memorial Rhymes, to  
arrest the young student's attention, excite his  
application and facilitate his progress in the  
knowledge of those languages.

To each volume will be prefixed the appro  
bation of some learned Members of both Col  
leges, with the subscribers names and preli  
minary essays on the analogy of language.

SUBSCRIBERS to the above Work are requested  
to send their Names to Patrick Lynch, School-Master,  
Carrick-on-Suir.

Fig.6.2

Fig. 6.1 Title page from *The Pentaglot Preceptor*.  
[Patrick Lynch].

Fig. 6.2 Address to readers from Lynch's *The Pentaglot Preceptor*.



Two shining examples of how highly English grammar was rated as a subject in the hedge schools, are Patrick Lynch (1754-1818) and Peter Gallegan (1792-1860). Lynch was an eminent past pupil of the Irish speaking hedge schoolmaster Donnchadh an Chorráin (Denis of the Heap) O'Mahony, affectionately known as 'The Star of Ennistymon'<sup>72</sup> from Ennis Co. Clare. He was taught Greek, Latin and Hebrew so well by Donnchadh that he was sufficiently well equipped to teach himself the rules of English grammar. Not only that but he published his own complete grammar of the English language called *The Pentaglot Preceptor Vol. I*<sup>73</sup> in 1796. The work began with 'A Preliminary Discourse addressed to the Schoolmasters of Ireland'<sup>74</sup>, in which he reviewed the best known English grammars of his day. He was critical of the methods of such luminaries as the American lawyer and Quaker Lindley Murray (1745-1826) who published an English grammar at York in 1795, which became the standard textbook for the use of schools. It ran into one hundred editions and was still in print as late as 1871.<sup>75</sup> He even accused the great classical English writer and lexicographer Dr. Johnson 'of several errors in his Saxon etymologies'<sup>76</sup>. Peter Gallegan also had a very professional approach to his work and despite his straitened circumstances, having only sporadic employment over his twelve year teaching career and earning just £6 per annum,<sup>77</sup> he still considered the teaching of grammar sufficiently important to warrant the transcription of the rules from Murray's Grammar. The original book cost between three and five schillings,<sup>78</sup> which his pupils certainly couldn't afford, but Gallegan took great care to transcribe from it in a most ornate and elegant style of handwriting, in a manuscript entitled '*Peter Gallegan - Collections in English and Irish, entirely written by Himself*'<sup>79</sup>,

---

<sup>72</sup>Séamus Ua Casaíde. 'Patrick Lynch, Secretary to the Gaelic Society of Dublin'. In *Journal of the Waterford & South-East of Ireland Archaeological Society*. Vol. XV, (1912), p. 48.

<sup>73</sup>P.J. Dowling. 'Patrick Lynch, Schoolmaster 1754-1818'. In *Studies* Vol. XX, (1931), p. 467.

<sup>74</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 466.

<sup>75</sup>J.M. Goldstrom. *The Social Content of Education 1808-1870*. (Irish University Press, Shannon, 1972), p. 56.

<sup>76</sup>Séamus Ua Casaíde, 'Patrick Lynch, Sec. to the Gaelic Soc.', p. 49.

<sup>77</sup>P.J. Dowling. *The Hedge Schools of Ireland*, p. 115.

<sup>78</sup>J.M. Goldstrom. *The Social Content of Education*, p. 56.

<sup>79</sup>Ms. G. 809. '*Peter Gallegan - collections in English and Irish, entirely written by Himself*'. 16 January 1824. (National Library of Ireland).



dated 16th January, 1824. The manuscript also included the most up-to-date methods on the teaching of reading<sup>80</sup> and grammar<sup>81</sup>, arithmetic<sup>82</sup> and writing<sup>83</sup>.

Great care was taken with the teaching of reading as each child was taught individually:

**There was no reading in class: every lesson was repeated individually, and in the masters hearing only.**<sup>84</sup>

Consequently masters were in a position to take note of the individual differences between students and their different rates of progress. Unlike the procrustean method of forcing students to conform to a type or to a set curriculum, which the mechanical monitorial method of teaching demanded, the hedge school masters enjoyed the freedom to select the academic course which was best suited to meet their students' individual needs. One hedge schoolmaster however held somewhat unorthodox views on the teaching of reading. He expressed them to Mrs. Griffin, the mother of the novelist Gerald Griffin when she arrived at Crosby Row, Limerick to enrol her sons in his hedge school. The master in question was the somewhat eccentric Richard MacElligott (1756-1818), who didn't think that reading aloud could be taught, as this was a natural gift, bestowed on a chosen few - and he numbered himself among this elite group:

**"Perhaps, Mrs. Griffin, you are not aware that there are only three persons in Ireland who know how to read". "Three!" said she. "Yes, madam, there are only three - the Bishop of Killaloe - the Earl of Clare - and your humble servant" Reading, madam is a natural gift, not an acquirement.**"<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>80</sup>Ibid., pp. 265-272.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., pp. 272-278.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., pp. 285-290.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., pp. 293-295.

<sup>84</sup>Dublin University Magazine. Nov. 1862, p. 602.

<sup>85</sup>Dr. Griffin. *The Life of Gerald Griffin*. (Dublin, James Duffy, 15, Wellington Quay, 1857), p. 22.



THE  
ENGLISH READER;  
OR,  
PIECES IN PROSE AND POETRY:  
SELECTED FROM  
THE BEST WRITERS,  
*Designed to assist young persons*  
TO READ WITH PROPRIETY AND EFFECT;  
TO IMPROVE THEIR LANGUAGE AND SENTIMENTS,  
AND TO INCULCATE  
SOME OF THE MOST IMPORTANT PRINCIPLES OF  
*PIETY AND VIRTUE.*  
With a few preliminary Observations  
ON THE PRINCIPLES OF GOOD READING.

---

By *LINDLEY MURRAY.*  
AUTHOR OF "ENGLISH GRAMMAR ADAPTED TO THE DIFFERENT CLASSES OF LEARNERS," &c.

---

Belfast:  
PRINTED BY JOSEPH SMYTH,  
115, HIGH-STREET.  
1812.

Fig. 7.1

Title page from *The English Reader; or, Pieces in Prose and Poetry* selected from the best writers. [Lindley Murray] 1812.



Other hedge schoolmasters who held more conventional views, developed innovative methods of teaching reading and expanding vocabulary. One such was John Casey of the Banna Hedge School in Ardfert, who devised the 'Banna Reading' method, which was the practice of synonymous reading in the teaching of English.

**Mr. Casey encouraged his pupils to introduce as many synonyms as possible during reading in English by the class in common. As the reading progressed, all the boys - prompted by the teacher - interjected words of identical or similar meaning. In this way they acquired an extended vocabulary and a consequent fluency of expression.<sup>86</sup>**

His method was widely used in the many schools in the neighbourhood of Ardfert.

David Manson (1726-1792) a Belfast town hedge schoolmaster, brewer, inventor and writer, liked to experiment in improved methods of teaching. Not only did he compile school textbooks such as *The New Spelling Primer for Beginners*<sup>87</sup>, *Pronouncing Dictionary and English Expositor adapted to Sheridan's Pronunciation*<sup>88</sup>, and *Mason's New Primer*<sup>89</sup> but he also invented special learning-playing cards as he believed in the progressive educational theory which specified that learning should be a pleasurable activity. As card-playing was the favourite form of entertainment among the people, he harnessed this source of interest for educational purposes. He furnished his pupils with:

**packs of cards, like playing cards, on which were printed elementary lessons in reading, spelling, and arithmetic. These lessons the young people of the party were expected to be studying, whilst their seniors were engaged with cards of a less instructive character 'David Manson's Cards' were long well known in Belfast.<sup>90</sup>**

Manson also believed that a happy atmosphere should be maintained in the classroom and he deplored the use of corporal punishment on children. Like many of his contemporaries he favoured rewarding students' best efforts. He elaborated on the reward system of brass

---

<sup>86</sup>M.L. Quane. 'Banna School Ardfert with a prefatory survey of classical education in Kerry in the 18th century'. In *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, Vol. LXXXIV, (1954), p. 170.

<sup>87</sup>David Manson. *The New Spelling Book for Beginners*. (John Brown, Monaghan, 1798).

<sup>88</sup>\_\_\_\_\_ *Manson's Pronouncing Dictionary and English Expositor*, (J. Smyth for Samuel Archer, Belfast, 1816).

<sup>89</sup>\_\_\_\_\_ *Manson's New Primer or The Child's Best Guide*, (T. Shearman, High Street, Kilkenny, 1840).

<sup>90</sup>J. Marshall. 'David Manson, Schoolmaster in Belfast'. In *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, Vol. xii, (1907), p. 66.



pins by using merit-tickets for successful pupils at morning lessons. The merit-tickets were marked *FRS for Fellow of the Royal Society* and 'the scholars who returned their tickets unsoiled got a half-guinea medal'<sup>91</sup>. Manson could afford to give generous rewards as his hedge school was run alongside his brewery business, both of which were successful enterprises.

It can be concluded therefore that the hedge schools met the requirements of parents. It was they who demanded individual instruction for their children thus resulting in relaxed classroom management practices and ensuring also that children learned in a happy homely atmosphere where the needs of each child could be observed and a suitable academic course drawn up to meet those needs.

(ii) The Curriculum in the Hedge School

**My eyelids red and heavy are  
With bending o'er the smould'ring peat  
I know the Aenid now by heart  
My Virgil read in cold and heat.**

**(Padraic Colum (1882-1972)).<sup>92</sup>**

The native schools won popular appeal for a variety of reasons, the main ones being that they laid emphasis on subjects such as Religion, Irish History and on Irish culture. Within recent memory, during the penal days, the catholic religion and the national identity of the majority of the population had been threatened with extinction. Any educational foundation that could guarantee the safety of both was assured of success. However, the hedge schools offered an impressive range of subjects besides Religion and Irish History, which included Arithmetic, Book-Keeping, Science, Surveying and Land Measuring, Astronomy, Geography, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, English, Irish and Dancing.

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<sup>91</sup>Ibid.

<sup>92</sup>Derek Mahon. *Modern Irish Poetry*. (Sphere Books Limited, 30/32 Gray's Inn Rd., London, WC1X 8JL, 1972), p. 54.



This classical and mathematical education with its traditional Irish orientation, became the hallmark of the indigenous schools. Not only was the curriculum all embracing but masters took pride in their profession and tried to up-date their books and their teaching methods by subscribing to the academic textbooks written by their colleagues. The books produced in History, Geography and Arithmetic, as we shall see, bore all the signs of industry, scholarship and professionalism as they encouraged sound teaching practice.

The livelihood of a hedge schoolmaster was largely dependent on his mathematical expertise as 'the ordinary people of Ireland would set no store by a school in which arithmetic did not figure prominently'<sup>93</sup>. The Rev. Robert Daly, Rector of Powerscourt, gave evidence to this effect before the education commissioners of 1825, when he confirmed that parents were not satisfied with mere scripture schools because:

**they think a fine Arithmetic book , written out, is a sure test of a good school and if a master is not able to put the children through Voster or Joyce, he is considered an ignoramus.**<sup>94</sup>

The most commonly used arithmetics were John Gough's *Arithmetic Both in Theory and Practice adapted to the Commerce of Ireland as well as of Great Britain*<sup>95</sup> and Elias Voster's *Arithmetick in Whole and Broken Numbers Digested after a New Method and Chiefly Adapted to the Trade of Ireland*. To which is added (never before printed) *Instructions for Book-Keeping*.<sup>96</sup> Voster's Arithmetic was the older of the two and was superseded by Gough's<sup>97</sup> and later by Paul Deighan's *A Complete Treatise on Arithmetic*<sup>98</sup>, which also included instructions for Book-Keeping [Table 5.1]. It would seem improbable that many of these arithmetics were actually purchased by parents, as they were written more in the style of handbooks of instruction for teachers. Besides, their prohibitive cost would doubtlessly have placed them well outside the reach of most people. The hedge schoolmasters themselves transcribed copiously from Gough and

---

<sup>93</sup>Martin Brenan. *Schools of Kildare and Leighlin*, p. 81.

<sup>94</sup>First Report of the Commissioners of Irish Education Inquiry, 1825, p. 798.

<sup>95</sup>John Gough. *Arithmetic Both in Theory and Practice*. (Isaac Jackson & Son, Meath St., 1770).

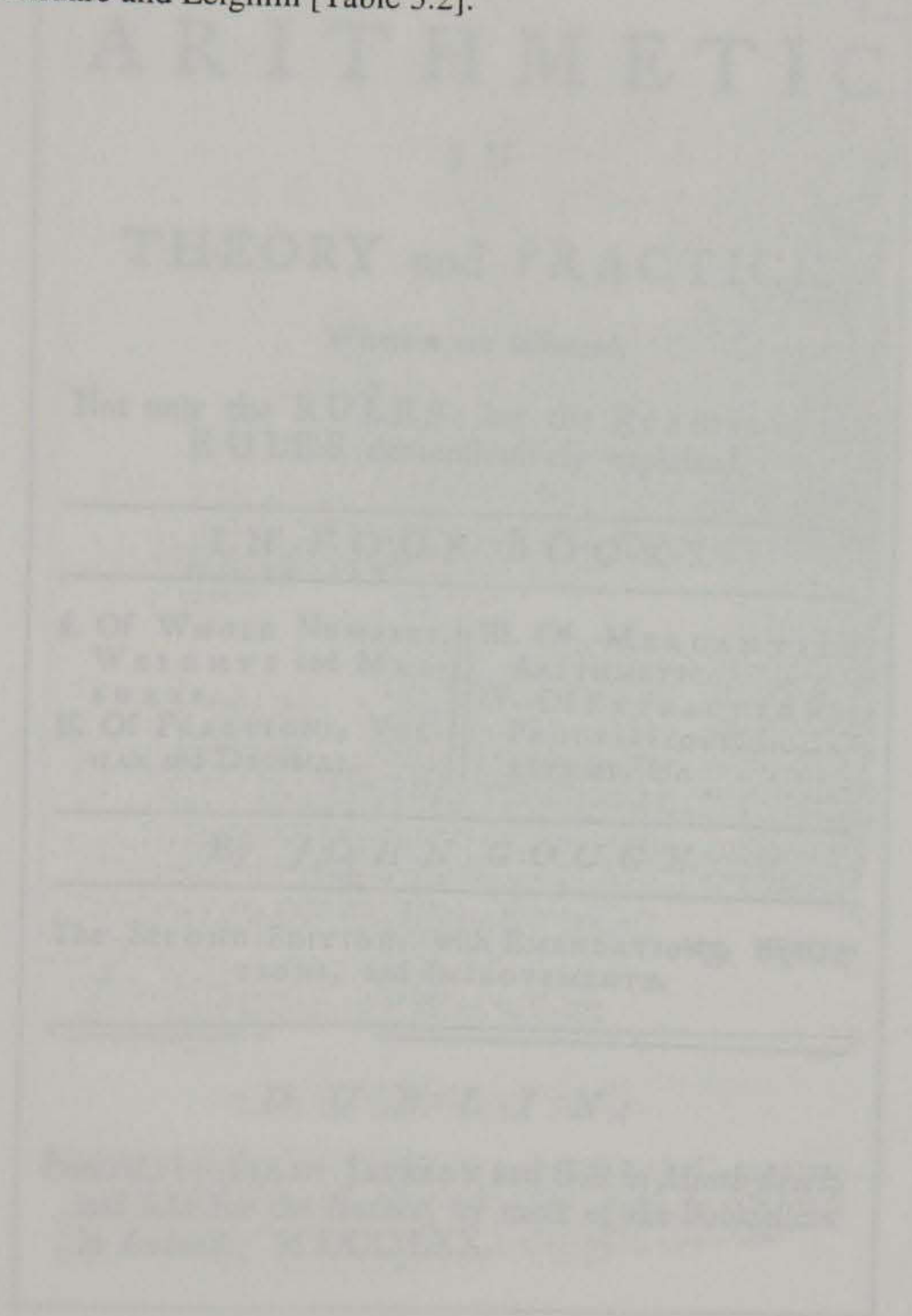
<sup>96</sup>Elias Voster. *Arithmetick in Whole and Broken Numbers*. (Dublin, Bart, Corcoran, on the Inns-Quay, 1772).

<sup>97</sup>P.J. Dowling. *The Hedge Schools of Ireland*, p. 77.

<sup>98</sup>Paul Deighan. *A Complete Treatise on Arithmetic*. (Dublin, J. Jones, 90, Bride St., 1804). 3rd ed.



Voster, judging from extant manuscripts.<sup>99</sup> We know from references in contemporary writings that these arithmetics were used extensively in the hedge schools of Roscommon<sup>100</sup>, West Galway<sup>101</sup> and James Baggott's<sup>102</sup> (1771-1806) celebrated mathematical school at Ballingarry, Co. Limerick, together with the hedge schools in the diocese of Kildare and Leighlin [Table 3.2].



<sup>99</sup>Ms. G. 809 P. Gallegan, January 16, 1824, pp. 272-276.

<sup>100</sup>Rev. William Shaw Mason. *A Statistical Account or Parochial Survey*, 1816, p. 405.

Isaac Weld *Statistical Survey of the County of Roscommon*. (Dublin, R. Graisberry, No. 10, Back-Lane, 1832), p. 699.

<sup>101</sup>Brigid Bean Uí Mhurchadha, M.A. *Oideachas in Iar-Chonnacht sa Naoú Céad Déag*. (Oifig an tSoláthair, Baile Átha Cliath, 1954).

<sup>102</sup>S. O'C. 'O'Baggott of Ballingarry'. In *The Irish Book Lover*, (March - April, 1930), p. 50.



A  
T R E A T I S E  
O F  
A R I T H M E T I C  
I N  
T H E O R Y and P R A C T I C E.

Wherein are delivered,

Not only the RULES; but the REASONS of the  
RULES demonstratively explained.

I N F O U R B O O K S.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| I. Of WHOLE NUMBERS,<br>WEIGHTS and MEASURES. | III. Of MERCANTILE<br>ARITHMETIC.                    |
| II. Of FRACTIONS, VULGAR and DECIMAL.         | IV. Of EXTRACTIONS,<br>PROGRESSIONS, LOGARITHMS, &c. |

By J O H N G O U G H.

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and sold for the Author, by most of the Booksellers  
in *Ireland*. MDCCLXX.

Fig. 8.1

Title page from *A Treatise of Arithmetic in Theory and Practice*.  
[John Gough] 1770.

ARITHMETICK

I N

Whole and Broken NUMBERS.

Digested after a

NEW METHOD,

And chiefly Adapted to the

TRADE of IRELAND.

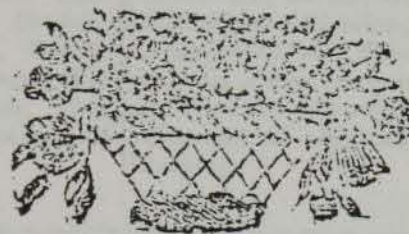
To which is added (never before printed)

INSTRUCTIONS for BOOK-KEEPING.

By ELIAS VOSTER.

THE TENTH EDITION,

Carefully Printed from the last Edition Revised  
by DANIEL VOSTER.



D U B L I N :

Printed by BART. CORCORAN, on the *Inns-Quay*.

M,DCC,LXXII.

Fig. 9.1 Title page from *Arithmetick in Whole and Broken Numbers*.  
[Elias Voster] 1772.



A  
Complete Treatise  
ON  
ARITHMETIC,  
RATIONAL AND PRACTICAL:  
WHEREIN THE PROPERTIES OF NUMBERS ARE CLEARLY  
POINTED OUT;  
THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF THE SCIENCE ARE  
DEDUCED FROM FIRST PRINCIPLES,  
AND DEMONSTRATED IN A FAMILIAR MANNER;  
WITH A GREAT VARIETY OF  
PROPER EXAMPLES IN ALL THE RULES,  
PERFECTLY SUITED TO  
THE MAN OF BUSINESS, ACADEMIES, SCHOOLS, AND  
STUDENTS OF EVERY DENOMINATION,  
DESIROUS OF BECOMING PROFICIENTS IN ACCOUNTS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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viz.—Numeration, Addition, Sub-  
traction, Multiplication, Division,  
Compendiums, Reduction, Golden  
Rule, Single and Compound, &c.  
Vulgar Fractions, Practice, Tare  
and Trett, Interest, Discount, and  
Exchange.

VOL. II. Containing Decimal  
Arithmetic, Barter, Gain and Loss,  
Fellowship, Alligation, Progressions,  
Arithmetical and Geometrical; Ex-  
traction of Roots in general, Position,  
or Trial and Error; with a copious  
Appendix of Algebra and Book-  
keeping.

VOL. I.

By P. DEIGHAN, PHILOMATH.

DUBLIN:

PRINTED AND SOLD FOR THE AUTHOR,

BY

J. JONES, 90, BRIDE-STREET.

1804.

Fig. 10.1 Title page from *A Complete Treatise on Arithmetic*.  
[Paul Deighan] 1804.



Hedge schoolmasters tried to ensure that the most modern books were in use in their schools, and three progressive Limerick teachers McElligott, O'Brien and Geoghegan went so far as to publish a 'recommendatory letter' in the *Limerick Gazette* of February, 2nd, 1813 suggesting that parents should purchase the newly published arithmetic by Deighan. They emphasised the utilitarian aspect of the book and recommended it as:

**... the only book extant, whereby youth can acquire a knowledge and facility of the most modern and concise methods of counting**

and they concluded that:

**Gough and Voster deserved well in their day but their methods are now become too tedious and elaborate and are totally exploded in every counting house of eminence.**<sup>103</sup>

Arithmetic was a subject in which hedge schoolmasters excelled. Credit for this was grudgingly given even by their strongest critics, one of whom was James Glassford, a commissioner of education in 1825. During his tours of Ireland in 1824 and 1826 he noted that 'Arithmetic is a favourite branch of instruction with the Irish generally', he called it 'the Irishman's hobby'<sup>104</sup> and Richard Lovell Edgeworth, an education commissioner of 1806, who also helped to compile the 1791 Report which suggested state control of all hedge schools, acknowledged the high standards they achieved at all levels in arithmetic. In a letter to Lord Selkirk in 1808, he remarked:

**I rely upon the event of any trials that may be made upon boys of the higher and lower classes in Ireland, in which I am certain it will be found that not only the common but the higher parts of arithmetic are better understood and more expertly practised by boys without shoes and stockings, than by young gentlemen riding home on horseback or in coaches to enjoy their Christmas idleness.**<sup>105</sup>

Hedge schoolmasters took considerable pride in their mathematical learning, even going so far as to append the epithet '*Philomath*' to the end of all correspondence, documents,

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<sup>103</sup>P.J. Dowling. *The Hedge Schools of Ireland*, pp. 65-66.

<sup>104</sup>James Glassford. *Notes on Three Tours in Ireland in 1824 and 1826*. (W. Strong and J. Chilcott, 1832), p. 2.

<sup>105</sup>Harriet Jessica Butler and Harold Edgeworth Butler. *The Black Book of Edgeworthstown*. (London, Faber & Gwyer, 1927), p. 195.



wills, promissory notes and even love-letters which they subscribed to.<sup>106</sup> Brian Merriman (1747-1805) the 'poet of one work' - *Cúirt an Mheadhon Oídche* (*The Midnight Court*) a poem of 1,206 lines, wished to be remembered, not for his famed poetic ability but rather for his mathematical expertise. His death notice in the *General Advertiser and Limerick Gazette* for Monday 29th July, 1865 read:

**Died - On Saturday morning, in Old Clare-Street, after a few hours illness, Mr. Bryan Merryman, teacher of Mathematics, etc.**<sup>107</sup>

Irish people paid special homage to a master who had displayed a flair for mathematics of a talent in any other branch of learning by conferring upon him a flattering title such as 'The Bright Star in Mathematical Learning'<sup>108</sup>, which was conferred on Owen Reynolds of Mohill, Co. Leitrim. James Baggott had not only a national but an international reputation as a mathematician, being a personal friend of the eminent physicist Laplace (1794-1827), who was tutor to Napoleon. Because of this distinction he was known as 'The Great O'Baggott'<sup>109</sup>. It wasn't unusual for past pupils of hedge schools to compose poems of praise eulogising on the mathematical talents of their much loved teachers. One such poet was Philip O'Connell, from Mountnugent, Co. Cavan, who referred to his hedge schoolmaster euphemistically as 'the great Longinus of my native town', although his pseudonym was 'lame Jack'.

**Where 'midst the simple neighbours who but he  
Could sound the depths of "Voster's Rule of Three",  
Engrave a Sundial - make a Patrick's Cross,  
And catechise the children after Mass.  
Find the moon's age correct by Doogan's rule,  
And prove each neighbouring pedagogue a fool.**<sup>110</sup>

The masters themselves displayed their appreciation of the mathematical expertise of members of their own profession, such as that of Paul Deighan, from Ballina, Co. Mayo,

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<sup>106</sup>William Carleton. *The Hedge School*, p. 275.

<sup>107</sup>Daniel Corkery. *The Hidden Ireland*, p. 224.

<sup>108</sup>Philip O'Connell. *The Schools and Scholars of Breiffne*, p. 430.

<sup>109</sup>Archdeacon John Begley. *The Diocese of Limerick*. (Browne & Nolan Ltd., Dublin, 1938), pp. 411-412.

S. Ó C., 'O'Baggott of Ballingarry', In *The Irish Book Lover*, (March - April, 1930), p. 50.

<sup>110</sup>Philip O'Connell. *Schools and Scholars of Breiffne*, p. 410.



by subscribing to his arithmetic when it was published in 1804.<sup>111</sup> The arithmetic also contained many 'recommendatory letters' from hedge schoolmasters. The following one was written by John Bartley in Drumcondra on the 17th May, 1804:

**The muse amaz'd inquires who could contrive,  
To make one digit do the work of five,  
Lo here a more surprising wonders seen,  
One figure does the duty of fifteen.**

**But Deighan of a more enlightened mind,  
More innate genius, talents more refin'd,  
... To him a more exalted task is due  
To teach the pupil and the master too.<sup>112</sup>**

Two hedge schoolmasters, one from Limerick, called Michael Tierney and the other from John Casey's hedge school at Banna, Ardfert, Co. Kerry, called Michael Madden, made their own contribution to the advancement of mathematical pedagogy. Tierney, who probably never heard of Pestalozzi's (1746-1827) progressive teaching methods, nonetheless adopted a very similar approach as he too believed in using practical, concrete examples to illustrate solutions to mathematical problems, especially for the teaching of addition and subtraction. His preferred teaching aid was the humble potato and 'in order to explain to a particularly dense pupil the - truth of the Euclidian axiom that the whole is greater than any part, Tierney took a potato, cut a piece off, and convinced his pupil simply and most effectively'.<sup>113</sup> Michael Madden, who taught Edward Day the son of Judge Robert Day, M.P. (1745-1841) in preparation for entry to Trinity College, won acclaim for introducing the compact multiplication table, which was adopted by the schools in the Ardfert area and which continued in use up until the 1890's. A year after Madden entered Trinity College as a student, in 1756, he died tragically, in a drowning accident. His death was recorded in a contemporary publication which acknowledged his mathematical genius.

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<sup>111</sup>P.J. Dowling. *The Hedge Schools of Ireland*, pp. 147-148.

<sup>112</sup>Ibid.

<sup>113</sup>Robert Herbert. 'Four Limerick Hedge-Schoolmasters', In *The Irish Monthly*, Seventy-Second Yearly Volume, (1944), pp. 46-47.



**September 17th - Drowned at Rush, Mr. Michael Madden of Co. Kerry, a student of our University, of a most promising genius and for his standing greatly advanced in the mathematical sciences.<sup>114</sup>**

This strong mathematical tradition which the hedge schools had firmly established in the 18th century was reinforced in the early 19th century by the publication of almanacs, such as *Lady's and Farmer's Almanack*, *The Lady's Almanack*, *The Belfast Almanack*, *Nugent's Almanack*, *The Telegraphic Almanack*. They appeared annually and provided sufficient reading material for a household for an entire year.<sup>115</sup> They posed mathematical problems, the solutions to which appeared the following year and the main contributors were hedge schoolmasters such as Peter Gallegan (1828-1860) and James Baggott (1771-1806). It would appear also that the almanacs helped to develop many a mathematical talent that might not otherwise have been developed. A past pupil of the hedge school at Glanellie, Co. Tyrone, named James McCullough became one of the leading mathematicians of the age and went on to become a professor of mathematics at Trinity College, in 1836, at the tender age of twenty five.<sup>116</sup> He owed much to the hedge schools and the almanacs and it was through the almanacs that 'he first discovered his genius for science by answering these mathematical queries. At the age of ten years, he was able to answer every one of them.'<sup>117</sup>

Science was taught as well as mathematics and was eagerly sought after by the poor, according to the evidence given by the Rev. Dr. Hincks before the Select Committee on Foundation Schools in 1836.<sup>118</sup> He was well acquainted with the hedge schools of the south of Ireland having taught from 1790 to 1815 in the city of Cork; and, from 1815 to 1821 in Fermoy, when he was appointed principal of the Belfast Academical Institution<sup>119</sup>.

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<sup>114</sup>M.L. Quane. *Banna School Ardfert*, pp. 167-168.

<sup>115</sup>Philip O'Connell. *Schools and Scholars of Breiffne*, p. 408.

<sup>116</sup>David Kennedy. *Education and the People*, pp. 57-58.

<sup>117</sup>op. cit.

<sup>118</sup>Reports from the Select Committees on Foundation Schools, together with Minutes of Evidence. Part II, 1836 (XIII), p. 20.

<sup>119</sup>P.J. Dowling. *The Hedge Schools of Ireland*, pp. 75-76.



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---

DUBLIN: Printed for WILLIAM ROSS,  
Bookseller in *Grafton-Street*, MDCCLXIII.

Fig. 11.1 Title page from *A Treatise of Practical Surveying*.  
[Robert Gibson] 1763.



He testified to having known:

**instances of very considerable advance in science, especially in mathematics, in the very lowest schools. I have known persons procuring scientific books, and apparently able to make use of those books, who were in very great poverty, in the south of Ireland especially. I think there is much more of such taste for scientific acquirements in the south than in the north.**<sup>120</sup>

Book-keeping was also regarded as an important subject. William Carleton and his brother John were fortunate enough to have attended the hedge school of Mr. O'Brien who was formerly from Connaught but who taught at Finnermore<sup>121</sup>, Co. Tyrone. He was such a 'pre-eminent and extraordinary scholar, that he was allowed to append the epithet **Great** to his name, after which the people referred to him as 'the great O'Brien, par excellence'<sup>122</sup>. In his autobiography, Carleton was generous in his praise of O'Brien, whom he regarded as:

**a most excellent teacher, and probably one of the best book-keepers of that day in the north. Several respectable young fellows used to come from long distances to be instructed by him in the art of keeping accounts.**<sup>123</sup>

Subjects related to mathematics, such as surveying, land measuring and astronomy were taught to advanced students. Parents in Tyrone and the northern counties expected a hedge schoolmaster to have a knowledge of surveying and an ability to teach their children land measuring<sup>124</sup>. In Co. Carlow, John Garrett taught surveying with the aid of no less than three different books on the subject - *Gibson's Surveying*, *Harding's Surveying and Croker's Surveying*. He also taught astronomy from *Brinkley's Astronomy*<sup>125</sup> [Table 6.1]. In the south of Ireland surveying was taught on a wide scale, judging from the question put to Dr. Hincks, when he was giving evidence before the Education Committee in 1835. He was asked

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<sup>120</sup>op. cit.

<sup>121</sup>John I.D. Johnston. *'Hedge Schools of Tyrone and Monaghan'*, p. 40.

<sup>122</sup>William Carleton. *'The Hedge School'*, pp. 275-276.

<sup>123</sup>William Carleton. *The Autobiography of William Carleton*, p. 19.

<sup>124</sup>William Carleton. *'The Hedge School'*, p. 284, p. 296.

<sup>125</sup>Rev. Martin Brenan. *Schools of Kildare and Leighlin*, pp. 438-439.



**Are you aware that in making an ordnance survey in Ireland great facility existed in finding competent persons to assist the surveyors at ordinary labourers' wages?**

This fact didn't surprise him

**I am not at all surprised at the circumstance: there were a great many of the hedge schools where there was given a great deal of scientific instruction.**<sup>126</sup>

Francis McGann (1786-1815), the 'brilliant County Leitrim mathematical scholar', whose tragic death in a snowstorm was remembered in the popular ballad *'The Fate of Francis McGann'*<sup>127</sup> had attended the mathematical schools of Hugh McDonald of Drumlara, Owen Reynolds, the 'Bright Star', of Mohill and the renowned mathematical school of 'The Great O'Baggott' of Ballingarry. Having qualified in higher mathematics he returned home to Drumlara where he earned a considerable reputation for himself as a cartographer and surveyor. He was reputedly offered a position as a surveyor in India, by the English government of the day, but rejected it. The legacy he left behind him was 'the art of preparing accurate large scale maps', which were 'developed later by the Ordnance Survey'<sup>128</sup>.

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<sup>126</sup>Reports from the Select Committees on Foundation Schools, together with Minutes of Evidence. Part II, 1836 (XIII), p. 20.

<sup>127</sup>Philip O'Connell. *Schools and Scholars of Breiffne*, pp. 430-431.

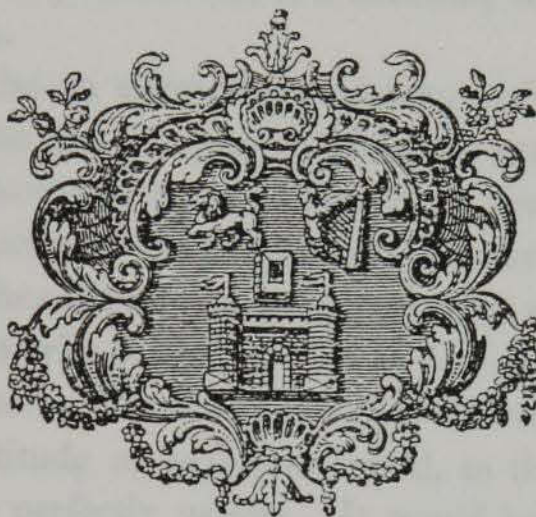
<sup>128</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 431.



ELEMENTS  
OF  
PLANE ASTRONOMY,

BY  
JOHN BRINKLEY, D.D.,  
LATE LORD BISHOP OF CLOYNE.

EDITED BY THE  
REV. THOMAS LUBY, M.A.,  
FELLOW OF TRINITY COLLEGE.



DUBLIN:  
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BOOKSELLERS TO THE UNIVERSITY.

M.DCCC.XXXVI.

**Fig. 12.1** Title page from *Elements of Plane Astronomy*.  
[John Brinkley] 1836.



## PREFACE.

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THIS work is altogether designed for the use of students in the Dublin University, but as it may fall into the hands of some not aware of this circumstance, and who may expect many things not found therein, and may meet with other things to them apparently unsuitable, or insufficiently illustrated, it is necessary to give some explanation.

A treatise on astronomy professing to be complete, ought, in the first place, to abound with examples. In a treatise, however, merely designed to teach the outlines of the science, and to point out what may incite and lead to further inquiry, such examples are unnecessary. In the necessarily limited portion of time devoted to astronomical science in the course of a University education, a multitude of examples would, to the mass of students, be perfectly useless. It would be, therefore, improper to increase thereby the size of this volume, which has been prepared at the request of the college for their use.

Again, it may be said, that more matter was introduced than was absolutely necessary; that it was unnecessary, for instance, to introduce the subject of astro-

Fig. 12.2 Page from Preface of Brinkley's *Elements of Plane Astronomy*.



The study of astronomy was aided to a large extent by the publication in 1817 of a textbook on astronomy by the scholarly Patrick Lynch. Like the titles of most of his textbooks, this one too included the contents of the book. It was called *An Easy Introduction to Practical Astronomy*<sup>129</sup>, and *The Use of the Globes; including, In Mnemonic Verses and Rhyming Couplets, As The Most Effectual Means Hitherto Invented For Assisting The Memory, The Necessary Axioms, Definitions and Rules of Chronology, Geometry, Algebra and Trigonometry, With the Prognostics of the Weather etc. etc. For the Use of Schools, and Young Ladies*<sup>130</sup>. In it Lynch supplied 'the necessary mathematical foundation for a study of elementary astronomy'. He posed numerous problems on astronomy and supplied the answers. He also treated the subject from the historical perspective and cited the opinions of forty writers on the subject, of whom twelve lived before Christ.<sup>131</sup> Patrick Lynch was dedicated to educational research as he produced an ambitious work on the geography of the world and a history of Ireland, that same year. Once again the textbook bore a lengthy and informative title. It was called *A Geographical & Statistical Survey of the Terraqueous Globe, Including a Comprehensive Compend of the History, Antiquities and Topography of Ireland. Embellished with a Curious Map of Ancient Éire. For the Use of Schools and Adult Persons*<sup>132</sup> [Table 7.1]. The book consisted of 340 pages, the first 190 were devoted to geography and the remainder to history. He treated the subject of geography scientifically and showed a preference for statistical geography, to judge from his synoptic tables.<sup>133</sup> Lynch was above all an educator, being 'an unusually good teacher' and proprietor of the *Classical and Mercantile School at No. 30, Lower Ormond Quay* since 1808<sup>134</sup>.

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<sup>129</sup>Patrick Lynch. *An Easy Introduction to Practical Astronomy*. (Dublin, John Barlow, 26, Bolton Street, 1817).

<sup>130</sup>Séamus Ua Casaide. 'List of Works Projected or Published by Patrick Lynch'. In *Journal of the Waterford & South-East of Ireland Archaeological Society*. Vol. XV, (1912), p. 116.

<sup>131</sup>P.J. Dowling. 'Patrick Lynch Schoolmaster 1754-1818', p. 469.

<sup>132</sup>Patrick Lynch. *A Geographical & Statistical Survey of the Terraqueous Globe*. (Dublin, John Barlow, 26, Bolton St., 1817).

<sup>133</sup>op. cit.

<sup>134</sup>P.J. Dowling. *The Hedge Schools of Ireland*, p. 140.



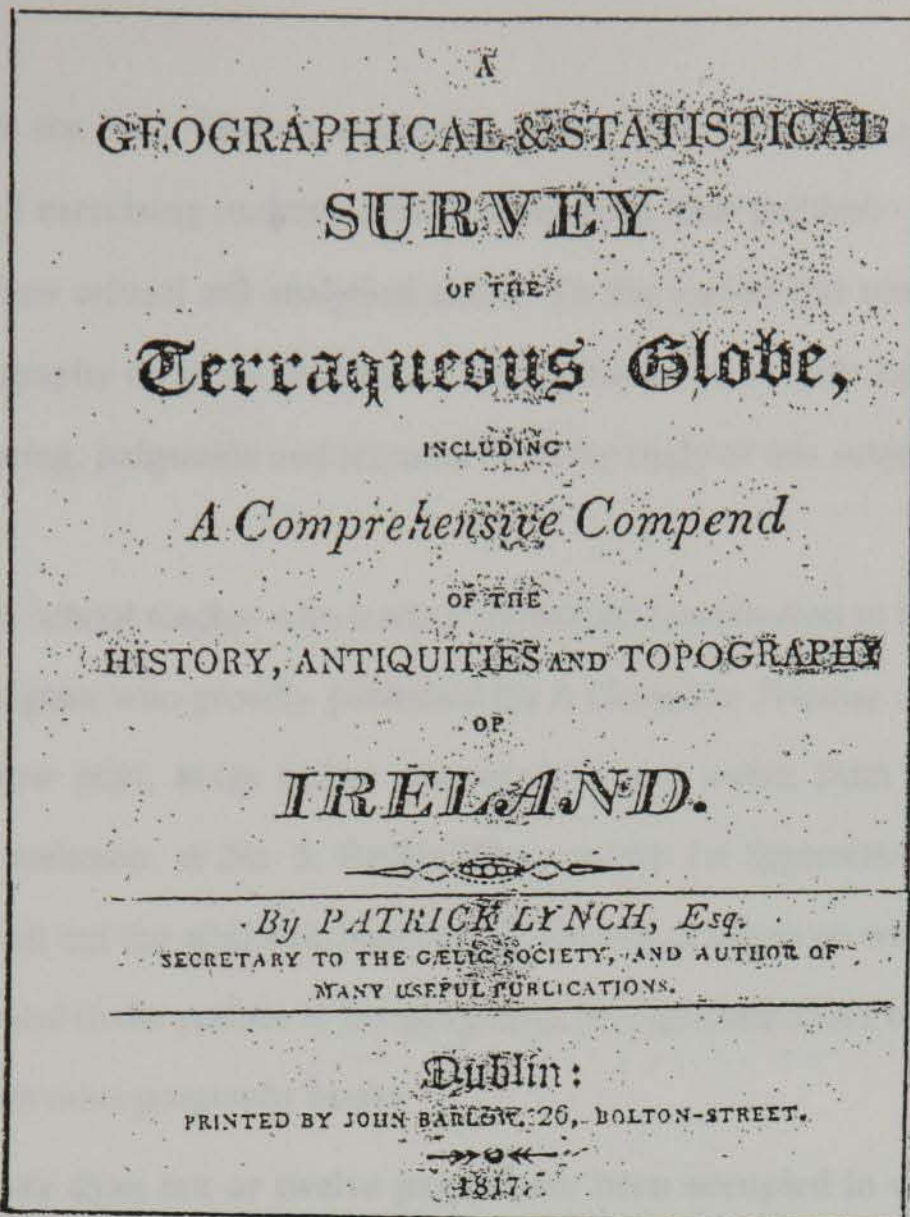


Fig.13.1

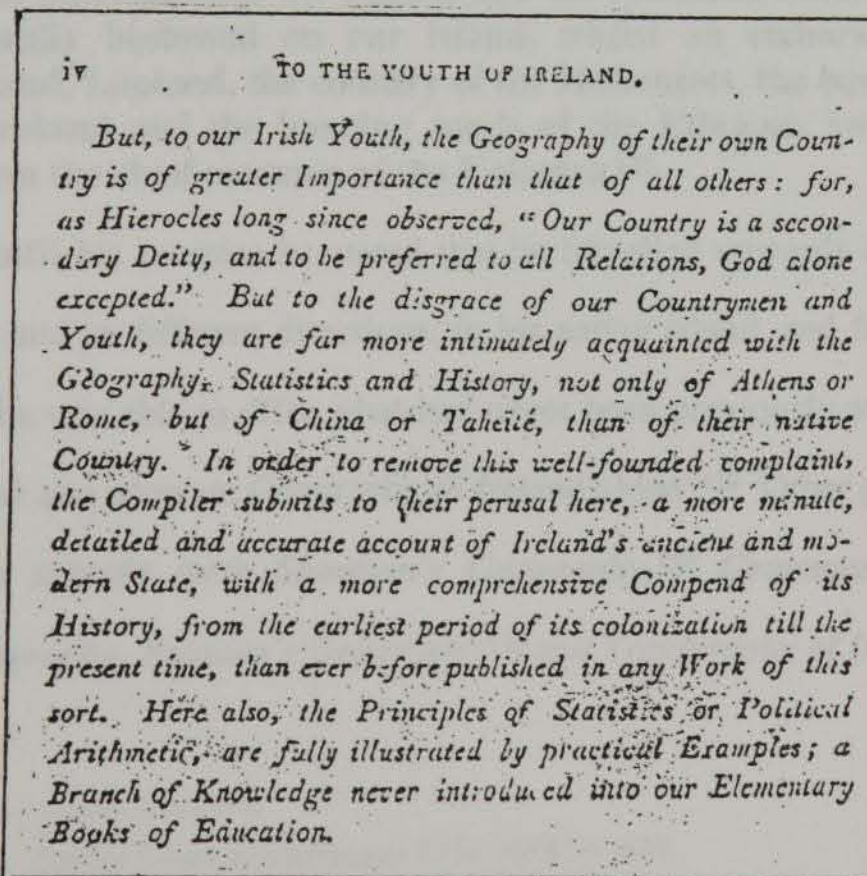


Fig.13.2

Fig. 13.1      Title page from *A Geographical & Statistical Survey of the Terraqueous Globe*.  
[Patrick Lynch] 1817.

Fig. 13.2      An address To the Youth of Ireland from Lynch's *A Geographical & Statistical Survey of the Terraqueous Globe*.



In line with the best modern education theory and practice, Lynch recognised the importance of exercising students' minds, developing their problem - solving abilities and sharpening their critical and analytical skills. To this end he laid some of the onus of the study of geography on to the students of his textbooks, as he indicated 'the value on their part of reasoning, judgement and research'<sup>135</sup> in the study of this subject.

Another Irish school teacher who made a significant contribution to textbook publication, was Paul Deighan who proudly published his *A Complete Treatise on the Geography of Ireland*, a new plan, never before attempted by any writer from his schoolbook and stationary warehouse, at No. 5, Swift's Row, on the 1st September, 1810.<sup>136</sup> Deighan wished to push out the academic boundaries. He was going to go where no man had ever gone before and in the preface to his geography he explained to his readers why he had to do this. In previous geography books

**not more than ten or twelve pages have been occupied in describing the rich and luxuriant soil the climate and the thousand natural advantages, so liberally bestowed on our island, whilst an elaborate account of Greenland, Lapland, the country of the Hottentots, the barbarous shores of Negroland and the burning sands of the Ethiopia, swell, the pages, and form the chief contents of the Volumes.**<sup>137</sup>

In order to fulfil his promise he stated that he travelled upwards of 8,000 miles, at his own expense and in different directions, in his native island, and from his own personal observation, he was able to offer what had never been previously attempted by any other writer - 'A true and accurate Geography of Ireland alone'.<sup>138</sup> Other geography books used in the hedge schools were *Sharman's Geography*,<sup>139</sup> *Grammar of Geography*, *De Furney's Geography*, *Fenning's Geography*<sup>140</sup> and *Topography of Ireland*.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>135</sup>P.J. Dowling. 'Patrick Lynch Schoolmaster 1754-1818', p. 470.

<sup>136</sup>Paul Deighan. *A Complete Treatise on the Geography of Ireland*. (Dublin, No. 5, Swift's Row, 1810).

<sup>137</sup>P. McG. "Some Southern Schoolmasters of a Hundred Years Ago". In *Journal of the Waterford & South-East of Ireland Archaeological Society*. Vol. XVII, (1914), p. 33.

<sup>138</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>139</sup>Sharman, John. *An Introduction to Geography*. Dublin, J. Jones, 1813.

<sup>140</sup>Fenning, Daniel. *A new and easy guide to the use of the Globes and Rudiments of Geography*. Dublin n.d.

<sup>141</sup>Rev. Martin Brenan. *Schools of Kildare and Leighlin*, p. 81.



A  
COMPLETE TREATISE  
ON

*The Geography of Ireland,*

ON A NEW PLAN, NEVER BEFORE ATTEMPTED BY  
ANY WRITER,

ADAPTED TO THE

MERCHANT, THE GENTLEMAN, THE POLITICIAN;  
THE ANTIQUARIAN, THE NATURALIST,  
THE SCHOLAR AND THE ARTIST.

*The following are some of the most prominent subjects, viz.*

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|--|----------------------------|--|----------------------------|

BY PAUL DEIGHAN, PHILOMATH.

DUBLIN PRINTED :

Sold by the AUTHOR, at his School-Book and Stationary Warehouse,  
No. 5, SWIFT'S-ROW, also by all the principal  
Booksellers and Stationers in Ireland.

Fig. 14.1 Title page from *A Complete Treatise on the Geography of Ireland*. [Paul Deighan] 1810.



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TO THE  
**READER.**

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THIS Work is presented to the Public on a new plan ; it has been the aim of the Author to extend its usefulness ; it is not confined to the Merchant, the Gentleman, the Politician, the Antiquarian, the Naturalist, the Scholar, or the Artist, but carefully adapted to each ; its plan is general, and its utility must operate generally, in proportion as its extension adheres to its designs. In descanting of the Cities, in the division of the Counties, in noticing the remains of ancient splendor, &c. &c. particular attention has been paid to the situation, antiquity, consequence, trade, commerce, advances to and retrogression from refinement among the original natives of the soil. The gross and virulent calumnies of former Geographers are refuted, and the old inhabitants proved not to have been that barbarous and savage race, which art and malignity have represented them before the eye of deceived Europe ; and some of the most prominent subjects relative to our native Island, (see title page) noticed with truth and precision. The respective Counties, and their present state reported, and the plans for educating and enlightening the poor particularly considered.

The Author of this Compendium, having spent the greater part of a laborious life in the instruction of youth, has had frequent occasion to lament, and has heard many of the most intelligent among his brethren lament, the want of a pure Geography of Ireland. In most of the Treatises on Geography that came within the Author's notice, not more than

Fig. 14.2 An address To the Reader from Deighan's *A Complete Treatise on the Geography of Ireland*.



INTRODUCTION  
TO  
GEOGRAPHY.

By JOHN SHARMAN.

THE TENTH EDITION.

STUDIOUSLY REVISED, CORRECTED, AND MODERNIZED, BY  
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CO.; G. CUTLER; AND THE OTHER RESPECTABLE BOOK-  
SELLERS OF DUBLIN.

1836.

Fig. 15.1 Title page from *Introduction to Geography*.  
[John Sharman] 1836. 10<sup>th</sup> edition.



A variety of books on voyages were also enjoyed such as *Captain Bligh's Expedition to the South Sea*,<sup>142</sup> *Cooke's Voyages*,<sup>143</sup> *Anson's Voyages*,<sup>144</sup> *Discovery of America*<sup>145</sup> and *Drake's Voyages*.<sup>146</sup> Books on travel were likewise very popular in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. They were read avidly in the hedge schools of Ireland judging from the following list: *Juvenile Travels*,<sup>147</sup> *Travels in Africa*,<sup>148</sup> *Modern Travels*,<sup>149</sup> *Travels Through Sweden and Germany*,<sup>150</sup> *Travels Through the English Shires*,<sup>151</sup> *Travels to the North Sea*,<sup>152</sup> *Turkish Travels*,<sup>153</sup> *Bruce's Travels*<sup>154</sup> and *Le Vaillant's Travels*<sup>155</sup>.

The study of Irish history was frowned upon by the government. Richard Lovell Edgeworth, in a letter to the Board of Education, dated 8<sup>th</sup> November, 1808, gave his explanation as to why history was not a suitable subject for the Irish. He wrote 'to inculcate democracy and a foolish hankering after undefined liberty is not necessary in Ireland'<sup>156</sup>. Contemporary writers viewed the hedge schoolmasters with the deepest suspicion as they doubted their loyalty to the English government. Edward Wakefield feared that Irish children would imbibe from them 'enmity to England, hatred to the government, and superstitious veneration for old and absurd customs'<sup>157</sup>. The Rev. William Shaw Mason feared for the security of the state also when he discovered a 'pernicious little book' called '*The Articles of Limerick*' in the hedge schools of Kilkenny.

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<sup>142</sup>Ibid., p. 81.

<sup>143</sup>Ibid., p. 192.

<sup>144</sup>Ibid., p. 335.

<sup>145</sup>Ibid., p. 341.

<sup>146</sup>First Report of Commissioners of 1825. Appendix No. 221, p. 555.

<sup>147</sup>op. cit., p. 396.

<sup>148</sup>Ibid., p. 560.

<sup>149</sup>Ibid., p. 351.

<sup>150</sup>Ibid., p. 567.

<sup>151</sup>App. No. 221, p. 558.

<sup>152</sup>Ibid., p. 555.

<sup>153</sup>Ibid., p. 558.

<sup>154</sup>Ibid., p. 555.

<sup>155</sup>Ibid., p. 558.

<sup>156</sup>P.J. Dowling. *The Hedge Schools of Ireland*, p. 85. (1813-1814 v., 3 Ed. Report, App. No. 109).

<sup>157</sup>Edward Wakefield. *An Account of Ireland*, p. 398.



T H E  
**H I S T O R Y**  
O F  
**I R E L A N D,**  
F R O M T H E

Earliest Account of Time, to the Invasion of  
the ENGLISH under King HENRY II.  
being a Series of the principal Transactions  
in that Kingdom, for upwards of 3000  
Years.

A L S O

An Account of the most eminent Men who flour-  
ish'd in the *Irish Church*, in the 5th, 6th, 7th,  
8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th Centuries; and  
of those famous *Irish* who converted to the Chri-  
stian Faith, the Kingdoms of the *Picts*, *North-*  
*umbrians*, *Mercians*, *East-Anglians*, and *East-*  
*Saxons*, in *Great-Britain*; *Switzerland*, *Fran-*  
*conia*, Part of *Flanders*, and Part of *Germany*.  
Likewise of those famous *Irish* who founded the  
Universities of *Oxford*, *Paris*, and *Pavia*, and  
others of less Note.

With a *Dissertation* on the *Laws*, *Customs*, and  
*Manners* of the *Antient Irish*. And the *Genea-*  
*logies* of their *Principal Families*.

---

By T. COMERFORD, Esq;

---

D U B L I N :  
Printed and sold by EBENEZER RIDER in  
*George's-lane*, near *Chequer-lane*, 1754.

Fig. 16.1 Title page from *The History of Ireland*.  
[T. Comerford] 1754.



THE  
HISTORY  
OF  
IRELAND.

BY  
FERD<sup>o</sup>. WARNER, L.L.D.

VOLUME the FIRST.

LONDON:

Printed for J. and R. TONSON, in the STRAND.  
M.DCC.LXIII.

Fig. 17.1 Title page from *The History of Ireland*.  
[Fernando Warner] 1763.



DR. L E L A N D ' S  
H I S T O R Y  
O F  
I R E L A N D.  
I N T H R E E V O L U M E S.  
V O L. I.

Fig. 18.1 Title page from *History of Ireland*.  
[Dr. Thomas Leland] 1774.

He considered that it would be impossible for children to read this book 'without imbibing a spirit of disloyalty to the Government, and hatred of the present Royal family and the English connection'<sup>158</sup>. These fears continued to be expressed in 1820 by an anonymous pamphleteer, who doubted very much also, whether, 'the country schoolmaster' was a loyal subject. He suspected that 'to his little store of learning, he generally adds some traditionary tales of his country, of a character to keep alive discontent'<sup>159</sup>. In 1822 T. Crofton Croker, when writing about his tour of the south of Ireland, recorded how he heard the hedge schoolmasters in the south express their 'disloyalty' quite openly while professing a deep commitment to the broadest republicanism as they deprecated and disclaimed the Union.<sup>160</sup>

However unsuited to the task, hedge schoolmasters were deemed to be by contemporary writers and unionists, one thing is certain, Irish and European history was a subject in great demand in the hedge schools as some twenty-seven different history books were in use. There was no narrow, provincialism displayed here either as there were texts on the French Revolution<sup>161</sup>, Hume's *History of England*<sup>162</sup>, Goldsmith's *Histories of England, Rome and Greece*<sup>163</sup>, together with biographies of Emperors of Rome<sup>164</sup>, Empress Catherine of Russia<sup>165</sup>, Frederick III of Prussia<sup>166</sup> and Charles XII of Sweden<sup>167</sup>.

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<sup>158</sup>Rev. William Shaw Mason. *Survey of Tullaroan*. (Dublin, Faulkner Press, 1819), p. 135.

<sup>159</sup>Anon. *Thoughts and suggestions on the education of the peasantry in Ireland*. (London, T. Cadwell in the Strand, 1820), p. 10.

<sup>160</sup>T. Crofton Croker. *Researches in the South of Ireland*. (Baldwin, Craddock & Joy, 47, Paternoster Row, 1818), p. 328.

<sup>161</sup>App. No. 221, p. 556.

<sup>162</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 555.

<sup>163</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>164</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 557.

<sup>165</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 558.

<sup>166</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 556.

<sup>167</sup>*Ibid.*



# NATURAL HISTORY,

FOR

THE USE OF SCHOOLS,

AND OF YOUNG PERSONS IN GENERAL;

FOUNDED ON THE LINNÆAN ARRANGEMENT OF ANIMALS;  
WITH POPULAR DESCRIPTIONS IN THE MANNER OF  
GOLDSMITH AND BUFFON.

ILLUSTRATED BY FORTY-SIX COPPER-PLATES,  
Representing One Hundred and Sixty-six of the  
most curious Objects.

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Author of the British Nepos, Abridgment of Plutarch's Lives,  
the Universal Short Hand, &c. &c. &c.

"Natural History is a study particularly suited to Children: it cultivates their talents for observation, applies to objects within their reach, and to objects which are every day interesting to them."—*Edgeworth on Practical Education.*

"It is to be regretted that Buffon, with all his excellencies, is absolutely inadmissible into the library of a young lady, both on account of his immodesty and his impiety. Goldsmith's History of Animated Nature has many references to a divine author: it is to be wished that some person would publish a new edition of this work, purified from the indelicate and offensive parts."—*Miss More's Strictures on Female Education.*

SECOND EDITION, REVISED.

London:

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1801.

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Fig. 19.1 Title page from *Natural History*.  
[William Mavor] 1801.



and head dresses. These birds are caught on rings smeared with a viscous substance. The feathers are dried in stoves, which is found to be the best means of preserving their beauty.

#### ORDER-III.—ANSERES.

**B**IRDS of the duck kind have smooth bills, covered with skin, and nervous at the points, serving as strainers to their food. Their legs are short, their feet formed for swimming, and their toes connected by membranes. They pass the greater part of their time in the water, but usually breed on land.

#### THE SWAN.

Of these elegant birds, there are two varieties; the wild and the tame. The former is a native of the hyperborean regions, and only migrates into our temperate latitudes, when compelled by the severity of the cold. It frequents the lakes and forests of Lapland, in common with other aquatic fowl, during the summer months; and there also it rears its young.

The wild swan is much less than the tame, and is of an ash-colour along the back, and on the tips of the wings; the eyes are bare and yellow, and the legs are dusky. Its cry is very loud, and may be heard at a great distance. In the new settlements of Cumberland county, in New Holland, black swans are seen as common as the white with us.

The tame swan is too well known to require a minute description. It is the largest of British birds, and of all others the most majestic and picturesque, when exercising its native propensities in the water. It lays seven or eight eggs, and is nearly two months in hatching. It subsists chiefly on aquatic plants and roots, but sometimes devours insects.

The swan was considered as a very delicate viand among the

Fig. 19.2 Page from Mavor's *Natural History*.



Irish history books included the *Life of St. Patrick*<sup>168</sup>, *The History of Tithes*<sup>169</sup>, *A Genuine History of Ireland*<sup>170</sup> and *Histories of Ireland* by Keating<sup>171</sup>, Comerford<sup>172</sup>, Leland<sup>173</sup>, Warner<sup>174</sup> and Lawless.<sup>175</sup> Natural History was taught as part of the children's reading lesson, which must have proved a source of great delight to them. The textbooks used were *Histories of Birds and Beasts and Natural History*<sup>176</sup>.

Religion was highly prized in Ireland and as a result it was one of the most sought after subjects in the hedge schools. The schoolmasters often worked in close co-operation with the catholic priests as 'Coadjutors' in the teaching of the catechism and the christian doctrine on Sundays.<sup>177</sup> [Ch. 1] There were 25 different religion books in use in the schools of Kildare and Leighlin as well as 26 doctrinal and devotional books.<sup>178</sup> The 1825 commissioners of education listed 92 works on Religious Works and Tracts, one of which was the famous Divine Verse in Irish of the pilgrim poet from Limerick, Tadhg Gaedhealach Ó Súilleabháin (1715-1795) whose *Pious Miscellany*<sup>179</sup> was published forty times after its first publication in 1802.<sup>180</sup> Of the 11 Roman Catholic Catechisms listed, 4 of them were in Irish. The first one was bilingual by the Rev. Andrew Dunlevy, Prefect of the Irish community in Paris.

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<sup>168</sup>Ibid., p. 555.

<sup>169</sup>Ibid.

<sup>170</sup>Ibid., p. 556.

<sup>171</sup>Ibid., p. 557.

<sup>172</sup>Ibid.

<sup>173</sup>Ibid.

<sup>174</sup>Ibid.

<sup>175</sup>Rev. Martin Brenan. *Schools of Kildare and Leighlin*, p. 81.

<sup>176</sup>Ibid., p. 81.

<sup>177</sup>Ibid., pp. 65-69.

<sup>178</sup>Ibid., pp. 67-68.

<sup>179</sup>App. No. 221, p. 554.

<sup>180</sup>Ristéard Ó Foghludha. *Tadhg Gaedhealach Ó Súilleabháin*. (Mhuinntir C.S. Ó Fallamhán Teo., 1927), p. 13.

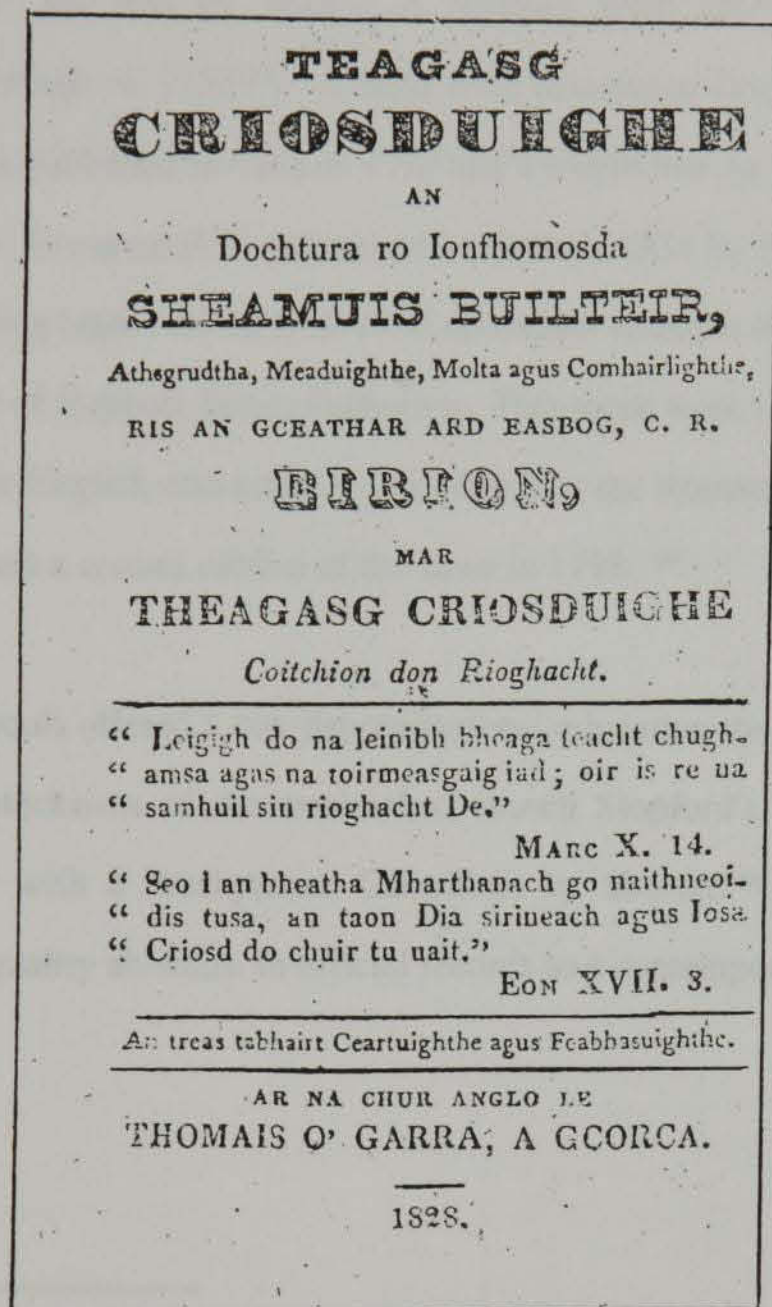


Fig. 20.1 Title page from *Teagasg Criosduighe*.  
[Seamus Buiteir] 1828.



It was entitled *The Catechism or Christian Doctrine by way of question and answer in the Irish language and character*<sup>181</sup> and it was published in Paris in 1742 'with the approbation of Louis XV and the support of P.J. Perrott, Lord of the Manor of Barmon'<sup>182</sup>. The Rev. Dr. Farrell O'Reilly published his Irish catechism *An Teagasc Críostaighe*<sup>183</sup> in Dublin in 1750. He was the Bishop of Kilmore from 1806-1829<sup>184</sup> and the titular Archbishop of Armagh in 1750<sup>185</sup>. A third Irish catechism *Teagusg Creesduí*<sup>186</sup> by Dr. James Butler was published in Cork in 1792 and a fourth one *An Teagasc Críostaiche, do réir cheiste agus fhreagraidh*<sup>187</sup>, published in Cork in 1831 by the bishop of Cloyne and Ross, William Coppinger. As early as 1735 seventeen sermons in Irish were published by the titular bishop of Raphoe, James Gallagher. This work went into eighteen editions and was printed in the English character.<sup>188</sup> An edition in the Roman character was printed in Dublin in 1795 and a second edition of the same in 1798.<sup>189</sup>

As the hedge schools offered a non-denominational education the commissioners' list also included four catechisms of the established church Stopford's, Mann's, Marriott's and Lewis's together with a Presbyterian Catechism by Shorter.<sup>190</sup> Evidence of its non-denominational quality abounds, in official records and contemporary writings.

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<sup>181</sup>Rev. Andrew Donlevy. *The Catechism of Christian Doctrine by way of Question and Answer*. (Paris: James Guerin at St. Thomas of Aquin's in S. James-Street, 1742).  
Andrew Donlevy. *An Teagasc Críosuidhe do Réir Ceasda agus Freagartha*. (Dublin: M.J. O'Connor, 1791).

<sup>182</sup>Christopher Anderson. *Historical Sketches of the Native Irish and their Descendants*. (Edinburgh, Oliver & Boyd, Tweeddale-Court, 1830), p. 96.

<sup>183</sup>Farrell O'Reilly. *An Teagasc Críostaighe*. (William Williams, 1863).

<sup>184</sup>S. Ó C. 'O'Reilly's Irish Catechism'. In *The Irish Book Lover* (Nov.-Dec., 1930), p. 170.

<sup>185</sup>Christopher Anderson. *Historical Sketches*, p. 98.

<sup>186</sup>Dr. James Butler. *Teagusg Creesduí*. (Corcuig, 1792).

<sup>187</sup>William Coppinger, Bishop of Cloyne and Ross. *An Teagasc Críostaiche; do réir cheiste agus fhreagraidh*. (Cork, Cormac Diolún, 1831).

<sup>188</sup>James Gallagher, Bishop of Kildare (1751). *Seventeen Irish Sermons on useful and necessary subjects in English Characters*. (Dublin, P. Wogan, 1807).

<sup>189</sup>Whitley Stokes. *Observations on the Necessity of Publishing the Scriptures in the Irish Language*. (Dublin, William Watson, 7, Capel St., 1806), p. 5.

<sup>190</sup>First Report of the Commissioners of Education, 1825. App. No. 221, p. 553.



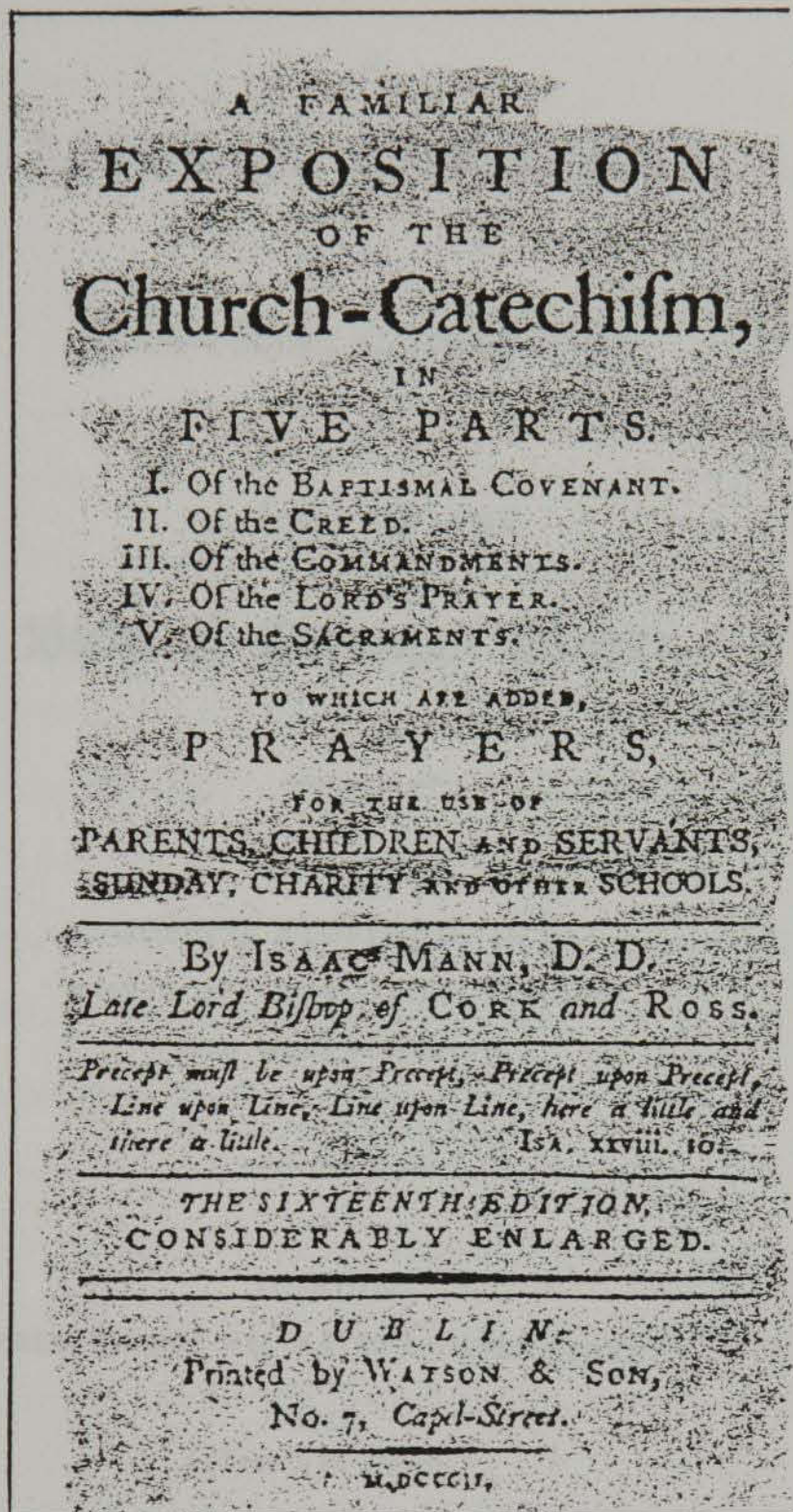


Fig. 21.1 Title page from *A Familiar Exposition of the Church-Catechism*. [Isaac Mann] 1802.



A  
LITURGY CATECHISM;  
OR,  
*SCRIPTURAL ILLUSTRATION*  
OF  
A PART OF THE  
*Book of Common Prayer.*

BY  
JOSEPH STOPFORD, D. D.  
RECTOR OF CONWALL, CO. DONEGAL,  
AND LATE S. F. T. C. D.

DUBLIN:  
PRINTED FOR WM. WATSON, CAPEL-STREET.

1818.  
(Price Ten Pence.)

Fig. 22.1 Title page from *A Liturgy Catechism*.  
[Joseph Stopford] 1818.

In Appendix No. 3 to the Fourteenth Report of the Commissioners of Education 1806-1812, it was stated that 'There are places in Ireland where Protestants and Catholics are taught to read and write, and to say their respective catechisms by Catholic masters'<sup>191</sup>. Carleton recorded in his autobiography 'that so many Protestants attended a school at which he was a pupil that their withdrawal necessitated its closing down'<sup>192</sup>. The Rev. Henry Cooke's presbyterian hedge schoolmaster Joseph Pollock taught 'The Shorter Catechism of the Westminster Divines, the Church Catechism, and the Christian Doctrine of the Roman Catholics ... to the members of the respective sects'<sup>193</sup>. In the Wexford hedge schools, when there was no suitable teacher to teach the protestant catechism 'one of the eldest Catholic boys performed the ceremony'<sup>194</sup>.

Studying the classics - Greek, Latin and Hebrew, formed an important part of the hedge school curriculum. This was a broad, liberal curriculum, which was a source of surprise to many, in an age which promoted the utilitarian philosophy of Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832), which emphasised 'useful learning as opposed to the decadent and illiberal liberal education'<sup>195</sup>. There was a strongly held conviction by political leaders, contemporary writers and evangelists who had an input into the rival education societies, that the poor should not be educated above their station in life. The Rev. Horatio Townsend, a clergyman of the established church, held fast to this belief. He considered that 'In a country where there is hardly any employment but tilling the ground, it (learning) can eventually be of no use except to such as are bred to trades'<sup>196</sup>.

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<sup>191</sup>Fourteenth Report of the Commissioners of Education, 1806-1812, p. 238.

<sup>192</sup>William Carleton. *Autobiography*, p. 38.

<sup>193</sup>J.L. Porter. *The Life and Times of Henry Cooke*, D.D. L.L.D. (London, 1871), p. 4.

<sup>194</sup>Dublin Uni Magazine, Nov., 1862, p. 610.

<sup>195</sup>S.J. Curtis and M.E.A. Boulwood. *An Introductory History of English Education Since 1800*. (University Tutorial Press Ltd., Clifton House, Euston Road, London, N.W.1, 1862), p. 51.

<sup>196</sup>Rev. Horatio Townsend. *General & Statistical Survey of the County of Cork, Vol. 1*. (Cork. Edwards & Savage, Castle St., 1815), p. 97.



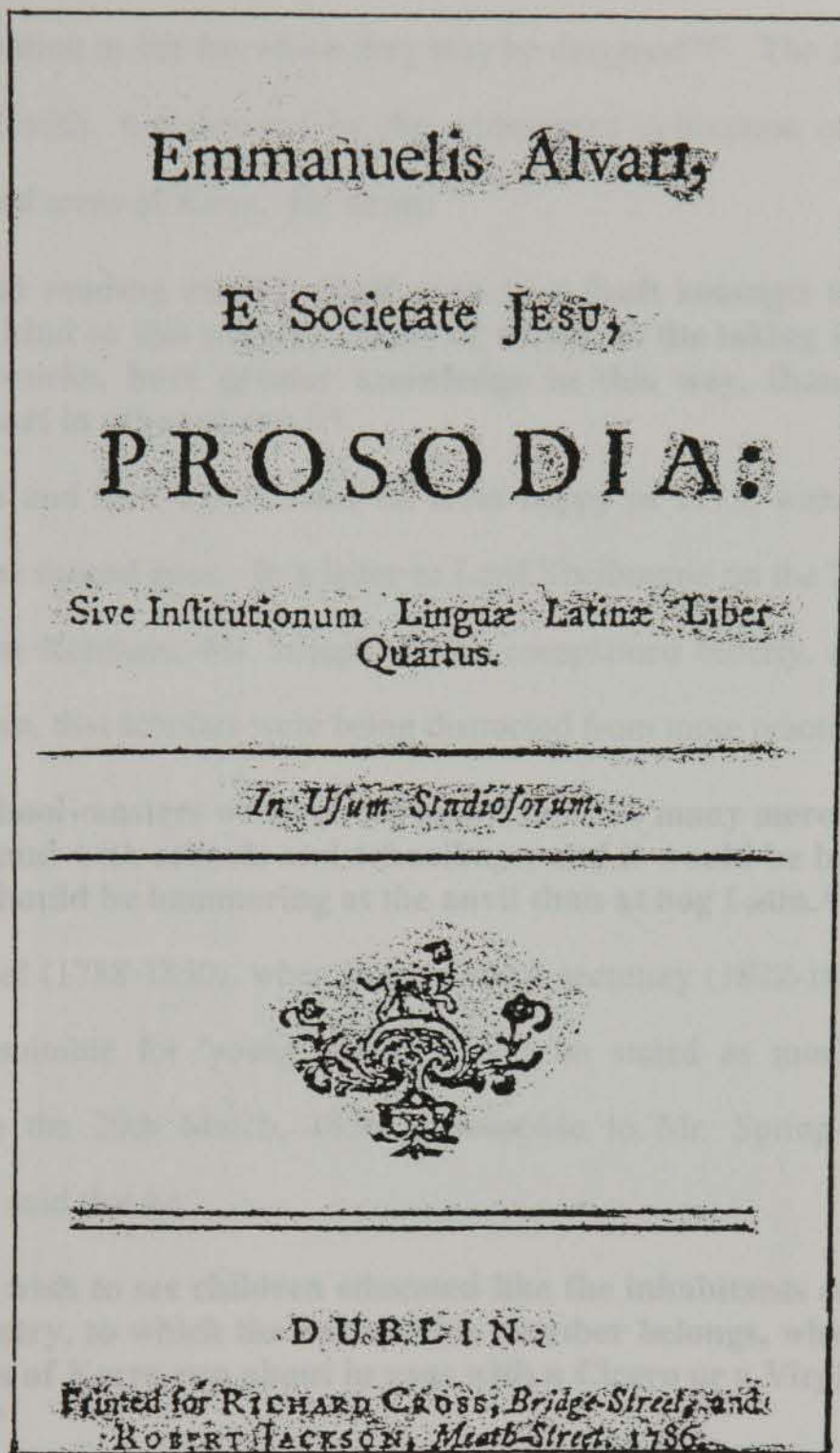


Fig. 23.1 Title page from *Prosodia*. [1786].

This was also the principle behind the Lancastrian Plan of education submitted to John Foster, Chancellor of the Exchequer in Ireland, in 1805, and applied by the Kildare Place Society and other education societies 'to make youth more useful, without elevating them above the situation in life for which they may be designed'<sup>197</sup>. The 18th century historian Dr. Charles Smith, was amazed by the widespread cultivation of the classics in the rugged, isolated areas of Kerry. He wrote:

**Classical reading extends itself even to a fault amongst the lower and poorer kind in this country; many of whom, to the taking them off more useful works, have greater knowledge in this way, than some of the better sort in other places.**<sup>198</sup>

The landlords and their agents were far from happy in 1773, with this quest for Latin learning by the ragged poor. In a letter to Lord Shelbourne on the 2<sup>nd</sup> September, 1773, his agent from Kenmare, Mr. Joseph Taylor complained bitterly, as he too shared Dr. Smith's concern, that scholars were being distracted from more practical occupations:

**as to school-masters we have too many, and too many mere schollars, for we abound with schools and schoolboys, and it would be better that our youth should be hammering at the anvil than at bog Latin.**<sup>199</sup>

Sir Robert Peel (1788-1850), when he was home secretary (1822-1827) considered such education unsuitable for 'young peasants' and he stated as much in the House of Commons on the 20th March, 1826 in response to Mr. Spring-Rice, the M.P. for Limerick. He said that he:

**did not wish to see children educated like the inhabitants of that part of the country, to which the honourable member belongs, where the young peasants of Kerry run about in rags with a Cicero or a Virgil under their arms.**<sup>200</sup>

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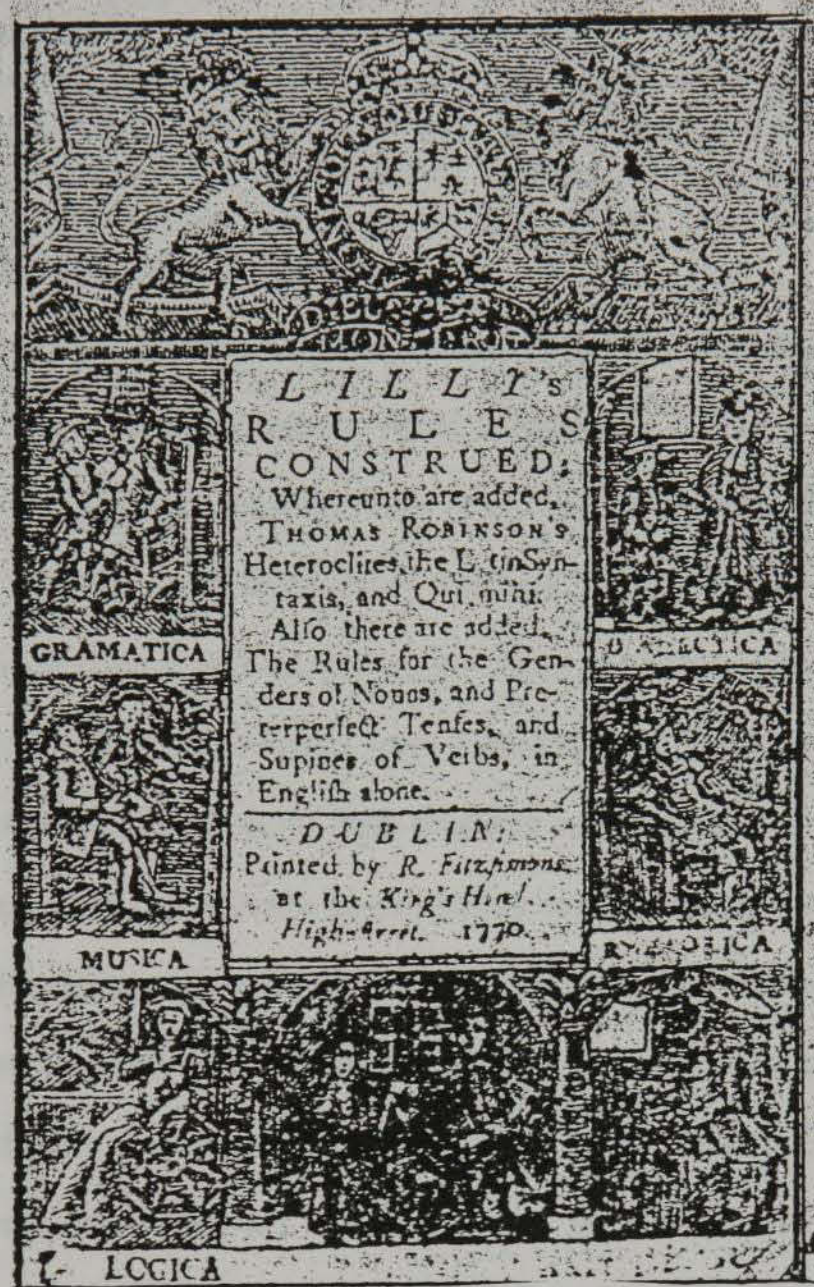
<sup>197</sup>Timothy Corcoran. *Selected Texts*, p. 104.

<sup>198</sup>George Holmes. *Sketches of Some of the Southern Counties of Ireland*. (London: Longman & Rees, J. Cuthell, Vernor & Hood, 1801), p. 151.

<sup>199</sup>Marquis of Lansdowne. *Glanerought and the Petty-Fitzmaurices*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), p. 90.

<sup>200</sup>The Irish Monthly, 1931. 59th Yearly Vol., p. 686.





**Fig. 24.1** Title page from *Lilly's Rules Construed*.  
[William Lily] 1770.



In some instances, the teaching of Latin, Hebrew and Greek was done to meet the practical needs of students, as Sir James Caldwell, F.R.S., Sheriff of Co. Fermanagh, pointed out in a letter to the press in 1764 with regard to the teaching of Latin:

**The papists are not only connected by the General Tie of religion that acknowledges the Pope for its common Father and Head, with the courts of France and Spain, but there is not a family in the Island that has not a relation in the Church, in the Army, or in Trade in these countries, and in order to qualify the children for Foreign Service, they are all taught Latin in schools that are kept in poor Huts, in many places in the Southern part of the Kingdom.<sup>201</sup>**

Irish parents had three main ambitions which they held in prospect for their sons, and these were that they would become either a 'priest, a clerk, or a schoolmaster'. The priesthood was the highest accolade they could aspire towards 'The determination once fixed, the boy was set apart from every kind of labour, that he might be at liberty to bestow his undivided time and talents to the object set before him'<sup>202</sup>. However, up until 1793, when the first Irish seminaries were founded at St Kieran's College, Kilkenny and at St. Patrick's College, Carlow,<sup>203</sup> Irish students who wished to study for the priesthood on the continent relied exclusively on the native schools for instruction in the classics, in order to meet the entry requirements of these colleges. During the French Revolution of 1798 there were 17 seminaries in France, mostly founded by the Irish 'in which nearly five hundred scholars and masters, were maintained and educated'<sup>204</sup>. The Archbishop of Dublin, Dr. Troy, in his *Report of the State of the Diocese of Dublin to the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda*, in 1802, referred to Irish Colleges in Paris, Nantes, Bordeaux, Douai as well as in Belgium at Louvain and Antwerp and one in Rome which was closed down by the French in 1798, as Ireland was in the British Empire.<sup>205</sup> According to the private report of Dr. Curtis, Rector of the Irish College at Salamanca, for the year 1789, the academic standard of entrants from Ireland was generally high and the

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<sup>201</sup>W.E.H. Lecky. *A History of Ireland in the 18th Century*. (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1897). Vol. II, p. 206.

<sup>202</sup>William Carleton. *The Hedge School*, p. 273.

<sup>203</sup>Norman Atkinson. *Irish Education*. (Dublin: Allen Figgis & Co. Ltd., 1969), p. 59.

<sup>204</sup>Myles V. Ronan. *An Apostle of Catholic Dublin*. (Dublin, Browne & Nolan Ltd., The Richview Press, Clonskeagh, 1944), p. 73.

<sup>205</sup>*Ibid.*



students came from twenty six different counties. The following progress report on Dr. Juan Robinson is representative of the other 28 listed:

**Dr. Juan Robinson, student. A native of the D. of Leighlin, of Catholic and noble parents, 24 years of age and two as a student with burse he had learned Humanities very well at home, and in this college he has studied a little Hebrew, Mathematics and is at present in his second year's Philosophy. His progress has been equal to his great talents. He is of fair application and excellent conduct.**<sup>206</sup>

Practically all of the students mentioned in Dr. Curtis's Report 'had learned the Humanities very well at home', or 'had learned sufficient Humanities at home to enter this college'. Considering that the Irish College had been incorporated with the University of Salamanca in 1608, 'the qualifications for entrance must in many cases have been of corresponding university standard'<sup>207</sup>. Rev. J. Milner, writing in 1808, was of the opinion that 'the Irish students in the foreign universities, down to the very period of the late revolution, carried off more than a due proportion of prizes and professorships by the sheer merit of superior talents and learning, and a much greater proportion than fell to the lot of all other foreigners put together'<sup>208</sup>.

Kerry was the county which contemporary writers<sup>209</sup> repeatedly singled out as the centre of classical learning in Ireland, especially the famous classical hedge school at Faha, where scholars, some of whom were intended for the priesthood, arrived from all over the country, in search of the much coveted 'Munster Diploma' for proficiency in Greek, Latin and Hebrew. George Holmes was astonished to meet 'amongst the uncultivated part of the country', 'good Latin scholars' who could 'not speak a word of English'<sup>210</sup>. The Rev. J. Milner could testify from his own personal contact with the peasants that a great proportion of them 'some twenty or thirty years back, could even converse fluently in Latin'. He conversed for a considerable time with two of them, 'both being indigent

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<sup>206</sup>Dr. Patrick Curtis. *Students of the Irish College, Salamanca*. In *Archivium Hibernicum*, Vol. IV, (1915), p. 55.

<sup>207</sup>P.J. Dowling. *The Hedge Schools of Ireland*, p. 67.

<sup>208</sup>Rev. J. Milner. *An Inquiry into Certain Vulgar Opinions*. (Keating, Brown & Co., No. 38, Duke St., Grosvenor Square, 1808), p. 14.

<sup>209</sup>John Carr. *The Stranger in Ireland*. (Richard Phillips, No. 6, Bridge St., Blackfriars, 1806), p. 380.

<sup>210</sup>George Holmes. *Sketches of Some of the Southern Counties of Ireland, 1801*, p. 151.



schoolmasters'<sup>211</sup>, one of whom was Eugene O'Sullivan of Ardfert who earned a reputation for himself as the hedge schoolmaster who conducted his own defence in court in pure Ciceronian Latin. The Cork Advertiser dated 30<sup>th</sup> August, 1808 reported on his case which took place in the Record Court of Tralee. It told how a poet and a professor of the learned languages, when arraigned in court, amused those present by refusing:

**to descend to that humble vernacular expression common to the profanum vulgus. No, his glowing mind, stored with the riches of Rome and Athens, was wafted, swift as with the Daedalean wing, to the highest summit of Mount Parnassus.**<sup>212</sup>

O'Sullivan won his case as he completely confounded and silenced two learned barristers, who attempted to ridicule him. Southern Ireland's alleged superiority in the field of classical teaching was challenged by the northern counties and Tyrone in particular. The Rev. Dr. McIvor in his *Memorial to the Commissioners of National Education* in 1867, vouched for this reputation as he boasted that 'Tyrone has been called. I understand, the Northern Kerry; Kerry may well have been the Southern Tyrone'<sup>213</sup>. This claim was further substantiated by the Memorial of the inhabitants of the Newtown Stewart district to the same commissioners:

**... We forward a list of more than 20 teachers, who have actually imparted classical instruction since the year 1800 in different parts of the parish ... At present with some 25 National Schools in the parish there is no classical or other superior education whatsoever ...**<sup>214</sup>

Teaching of the classics was greatly assisted by the publication in 1817 of Patrick Lynch's *The Classical Students' Metrical Mnemonics*, containing in familiar verse, all the necessary Definitions and Rules of the English, Latin, Greek and Hebrew Languages<sup>215</sup>. Lynch used rhyme as an aid to memory and with the exception of the introduction, he gave the rules of grammar for English, Latin, Greek and Hebrew entirely in rhyming verse. In the teaching of Latin John Casey (c. 1750) of the Banna hedge school in

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<sup>211</sup>Rev. J. Milner. *An Inquiry into Certain Vulgar Opinions*, p. 184.

<sup>212</sup>Séamus Ó Casaide. 'Latin in County Kerry'. In *Kerry Archaeological Magazine*, Vol. III, No. 16, (1916), pp. 301-302.

<sup>213</sup>John I.D. Johnston. 'Hedge Schools of Tyrone and Monaghan', p. 34.

<sup>214</sup>Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>215</sup>Patrick Lynch. *The Classical Student's Metrical Mnemonics*. (Dublin, Brett Smith, Mary-Street, 1817).



Ardfert, displayed both flair and imagination. He employed the 'captus' or capping verses method, which worked as follows:

**Two rivals having been pitted against each other, one of them recited a line of Latin poetry usually an hexameter; to which his antagonist replied with a line commencing with the last letter of his antagonist's verse, to which the other rejoined in a similar manner, and thus they continued bandying quotations until the stock of one side began to fail, the other had succeeded in declining the adjective 'captus' before his opponent could furnish the requisite line of poetry in his turn.**<sup>216</sup>

Past pupils later acknowledged the merit of this method of intellectual challenge which resulted in the memory being stored 'with a treasure of classical quotations ready for use and display'.<sup>217</sup>

Eminent past pupils of hedge schools had fond recollections of the infectious love of classical learning displayed by their former masters and passed on to them, so that they retained a partiality for the classics, throughout their lives. Edmund Burke claimed to have learned more Latin and Greek from an obscure schoolmaster on the banks of the Nore, than he afterwards acquired at the more celebrated places of education, and at the university itself.<sup>218</sup> Gerald Griffin was fortunate enough to have been taught by the scholarly T.M. O'Brien of Limerick in 1814, a teacher who was 'passionately devoted to the ancient poets' and one who 'showed a highly cultivated taste in their study'. The young Griffin quickly acquired a good grasp of the classics which were to become his absorbing interest 'He was exceedingly fond of Virgil, Ovid and Horace, particularly the first, which he read with such an absorbing interest that his lessons lost all the character of a school-boy's task'<sup>219</sup>. O'Brien insisted that his students should speak the Latin language daily, as well as Greek, so that eventually they were as fluent in Latin and Greek as they were in English. In later life they corresponded through Latin and as one contemporary recollected, they even sold pigs at the fair through Latin.

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<sup>216</sup>Michael Quane. *Banna School Ardfert*, p. 170.

<sup>217</sup>Ibid.

<sup>218</sup>Rev. J. Milner. *An Inquiry into Certain Vulgar Opinions*, p. 184.

<sup>219</sup>Dr. Griffin. *The Life of Gerald Griffin*. (Dublin, James Duffy & Sons, 15, Wellington Quay, 1857), p. 46.



**I recollect when, the scholars made by Kennedy, Cantillon, Buckley and O'Brien used keep up a regular correspondence, meet at the fairs, and buy pigs from each other without ever using a word but Latin.<sup>220</sup>**

One should bear in mind that Latin was the spoken language in general use in western Europe in the post-Renaissance period and 'In Ireland there were additional reasons for its study and use in that it was the language of the Church and a principal link with Catholic European countries'<sup>221</sup>.

Charles McGoldrick passed on a love of the classics to Carleton, when he attended his school at Tulnavert. In his autobiography he recalled with delight:

**Ovid's Metamorphoses ... charmed me more than any book I had then ever read; in fact I cannot describe the extraordinary delight with which I perused it. The sense of task work was lost, because I did it con amore.<sup>222</sup>**

Carleton read the classics as novels and he became totally absorbed in the story:

**If ever a schoolboy was affected almost to tears, I was, by the death of Dido. Even when a schoolboy, I did not read the classics as they are usually read by learners. I read them as novels - I looked to the story - the narrative - not to the grammatical or other difficulties.<sup>223</sup>**

The Rev. Henry Cooke (1788-1868) attended the hedge school of Frank Glass at Tobermore (1797-98), where he learned four languages - Latin, Greek, English and Irish, although still practically a child, being under ten years of age. Nonetheless, he acquired from Glass a knowledge of and a taste for the classics. Frank Glass was the model classical teacher:

**a pure Milesian ... a good scholar and a successful teacher. Like many of his countrymen, his love for classic literature, amounted almost to a passion, and he had the rare talent of inspiring favourite pupils with much of his own enthusiasm. Among Latin authors he delighted in Horace ...**

Cooke immersed himself in the study of classical literature and poetry:

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<sup>220</sup>Robert Herbert. *Four Limerick Hedge Schoolmasters*, p. 54.

<sup>221</sup>Michael Quane. *Banna School Ardfert*, p. 158.

<sup>222</sup>William Carleton. *Autobiography*, Vol. I, pp. 72, 19, 120.

<sup>223</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 70.



**While at school, he committed to memory the Odes of Horace, and a great part of the Georgics of Virgil. But the eloquence of Cicero and Demosthenes had greater charms for him than the graces of poetry.**<sup>224</sup>

Frank Glass awakened in him an abiding interest in the subject which enriched the remaining years of his life.

English orthography, syntax and reading were taught with assiduity in the hedge schools, from textbooks already referred to. The classics of English literature such as Milton's *Paradise Lost*,<sup>225</sup> Dr. Johnson's *Classical Essays*<sup>226</sup>, Chesterfield's *Accomplished Gentlemen* and Chesterfield's *Letters*<sup>227</sup>, Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*<sup>228</sup> and poetry by Swift, Cowper and Thomson<sup>229</sup> were also on the English curriculum for senior pupils. These textbooks and reading books were never referred to by contemporary writers such as Hely Dutton, Edward Wakefield or the Rev. William Shaw Mason. Dutton listed a few romantic chap books with colourful titles as being representative samples of the reading books in general use in the hedge schools. This was simply not the case.

Irish was taught in the hedge schools although demand for it was diminishing, as in the opening years of the 19th century, it was spoken by about one half of the population, and its use was dominant among the poorer classes<sup>230</sup> [App. F]. The Rev. William Shaw Mason blamed 'the hedge schools where English alone is taught', as well as the demands of the English speaking commercial world, which forced the Irish to speak 'English in all their trafficking'<sup>231</sup>, for the decline of the Irish language. Hedge schoolmasters were meeting the demands of the market place by satisfying the wishes of parents who desired social advancement for their children. Shaw Mason was partially correct in his assessment however, as English was the language of commerce, fair and market. It was

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<sup>224</sup>J.L. Porter. *The Life and Times of Henry Cooke*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>225</sup>First Report of the Commissioners of Education, 1825. App. No. 221, p. 555.

<sup>226</sup>Ibid., p. 556.

<sup>227</sup>Ibid., p. 557.

<sup>228</sup>Ibid., p. 556.

<sup>229</sup>Ibid.

<sup>230</sup>Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh. *Ireland Before the Famine 1798-1848*. (Gill and Macmillan Ltd., 15-17 Eden Quay, Dublin 1, 1973), p. 157.

<sup>231</sup>Rev. William Shaw Mason. *Survey of Tullaroan*, p. 133.



the language of the landlord and the tithe proctor, it was the language used in court. English was necessary for the Irish who emigrated to America and it was also the language which came to dominate church service. People were no doubt influenced by the advice offered by Jonathan Swift (1667-1745), satirist, churchman and political writer, when he told them that 'It would be a noble achievement to abolish the Irish language so far as to oblige all the natives to speak only English on every occasion of business in shop, markets, fairs and other places of dealings'<sup>232</sup>. Of greater significance by far was the example given by a native Irish speaker of repute, a man described by Charles Greville, the political diarist and clerk to the Privy Council as 'the most important and most conspicuous man of his time and country'<sup>233</sup>. This was Daniel O'Connell (1775-1847) the Irish statesman celebrated as 'The Liberator', one whose name was 'mightier in its appeal in Ireland than any other name'<sup>234</sup>, but one who was a declared Benthamite when it came to the use of the Irish language. 'I am sufficiently utilitarian not to regret its abandonment ... a diversity of tongues is of no benefit', he declared, and added dispassionately, 'The superior utility of the English tongue, as the medium of all modern communications, is so great, that I can witness without a sigh the gradual disuse of Irish'<sup>235</sup>. The catholic hierarchy too exercised an enormous influence over the Irish people and they conducted mass and church services, mostly through English. The Chevalier de la Tocnaye, when he toured Ireland in 1796 attended a mass at Ardfert, where the priest translated the principal part of his sermon into English.<sup>236</sup> William Tighe found a similar situation prevailing in Kilkenny in 1801. He wrote 'The priests often preach alternately in Irish and English, but in Irish if they are desired to be well understood'<sup>237</sup>.

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<sup>232</sup>Herbert Davis. *Jonathan Swift Irish Tracts 1728-1733*. (Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1971), p. 89.

<sup>233</sup>Michael McDonagh. *Daniel O'Connell*. (The Talbot Press Ltd., Dublin & Cork, 1929), p. xvi.

<sup>234</sup>*Ibid.*, p. xv.

<sup>235</sup>Daniel Corkery. *Imeachtaí na Teanga Gaeilge*. (Cork, The Mercier Press, 4, Bridge St., 1956), p. 114.

<sup>236</sup>John Stevenson. *A Frenchman's Walk Through Ireland*, p. 111.

<sup>237</sup>William Tighe. *Statistical Observations Relative to the County of Kilkenny*. (Dublin, Graisberry & Campbell, 1802), p. 515.



There was another factor which precipitated the decline of the language and that was the use the proselytising education societies put it too. The London Hibernian Society (1806), The Baptist Society (1814), and The Irish Society (1818), issued their religious tracts in Irish and they used the Irish language to spread the protestant religion, all of which 'tended to bring the language into disfavour as a literary medium and thereby hastened its decay'<sup>238</sup>. The Irish language therefore was to have very bad associations in the minds of the people, it was a language which would retard their progress and keep them backward. They associated it with oppression, coercion and proselytism. The hedge schoolmasters therefore faced a formidable challenge in their efforts to teach Irish as an academic subject. The absence of a wide variety of printed books in Irish also made their task much more difficult. Richard Twiss noted this fact back in 1775<sup>239</sup>, an observation later confirmed by Bernard Trotter in his *Walks through Ireland*<sup>240</sup> in the years 1812, 1814 and 1817. This shortfall was met by the scholarly publications of the Louvain Franciscans, the chief one being *Stair an Bhíobla*, 'a biblical commentary written or adapted about 1726 by a Franciscan named Uáitéar Ó Ceallaigh' from Roscommon. The theological writings of Dr. Seathrún Céitinn (1570-1650?) born near Clonmel and educated at Bordeaux and Spain, were popular throughout the country in the 18th century. These were *Eochairsgiath an Aifrinn* and *Trí Bíorghaoithe an Bháis* (1631)<sup>241</sup> which were widely circulated. Céitinn produced the first Irish history in narrative form *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* (1633) and although as a historian, Keating was uncritical and failed to discriminate between the authentic and the fabulous, being blinded by his sense of racial and national pride<sup>242</sup>, yet the Gaelic Society of Dublin (1806) set up to preserve a record of Ireland's history and literature, published a new Irish edition of *Foras Feasa Ár Eirinn*

<sup>238</sup>Philip O'Connell. *The Schools and Scholars of Breiffne*, p. 381.

<sup>239</sup>Richard Twiss. *A Tour in Ireland in 1775*, p. 41.

<sup>240</sup>Bernard Trotter. *Walks through Ireland in the years 1812, 1814 and 1817*. (Sir Richard Phillips & Co., Bridge-Court, Bridge St., 1819), p. 46.

<sup>241</sup>R.A. Breatnach. 'The End of a Tradition. A Survey of Eighteenth Century Gaelic Literature.' In *Studia Hibernica*. No. 1. (1961), p. 143.

<sup>242</sup>J.E. Caerwyn Williams and Máirín Ní Mhuiríosa. *Traidisiún Liteartha na nGael*. (An Clóchomhar Tta., Baile Átha Cliath. 1979), p. 211.



and a translation by William Haliday together with the life of the author, by Patrick Lynch<sup>243</sup>, in 1811.

In the opening years of the 19th century several publications in Irish 'upon Irish ground' appeared 'such as the *Irish Grammars* of Dr. William Neilson of Dundalk, of Dr. Paul O'Bryan, Irish Professor of Maynooth, of William Haliday, Esq., of Dublin, the *Synoptic Tables* of Mr. Patrick Lynch, and, finally, the *Irish-English Dictionary* by Mr. Edward O'Reilly<sup>244</sup>. Lynch was appointed Secretary of the Gaelic Society in 1815, the year he published his grammar of the Irish language 'methodically disposed in fourteen short Synoptic Tables', a work which 'ranks easily with modern works on Irish grammar of equal scope'<sup>245</sup>. Philip Fitzgibbon (1711-1792) the Kilkenny hedge schoolmaster, who taught 'the Irish language grammatically, with its derivatives and compounds' bequeathed an Irish dictionary which he had compiled, with many other valuable Irish manuscripts to the Rev. Richard O'Donnell, P.P. of St. John's, Kilkenny.<sup>246</sup> This dictionary of 400 quarto pages was remarkable for one reason - the author's 'singular omission, the letter S, and that he appeared to have entirely forgotten'<sup>247</sup>. A master considered among 'the most eminent Celtic scholars of his day', one who was elected an honorary member of the Gaelic Society on merit, Richard MacElligott, stood out in stark contrast to Fitzgibbon by way of his professionalism and expertise. He contributed the first paper to the society's one and only volume of transactions, in which he discussed the difficulties the society were likely to face, in their proposed new dictionary and grammar. He displayed 'a thorough knowledge of the Manx and Scottish dialects, and at least some acquaintance with Latin, Greek, German, Hebrew and Persian'<sup>248</sup>. MacElligott's valuable contribution treated of the 'Berlagar na Saer, or Mason's Jargon, of the differences between the Irish,

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<sup>243</sup>Seathrún Céitinn. *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn*. (Baile Átha Cliath, Seán Barluaidh, No. 26, Sráid Bholtoin, 1811).

<sup>244</sup>Christopher Anderson. *Historical Sketches of the Native Irish*, p. 100.

<sup>245</sup>P.J. Dowling. 'Patrick Lynch, Schoolmaster, 1754-1818', p. 468.

<sup>246</sup>Séamus Ó Casaide. 'Philip Fitzgibbon'. In *Journal of the Waterford and South-East of Ireland Archaeological Society* (January 1920), p. 50.

<sup>247</sup>Christopher Anderson. *Historical Sketches of the Native Irish*, p. 100.

<sup>248</sup>Robert Herbert. 'Four Limerick Hedge-Schoolmasters', p. 51.



Scottish and Manx dialects, of the correct orthography of the language, and of distinct signs of aspiration for different consonants'<sup>249</sup>. MacElligott also wrote an Irish grammar which remained in manuscript form but which was used extensively up to 1883.<sup>250</sup>

The hedge schoolmasters were also instrumental in preserving countless Irish legends, medieval tales, songs and Ossianic poems, in their efforts to perpetuate the use of the language, and to preserve their cultural heritage. T. Crofton Croker paid tribute to them in 1822 when he noted that 'modern manuscripts in the Irish character, may be met with in almost every village and they are usually the produce of the leisure hours of the schoolmaster'<sup>251</sup>. One such scribe was the Cork hedge schoolmaster Micheál Óg Ó Longáin (1766-1837) who 'transcribed nearly 300 volumes of Irish Mss. thus rescuing from destruction several rare and curious specimens of the ancient literature of Ireland'<sup>252</sup>. Three generations of this family were distinguished as Irish scribes, Micheál Óg's father Michael and his two sons Peter and Paul. In 1822 Micheál Óg and his sons wrote manuscripts for their patron Dr. Murphy, the Bishop of Cork, and these manuscripts are now in St. Patrick's College, Maynooth. The 28 volumes which make up the Stowe Collection and the 50 which comprise the Betham Collection are in the Royal Irish Academy, and over 20 of these manuscripts are in St. Colman's College, Fermoy.<sup>253</sup>

In 1855 the poverty stricken hedge schoolmaster Peter Gallegan was forced to part with 16 volumes of his Irish manuscripts to Eugene Finnerty of Edinburgh University, for a monetary consideration which 'rendered him independent and happy in his latter days'<sup>254</sup>. He transcribed tirelessly and meticulously a total of 24 manuscripts ranging in length from 800 pages to 33, over a period of almost 40 years, from 1822-1861. To-day there

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<sup>249</sup>Séamus Ua Casaide. 'Patrick Lynch, Secretary to the Gaelic Society of Dublin', p. 57.

<sup>250</sup>op. cit.

<sup>251</sup>T. Crofton Croker. *Researches in the South of Ireland during the years 1812-1822*. (Dublin: C. Roworth, Bell Yard, Temple Bar, 1823), p. 331.

<sup>252</sup>S. Ó Casaide. 'Three Irish Scribes of County Cork'. In *The Irish Book Lover* (January-February, 1928), p. 4.

<sup>253</sup>Tadhg Ó Donnchadha. 'Micheál Óg Ó Longáin'. In *Journal of the Ivernian Society*, Vol. I, (July 1908 - June 1909), p. 230.

<sup>254</sup>P.J. Dowling. *The Hedge Schools of Ireland*, p. 115.



are 5 of them in the National Library of Ireland, 6 in the Royal Irish Academy, 5 in Belfast Public Library, 1 in University College Cork, 2 in University College Galway, 1 in Edinburgh University, 2 in University College Dublin, 1 in Cambridge and 1 in Queen's University Belfast.<sup>255</sup> Ó Longáin and Gallegan were representative of most of the hedge schoolmasters and how they spent their leisure hours as 'a large proportion of the Irish manuscripts in the Royal Irish Academy, the British Museum and elsewhere is the work of hedge schoolmasters; and much of the matter of the later manuscripts is their composition'<sup>256</sup>.

These scribes grew very attached to their manuscripts, as in the case of the Iveragh poet Tomás Rua Ó Súilleabháin (1785-1848) who lost 'great bags filled with books, mostly written with the pen'<sup>257</sup>, when the vessel which was transporting them hit a rock on the sea voyage from Derrynane harbour to Portmagee. He composed a long song of lament entitled *Amhrán na Leabhar* [Table 2.1] to express his grief. Tomás had lost his most prized possessions, among them Keating's, Comerford's and O'Halloran's histories, Paul O'Brien's *Grammar*, Tadhg Gaedhealach's *Pious Miscellany*, Patrick Denn's *Book* and the *Arithmetics* of Deighan, Dowling and Voster<sup>258</sup>, and especially his '*Psalter mhilis chaisil*' of which he said 'I would not part with that volume for a farm of land'<sup>259</sup>. This was not the original *Sáltair* but was in fact quite a different book. The original was lost but was available in 1453 when passages of historical poems and genealogies were transcribed from it into manuscript Laud 610 which is now in the Bodleian Library in Oxford. The '*Denn's Book*' mentioned in the song, was the work of Pádraig Denn (1756-1828), son of Laurence Denn, both hedge schoolmasters from Cappoquin, Co. Waterford. Pádraig was a religious poet who wrote a catechism for children and a poem which brought him fame called '*Aighneas an Pheachaigh leis an mBás*'<sup>260</sup> (1814). The books listed in *Amhrán na*

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<sup>255</sup>Ciarán Dawson. *Peadar Ó Gaelacáin: Scríobhaí*. (An Clóchomhar Tta, Éigse Oiriaila, 1992), p. 146.

<sup>256</sup>op. cit., p. 103.

<sup>257</sup>Séamus Dubh. *Amhráin Tomáis Ruaidh*. I. *The Songs of Tomás Ruadh O'Sullivan The Iveragh Poet (1785-1848)*. (Dublin, M.H. Gill & Son Ltd., 1914), p. 11.

<sup>258</sup>P.J. Dowling. *The Hedge Schools of Ireland*, pp. 128-132.

<sup>259</sup>op. cit.

<sup>260</sup>Gaelic Journal 1907. '*Pádraig Din*', pp. 318-319. Vol. 17, Aibreán 1907.



*Leabhar* are interesting for two reasons - the fact that a poorly paid master could afford to have in his possession such a vast collection of very expensive books, and the fact that seven of his manuscripts of Irish stories were listed also in a poem entitled 'Barántas na Leabhar', from a County Cork manuscript of 1803. The latter was written by Donnchadh Ó Buachallaigh, sgoiláire foghlumtha<sup>261</sup>. Both sources provide a record of the tales which were most popular in Ireland in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

We have ample evidence to show that the hedge schoolmasters held Irish culture in the highest esteem. They also familiarised their students with Irish folklore from *The Royal Hibernian Tales*<sup>262</sup>, which 'is the earliest known collection of Irish popular tales or märchen, as well as being one of the rarest books in the field of Irish folklore'<sup>263</sup>. This book met with the approval of the English novelist W.M. Thackeray (1811-1863) in *The Irish Sketch Book* (1842)<sup>264</sup>, and also some forty years later from W.B. Yeats (1865-1939), the 20th century Anglo-Irish poet, who reprinted two stories from it in his *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry*.<sup>265</sup> It was to be expected that the masters would be discerning in their choice of Irish books as many of them were 'able classical scholars whose only other language was Irish ... men who had mastered the difficulties of old and middle Irish'<sup>266</sup>. Many others were successful Irish poets who most surely have enthused their students with their own love of the language, like the following poet/hedge schoolmasters whose works are familiar to Irish students down to the present day:

|                                   |                  |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|
| <b>Peadar Ó Doirnín</b>           | <b>1704-1768</b> |
| <b>Seán Ó Tuama</b>               | <b>1709-1775</b> |
| <b>Donnchadh Ruadh MacConmara</b> | <b>1715-1810</b> |
| <b>Brian Mac Giolla Meidhre</b>   | <b>1747-1805</b> |

<sup>261</sup>R.A. Stiubhart MacAlasdair. 'Barántas na Leabar'. In *Irisleabar na Gaedilge IX*, No. 103, (Jan. 1899), pp. 322-326.

<sup>262</sup>First Report of the Commissioners of Education, 1825, App. No. 221, p. 555.

<sup>263</sup>Séamus Ó Duillearga. 'The Royal Hibernian Tales', In *Béaloides X*, (1940). (The Educational Co. of Ireland, 89 Talbot St., 1940), pp. 151-203.

<sup>264</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>265</sup>Ibid., p. 149.

<sup>266</sup>P.J. Dowling. *The Hedge Schools of Ireland*, p. 71.



|                                  |                                 |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>Amhlaoibh Ó Súilleabháin</b>  | <b>1780-1838</b>                |
| <b>Seán Ó Coileáin</b>           | <b>1754-1817</b>                |
| <b>Tomás Rua Ó Súilleabháin</b>  | <b>1785-1848.<sup>267</sup></b> |
| <b>Philip Fitzgibbon</b>         | <b>1711-1792</b>                |
| <b>Eoghan Rua Ó Súilleabháin</b> | <b>1748-1784</b>                |
| <b>Andrias Mac Criath</b>        | <b>1710-1790</b>                |
| <b>Pádraig Denn</b>              | <b>1756-1828</b>                |
| <b>Riocard Bairéad</b>           | <b>1739-1819</b>                |

During the penal days a number of these poet/hedge schoolmasters, under the leadership of Seán Ó Tuama, were so concerned about the threat they perceived to Irish culture, that they assembled in a Court of Poetry in 1754, at O'Tuama's famous Inn, at Croom. The Courts of Poetry were originally set up to continue the tradition of the Bardic Schools, and were normally convened to discuss and recite poetry and to read and exchange manuscripts.<sup>268</sup> But now the warrant or *Barántas*, which was the formal summons to the court, indicated the urgency of the situation as 'the poet insisted that what little remained of Irish was sure to vanish utterly unless they took steps towards its revival'<sup>269</sup>. One master risked his life and his liberty to ensure its revival, this was Peadar Ó Doirnín, who taught Irish in Armagh and was forced to go into hiding to escape arrest, after he was caught teaching the Irish language. He took up residence in a cave where he composed an Irish poem '*A Ghaeilge mhilis is sáimhe fonn*' to mark the event in which he eulogised on the beauty of the Irish language and in which he referred to the hazards involved in teaching it.

**O sweet Irish tongue of the beguiling airs;  
Swift, bold, strong as the beating waves;  
'Twas no crime once to speak you in Fódla,  
And your bards went not in peril of their heads.<sup>270</sup>**

<sup>267</sup>R. Batterberry. *Oideachas in Éirinn 1500-1946*. (Baile Átha Cliath, Oifig an tSoláthar, 1955), p. 119.

<sup>268</sup>P.J. Dowling. *A History of Irish Education*, p. 18.

<sup>269</sup>J.E. Caerwyn Williams and Patrick K. Ford. *The Irish Literary Tradition*. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1992), p. 226.

<sup>270</sup>Aodh de Blácam. *Gaelic Literature Surveyed*. (Dublin: Mercier Press, 1979), pp. 298-299.



The hedge schools didn't neglect the liberal arts. Travelling dance teachers were employed to teach the children to dance, for a fee of 6d a quarter. The dance teachers were accompanied in their travels from cabin to cabin by pipers or a blind fiddler. Arthur Young was impressed by this liberal education and he noted also that a fine education was given in reading, writing and book-keeping, even to the poorest child.<sup>271</sup> The extent of the curriculum depended entirely on the qualifications of the masters. Reading, writing and arithmetic were taught in all schools, according to Brenan's study of the schools in Kildare and Leighlin, only five schools reported teaching less than reading writing and arithmetic.<sup>272</sup> Sixteen of the two hundred and sixty-two teachers upon whom he had information, were conducting schools, with enough Latin taught, to be classified by him as 'Classical Schools'<sup>273</sup>. The curriculum was more extensive in the hedge schools than in any other school of equal social status and the standard was higher according to the informed opinion of Sir Thomas Wyse, which he expressed in a letter to Dr. Doyle in 1830, when he wrote that 'the lower class proportionally to their position, are better educated than the middle and upper classes'<sup>274</sup>.

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<sup>271</sup>R. Batterberry. *Oideachas in Éirinn*, p. 119.

<sup>272</sup>Rev. Martin Brenan. *Schools of Kildare and Leighlin*, p. 79.

<sup>273</sup>D.H. Akenson. *The Irish Education Experiment*, p. 52.

<sup>274</sup>Winifrede M. Wyse. *The Unpublished Memoirs of the Rt. Hon. Sir Thomas Wyse, K.C.B.* (Waterford, C.P. Redmond & Co., 49/50 O'Connell St., 1901), p. 16.



# Chapter Four

## Part 1

### 'Penny Merriments' and 'Penny Godlinesses'<sup>1</sup>

#### Introduction

The range of books in everyday use in a hedge school was quite considerable. There could have been as many reading books in a school as there were children who read.<sup>2</sup> The radical, social and evangelical movements which took root in the late 18th and early 19th centuries had an impact on the reading material in the schools as they each spread their doctrines through the printed word. Accordingly, the radical philosophical and educational theories of John Locke (1632-1704) and Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), the revolutionary doctrines of Thomas Paine (1737-1809) and William Godwin (1756-1836), and the moral tales of the evangelical writer Hannah More (1745-1833) were all read in the hedge schools of Ireland, or works exemplifying their theories.

The diversity of the reading material was borne out by the observations of the commissioner of education of 1825, when he visited a hedge school in Sligo and observed:

**... a child reading the New Testament in its hands, sitting between two others, one of whom was supplied with the *'Forty Thieves'*, and the other with *'The Pleasant Art of Money Catching'*, while another at a little distance was perusing *The Mutiny Act*.<sup>3</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup>F.J. Harvey Darton. *Children's Books in England*. (Cambridge University Press, The Pitt Building, Trumpington St., Cambridge CB2 1RP, England, 1982), p. 74.

<sup>2</sup>P.J. Dowling. *The Hedge Schools of Ireland*, p. 86.

<sup>3</sup>*First Report of the Commissioners of Irish Education Inquiry, 1825* (xii), pp. 43-44.



The commissioner in this case was misled by what he saw, as he appeared to judge the books by their titles. *The Pleasant Art of Money Catching*,<sup>4</sup> is in fact a book written along the lines of the Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) philosophy of utilitarianism, and the *Forty Thieves*,<sup>5</sup> is a fairy tale of Indian or Persian origin, translated by Antoine Galland (1701-1717) while *The Mutiny Act* is an historical document.

Hedge school books were supplied by parents and reading took place 'in the master's hearing only',<sup>6</sup> each child being taught individually. It should be remembered that hedge schools were undendowed and that the spectre of poverty continuously haunted both the people and the masters. The reading material therefore consisted mainly of the cheapest book a parent could purchase. The commissioners of education in 1825, stated as much in their first report:

**The selection of the book in which each child is to learn to read in a common school has necessarily been left to the child itself, or to its parents. The masters scarcely removed above the lowest state of poverty, in no instance has ever thought of providing them, and the schools being mostly founded on private speculation and unsupported by societies or patrons; the books which were easily and cheaply to be procured were those naturally preferred by the children and their parents.**<sup>7</sup>

In Appendix No. 221 to this report, the Commissioners provided a list of all the books found in 'the common schools', drawn up from the parochial returns submitted by clergymen of both denominations in 1824, representing one county from each of the four provinces - Donegal, Kildare, Galway and Kerry, to serve as a specimen for the whole. The books were classified under two headings - *Religious Books* and *Tracts and Works of Entertainment*, such as histories and tales.<sup>8</sup> Ninety two were classified as Religious and 299 titles as Works of Entertainment Histories, Tales etc. [Table 1.1]. Of the 391 books

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<sup>4</sup>*The Pleasant Art of Money Catching*. To which is added the way to turn a penny, or the art of thriving. (Dublin, T. McDonnell, 1793).

<sup>5</sup>*Arabian Night's Entertainment*. (Dublin: R. Cross, 1792).

<sup>6</sup>Dublin University Magazine. November 1862, p. 602.

<sup>7</sup>*First Report of the Commissioners of Irish Education Inquiry 1825*, (xii), p. 44.

<sup>8</sup>Appendix No. 221, pp. 553-559.



listed, over a dozen came in for repeated criticism from sources loyal to the government and deeply suspicious of the hedge schoolmasters. The Rev. Henry Cooke, Moderator of the Synod of Ulster submitted a list of 12 books in use in the hedge schools he attended<sup>9</sup> and Hely Dutton, who was employed by the Royal Dublin Society to carry out a statistical survey of Co. Clare, listed 14<sup>10</sup>, which they roundly condemned. Opprobrium was expressed also by the education commissioners of 1825, in their first report, as they quoted directly from the Report of the commissioners of 1806-1812. They inferred that the minds of the children were 'corrupted by Books calculated to incite to lawless and profligate adventure, to cherish Superstition, or to lead to Dissension or Disloyalty'<sup>11</sup>.

The chapbooks which contemporary observers found objectionable were never intended for a juvenile readership, many of them being well beyond the comprehension of children, others were simple romantic tales, as Gerald Fitzgibbon observed in 1868, when he pointed to the fact that they were never used as text books:

**... no one of those books, so objected to, ever was a school-book, in any school. They were two-penny romances, which boys bought, with their pocket money, and read for mere amusement; and many of them, if not at all, were of a very harmless character.**<sup>12</sup>

They were poorly produced works, crudely printed on coarse, flimsy but durable paper, containing 8-32 pages and illustrated from rough woodcuts. They came to be termed 'chapbooks' in 1824, previous to this they were called 'Burtons' books, from the surname of a printer or bookseller who supplied them.<sup>13</sup> Originally they only cost a halfpenny, eventually they became more expensive and came to be called 'sixpenny books'.<sup>14</sup> The channel through which the much criticised literature arrived at the schools or the homes

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 820.

<sup>10</sup>Hely Dutton. *Statistical Survey of the County of Clare*, pp. 236-7.

<sup>11</sup>First Report of the Commissioners of Irish Education Inquiry 1825, p. 38.

<sup>12</sup>Gerald Fitzgibbon. *Ireland in 1868 - The Battlefield for English Party Strife*. (London: Longman, Green, Reader and Dyer, 1868), p. 80.

<sup>13</sup>Biblio. 'Irish Chap Books'. In *The Irish Book Lover* Vol. ii, (February 1911), p. 110.

<sup>14</sup>J. Warburton, Rev. J. Whitelaw, and Rev. Robert Walsh. *History of the City of Dublin*, vol. 22. (London: W. Bulmer & Co., Cleveland Row, St. James's, 1818), p. 814.



of the children, was via the hawkers or pedlars. These were the 'books which pedlars and petty shopkeepers' sold to the country people.<sup>15</sup>

Book pedlars toured the country and frequented every fair and meeting. The books were displayed on tables in the streets, and the markets resembled a Leipzig fair.<sup>16</sup> According to contemporary writers' accounts it was a custom that children meeting adult relatives or friends at such fairs, should beg for a treat. 'On the recurrence of a fair it was a practice with children to cry 'my fairing on you' to whomsoever they knew, and to obtain a sixpenny book for a fairing was the great object of young ambition'.<sup>17</sup>

The demand for these books was so great that four Dublin booksellers were engaged in printing Burton books exclusively in 1825 - one of whom had four presses in operation, publishing 50,000 books annually. Other presses were located in Cork, Limerick, Belfast and Galway. From all these sources, it was estimated that circulation of chapbooks grew to about 300,000 per annum.<sup>18</sup> Irish chapbooks were mostly pirated versions of English originals, as a thriving re-print industry (1740-1800) developed in this country due to an oversight in the Copyright Act of 1709.

A study of the historical development of children's literature from 1671 to 1851, from the origin of the chapbooks or 'penny histories' to the arrival of the newly styled chapbooks known as 'penny dreadfuls', will show that Ireland's hedge schools contained samples of many of the varying genres of English literature, faithfully re-produced from English originals, and that they were unique in allowing children to read works of fiction, fantasy and fairy lore.

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<sup>15</sup>Rev. William Shaw Mason. *Survey of Tullaroan*. (Dublin: Faulkner Press, 1819), p. 135.

<sup>16</sup>Biblio. *'Irish Chap Books'*, p. 110.

<sup>17</sup>Warburton, Whitelaw and Walsh. *History of the City of Dublin*, vol. ii, p. 815.

<sup>18</sup>op. cit.,



A detailed analysis of a selection of the most frequently criticised chapbooks will be done with regard to content, stylistic features, and values promoted, to determine their suitability or otherwise for juvenile readers. The categories to be examined will include criminal biographies, books of entertainment, and chivalric romances - pre-medieval and medieval. A selection of Hannah More's moral tales will also be scrutinised, as an example of the type of book or tract read by students but never referred to by contemporary observers and critics.



(i) The Historical Development of Children's Literature 1671-1851 - 'Penny Histories' to 'Penny Dreadfuls'

Chapbooks or 'penny histories' as they were sometimes called, were the most numerous and most important forms of English popular literature in the 18th century both in England and Ireland as the markets of the two kingdoms were closely related.<sup>19</sup> They had their embryonic existence in England in the 17th century<sup>20</sup> and the first Irish produced chapbooks appeared at the end of the 17th century.<sup>21</sup> There is however evidence of the appearance of English chapbooks on the Irish market in the early part of the century, from London bookseller's advertisements, which referred to the availability of stock to Irish pedlars, at this time.<sup>22</sup> The Irish poor relied heavily on chapbooks as an aid to reading and for their entertainment, as they were the only source of cheap printed material available to them other than the evangelical religious tracts, which never held the same appeal for them.

The Irish chapbook market depended for its lead on England as most of their books were piracies from that country. In Puritan England of the 17th century reading for pleasure was considered an abhorrence - a prostitution of the God-given ability to read<sup>23</sup>, and books for children were a rarity as children were treated like adults in miniature. From their earliest days, children were warned 'when thou canst read, read no ballads and foolish books, but the Bible'. They were encouraged to read 'the good godly books', the devotional and theological works which were more suited to the adult mind:

**Read the Histories of the Martyrs that dyed for Christ ...  
Read also often treatises on Death and Hell and**

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<sup>19</sup>Victor E. Neuburg. *The Penny Histories: a study of chapbooks for young readers over two centuries.* (London, 1968), p. 3

<sup>20</sup>Harvey Darton. *Children's Books in England*, p. 69.

<sup>21</sup>E.R. McDix, 'Irish Chapbooks, Songbooks and Ballads'. In *Irish Book Lover*, Vol. II, No. 3, (Oct. 1910).

<sup>22</sup>Margaret Spufford. *Small Books and Pleasant Histories.* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1981), p. 111.

<sup>23</sup>Joyce Irene Whalley and Tessa Rose Chester. *A History of Children's Book Illustration.* (John Murray (Publishers) Ltd., 50 Albermarle Street, London W1X 4BD, 1988), p. 14.



## Judgement, and of the Love and Passion of Christ.<sup>24</sup>

There were two chapbooks which were written specifically for children at this period. One was the great classic of puritan literature, the 17th century bestseller by James Janeway, with the chilling title *A Token for Children Being an Exact Account of the conversion, holy and exemplary lives, and joyful deaths of several young children* (1671)<sup>25</sup>, and the other was the much more pleasing *Divine Songs attempted in easy language for the Use of Children*, by the non-conformist divine Isaac Watts (1674-1748). *A Token for Children* was the most quoted of any book to 18th century children, with the exception of the Bible.<sup>26</sup> Janeway was very much a man of his time and like most puritan writers, he believed that pleasure for children should consist of an awareness of doing right, even if such an awareness could only be achieved through fear of the pains of Hell. His book contained detailed accounts of the pious lives and joyful deaths of young children, some as young as two years. What has to be borne in mind however, is that many infants in the 17th century died before they reached their fifth year, and in this context, death and judgement had a reality for the 17th century and early 18th century child which his modern counterpart no longer shares.<sup>27</sup> This chapbook was available in Ulster in the middle of the 18th century as well as Isaac Watts *Divine Songs* (1715)<sup>28</sup>. One can therefore assume that they were read in the hedge schools in the northern counties, and we know that *Watt's Hymns*<sup>29</sup> were widely used in the hedge schools in the southern counties. Watts made a significant contribution to juvenile literature as he had an instinctive understanding of the world of children having tutored the three daughters of Sir Thomas Abney, to whom he dedicated *Divine Songs*. His work was firmly based on their everyday childish activities and his verses were written with children in mind. They

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<sup>24</sup>Gillian Avery and Julia Briggs. *Children and their Books*. (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1989), p. 97.

<sup>25</sup>Alec Ellis. *How to Find Out About Children's Literature*. (Pergamon Press, 1968), p. 118.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*,

<sup>27</sup>Whalley and Chester. *A History of Children's Book Illustrations*, p. 15.

<sup>28</sup>J.R.R. Adams. *The Printed Word and the Common Man*. (The Institute of Irish Studies, The Queen's University of Belfast, 1987), App. 11, pp. 182-184.

<sup>29</sup>App. No. 221, p. 553.



were an instant success and were to be enjoyed by over two generations of English and Irish children.<sup>30</sup>

An important and innovative development occurred in 1659 with the appearance of illustrations in children's books. Now the written text of the book was accompanied by a series of corresponding pictures. They appeared in Charles Hoole's English translation of Comenius's *Orbis Sensualium Pictus* (1658), and by 1777 the English version of Comenius's *Visible World* had reached its 12th edition.<sup>31</sup> This development scarcely altered the appearance of the chapbooks whose 'woodcut illustrations possessed a vitality which outweighed the undoubted crudity of their execution'<sup>32</sup>. The tendency was, either 'through loans or through copying and recutting' to use the 'same cuts' which appeared constantly in different books issued by different printers. 'George, Guy, Bevis, giants, dying Christians, boars, dragons, fiddlers were interchangeable figures, and historical property, or fidelity to the detail of any one text, did not matter', and it was printers such as Caxton, de Worde and Pynson that provided the stage-army of blocks for the true chapbook, from the 15th century and 'they persisted in that decadence almost as long as chapbooks themselves'<sup>33</sup>.

The first in a series of great classics of English literature intended for adults but later abridged as chapbooks, arrived in 1678 with the publication of the Puritan writer John Bunyan's (1628-1688) *Pilgrim's Progress*, a religious allegory whose style answered the imaginative needs of children so well that they quickly adopted it as their own. The juvenile reading market was enhanced also by Daniel Defoe's (1659-1731) *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson of York, Mariner ... Written by Himself*<sup>34</sup> which appeared in 1719 and which was followed in 1726 by Jonathan Swift's (1667-

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<sup>30</sup>Humphrey Carpenter, and Mari Prichard. *The Oxford Companion to Children's Literature*, (Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. 563-564.

<sup>31</sup>Whalley and Chester. *A History of Children's Books Illustrated*, p. 17.

<sup>32</sup>Victor E. Neuburg. *The Penny Histories*, p. 6.

<sup>33</sup>Henry Darton. *Children's Books in England*, p. 71.

<sup>34</sup>Rev. Martin Brenan. *Schools of Kildare and Leighlin*, p. 81.



1745) satire *Gulliver's Travels*<sup>35</sup>. As with Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, children remained ignorant of Swift's satire, the allegory employed and of the deeper moral lesson intended. The dangerous journey of Christian, the desert island of Crusoe, and the miniature or other imaginary worlds of Gulliver served as themes for innumerable later novels<sup>36</sup>, but it was the abridged versions of the chapbooks which charmed the children of the poor in the 18th century and which were to remain their perennial favourites for at least another generation.

Equally popular among the poor of both countries were the truncated accounts of medieval tales of chivalry and romance, which had been appreciated by all classes of society in medieval times but which had been abandoned by the 'literate and the sophisticated' in the 16th century. The chivalric romances became not only the fiction of the common reader but also 'the earliest books for children which provided the qualities of wholesomeness and excitement'<sup>37</sup>. Printers who were often booksellers kept the chapman supplied with romances such as *Guy of Warwick*, *Bevis of Southampton*, *The Four Sons of Aymon*, *The Seven Wise Masters*, *Fortunatus*, and *The Famous History of Valentine and Orson*<sup>38</sup> and in Ireland they formed a considerable part of the reading material used in the hedge schools. If proof were needed of the important function these stories played in the imaginative life of the young, one would not have to look much further than the treasured memories of the eminent literary artists of the 17th and 18th centuries, who owed their love of English literature to this 'degenerate literary form'. John Bunyan ignored the puritanical warnings against reading 'vain Books, profane Ballads ... all fond and amorous Romances and fabulous Histories of Giants, the bombast achievement of Knight errantry'<sup>39</sup>, and he delighted more in reading about *George on Horseback*, or *Beavis of Southampton*, than in reading the scriptures.<sup>40</sup> Dr. Samuel

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<sup>35</sup>App. No. 221, p. 556.

<sup>36</sup>John Rowe Townsend. *Written for Children*, p. 13.

<sup>37</sup>Victor E. Neuburg. *The Penny Histories*, p. 8.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 8-13.

<sup>39</sup>Victor E. Neuburg. *The Penny Histories*, pp. 20-21.

<sup>40</sup>Carpenter and Prichard. *The Oxford Companion to Children's Literature*, p. 106.



Johnson (1709-1784), writer and lexicographer, read the chivalric romances 'of which he was inordinately fond', while working in his father's bookshop in 1720<sup>41</sup>, and his Scottish biographer James Boswell (1740-1795) recalled with fondness his childhood reading which comprised '*Jack and the Giants, The Seven Wise Men of Gotham*'<sup>42</sup>. Charles Lamb (1775-1834) also grew nostalgic about 'the old classics of the nursery' and Wordsworth went so far as to eulogise on them in *The Prelude*, V. 11.

**Oh! Give us once again the Wishing-Cap  
Of Fortunatus, and the invisible Coat  
Of Jack the Giant-Killer, Robin Hood,  
And Sabra in the forest with St. George!**<sup>43</sup>

Next to the romances, the fairy tales made the greatest appeal to children and provided them with opportunities for wonder and delight 'and it was these chapbooks which were printed in the greatest numbers'<sup>44</sup>. The earliest collection of fairy legends to have been printed in popular chapbook form was by William Dicey, a printer from Bow Churchyard. They appeared at a time 'when traces of the traditional oral lore of faery still survived amongst the English peasantry'<sup>45</sup>. To Georgian society however, fairy tales were not quite 'respectable'. They represented 'the imbecilities of the peasantry'<sup>46</sup>. By the end of the 18th century when the oral lore had declined, 'the fairy stories which had once laid so great a hold upon the imagination of men and women in a pre-literate society became - largely because of their survival in chapbook - an important element in children's literature'<sup>47</sup>, and have remained so ever since.

The fairy tales came into English juvenile society 'through first being presented at the French Court', where they received royal approval under Louis XIV, 'and the stories which peasants honestly told to their children were furbished up for a pastime of elegant

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<sup>41</sup>Margaret Spufford. *Small Books and Pleasant Histories*, p. 75.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>43</sup>Victor E. Neuburg. *The Penny Histories*, p. 16.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>46</sup>Harvey Darton. *Children's Books in England*, p. 85.

<sup>47</sup>Victor E. Neuburg. *Penny Histories*, p. 17.



salons'<sup>48</sup>. Many French writers published the fairy tales but it was in 1697 that the talented Charles Perrault (1628-1703) published the best version of all, in his *Histoires ou Contes du temps passé: avec des Moralitéz*<sup>49</sup>, although the work didn't contain his name, but that of his son, Pierre Darmancour. Scholars disagree as to who the real author was. A popular belief was that Pierre related these stories to his father, he having heard them from his nurse.<sup>50</sup> One of its earliest appearances in print for children was in Perrault's collection entitled *Les Fées*. They were translated by Robert Samber, thirty years later in *Histories, or Tales of Past Times Told by Mother Goose* (1729). The fairy tales contained in this important collection included such well known classics as

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| <i>La Belle au Bois Dormant</i>                    | - | <b>The Sleeping Beauty (incorrectly)</b> |
| <i>La Petit Chaperon Rouge</i>                     | - | <b>Red Riding Hood</b>                   |
| <i>La Barbe Bleüe</i>                              | - | <b>Blue Beard</b>                        |
| <i>Le Maistre Chat, ou le Chat Botté</i>           | - | <b>Puss-in-Boots</b>                     |
| <i>Les Fées</i>                                    | - | <b>Diamonds and Toads</b>                |
| <i>Cendrillon, ou la petite Pantoufle de Verre</i> | - | <b>Cinderella, or the Glass Slipper</b>  |
| <i>Riquet à la Houppe</i>                          | - | <b>Riquet with the Tuft</b>              |
| <i>Le Petit Poucet</i>                             | - | <b>Hop o' my Thumb</b> <sup>51</sup>     |

In the native schools children learned how to read from a primer called *The Child's New Spelling Primer*, to which was added *The Stories of Cinderilla, and Little Red Riding Hood*,<sup>52</sup> and they also read from a book simply called *Fairy Tales*<sup>53</sup> which was probably

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<sup>48</sup>op. cit., p. 85.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 88.

<sup>50</sup>R.C. Churchill. *The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature* (Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 617.

<sup>51</sup>Harvey Darton. *Children's Books in England*. pp. 87-88.

<sup>52</sup>*The Child's New Spelling Primer*. (T. Wilkinson, No. 40, Winetavern St., Dublin, 1799).

<sup>53</sup>*History of the Tales of the Fairies: being a collection of entertaining stories tr. from the French. Dedicated to the ladies of Ireland.* (Dublin, C.J. Warren, n.d.).



the popular *History of Tales of the Fairies*.<sup>54</sup> This was a treat denied to their better off counterparts in the schools of England or Ireland in the 18th and 19th centuries.

The radical philosophers John Locke (1632-1704) and his French counterpart Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) were to exercise a powerful influence over the writers of children's literature in the 18th century. Locke brought the forces of reason and experience to bear on established ideas. His theories on the education of children were quite progressive, considering that he lived in an age unaccustomed to treating children as children. He believed in stimulating children's interests, and in capitalising on the value of play and on the good results that can be achieved by using rewards as incentives. He stressed that 'children may be cozened into a knowledge of their letters ... and play themselves into what others are whipped for'<sup>55</sup>. To Locke, the inculcation of virtue and the moral development of the child were more important than the acquisition of knowledge, and it was these two principles - play and the formation of proper habits of morality and conduct, which set the standard for a great deal of 18th century children's literature. Children were to be enticed to read, but not with fairy tales and fairy lore, but rather with

**some easy pleasant book, suited to his capacity ... wherein the entertainment that he finds might draw him on and reward his pains in reading, and yet not such as should fill his head with perfectly useless trumpery, or lay the principles of vice and folly.**<sup>56</sup>

In addition to the Scriptures, Locke approved of *Aesop's Fables*, preferably illustrated, and *Reynard the Fox*, as being suitable for the purposes he had in mind, taking into consideration a child's natural interest in animals. A selection from *Aesop's Fables* was included in most school textbooks of the time and an abridged version of *Reynard the Fox* formed part of *The Child's New Play-Thing*<sup>57</sup>, which was used by the junior classes in the hedge schools. He also believed in the usefulness and attractiveness of pictures, as

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<sup>54</sup>App. No. 221, p. 555.

<sup>55</sup>John Locke. *Some Thoughts Concerning Education: In Works Vol. IX.* (London, T. Davison, 1801), p. 149.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 156.

<sup>57</sup>*The Child's New Play-Thing.* (Dublin, D. Wogan, 28, Merchant's Quay, 1819).



an aid to learning, but he recognised that there was a dearth of suitable reading books for children in the late 17th century.<sup>58</sup> His ideas spread slowly and it took another fifty years before they took root. They eventually found their champion in one John Newbery (1713-1767), the philanthropic bookseller and proprietor of the '*Bible and Sun*', printing house at 65, St. Paul's Churchyard.

While Newbery is generally credited with being the first to produce books of amusement for children, this isn't strictly accurate. The entertaining children's book probably made its first appearance as early as 1740, with the publication of Thomas Boreman's humorously titled *Gigantic Histories*, for his ten volumes of miniature sized books. Boreman displayed great flair and he possessed an intuitive knowledge of what would appeal to children. Even though his little books were didactic, they were cheerfully illustrated and elegantly bound in bright colours of Dutch floral or embossed paper. This idea was in itself, a novel one.<sup>59</sup> Newbery, however, can be credited with 'being the first British publisher to create a permanent and profitable market for children's books, to establish them as a genre of their own'<sup>60</sup>. His success was due to his own keen business sense, his friendship with literary figures of the stature of Oliver Goldsmith and Samuel Johnson, whose talents he called upon occasionally, coupled with his own genuine affection for children, and his understanding of their needs. No doubt he was also influenced by Boreman's success in this lucrative market and by the popularity of Mrs. Cooper's book *The Child's New Play-Thing*, published in 1743, which was intended 'to make the learning to read a Diversion instead of a Task'<sup>61</sup> and was based on the educational ideas of Locke. The persistent demand for the ever popular chapbooks would surely have influenced him also, in his choice of themes.

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<sup>58</sup>Ibid., pp. 147-148.

<sup>59</sup>Whalley and Chester. *A History of Children's Book Illustrations*, p. 21.

<sup>60</sup>Gillian Avery. *Children and Their Books*, p. 114.

<sup>61</sup>*The Child's New Play-Thing*, 1819, 16th edition.



His first publication in 1744 of *A Little Pretty Pocket Book* reflected many of these influences, as it was tastefully presented in gilt and embossed papers. He displayed a shrewd entrepreneurial business sense, and in order to stimulate sales, he inserted an advertisement in the *Penny Morning Post*, on the 13th June, 1744, in which he made free offers to Little Master Tommy and Pretty Miss Polly of a ball and pincushion respectively. Even with this, his first children's publication, John Newbery explored the possibility of using extra inducements to increase turnover 'the price of the book alone was sixpence, but with a choice of ball or pincushion, only eightpence'<sup>62</sup>. He quoted Locke's advice on the care of children, for the benefit of parental ears and for his juvenile audience, he included two letters from Jack the Giant Killer. As in most other children's books at this time, he too included the obligatory moral, only John Newbery preached in a very gentle manner, 'which stressed the difficulty of avoiding naughtiness, rather than the more intricate philosophy of avoiding sin'<sup>63</sup>.

His second book, which was designed to amuse children was *The Lilliputian Magazine: or the young Gentleman and Lady's Golden Library. Being an Attempt to mend the World ... Printed for the Society, and Published by T. Carnan at Mr. Newbery's, the Bible and Sun, in St. Paul's Church Yard. The 'Society' for which it was printed was one invented in the course of the book and was alleged to have been founded on December 26th, 1750. This novel feature was followed by a variety of fascinating stories ranging from an account of the rise of learning in Lilliput, an anti-cock-fighting letter to jests, songs, riddles and the 'Adventures of Tommy Trip and his dog Jouler'.<sup>64</sup> The second volume had the instructive title *A Little Lottery-Book for Children: containing a new method of playing them into a Knowledge of the Letters, Figures, etc ...* Published with the Approbation of the Court of Common Sense. The title page was somewhat misleading, although very eye-catching and was almost certainly intended to attract customers, but in the book itself, there was nothing concerned with lotteries, except some*

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<sup>62</sup>Eric Quayle. *The Collector's Book of Children's Books*. (London Studio Vista, 1971), p. 23.

<sup>63</sup>Meigs et al., *A Critical History of Children's Literature*, p. 59.

<sup>64</sup>Harvey Darton. *Children's Books in England*, pp. 124-125.



sentences in the 'Advertisement' which spoke of their evils, and the denunciation of them by Peter Prudence in his capacity as Secretary of the Court of Common Sense, who deplored their abuse and showed the reader how to avoid them.<sup>65</sup> *The Lilliputian Magazine* was one of the most popular children's books of the 18th century, not only in England but also in the indigenous schools, particularly in the north, and it was read also in the south of Ireland. In 1775 a Belfast edition appeared, which omitted all illustrations and substituted a hymn for the original preface and added hymns and prayers at the end.<sup>66</sup> The Dublin publication of 1792 followed the original more faithfully as there were no additions or deletions made.<sup>67</sup> It would have provided great entertainment for children, although most of the stories would have required advanced reading skills.

Newbery's most famous work of all was *The History of Little Goody Two-Shoes*; otherwise called, *Mrs. Margery Two-Shoes* (1765), sometimes attributed to the pen of Oliver Goldsmith. It was charmingly written in an amusing, playful style by the avuncular author, who dedicated his book 'To All Young Gentlemen and Ladies who are good, or intend to be good' from 'their old Friend in St. Paul's Church-Yard'<sup>68</sup>. Newbery believed in rewarding hard work, only he represented these rewards in materialistic terms. Mrs. Margery Two-Shoes rose from rags to riches because she plied her books diligently and acquired a stock of knowledge:

**Who from a State of Rags and Care,  
And having Shoes but half a Pair;  
Their Fortune and their Fame would fix,  
And gallop in a Coach and Six<sup>69</sup>**

Usually there were two golden coaches for every little girl who would become a fine woman, and five horses, for every little boy who would become a great man. While the puritanical influence was evident here with its robust pre-occupation with material gain and while Newbery displayed a tendency towards commercialism, apparent from his

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<sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 125.

<sup>66</sup>J.R.R. Adams. *The Printed Word and The Common Man*, p. 19.

<sup>67</sup>*The Lilliputian Magazine*. (Peter Hoey at the Mercury, No. 33, Upper Ormond Quay, Dublin, 1792).

<sup>68</sup>Harvey Darton. *Children's Books in England*, pp. 131-132.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., p. 131.



many references to his other publications on the cover and in the text of his latest publication, nonetheless, he understood children better than many of his predecessors.<sup>70</sup> He knew how to entertain them and this was obvious from his amusing claim, which accompanied *The History of Little Goody-Two-Shoes*, that it was 'from a manuscript found in the Vatican, with the illustrations by Michael Angelo'<sup>71</sup>, and he knew what appealed to them but just as he didn't lose sight of the commercial market neither did he ignore the moral climate of the time which outlawed fairy tales. The middle class market, which he catered for, who could afford to buy children's books illustrated with copper plate engravings and bound 'in gilt and flowered boards for sixpence'<sup>72</sup>, had little enthusiasm for 'such things as moon-leaping cows, Banbury cock-horses', or 'booted cats'.<sup>73</sup> Out of deference to parental convictions, he offered the following advice, in verse, to his young readers

**So children who are good and wise  
Hobgoblin - stories will despise  
And all such idle tales;**

**Virtue can fortitude instil,  
And ward off all depending ill  
Which over vice prevails.<sup>74</sup>**

Writers of children's books continued to be influenced by the educational theories of the philosophers 'and in the period immediately after Newbery's death, the works of Rousseau had a very direct effect upon English books for children'<sup>75</sup>. Rousseau's thinking was patterned along the lines of Locke's philosophy and like the English radical thinker, he was firmly opposed to fairy tales and fantasy. He believed that 'man may be taught by fables' but that 'children require the naked truth'.<sup>76</sup> Rousseau broke with the rationalist outlook, as he did not place all his confidence in reason, but he believed that feeling,

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<sup>70</sup>Meigs et al., *A Critical History of Children's Literature*, pp. 59-60.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>73</sup>Harvey Darton. *Children's Books in England*, p. 85.

<sup>74</sup>The Lilliputian Magazine, p. 41.

<sup>75</sup>op. cit., p. 140.

<sup>76</sup>Mary Thwaite. *From Primer to Pleasure*. (London, 1963), p. 66. 'Citing 'Emile' Book II, p. 77.



sensibility, and the language of the heart, were the things the child could understand, and were true guides to living. He believed that the child should be removed from the corrupt influences of urban life and brought up in rural seclusion where making and doing should be the basis of the child's progress towards health and virtue. These ideas he experimented with in his epoch-making treatise on education *Émile* (1762). Chief among Rousseau's followers was the eccentric writer Thomas Day (1748-1789), author of the first full-sized narrative for children. The book was called *Sandford and Merton*<sup>77</sup>, which was practically a juvenile novel, in three volumes, and it was heavily influenced by '*Émile*'. In order to present education along Rousseauite lines, Day employed a favourite technique of the moral school of writers, which was that of contrast. His two principal characters Tommy Merton and Harry Sandford were bad and good respectively. Tommy was the spoilt son of a rich merchant from the West Indies and Harry was the son of a local farmer. Harry's character was based on the *Émile* prototype as he displayed all the *Émilean* virtues of self-reliance, courage, kindness and strength. Tommy was sent to be educated with Harry under the excellent tutelage of the worthy Mr. Barlow, a clergyman of the neighbourhood. In time, Tommy was transformed into a paragon of virtue, just like his role model, but any resemblance these characters bore to real boys was purely accidental. 'Harry Sandford served as a mere wooden peg on which to hang a deadweight of moralizing, scientific truths and gratuitous information'<sup>78</sup>. No doubt young readers would have passed over much of the extraneous matter, including the episode with the amazing title 'History of a surprising cure of the Gout', to read instead of the lively pursuits of the boys and the misfortunes the hapless Tommy encountered on the road to his salvation. Day displayed many weaknesses as a writer, not least being his failure to structure a story. *Sandford and Merton* was even parodied in 1872 by the editor of *Punch*, F.C. Burnand, in a burlesque entitled *The New History of Sandford and Merton, complete with illustrations by Linley Sambourne*. Nonetheless, the original became an 18th century best-seller. A century after its first publication, the editor of a new edition felt justified in

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<sup>77</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>78</sup>Gillian Avery. *Childhood's Pattern*. (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1975), p. 40.



claiming that it had 'charmed instructed and ennobled the young hearts and minds of more than half a century with a constant increasing celebrity'<sup>79</sup>. No doubt it charmed the children in the hedge schools also as it made its first appearance in Belfast in 1787<sup>80</sup> and it was re-printed in 1791 and 1797. The complete edition in one volume was printed in Dublin and ran into its tenth edition in 1812.<sup>81</sup> It was in fact translated into several foreign languages before the end of the century<sup>82</sup> and Harry Sandford was set to become the pattern hero of the moral tale for many years to come.

In his own country Rousseau's ideas influenced the writer Arnaud Berquin in his *L'ami des enfants*, a periodical of pleasant moral tales, later translated into English as *The looking glass for the mind*, by Richard Johnson, under the pseudonym 'The Rev. W.D. Cooper'<sup>83</sup>. Another French writer, Madame La Comtesse de Genlis, owed much to Rousseau, and translations of her stories had wide transmission in England.<sup>84</sup> These French writers served as an inspiration to English writers of children's books such as Mrs. Barbauld, Lady Eleanor Fenn and the distinguished Anglo-Irish writer and educator Maria Edgeworth (1767-1849), who 'included in her list of friends and acquaintances ... Mme. de Genlis' and indeed 'Mrs. Barbauld'.<sup>85</sup> Maria Edgeworth was influenced also by Thomas Day, who was actually a family friend. Her father Richard Lovell Edgeworth (1744-1817) was her mentor and he exercised an inordinate influence over Maria. He had educated his large family of 18 children along strict Rousseauite principles which didn't allow for tales of fantasy or flights of imagination. To him 'Fairy-tales were trumpery - 'fantastic visions', not at all 'useful'<sup>86</sup>. Maria collaborated with her father in a book of essays entitled *Practical Education*, which did much to spread the theories of Rousseau

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<sup>79</sup>Meigs et al., *A Critical History of Children's Literature*, p. 40.

<sup>80</sup>J.R.R. Adams. *The Printed Word and The Common Man*, p. 64.

<sup>81</sup>Thomas Day. *The History of Sandford and Merton*. (C. Crookes for D. Wogan and others, 1812). App. No. 221, p. 555.

<sup>82</sup>Eric Quayle. *The Collector's Book of Children's Books*, p. 30.

<sup>83</sup>Mary J. Thwaite. *From Primer to Pleasure*, p. 67.

<sup>84</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 68.

<sup>85</sup>Harvey Darton. *Children's Books in England*, p. 144.

<sup>86</sup>Harvey Darton. *Children's Books in England*, p. 145.



and which was very influential in its day.<sup>87</sup> Unfortunately her father's influence proved to be a limiting factor, which was evident in her children's book *Harry and Lucy*, which had been started by Edgeworth and his wife Honora but later finished by Maria.<sup>88</sup> These were determinedly didactic stories with a utilitarian bias, which clearly derived from Rousseau. Her most famous story was *Rosamond and the Purple Jar*, which was first included in *The Parents Assistant* (1796) and later in *Early Lessons* (1801), and it told of a little girl named Rosamond who longed for the purple jar in the chemist's window in preference to a pair of shoes. She soon realised that the jar was useless, it wasn't even purple, as its colour came from an unpleasant smelling liquid. Meanwhile, Rosamond's shoes were deteriorating and she had now been taught a cruel lesson. She bitterly regretted her foolishness "Oh mamma", said she, as she took off her hat, "how I wish that I had chosen the shoes - They would have been of so much more use to me than that jar: However, I am sure - no, not quite sure - but, I hope, I shall be wiser another time"<sup>89</sup>. While the story was well told in a humorous and sometimes dramatic form, it was marred by the questionable merits of the values promoted. Maria Edgeworth's later stories such as *Simple Susan* and *Waste Not Want Not* were much more satisfactory and showed a marked improvement in substance and style. While words of wisdom and improving advice were still offered gratuitously to the young, the tone adopted was better suited to their level. In general Maria Edgeworth's stories were 'highly esteemed by most critics'<sup>90</sup>. *The Edgeworth Tales*<sup>91</sup> were read in the hedge schools, not for their heavy moralising, but 'because they were really good stories, told in simple delightful English, with frequent humour'<sup>92</sup>.

The Rousseauists weren't allowed to monopolise the world of juvenile fiction, they had to share the market with leading members of the Bluestockings, which was a coterie of

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<sup>87</sup>Mary Thwaite. *From Primer to Pleasure*, p. 76.

<sup>88</sup>Meigs et al., *A Critical History of Children's Literature*, p. 94.

<sup>89</sup>Harvey Darton. *Children's Books in English*, p. 141.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., p. 140.

<sup>91</sup>Maria Edgeworth. *Popular Tales*, Vols. I-II. (C. Mercier for J. Johnson, 1804).

Rev. Martin Brenan. *Schools of Kildare and Leighlin*, p. 81.

<sup>92</sup>op. cit.



literary women [Ch. 5], some of whom were fervent evangelicals who promoted Sunday schools. The end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century marked 'the heyday of the Bluestockings' as writing children's books began to rank as an occupation for gentlewomen, many of them being commissioned to do so from 1780 onwards.<sup>93</sup> As 'the authorship of children's books was regarded as a very inferior branch of learning'<sup>94</sup> some of the Bluestockings preferred to remain anonymous. The Kilner sisters, Dorothy (1755-1836) and Mary (1753-1831) wrote as M.P. or M. Pelham and S.S. respectively. These were innovative writers who employed a novel literary device of having an animal, bird or even an inanimate object to act as narrator of the tale. Lady Eleanor Fenn (1743-1813), who is best remembered for her highly regarded *Cobwebs to Catch Flies* (1783), which was a system of graded reading 'in short sentences adapted to children from 3 to 8 years', wrote under a bewildering array of pseudonyms such as 'Solomon Lovechild', 'Mrs. Teachwell' and 'Mrs. Lovechild'. The 'mildly pious' Mrs. Barbauld, and the 'sternly moralistic' Mrs. Trimmer broke with social convention and published under their own names, and both were to suffer from the prevailing prejudices of the time. The attack came from Charles Lamb who criticised the solemn female writers, who made a 'puritanical onslaught on the literate youth of the day'<sup>95</sup>. In a letter penned to his friend, the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) in 1802, he complained bitterly that his sister Mary had difficulty finding a copy of his favourite childhood book, because

**Goody Two-Shoes is almost out of print, Mrs. Barbauld's stuff has banished all the old classics of the nursery and the shopman at Newbery's hardly deigned to reach them off an old exploded corner of the shelf, when Mary asked for them. Mrs. Barbauld's and Mrs. Trimmer's nonsense lay in piles about.**<sup>96</sup>

Lamb's censure of the diffident Mrs. Anna Laetitia Barbauld (1743-1825) was quite unfair considering her significant contribution to children's reading, with her *Lessons for Children, from two to three years old*, in three parts. The first part was published in

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<sup>93</sup>Victor E. Neuburg. *The Penny Histories*, p. 64.

<sup>94</sup>Mary Thwaite. *From Primer to Pleasure*, p. 72.

<sup>95</sup>Eric Quayle. *The Collector's Book of Children's Books*, p. 30.

<sup>96</sup>Harvey Darton. *Children's Books in England*, p. 129.



1778, with parts two and three following in 1794 and 1803.<sup>97</sup> The American Quaker, Lindley Murray (1745-1826), who became one of the most popular writers of English textbooks in the 19th century, thought so highly of Mrs. Barbauld's *Lessons* that he included a selection in his own books so too, did Daniel Fenning in his *Universal Spelling Book*. Three of Murray's textbooks were used as such, in the indigenous schools in the diocese of Kildare and Leighlin<sup>98</sup> *Murray's Primer, Grammar and English Reader*. In other schools of native origin, the master had a transcribed copy of *Murray's Grammar*.<sup>99</sup> Its widespread use was unlikely considering that Murray's *English Reading Book* alone sold at prices ranging from 3s to 5s.<sup>100</sup>

Mrs. Sarah Trimmer, who was probably more deserving of Lamb's malediction, being a belligerent moralist and educationalist of conservative views, was also a devout evangelical, who promoted Sunday schools and did all in her power to provide instruction and 'proper books' for poor illiterate children in England. She was greatly alarmed by the French Revolution and by the introduction of Rousseau's system. Thomas Day's books caused her some disquiet because she believed that they were badly infected with dangerous philosophical principles imported from France. She could take little comfort from R.L. Edgeworth's books on education either which she considered too secular, but there was one area where she shared common ground with the Rousseauists and that was in her aversion to fairies and works of fantasy. She denounced *Cinderella* as 'a compendium of vice', but unlike Rousseau and his followers, she condemned *Robinson Crusoe* as a dangerous book 'which led to an early taste for a rambling life'<sup>101</sup>. Whatever one might think of Mrs. Trimmer's strong moralistic views, no one could doubt her sincerity as she attempted to protect society against dangerous principles and books that could only have the worst possible effects on the young. She did this by her campaigning

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<sup>97</sup>op. cit., pp. 30-31.

<sup>98</sup>Rev. Martin Brenan. *Schools of Kildare and Leighlin*, pp. 177-536.

<sup>99</sup>Ms. G. 809. Peter Gallegan. *Collection in English and Irish Entirely written by himself*. January 16, 1824. pp. 272-278.

<sup>100</sup>J.M. Goldstrom. *The Social Content of Education 1800-1870*, p. 56.

<sup>101</sup>R.C. Churchill. *The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature*, p. 512.



efforts in her periodical *The Family Magazine* (1788-1789) and later in her *Guardian of Education* (1802-1806), in which she published notices and reviews of the many children's books, and works on educational theory, newly published. In the *Guardian* she expressed her complete disenchantment with the '*Books of Education*' and '*Children's books*', which she felt would infect the minds of youth and subvert the social order.<sup>102</sup> She abhorred chapbooks as reading material for juveniles and supplied the Sunday schools with her own *Oeconomy of Charity*, her *Charity School Spelling Book* and its related *Teacher's Assistant* in an effort to improve the education of the poor in these schools. She also produced a series of prints illustrating sacred and profane history, an accompanying set of lessons, and a volume of scriptural extracts.<sup>103</sup> The one really notable book for children which Mrs. Trimmer can take credit for was her *Fabulous Histories*: designed for the instruction of children, respecting their treatment of animals (1786), which was abbreviated to *The History of the Robins* and then to *The Robins*. The book was written to promote kindness to animals, and it showed Mrs. Trimmer at her most genial, even if she did cull 'The names of her daring little birds Robin, Dicky, Flapsy and Pecksy from the works of John Newbery'<sup>104</sup>. She was faced with a real dilemma however, when she had to allow her robin to talk, in order to carry out the intention of the story. The resourceful Mrs. Trimmer solved the problem by explaining apologetically in her introduction that:

**Before Henry and Charlotte began to read these Histories, they were taught to consider them, not as containing the real conversations of birds, (for that is impossible as we shall understand) but as a series of Fables, intended to convey moral instruction.**<sup>105</sup>

The fairy tale and works of fiction may have been fraught with danger for Mrs. Trimmer, but not so the fable. Her *History of the Robins* was to become the book 'on which children of all right-minded parents were reared for two generations'<sup>106</sup>.

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<sup>102</sup>Harvey Darton. *Children's Books in England*, p. 160.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid., p. 157.

<sup>104</sup>Eric Quayle. *The Collector's Book of Children's Books*, p. 34.

<sup>105</sup>Mrs. Sarah Trimmer. *Fabulous Histories*. (London, Longman, 1786), p. 162.

<sup>106</sup>Gillian Avery. *Childhood's Pattern*, p. 46.



Children could at least find some relief from the heavy piety which characterised many of the children's books during the late 18th and early 19th centuries in the chapbooks which were still being supplied by several printers in English provincial towns during the 1780's, 1790's and into the first decades of the 19th century.<sup>107</sup> It was clear to see however that 'the heyday of the chapbook' was over by this time, as an ever-increasing English reading public rejected them in favour of political books and pamphlets, such as Tom Paine's *Rights of Man*. In the wake of the industrial revolution people no longer had any use for the chivalric romances of the past. They were not looking for escapism but rather for coping mechanisms and guiding principles to help them to adjust to their changed living conditions. It was to the radical writers that they turned for this direction. It was at this stage also that the prolific evangelical writer Hannah More decided to follow in the footsteps of Sarah Trimmer and launch her offensive literary campaign against the 'seditious' writings of Thomas Paine. She armed herself with 114 religious tracts - *The Cheap Repository Tracts*, half of which she wrote herself, and which appeared during the years 1795 to 1798,<sup>108</sup> in order to counteract the evil influences of the radical writings and the immoral influences of the chapbooks, on whose format she modelled her series. She failed to replace the chapbooks but she succeeded in achieving a commercial success with her venture.

The last of the female writers of children's books for this period was the sternly evangelical Mrs. Sherwood (1775-1851), who was the most formidable of the writers of the moral tale. While in India she came under the influence of the great missionary Henry Martyn whose rigid Calvinist views and evangelical zeal laid a deep impression on her. This influence, would, in time, be reflected in her books, as she adopted the hell-fire and brimstone morality one associates with the Calvinists of the 17th century, most notably James Janeway. She believed that:

**All children are by nature evil, and while they have none but the natural evil principle to guide them, pious and prudent parents must check their**

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<sup>107</sup>Victor E. Neuburg. *Penny Histories*, p. 65.

<sup>108</sup>Carpenter and Prichard. *The Oxford Companion to Children's Literature*, p. 361.



**naughty passions in any way that they have in their power, and force them into decent and proper behaviour and into what are called good habits.**<sup>109</sup>

This was her guiding philosophy in her most popular children's book *The Fairchild Family*, and she repeated this belief many times throughout the book and quoted scripture to lend support to it. The first part of the book was published in 1818, the second and third parts followed much later, in 1842 and 1847 respectively, but it was part one which earned Mrs. Sherwood most acclaim. This was primarily a family story, the first of its type designed for children, in which every chapter had its moral lesson. The Fairchild children, Lucy, Emily and little Henry delighted their readers by behaving like normal children and getting into mischief time and time again even though they knew they would be severely punished if caught. Indiscretions and misdeeds not only brought immediate retribution but also led to eternal damnation<sup>110</sup> and when Henry was daring enough to steal apples and foolhardy enough to lie about it, Mrs. Fairchild locked him in a little room at the top of the house, where he was incarcerated for an entire day and deprived of all food and drink, until darkness fell. Mrs. Fairchild explained to Henry why she did this 'I did not punish you, my child, because I do not love you, but because I wished to save your soul from hell'<sup>111</sup>. There were macabre incidents in the book also, in which Mrs. Sherwood displayed an excessively morbid imagination, as when the high spirited Fairchild children were taken on a gruesome visit to the cottage in which Mr. Fairchild's old gardener Roberts, had just died. In order to deter the children from committing sin, they were allowed to view the rotting corpse, which they were told was a direct result of the consequences of sinning.

**When they came to the door they perceived a kind of disagreeable smell, such as they had never smelt before; this was the smell of a corpse, which having been dead now nearly two days had begun to corrupt ... the whole appearance of the body was more ghastly and horrible than the children expected ... at last Mr. Fairchild said, 'my dear children, you now see what death is; ... The soul I trust is in God; but such is the taint and corruption of the flesh, by reason of sin, that it must pass**

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<sup>109</sup>Harvey Darton. *Children's Books in England*, p. 168.

<sup>110</sup>Mary Thwaite. *From Primer to Pleasure*, p. 64.

<sup>111</sup>*Ibid.*,



**through the grave and crumble to dust ... Remember these things, my children, and pray to God to save you from sin.**<sup>112</sup>

On another occasion Mr. Fairchild took the children to examine the gibbeted body of a man who had murdered his brother, in a fit of anger. He wished to impress upon them the evil effects of yielding to their passions. Mr. Fairchild pointed out that the two brothers, 'when they first began to quarrel in their play, as you did this morning, they did not think that death, and perhaps hell, would be the end of their quarrels'<sup>113</sup>. Purged of these macabre incidents and a great deal of theology, *The Fairchild Family* became a 19th century best-seller, which was still being re-printed in the early part of this century.<sup>114</sup> Victorian children enjoyed it because of the descriptions of scrumptious food and colourful funerals. Lord Frederick Hamilton recalled his happy memories of the Fairchild family:

**I liked it notwithstanding. There was plenty about eating and drinking: one could always skip the prayers, and there were three or four very brightly written accounts of funerals in it.**<sup>115</sup>

The chapbooks still had a large share of the juvenile market, and they were once again to be used as 'penny godlinesses', following in the wake of Hannah More's success with her religious tracts. This time the evangelical writer was George Mogridge (1787-1854), one who 'had been brought up on chapbook literature - *Friar Bacon, The Seven Champions* and *Tom Thumb*'<sup>116</sup>. He wrote a large number of books for children, most of which were published by the Religious Tract Society, founded in 1799. His favourite pseudonyms were Ephraim Holding, Peter Parley and Old Humphrey, which he used for his 'fifty three little 32 mo books'<sup>117</sup>, which were produced to resemble chapbooks in appearance, although 'the contents could not have been more unlike those of the penny histories'<sup>118</sup>. There was really very little to distinguish Mogridge from the other early 19th century

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<sup>112</sup>John Rowe Townsend. *Written for Children*, p. 29.

<sup>113</sup>*Ibid.*,

<sup>114</sup>*Ibid.*,

<sup>115</sup>Gillian Avery. *Childhood's Pattern*, p. 93.

<sup>116</sup>Harvey Darton. *Children's Books in England*, p. 224.

<sup>117</sup>Victor E. Neuburg, *Penny Histories*, p. 74.

<sup>118</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 66.



writers of children's books, like Sarah Trimmer, except that he wrote chapbooks. He too condemned the romances which he enjoyed in his youth and resolved never to read them again. He even composed a poem in later life vowing to do just that:

**And did the magic of Romantic lays  
Seduce the leisure of my earlier days?  
And has the midnight taper wasted been  
In pondering legend hoar, and fairy scene?**

**Farewell, ye tales of terror, that control  
In mystic bonds the passion of the soul.  
... Your fleeting joys I freely now resign;  
For ever let the Book of Truth be mine.<sup>119</sup>**

In keeping with the trend at the time, he outlawed the fairies and fantasy 'and on at least one occasion he went out of his way to criticize Tom Thumb as being likely to corrupt children'<sup>120</sup>.

Despite the fashion for 'self-improvement' and 'morality' in children's books, there was one printer in England who continued to expand the chapbook market by producing books to amuse and delight the young reader. This was James Catnach, the printer who set up in business in 1813 at Nos. 2-3 Monmouth Court, Seven Dials. Catnach had an instinctive business sense and he displayed a natural flair as he supplied the market with a variety of cheap books designed to appeal to public taste. Because of his entrepreneurial skills, the chapbooks enjoyed a remarkable revival in the 19th century, and Catnach amassed quite a fortune as a result. It wasn't that he produced an original series of chapbooks, on the contrary, he simply re-printed the old favourites and children were once more supplied with *Jack Spratt*, *Cock Robin*, *Mother Goose*, *Tom Hickathrift*, *The Tragical Death of an Apple Pie*, *Cinderella* ... and 'A variety of Children's Books'<sup>121</sup>.

In the 1880's the final owner of the Catnach Press, W.S. Fortey, went out of business and the chapbooks rolled off the presses for the last time. The 'penny histories', which had

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<sup>119</sup>Ibid., pp. 72-73.

<sup>120</sup>Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>121</sup>Ibid., pp. 68-69.



brought endless pleasure to both adults and children in Ireland and England and which had proved so durable, finally had to yield to popular taste. The day of the chapbook was over as 'penny dreadfuls' had superseded 'penny histories' and *Fortunatus* was obliged to give way to *Varney the Vampire*.<sup>122</sup> However in the hedge schools of Ireland, it was the chapbooks which held the greatest appeal for children, especially the books of criminal biography and the books of entertainment.

(ii) **'Penny Merriments' - Books of Criminal Biography**

There were two criminal biographies which draw down the wrath of critics, during the period under review, and those were *The Life and Adventures of James Freney*<sup>123</sup> and *A Genuine History of the Lives and Actions of the most notorious Irish Highwaymen, Tories and Rapparees*<sup>124</sup>. The commissioners of education believed that they would incite children 'to lawless and profligate adventure',<sup>125</sup> and the Rev. Henry Cooke, Moderator of the Synod of Ulster stated in his submission before the commissioners on the 5th January, 1825, that he found the biographies of notorious highwaymen 'exceedingly promiscuous, and in general very bad'.<sup>126</sup> The Rt. Hon. John Edward Walsh, Master of the Rolls considered that 'The general character of such volumes was loose and immoral' because 'The Irish Rogues and Rapparees celebrated the deeds of highwaymen'.<sup>127</sup> His concern was that children would emulate the actions of their heroes, in particular the ill-famed James Freney, about whom he wrote 'Among the Rapparees was one held in high esteem

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<sup>122</sup>Ibid., p. 75.

<sup>123</sup>*The Life and Adventures of James Freney, Commonly called Captain Freney*. (S. Powell, Dublin, 1754), Written by Himself.

<sup>124</sup>John Cosgrave. *A Genuine History of the Lives and Actions of the most notorious Irish Highwaymen, Tories and Rapparees*. (Belfast, 1776).

<sup>125</sup>Report of the Commissioners 1806-1812, p. 331. First Report of the Commissioners 1825, p. 38.

<sup>126</sup>Ibid., p. 820 Appendix (XII).

<sup>127</sup>John Edward Walsh. *Ireland Sixty Years Ago*. (James McGlashan, 21, D'Olier St., Dublin, 1847), pp. 102-103.



by the youth of the peasantry, and a representation of his deeds formed a part of their plays and sports. The person was James Freney'.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>128</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 103.



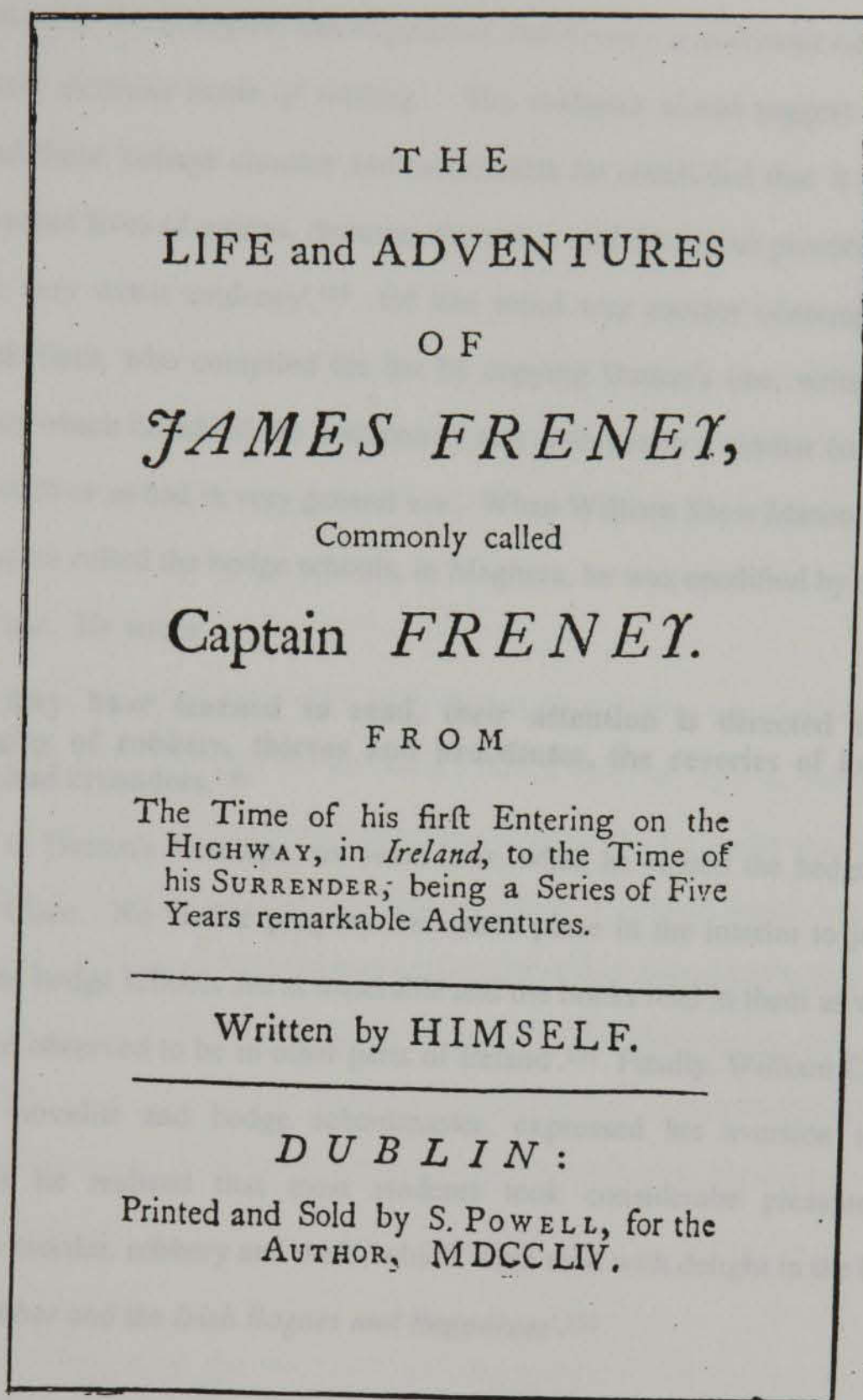


Fig. 25.1 Title page from *The Life and Adventures of James Freney*, commonly called *Captail Freney*. [James Freney] 1754.



The contemporary writers continued this barrage of abuse right into the next century, when Hely Dutton visited the hedge schools of Co. Clare in order to collect data for his statistical survey of the county. He was shocked by the reading books he found there, among them were *'Irish Rogues and Rapparees and Freney, a notorious robber, teaching them the most dextrous mode of robbing'*. The evidence would suggest that he hadn't actually read these 'cottage classics' but nonetheless he concluded that 'it can hardly be expected that the lives of pirates, dextrous thieves ... and illustrious prostitutes, can have any but the very worst tendency'.<sup>129</sup> Of like mind was another contemporary writer, Edward Wakefield, who compiled his list by copying Dutton's one, written four years previously, to which he added the comment 'I met with nearly a similar list in Wicklow and I found such or as bad in very general use'. When William Shaw Mason visited 'these seminaries' as he called the hedge schools, in Maghera, he was unedified by the calibre of the books in use. He wrote:

**when they have learned to read, their attention is directed to the biography of robbers, thieves and prostitutes, the reveries of knights errant and crusaders.**<sup>130</sup>

He followed in Dutton's footsteps, six years later, when he visited the hedge schools in Kilrush, Co. Clare. No visible progress had taken place in the interim to judge by his report that 'The hedge schools are as miserable and the books read in them as worthless as they have been observed to be in other parts of Ireland'.<sup>131</sup> Finally, William Carleton, the distinguished novelist and hedge schoolmaster, expressed his aversion to criminal biography but he realised that most students took considerable pleasure in these 'Eulogiums on murder, robbery and theft', which 'were read with delight in the histories of *Freney the Robber* and the *Irish Rogues and Rapparees*'.<sup>132</sup>

According to a recent study carried out by Niall Ó Ciosáin (1997) the Freneys were a leading Anglo-Norman family in Kilkenny who were dispossessed of their lands after the

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<sup>129</sup>Hely Dutton. *Statistical Survey of the County of Clare*. 1808, pp. 236-237.

<sup>130</sup>William Shaw Mason. *A Statistical Account or Parochial Survey of Ireland*, p. 598.

<sup>131</sup>*Ibid.*,

<sup>132</sup>William Carleton. *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry*. Vol. I, p. 313.



1640 war, and while Freney may not have belonged to this family, the name certainly had 'tory' associations.<sup>133</sup> It is interesting to observe that the first edition of the *Life and Adventures of James Freney, Commonly called Captain Freney* was published by subscription and the list of purchasers included the provost of Trinity College, and a number of the newer landlords in Kilkenny.<sup>134</sup> This only makes sense if we refer to the text of *Freney*, from which it would appear that his gang was headed by landless gentry, who operated with a certain amount of protection from local elites. At one stage, when two members of the gang were put on trial, they were discharged by a jury after the intervention of a 'man of power and interest'.<sup>135</sup> This means that Freney had an elite readership in the mid 18th century but by the late 18th and early 19th centuries the book was being condemned unanimously by elite commentators and had an exclusively popular audience.

Likewise it can be stated that initially *Irish Rogues and Rapparees, A Genuine History*, had an elite readership because in the early editions buffoon figures, such as William Maguire were included. This would have been offensive to a popular readership with a strong attachment to an oral culture and who as Niall Ó Ciosáin noted 'might not have appreciated such an external and deprecatory view of verbal dexterity'.<sup>136</sup> By the late 18th century these texts were located well down the social scale. Both books were recorded as having been read by students in the Valentia Erasmus Smith School in West Kerry in the 1790's. *Irish Rogues and Rapparees* was read by a fourteen year old student and *Freney* by a sixteen year old.<sup>137</sup>

The principal characters in the two criminal biographies James Freney and Redmond O'Hanlon were real-life highwaymen who were admired by the people, because they

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<sup>133</sup> Niall Ó Ciosáin. *Print and Popular Culture in Ireland, 1750-1850*. (MacMillan Press Ltd., Houndsmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS, 1997), p. 94.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., p. 96.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., p. 94.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., p. 97.

<sup>137</sup> P. de Brún. 'Some Documents Concerning Valentia Erasmus Smith School, 1776-1795'. In *Journal of the Kerry Historical and Archaeological Society* Vol. XV-XVI (1982-3), pp. 70-82.



struck a blow at the establishment, while operating outside the law. Highway robberies were a common feature of travel in 18th century Ireland and it was not unusual for travellers to place notices in the newspapers of the time, requesting 'escorts of dragoons or coaches advertised as bullet proof'<sup>138</sup>, but James Freney and O'Hanlon were the folk heroes of the poor people, the romantic highwaymen on horseback, with masks and pistols, who robbed the rich to help the poor, in the time honoured fashion of Robin Hood. On the road between Clonmel and Kilkenny, the scene of many of Freney's robberies, there was an elm tree planted in his honour, known as 'Freney's Tree'<sup>139</sup>, but he was to come to a rather inglorious end, having enjoyed such a level of hero worship, because he informed on his friends in order to gain a royal pardon. His counterpart, Redmond O'Hanlon achieved equal notoriety in the north of Ireland. O'Hanlon was identified in the minds of the people with those who were driven from their lands by the confiscations of Cromwell and William of Orange. He was the terror of the rich landlords of Armagh and the neighbouring counties for nearly twenty years. The people supported the highwaymen or rogues and rapparees, as they were a dispossessed people themselves, who could empathise with the outlaws and who took pride in their exploits. The people rejoiced when the highwaymen managed to strike a blow at the planters or the tory-hunters and yeomanry leaders. The latter, who represented the establishment became one of the most hated groups in local tradition. They were well-known to the people, especially Redmond O'Hanlon's chief pursuer, Johnston of the Fews. There were others also 'men like Seaver of the Bog and Batchy Kirk and Lucas of Dromolane, all approximating in villainy to the local demon, Johnston of the Fews'. The people prayed that they might be spared from the wrath of Johnston.

**Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews,  
Save us from Johnston, King of the Fews.<sup>140</sup>**

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<sup>138</sup>Kevin Danaher. 'Highwaymen - They Robbed the Rich'. In *Biatas* (October 1961), p. 487.

<sup>139</sup>John Edward Walsh. *Ireland Sixty Years Ago*. p. 106.

<sup>140</sup>Tomás Ó Fiaich. 'The Political and Social Background of the Ulster Poets'. In *Léachtaí Cholm Cille*. (1970), p. 51.



## The Life and Adventures of James Freney

This book was Freney's own Autobiography, which he described as an account 'from the time of his first entering on the Highway in Ireland to the time of his surrender, being a series of five Years remarkable adventures written by himself'. This was an original composition written in simple language readily understandable to those aged ten and upwards, and its style was conversational and entertaining, which would account for its enormous popularity. There were no illustrations but the variety of action would have compensated for this deficiency, and a lively pace was maintained throughout.

Freney dedicated his book to the Earl of Carrick because he was in his debt 'As I owe my life to your Lordship by whose interest and intercession I obtained his Majesty's most gracious pardon'. Both his parents were employed at the 'Big House' of Mr. George Robbins, where his father worked earnestly as a house-steward and his mother Alice Phelan, as a servant maid. His mother continued to work there, until 'she proved with child'<sup>141</sup>. She then returned to her father's home at Ennistearg near Ballyduff and it was there that the famous Irish highwayman was born. This was the last reference he made to his mother.

He spent his youth working as a pantry boy for Mrs. Robbins, who took a special interest in the boy. As a result, he enjoyed a privileged upbringing, with a private tutor to instruct him, when he was not engaged in his official duties. Her best efforts at strengthening his character failed as he displayed a certain weakness for pleasure seeking and enjoyment, to the neglect of his household responsibilities. He listed his misdemeanours, which his puritanical contemporaries would certainly have frowned upon but which the modern reader would regard as diverse leisure activities. He was overcome with remorse because he 'attended all the little country dances, diversions and meetings, and became, what is

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<sup>141</sup>*The Life and Adventures of James Freney*. commonly called Captain Freney. (S. Powell, Dublin, 1754). Written by Himself, p. 2.



among them deemed a good dancer'.<sup>142</sup> He confessed also to having 'an idle disposition' and in delighting 'in nothing but hurling, horse-racing, gaming, dancing and such like diversions'.<sup>143</sup> These innocent amusements would soon be abandoned by him for more robust ones. Freney was completely devoid of sensitivity or sentimentality. When his benevolent mistress died in 1742, he didn't grieve or bemoan her passing, instead he rejoiced in his new found freedom. Finally, he was his own master. He then married and on the strength of his dowry he established himself in business in Waterford. His investment failed because he proved to be unacceptable to the other traders in the city. As in the case of his mother, his wife, was never referred to again, after he had disposed of her dowry.

He then moved to Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny where misfortune assailed him once again. He found himself in debt to the tune of fifty pounds, with his creditors pursuing him daily. He was now faced with two choices, he had the option of selling his furniture or selling his riding mare, the latter choice he would have found demeaning. Such indignity and loss of gentlemanly status he wasn't prepared to countenance. He was left with no other alternative but to turn to a life of crime and to earn his living as a highwayman. In his new 'calling', he was to experience unparalleled success and he was destined to become quite a notoriety. As a highwayman, James Freney exemplified all the gentlemanly virtues. He conducted himself with the greatest dignity on all his highway robberies. He was both charming and thoughtful towards his victims as he assumed a Robin Hood style persona. During one such robbery, he courteously bade a gentleman to 'Stand and Deliver'. The gentleman was unresponsive to his polite entreaties, he even attempted to escape but failed to do so. He pleaded meekly 'that was no usage for a gentleman on the Kings High Road of a Sabbath Day'.<sup>144</sup> Freney encouraged him to part with fifty pounds immediately, the gentleman duly complied, at which point Freney returned the sum of £1-30s-10d to him, to cover his travel expenses home. After this

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<sup>142</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>143</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>144</sup>Ibid., p. 7.



magnanimous gesture, he proceeded to Thomastown to discharge part of his debts. One could have been forgiven for thinking at this stage that he had reformed but unfortunately the path of righteousness held little attraction for Freney and he soon found himself 'Resorting to and frequenting taverns and going to hurlings, races, and cockfights'.<sup>145</sup>

He decided that the time had come for him to dispense some retributive justice and settle an old score. Once his pride had been deeply wounded by an affront offered to him by a Mr. Collier, a clergyman, who for some reason not mentioned, forbade his former master Mr. Robbins from giving him a suit of 'cloaths'. He now planned to burgle his old enemy's house. To this end he and his fellow highwayman blackened their faces, lit candles and stole a sledge from a neighbouring forge. With the aid of this instrument, they broke open a sash window and entered the house. Freney noted that one of the sash windows had been raised up so he deduced that while 'the nest was there ... the birds had flown'. He went in search of the Colliers, and ran into the orchard, where he 'overtook Mrs. Collier and obliged her to come back'.<sup>146</sup> She offered no resistance and 'he let her go in at the street door'<sup>147</sup>. These civilities having been discharged, he demanded her money, plate and watch. For once Freney was outwitted as Mr. Collier had left home with his valuable possessions and a sum of seventy pounds.

His next robbery was a much more successful operation and it took place at Colonel Palliser's house. Here he took the precaution of placing the house under surveillance. As they lay in watch, he saw the Colonel 'lighted to bed' by a servant. This was a lucky chance because it enabled them to survey the colonel's room and to take stock. Freney ordered his companions Bulger, Motley and Commons to enter the house with him but the cowardly Commons refused to obey orders as he knew that there were firearms in the house. Freney was disgusted at such a cowardly response 'and swore I would as soon

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<sup>145</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>146</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>147</sup>Ibid., p. 10.



shoot him as look at him, and at the same time cocked his pistol to his breast'.<sup>148</sup> Commons was then abandoned by his friends 'where he might run away when he thought proper'. When the opportunity to escape was afforded to him he was quick to grasp it.

In the meantime entry was gained into the Palliser's residence with the aid of a sledge, a method which had worked well in the past. Freney then presented himself in the Colonel's bedroom much to the latter's surprise. This prompted him to ask 'Odds - Wounds! Who's there?', to which Freney politely responded 'a friend sir'. The Colonel wasn't altogether convinced by this declaration of friendship and told Freney so, 'you lie! by G-d you are no friend of mine'. Undaunted by this rejection of his friendship Freney went a step further and claimed relationship to the exasperated Colonel. Throughout this conversation Freney seized a bullet-gun and a case of pistols which he observed hanging up in the bedroom.<sup>149</sup> The Colonel retained his dignity in the face of severe provocation and calmly asked him to 'go out for a villain and not breed a disturbance', whereupon Freney snatched the Colonel's breeches, right 'from under his head'. It was a fortuitous move because he got 'a small purse of gold' but he felt slighted by the Colonel's rejection of him as a relation. He told the Colonel of the pain he felt 'and said that that abuse was not fit treatment for me who was his relation, and that it would hinder me of calling to see him again'. He regained his composure and demanded the key to the desk, but the Colonel who was more accustomed to giving orders than obeying them, flatly refused. 'A stroke of the sledge' and the desk burst open, to reveal a purse which contained ninety guineas, a four pence piece, two moidores, some small gold, and a large glove with twenty-eight guineas in silver. The Colonel remained impassive while he was being robbed of his valuables. The reader can only assume that he was distraught. Like his relation who had just robbed him, he was not prone to displays of emotion. Freney then hid the plate in the wood, out of danger and paid everybody his just deserts.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>148</sup>William Thackeray. *The Irish Sketch Book*. Vol. I. (London, Smith and Elder, 1887). Ch. XV, p. 287.

James Freney. *The Life and Adventures of James Freney*.

<sup>149</sup>Ibid., p. 288.

<sup>150</sup>Ibid., p. 290.



Throughout his autobiography Freney was intent on portraying, not only a heroic image of himself, but also one of a man of honour and dignity. He related how the son of his former patron, Counsellor Robbins, was now his chief pursuer, but that despite the promptings of his friends and the many opportunities presented to him 'to blow the Counsellor's brains out; yet to his immortal honour, ... he refused that temptation, agreeable as it was, declaring that he had eaten too much of that family's bread ever to take the life of one of them'. Besides he respected the Counsellor's role as chief pursuer and regarded him more in the light of 'an honourable and terrible adversary'.<sup>151</sup> He also wanted to be viewed as a loyal, trustworthy friend, so that when he was approached by George Roberts for help in securing the release of his friend Welsh and his associate Anderson, who were imprisoned for suspected robbery, his generosity knew no bounds. All Roberts required to bribe the 'mercenary man' was five guineas, but Freney offered him twice that amount as well as the first gold watch he could get his hands on. After some negotiations, the 'man of power' agreed to save the prisoners from the gallows for 'a plate tankard, value £10, a large ladle, value £4 with some tablespoons'<sup>152</sup> which Freney duly gave him. Six of the jury were for finding them guilty, and six for acquitting them, and the other six 'finding them peremptory ... resolved to starve the others into submission'. Even though Counsellor Robbins 'began to smoke the affair and suspect the operation of gold dust'.<sup>153</sup> he was powerless to do anything about it.

Freney's final stand-off against the law officers was heroic but he described it in his customary understated style. The house in which Bulger and he were staying was surrounded by a hundred men, who set the house on fire. Both men faced the enemy as they escaped through a hail of bullets. Bulger, was shot in the small of the leg which meant that Freney was now reduced to a walking pace with his wounded friend. When the enemy came within firing distance, the hero simply laid down his fusee, stripped off

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<sup>151</sup>Ibid., p. 293.

<sup>152</sup>Ibid., p. 298.

<sup>153</sup>Ibid., pp. 298-299.



his coat and waistcoat and ran towards them and shouted defiantly at them 'You sons of cowards, come on and I will blow your brains out'<sup>154</sup>. The enemy must have been awe struck by this singular display of courage as they withdrew immediately and allowed Freney to walk 'easy' to the place where he had left his clothes. When dressed, Bulger and he walked 'leisurely' some distance further<sup>155</sup>. Surprisingly, the gormless enemy re-appeared and once more Freney took control and 'occasioned them to draw back as before', to which they complied without a protest.

Finally, we were introduced to the unheroic Freney, the one who abandoned his wounded friend Bulger 'and left him there in a break of briars ... surrounded by the army'.<sup>156</sup> According to his own version of events, he didn't actually betray his own friend, but that it was a friend of his who had "set" Bulger, without consulting him, as he realised that Freney would never have agreed to it. Accordingly, Bulger was 'taken by the Earl of Carrick and his party and Mr. Fitzgerald and six of Counsellor Robbin's soldiers and committed to Kilkenny jail'.<sup>157</sup> All of Freney's friends were subsequently tried, convicted and hanged, but he himself obtained a pardon, through the influence of Lord Carrick. This latter gentleman and Counsellor Robbins sought to raise a subscription to help Freney and his family 'to quit the kingdom'<sup>158</sup>, but as the local gentry refused to assist him, he was forced to raise money by writing his autobiography. The authorities eventually decided that his special talents should not be wasted. They therefore gave him a job as customs man and water bailiff in New Ross, in which peaceful occupation he ended his days.<sup>159</sup>

Posterity saw two different Freneys. John Edward Walsh, writing in 1847 saw him as 'a mean-looking fellow, fitted with the small-pox and blind of an eye ... a coarse vulgar,

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<sup>154</sup>Ibid., pp. 305-306.

<sup>155</sup>Ibid., p. 306.

<sup>156</sup>Ibid., p. 307.

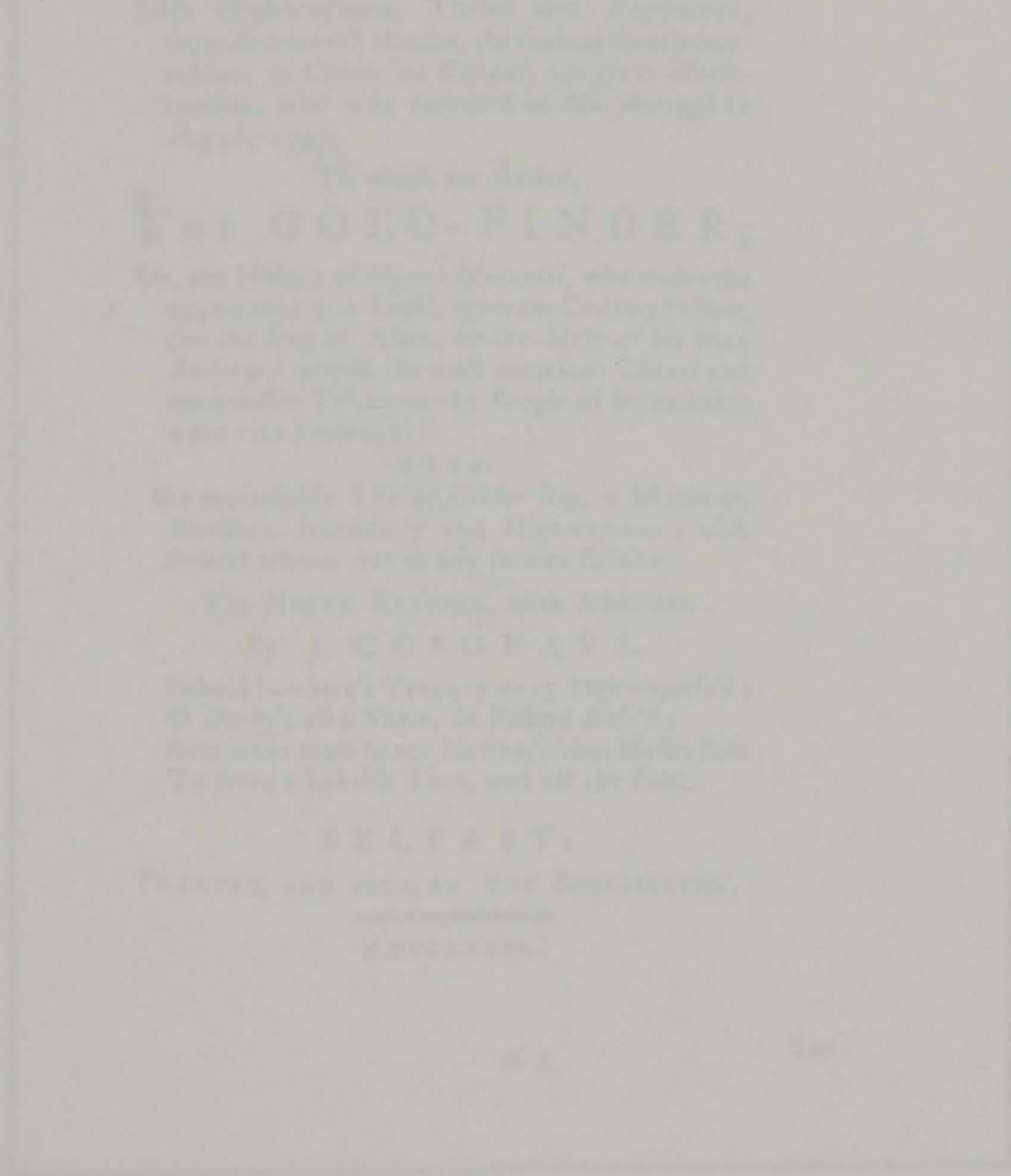
<sup>157</sup>Ibid., p. 309.

<sup>158</sup>*The Life and Adventures of James Freney*, p. 145.

<sup>159</sup>Kevin Danaher. *Highwaymen - they Robbed the Rich*, p. 487.



treacherous villain, much of the highwayman and nothing of the hero'.<sup>160</sup> However, mid twentieth-century nationalism saw him as a chivalrous knight, with his betrayals excised from the record, who took part in adventures and thrilling escapes - his only victims the establishment, the representatives of British rule.<sup>161</sup> In any event, the history of his life became one of the most popular reading books in the 'rustic universities'<sup>162</sup> as Thackeray called the hedge schools, and his adventures were the favourite themes of school-boys, and the representation of his achievements their favourite amusement.<sup>163</sup>



<sup>160</sup>John Edward Walsh. *Ireland Sixty Years Ago*, pp. 106-107.

<sup>161</sup>Terence O'Hanlon. *The Highwayman in Irish History* (Dublin, 1932), pp. 97-105.

<sup>162</sup>William Thackeray. *The Irish Sketch Book*. Vol. I., p. 311.

<sup>163</sup>John Edward Walsh. *Ireland Sixty Years Ago*, p. 106.



A GENUINE  
H I S T O R Y  
OF THE  
L I V E S and A C T I O N S.

Of the most notorious  
Irish Highwaymen, Tories and Rapparees,  
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robber, to *Cabier na Gappul*, the great Horse-  
catcher, who was executed at *Maryborough* in  
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Save what from hence his treach'rous Master stole  
To serve a knavish Turn, and act the Fool.

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Fig. 26.1 Title page from *A Genuine History of the Lives and Actions of the Most Notorious Irish Highwaymen, Tories and Rapparees.*



The book's title, *Richard O'Hanlon*, consisted of a collection of short critical biographies, several of which were by other authors. The *Surprising History of Richard O'Hanlon*, from the capture of the Earl of Jersey John Bull, was a historical account of the life of the Earl of Jersey John Bull, written as if by the author, John Cosgrave, and in a style which was

The title of the book was *A Genuine History of the Life and Actions of the most eminent Irish Statesman, Turner and Rovers*.<sup>10</sup> The engaging title was an allusion to the life of a man whose government's administrative escape and capture was recorded by John Cosgrave. O'Hanlon was a reduced prisoner, who looked to his captors to pay him tribute towards his maintenance. This was not the case, he received what he needed to live, but he received a pension of only O'Hanlon regarded himself as a philosopher who rendered a public service to his country. The words and actions of his captors were recorded in his book, and he carried his pocket book around with him, which contained a list of the names of those who had paid him. He guarded this book carefully, and his friends seldom suffered under his penitence.<sup>11</sup>

John Cosgrave was a bridge highwayman, of the Ridge Hood and Highwaymen, who regularly roamed the roads of the north to rob the poor of their money.<sup>12</sup> He was a highwayman, and was clear from the incident which occurred as he was passing along the road between Derby and Ashby, like a life in the air. In quest of prey, he approached a public house, who provided him with a drink, and had

<sup>10</sup> John Cosgrave, *A Genuine History of the Life and Actions of the most eminent Irish Statesman, Turner and Rovers* (London, 1776).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.



## Irish Rogues and Rapparees. The Surprising History of Redmond O'Hanlon

The book *Irish Rogue and Rapparees* consisted of a collection of short criminal biographies, three of which will now be scrutinised, namely, *The Surprising History of Redmond O'Hanlon*, *Some Passages of the Life of Strong John MacPherson, a notorious robber* and *The History of Sir John Falstaff, a Highwayman*. Despite a complete lack of illustrations of any kind, these stories would have held young readers captive, written as they were in simple, direct language and in a light, amusing style.

The full title of the book was *A Genuine History of the Lives and Actions of the most notorious Irish Highwaymen, Tories and Rapparees*.<sup>164</sup> The foregoing title was an appropriate description of the life of a hero whose 'gentlemanly' robberies, daring escape and unhappy end were faithfully recorded by John Cosgrave. O'Hanlon was a reduced gentleman who looked to his countrymen 'to pay him tribute towards his maintenance'. With this end in mind, he operated what, in modern times would be called a 'protection racket', only O'Hanlon regarded himself as a philanthropist who rendered a public service to his friends. His friends and acquaintances paid him to guard them against thieves and if 'they didn't pay up ... they would pay for it'. He carried his pocket book around with him, which contained a list of the names of those who had paid him. He 'guarded their goods from thieves' and 'his friends seldom suffered under his protection'.<sup>165</sup>

Like Freney, he was a benign highwayman, of the Robin Hood confraternity, who frequently shared 'what he got from the rich to relieve the poor in their necessities'.<sup>166</sup> He valued his reputation also, this was clear from one incident which occurred as he was 'gliding along the road between Newry and Armagh, like a kite in the air, in quest of prey'. He encountered a pedlar in a distraught state, who protested loudly that O'Hanlon had

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<sup>164</sup>John Cosgrave. *A Genuine History of the Lives and Actions of the most notorious Irish Highwaymen, Tories and Rapparees*, (Belfast, 1776).

<sup>165</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>166</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 4.



robbed him of five pounds and his box, not only that, but he also suffered the added indignity of being knocked down by him, kicked and abused, like a dog. O'Hanlon was so incensed at his abusive language that he temporarily lost control and 'called him a rascal and a lying son of a whore'.<sup>167</sup> He then wrote a mittimus and sent the criminal with a proper guard to the gaol of Armagh. This had the effect of reducing the entire court to a state of convulsive laughter 'till they were ready to burst'.

He had no fear whatsoever of the officers of the law. They posed little threat to one, who could outwit them at every turn. Once he disguised himself as a gentleman and came to the law officers for protection against the notorious plunderer O'Hanlon 'because he had a charge of money about him'.<sup>168</sup> On another occasion he was taken prisoner by the officers but he 'got them drunk with whiskey, then tied them up took their arms and marched off, with his gang'.<sup>169</sup> Their response was to put up 'a reward for his head dead or alive'<sup>170</sup> and to muster together a party of twenty active men and a Captain, armed with 'muskets and bayonets'<sup>171</sup>, in order to pursue him. O'Hanlon used this occasion for his own merriment, and as an opportunity to make them look very foolish, so that 'in the midst of their search', they 'had the mortification to hear him call out from an adjacent hill, bidding defiance, for it seems, he had warning of their approach, although there was so short time that he ran out half-dressed'.<sup>172</sup> When O'Hanlon calculated on the officers returning home 'here he was entirely mistaken for his pursuers suspected that he had hid himself'<sup>173</sup>. He therefore decided that it would be safe for him to emerge from hiding in order to visit a friend's house. He hadn't eaten for three days and just as he was about to savour his first morsel of food 'the captain of the little army appeared at the door', and contrary to expectations he greeted O'Hanlon 'with a very kind salutation, which Redmond (though under the

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<sup>167</sup>Ibid., pp. 5-6.

<sup>168</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>169</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>170</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>171</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>172</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>173</sup>Ibid., pp. 15-16.



greatest surprise), returned with a gentlemanlike air',<sup>174</sup> and he allowed him to finish his meal. There was no display of braggadocio by the captain, which was probably just as well, as his triumph was short lived. Despite a heavy security presence which consisted of an armed guard with an officer, and a further eight men guarding the door and twelve guarding the house, the prisoner 'managed to escape by confusing them'<sup>175</sup>. All that was required was imaginative thinking, he only had to request 'a little play that the world should not have it to say that I was taken so silly'<sup>176</sup>, which he got and took full advantage of.

The reader's interest was retained by the introduction of the great Robber of Munster, Richard Power of Kilbolane, whose fame rested on his 'pleasant habit of waiting until the rents were collected and the receipts safely in the hands of tenants' before he 'held up the landlord's agent and halved the loot with the tenants'.<sup>177</sup> He visited the north of Ireland and tried to hold up a wayfarer. A dual ensued until such time as his opponent revealed himself to be none other than the great Redmond O'Hanlon. They became friends instantaneously and Power agreed to stay in the north for a year and a half. The northern food didn't appeal to his delicate palate 'not relishing so much bannocks and oatmeal as they usually got in this place'.<sup>178</sup> He decided to return home without delay. Before his departure the two friends made a pact, in which they promised to give one another notice, if at any stage, either one of them was put into prison, so that the one at liberty might possibly relieve or rescue the other.

'Soon after this the Munster tory was apprehended and put into Clonmel jail, for robbing and murdering a traveller'.<sup>179</sup> O'Hanlon honoured his promise and arrived on the evening before the 'Munster Champion' was led to Kilgowna for execution. O'Hanlon got the

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<sup>174</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>175</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>176</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>177</sup>Kevin Danaher, *Highwaymen – they Robbed the Rich*, p. 487.

<sup>178</sup>John Cosgrave. *A Genuine History*, p. 19.

<sup>179</sup>Ibid., p. 20.



upper hand of the law once more by disguising himself as a gentleman, a method used successfully by him in the past. Having gained entry into the prison, his request to see the prisoner was granted. He then bought the officers a liberal supply of whiskey, which they daily imbibed, thereby allowing his friend the opportunity to escape. Power's freedom was short-lived. He was destined to die on the gallows, as he was later betrayed 'by his sweetheart, who poured water into his pistols while he was asleep and then sent for the soldiers, and, as the song says: he couldn't shoot the water and a prisoner he was taken'<sup>180</sup>. He was hanged in public in Clonmel in 1865.

The hero lived in permanent danger of being captured by the infamous Johnston of the Fewes. He had one lucky escape, having been pursued relentlessly by Johnston over hills and dales, until they reached an ale house by the river side in Carlingford. All the circumstances were in Johnston's favour as there was no boat in sight, the river was broad and the tide was in. Success was assured or so he thought but the gallant highwayman escaped by swimming underwater for two hundred yards and thereby avoided a barrage of shell shots. There was a price on Redmond O'Hanlon's head as he became one of the most wanted men in the country.

**A reward of £400 - a mighty sum in those days was put on his head and £40 on each of his men, and although many of the country people knew of his haunts, none of them would touch the blood-money.<sup>181</sup>**

Even though O'Hanlon was now quite advanced in years 'he fell desperately in love with an inn-keeper's daughter, a very beautiful young woman',<sup>182</sup> and he prevailed upon her to marry him. Her father tried to get her to betray her husband but she refused. Douglas, a minister of the established church did likewise but he too failed until eventually 'Redmond took some occasion to abuse her' and she felt so aggrieved that she capitulated and told Douglas where he could find her husband. O'Hanlon was immediately removed to Armagh gaol, where a stone of iron was placed about him. He was found guilty at the

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<sup>180</sup>Kevin Danaher. *Highwaymen - they Robbed the Rich*, p. 487.

<sup>181</sup>Ibid., p. 486.

<sup>182</sup>John Cosgrave. *A Genuine History*, p. 28.



assizes and the blood-curdling description of the death sentence must surely have served as a salutary lesson to many young readers. His body was 'ordered to be cut into four quarters and to be hung up in different places, as a terror to others'.<sup>183</sup> Defying all the odds, O'Hanlon managed to escape from prison, only to suffer the ignominy of being duped and betrayed by one of his own relations. His foster brother Art was greedy for the large reward on offer and he connived with his wife to lay a wile for O'Hanlon. She having lulled the hero into a false sense of security and 'under a pretence of giving him some refreshment, he being weary stretched himself down to rest',<sup>184</sup> Art took the opportunity to shoot his trusted friend and relative through the head, as he lay asleep in the barn. He then had O'Hanlon's head carried on a staff to Armagh, where it was unceremoniously 'stuck on a spike over the gate of Downpatrick gaol'.<sup>185</sup> The writer, John Cosgrave, bemoaned the fact that many of Redmond O'Hanlon's exploits and adventures were never recorded for posterity, had this happened he believed that 'they would have made as remarkable a history as most of the Irish giants'.<sup>186</sup>

### **Some passages of the Life of Strong John MacPherson, a notorious robber**

This short story gave an entertaining account of a robber who was reputed to have been 'the strongest man in the nation'. He was known as strong John MacPherson. This notorious robber had much in common with Freney as he too had a good start in life, having been bequeathed 'a pretty little income' on the death of his parents. He dissipated these funds quickly as he kept the 'company of pert women and gamesters'. Like Freney he had a 'weakness for hurlings, patrons and matches of football'.<sup>187</sup> He was soon

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<sup>183</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>184</sup>Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>185</sup>Kevin Danaher. *'Highwaymen – the Robbed the Rich'*, p. 486.

<sup>186</sup>op. cit. p. 29.

<sup>187</sup>'Some Passages of the Life of Strong John MacPherson, a notorious robber'. In *A Genuine History*, p. 30.



reduced to poverty. This unfortunate condition provided the writer with an opportunity to moralise on the evils attending idleness in youth.

**Men that are brought up in luxury and idleness seldom settle themselves rightly to business after. Nothing is more commendable in youth than industry. It is the bulwark and preservation of the commonwealth, and the support of private persons and families.**<sup>188</sup>

John 'was a stranger to work' and he was so proud that 'it was beneath him to beg'. Consequently his friends 'began to look very shy upon him'<sup>189</sup> and the only career choice that remained open to him was that of a highwayman.

Like his predecessors Freney and O'Hanlon, strong John MacPherson devised his own system of robbing. As his name would suggest, he resorted on occasions to excessive physical force in order to divest people of their valuables. He had a set procedure. Firstly he would engage in polite banter with his intended victims, during which he would request a loan of some money. If this was forthcoming he 'commonly took but a part'. If it wasn't he would resort to more physical forms of persuasion, which generally involved 'a pretty hearty squeeze' having first pulled his terrified victim off his horse by 'taking him by the arm'<sup>190</sup>. If his victim was foolhardy enough to put up a resistance and continued 'sturdy', 'his custom was to throw him over his shoulders and run away with him to some private place and there rifle him'<sup>191</sup>.

One incident in particular dented MacPherson's reputation as Ireland's strongest man, and showed him up in a very cowardly light. It occurred as a result of a rash decision he took to rob a country house, single-handedly and in broad daylight. Strong John's methods were crude compared to the suave performances of his two counterparts. He carried each member of the household he encountered, on his way around the house, and deposited him or her in the same locked room. He neglected to check upstairs, but had he done so he would have discovered workmen busily engaged in their tasks. The workmen released

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<sup>188</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>189</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>190</sup>Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>191</sup>Ibid., p. 31.



the imprisoned household members, who sought revenge on their captor. They 'all fell upon him altogether, with clubs and other instruments till he was almost overpowered'<sup>192</sup>. In an unprecedented display of cowardice, he took hold of the 'woman of the house' and cast her over his shoulders, that he might 'screen himself from the blows'. The lady's ordeal was to continue as he ran away with her, into a little wood 'when he laid her down, and clapped his foot upon her petticoats, to prevent her from stirring, while the rest stood at some distance, holding a parley, and threatening for they were afraid to do any more'.<sup>193</sup> He refused to release her until he received twenty pieces of gold. He then 'quitted her' and 'left their coasts'. The writer defended MacPherson's actions by claiming that he had never actually murdered anyone and that he only struck out in self-defence. He had more robberies attributed to him than Redmond O'Hanlon, the great master highwayman, but he was 'at last taken up by treachery'<sup>194</sup>, tried and found guilty in 1678. Whatever about the tawdry deeds of strong John's life, his exit from the world proved that he had, after all, remarkable courage. It was reminiscent of the last dying moments of Shakespeare's character, the traitorous Thane of Cawdor, from his play *Macbeth*. Malcolm reported to his father King Duncan that

**Nothing in his life  
Became him like the leaving it! he died  
As one that had been studied in his death  
To throw away the dearest thing he owed  
As t'were a careless trifle.**<sup>195</sup>

James MacPherson's departure was not so dignified, but it was marked also by a total absence of any fear of death. He left on a musical note and 'as he was carried to the gallows, he played a fine tune of his own composing on the bagpipe, which retains the name of MacPherson's tune to this day.'<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>192</sup>Ibid., p. 31

<sup>193</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>194</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>195</sup>William Shakespeare. *Tragedies. Great Writers Library.* (Marshall Cavendish Partworks Ltd., 58, Old Compton St., 1988.

*Macbeth*, Act I.IV., p. 230.

<sup>196</sup>op. cit. p. 32.



## The History of Sir John Falstaff, a Highwayman

This history of Sir John Falstaff was a re-interpretation of the character of one of Shakespeare's greatest comic creations - the much loved, corpulent but cowardly Jack Falstaff. Shakespeare's rogue possessed a sophisticated self-image which rendered him impervious to insults. He described himself in the following flattering terms to his friend and chief critic, Prince Hal, the future King.

**Sweet Jack Falstaff, valiant Jack Falstaff, and therefore more valiant  
being as he is, old Jack Falstaff, banish not him thy Harry's company ...  
banish plump Jack and banish all the world.<sup>197</sup>**

'Sweet Jack Falstaff' would have been well pleased, with this new interpretation, which laid blame on the great master of English literature for misrepresenting him as a very great coward, instead of the 'man of courage and resolution', which he really was. To substantiate his claim, the writer pointed to the fact that King Henry IV 'allowed him a pension of 400 marks per annum',<sup>198</sup> for behaving himself so gallantly against the Yorkists. As this funding was totally inadequate to support Falstaff's gregarious lifestyle, he was forced to become a highwayman. He was joined in his 'profession' by the three Shakespearean characters - Poins, Bardolph and Pet and the two new Irish creations - Harvey and Rossil. They each promised undying loyalty to Falstaff before they proceeded to carry out many robberies 'for 100 miles about'<sup>199</sup> in Surrey, Sussex and Kent. They concentrated their efforts on Gad's Hill, in Kent.

Sir John Falstaff, as his title would suggest was no ordinary highwayman. He was first and foremost a gentleman, and secondly a rogue, hence the reason he chose such a dangerous calling in order to support his extravagancies. His first recorded robbery

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<sup>197</sup>*The Complete Works of Shakespeare*. (The Hamlyn Publishing Group Ltd., Astronaut House, Feltham, Middlesex, England, 1976). 'King Henry IV, Part One', Act III. 1, p. 398.

<sup>198</sup>'*The History of Sir John Falstaff, a Highwayman*'. In *A Genuine History*, p. 175.

<sup>199</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 175.



reflected both these qualities. It took place on Gad's Hill and his victim was a farmer, who was naive enough to pretend that he had no money to hand over.

**Upon which Sir John pulled a manual out of his pocket, and ordered him to join him in prayer for some time. Sir John had not mumbled over three or four prayers, before he enquired of the countryman how he did, and what he got by his prayers, who answered not a farthing, upon which Sir John put his hand in his pocket and pulled out a 9d, saying that God was never unkind to the petition of a devout penitent.<sup>200</sup>**

Sir John repeated this performance twice, but the farmer steadfastly refused to hand over his money, until eventually Sir John:

**putting his hands in the countryman's pockets, he took out of them 20 pieces of gold saying 'What you hypocritical rogue, you would have cheated me. To punish you for your wickedness, I shall keep what heaven has sent me into your pocket.'<sup>201</sup>**

This comic scene ended with Falstaff handing over to the farmer what he himself had gained by praying, with the rejoinder that he was to spread his reputation as an honest gentleman who gave him 8s 6d although the farmer had intended cheating him of 20 broad pieces.

The pace of the story was brisk as major events were recounted in brief for this abridged chapbook version of the story. Shortly after the aforementioned robbery, Sir John and his friends 'met the hangman coming from Kingston, whom they first robbed and then hanged' 'as a dangerous fellow'.<sup>202</sup> No sooner had Falstaff hanged the hangman, then he put in motion plans for his most daring robbery. He had received notification of the expected arrival of a rich merchant from the fair at Guilford, and immediately decided to dress himself in women's apparel. He then laid himself prostrate on the road, like a damsel in distress, as he made the most lamentable noises. The merchant enquired as to the cause of such deep anguish 'from so fine a woman as Sir John appeared to be'.<sup>203</sup> Drawing from the deep well of his creative talent Sir John gave a heart rending account of the unkindness of her relations and the many hardships she had suffered at the hands of a

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<sup>200</sup>Ibid., pp. 175-176.

<sup>201</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>202</sup>Ibid., p. 176.

<sup>203</sup>Ibid., p. 176.



cruel brother. The merchant was so moved by this touching story that he endeavoured 'to comfort her with tokens of love', 'and at length dragged her into the corner of a wood' where 'the supposed mistress bit him ... saying 'that since the unkind fates had so decreed that she must forfeit her honour, she hoped she might not prostitute it to everybody that came by".<sup>204</sup> The merchant acceded to the lady's request for privacy by carrying her to a more secluded area. Just 'then Sir John struck a poyniard through his arm, and then rifled him of two or three purses of gold and so rid off leaving the merchant to make the best of a bad bargain'.<sup>205</sup>

The reader's interest was sustained by the fast moving action in this story and the unique comic elements. Falstaff was an opportunist, who could see possibilities where others wouldn't dream of looking. Upon meeting a couple of friars from Dartford in Kent, he had no hesitation in stripping them of their religious habits, despite the protestations of his comrade. When they had donned their new robes, they proceeded to Lewisham to the curate's house, where they were warmly received. They informed the unsuspecting curate that they 'designed to say Mass'.<sup>206</sup> He allowed them in, which kind gesture they repaid by knocking him to the ground and gagging him. They 'afterwards fell to rifling his trunks, and taking the keys of the church, they stole and carried away the gold chalice which Sir John had his eye upon and all the ornaments of the church'.<sup>207</sup>

The final episode encapsulated fully the character of Sir John Falstaff. When he encountered rival highwaymen who attempted to rob him, his professional pride was wounded as they had mistaken him for a Club, 'but he soon proved a Tartar'<sup>208</sup>. Falstaff, using a certain amount of physical force while 'robbing them of their ready Ryno', tied them by the neck and heels and with a theatrical touch pinned four lines of doggerel verse

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<sup>204</sup>Ibid., p. 177.

<sup>205</sup>Ibid., p. 177.

<sup>206</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>207</sup>Ibid., p. 177.

<sup>208</sup>Ibid., p. 178.



to one of their breasts, lines which contained enough information to incriminate at least one of them.

**All passengers what e're you be,  
This rogue in grain behold:  
For in his stead of robbing me  
I took from him his gold.<sup>209</sup>**

The plan was a success, as the 'rogue in grain' was identified by people he had once robbed. They 'unloosed him and carried him before a magistrate who committed him to jail, where he lay until he was tied up for good'.<sup>210</sup>

The story ended with an explanation as to why Sir John was so brave and fearless. It was because of his close association with the valiant Prince Hal, who had accompanied the rogue on some of his highway expeditions to familiarise himself with worldly ways. When the prince took over from his father as King he took his royal responsibilities very seriously. He commanded his wayward companions 'to leave their ill courses, or quit his court'. This royal decree proved too difficult for Sir John to obey. He continued 'on in his old way' about Gad's Hill until such time as he was caught and sent to Maidstone jail 'as a just merit for all his rogueries'. He was condemned at the next assizes but was pardoned by King Henry, his old highway companion. Unfortunately there was one condition which was to prove the death of the affable Sir John Falstaff. He was obliged under this condition to leave his native land within a month and this was more than the patriot could bear and sadly it 'broke his heart before the time was expired'.<sup>211</sup>

The books of criminal biography offered little by way of encouragement to the young reader to join the criminal class. With the exception of James Freney who benefited from a royal pardon, most of the other highwaymen were either murdered or hanged. This would surely have provided a salutary lesson for impressionable readers. No doubt they also admired the daring nature of some of Freney's and O'Hanlon's highway robbers, their

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<sup>209</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>210</sup>Ibid., p. 178

<sup>211</sup>Ibid., p. 178.



chivalrous decorum in respect to their victims and the cunning methods they used to dupe the law officers. It is likely that they viewed the Irish highwaymen in the same light as Robin Hood or Dick Turpin, as supermen and not mere mortals. These books would have provided children with enjoyment and entertainment and would most likely have inculcated in them a love of reading.

The 19th century novelist William Thackeray (1811-1863) attempted to explain why evangelical writers and radical thinkers objected so strongly to the chapbooks and he concluded that it was due to the books' lack of the 'inevitable moral corollary'<sup>212</sup> and their utterly fantastic content. Both groups regarded imaginative works of fiction with the deepest suspicion. Writing in 1887, Thackeray expressed his regret that these criminal biographies had been replaced by 'such books as *'Conversations on Chemistry'*, *'The Little Geologist'*, *'Peter Parley's Tales about the Binomial Theorem'* and the like'.<sup>213</sup> Just as Charles Lamb writing in 1802, lamented the replacement of the medieval romances and children's books like *Goody Two Shoes* with the works of evangelical writers like Sarah Trimmer and the wretched *'Barbauld Crew'*.<sup>214</sup>

In the case of successive commissioners of education from 1806 to 1825, they shared the contemporary writers' suspicions that these chapbooks had a subversive sub-text [Ch. 1]. It should be remembered that Redmond O'Hanlon was one of the dispossessed landowners who was viewed by the people as one who simply striking a blow against the new planters. As J.R.R. Adams pointed out in his book *The Printed Word and the Common Man*, Redmond O'Hanlon was a symbol of defiance and 'one of the main attractions of such figures was the extent to which they stood outside the established order and threatened it'.<sup>215</sup> Under such circumstances, one could readily understand why

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<sup>212</sup>W.M. Thackeray. *The Irish Sketch Book*. (London, Smith & Elder, 1887), p. 155.

<sup>213</sup>*Ibid.*,

<sup>214</sup>F.J. Harvey Darton. *Children's Books in England*, pp. 128-129.

<sup>215</sup>J.R.R. Adams. *The Printed Word and the Common Man*. p. 79.



these 'little histories were not quite respectable to those in power and why their moral tendency was generally condemned'.<sup>216</sup>

(iii) 'Penny Merriments' - Books of Entertainment

Books of entertainment consisted of *The Unfortunate Concubines or The History of Fair Rosamond, Mistress to Henry II, and Jane Shore, Concubine to Edward IV, King of England*<sup>217</sup>. Books on 'illustrious prostitutes' could produce nothing 'but the very worst effect'<sup>218</sup> on young readers, according to Hely Dutton (1808), an opinion shared by his fellow writer William Shaw Mason (1819). No doubt, these were the same books which the commissioners of education 1806-1812 had in mind when they referred to 'the evils arising from the want of proper books adapted to the inferior schools' and to 'the corruption of morals and perversion of principles too often arising from the books actually in use'<sup>219</sup>. The legend of Fair Rosamond was based on the historical Rosamond Clifford, with whom King Henry II lived in open adultery, after the great rebellion of 1173-1174, having first imprisoned his wife Eleanor.<sup>220</sup> The legend was first mentioned in *Higden's Polychronicon* in the mid 14th century and was turned into a ballad in the late 16th century, by the popular versifier Thomas Delaney.<sup>221</sup> The earliest chapbook version was printed c. 1640 entitled *The Life and Death of Fair Rosamond, King Henry the Second's Concubine and how she was Poysoned to Death by Queen Eleanor* and numerous editions were published. Fair Rosamond was made the subject of drama many times, the most notable was that of John Bancroft, 'A Tragedy acted at the Theatre Royal' in 1693.<sup>222</sup> The second royal concubine Jane Shore may well have been a historical figure also, as King Edward IV (1442-1483) was pleasure-loving and given to amorous

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<sup>216</sup>T. Wall. *The Sign of Dr. Day's Head*. (Dublin, 1958), p. 90.

<sup>217</sup>*The Unfortunate Concubines or the History of Fair Rosamond, Mistress to Henry II, and Jane Shore, Concubine to Edward IV, King of England*. (Dublin, R. Cross, 28, Bridge St., 177?).

<sup>218</sup>Hely Dutton. *Statistical Survey of the County of Clare*, pp. 236-237.

<sup>219</sup>Fourteenth Report of the Commissioners of Education 1806-1812, pp. 331-332.

<sup>220</sup>*Dictionary of National Biography*, p. 531.

<sup>221</sup>Carpenter and Prichard. *The Oxford Companion to Children's Literature*, p. 175.

<sup>222</sup>John Ashton. *Chap-Books of the Eighteenth Century*. (London, 1882), p. 388.



intrigues. A separate chapbook on her life was printed in Newcastle in the 17th century. As a forerunner to this chapbook there was 'a very lugubrious and classical form of nearly two hundred verses, or twelve hundred lines, called *'Beawtie Dishonoured'* written under the title of *'Shore's Wife'*, which was published in London in 1593.<sup>223</sup>

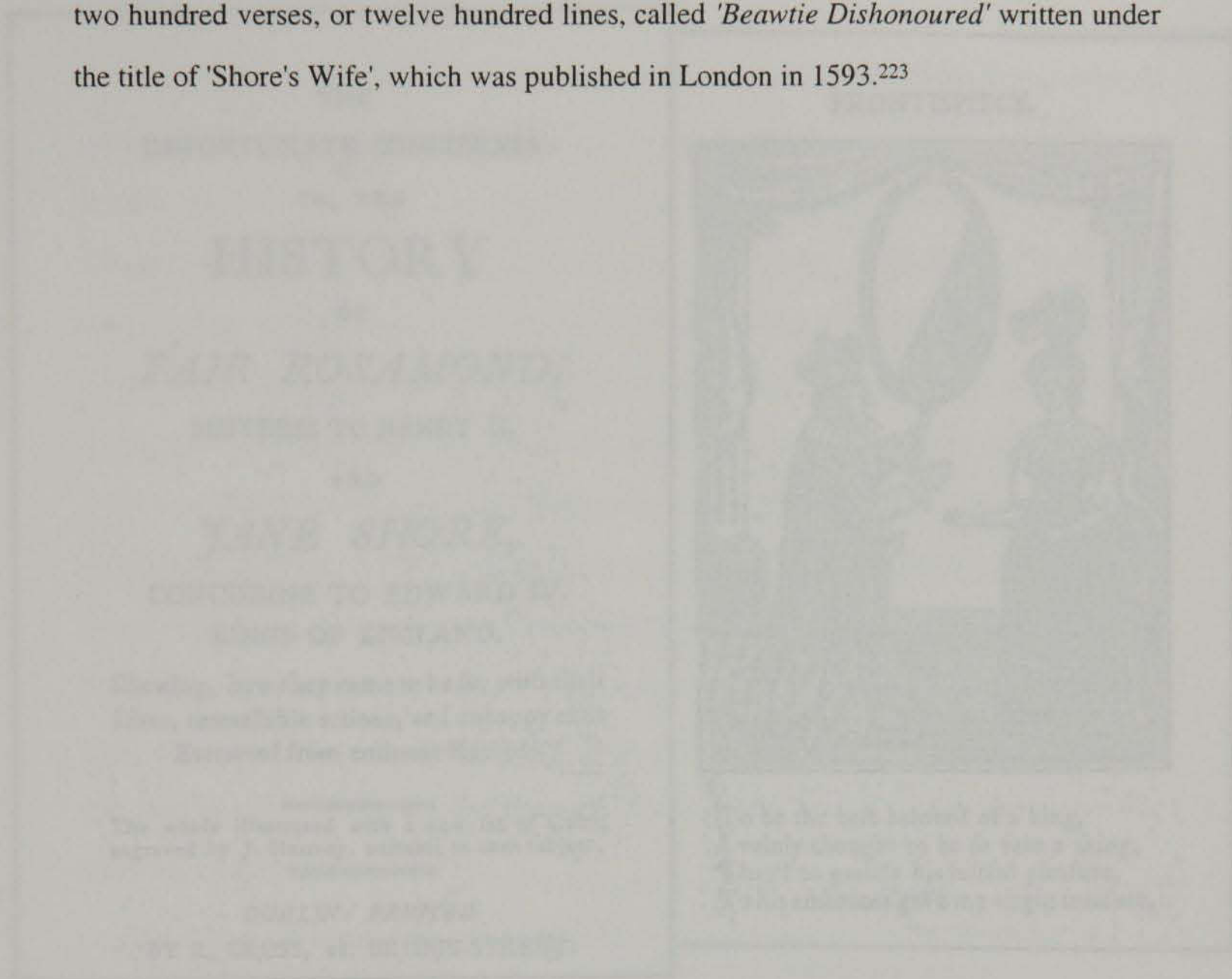


Fig. 27.1

Fig. 27.2

Fig. 27.1 Title page from *The Unfurnished Considerations on The History of Fair Rosemond, Mistress to Henry II and Jane Shore, consortine to Edward IV, Kings of England*, 1774.

Fig. 27.2 Frontispiece to *The Unfurnished Considerations*.

<sup>223</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 395.



THE  
UNFORTUNATE CONCUBINES,  
OR, THE  
HISTORY  
OF  
*FAIR ROSAMOND,*  
MISTRESS TO HENRY II.  
AND  
*JANE SHORE,*  
CONCUBINE TO EDWARD IV.  
KINGS OF ENGLAND.

Shewing, how they came to be so, with their  
Lives, remarkable actions, and unhappy ends  
Extracted from eminent Records.

The whole illustrated with a new set of CUTS,  
engraved by J. Hanvey, suitable to each subject.

DUBLIN: PRINTED  
BY R. CROSS, 23, BRIDGE-STREET.

FRONTISPIECE.



To be the best beloved of a king,  
I vainly thought to be so vain a thing,  
That I to gratify his lustful pleasure,  
To his embraces gave my virgin treasure,

Fig.27.1

Fig.27.2

Fig. 27.1 Title page from *The Unfortunate Concubines or, The History of Fair Rosamond, Mistress to Henry II and Jane Shore, concubine to Edward iv, Kings of England.* [177-].

Fig. 27.2 Frontispiece to *The Unfortunate Concubines.*



**The Unfortunate Concubines or the History of Fair Rosamond, Mistress to Henry II and Jane Shore, Concubine to Edward IV, Kings of England.**

In the histories of Fair Rosamond and Jane Shore an adulterous lifestyle was strongly condemned. The reader was warned that this immoral behaviour could only lead to a painful, fatal or humiliating end, just like that suffered by the unfortunate Rosamond and misguided Jane Shore, when they became royal concubines. Both stories, which were contained in the one book, were very moralistic. Unlike other stories of the didactic nature, the moral came at the beginning so that the reader knew in advance how the story would end. The adolescent reader was left in no doubt as to the purpose of the stories - while it was true that both ladies 'sought not the royal favour, but endeavoured to avoid it as much as possible',<sup>224</sup> yet Rosamond 'was willing to taste the pleasures of the court', as she wrongly believed that 'she could have kept herself from the pollutions of it'.<sup>225</sup> Jane Shore, the writer added, should have 'staid with her own husband and then she had done well', and 'if we would be innocent, we must not only avoid doing evil but all the ways that lead to it'.<sup>226</sup> The dire consequences occasioned by sin were exemplified in these histories, as they emphasised that:

**lust is a pleasure bought with pain, a delight hatched with disquiet, a content passed with fear, and a sin finished with lasting sorrow.**<sup>227</sup>

The 'awful warning' was then sounded as the reader was reminded that:

**If any are so weak, as to be taken with the gaudy trappings of royalty and glittering pomps of the court, let them read on, and see the dreadful catastrophe of this imaginary greatness.**<sup>228</sup>

The devastating results of such folly were spelt out and the wages of sin were catalogued so effectively, that any female who might have harboured royal aspirations, would have

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<sup>224</sup>*The Unfortunate Concubines or the History of Fair Rosamond, Mistress to Henry II, and Jane Shore, Concubine to Edward IV, King of England.* (Dublin, R. Cross, 28, Bridge St., 177?), p. viii.

<sup>225</sup>*Ibid.*, p. ix.

<sup>226</sup>*Ibid.*,

<sup>227</sup>*Ibid.*, p. x.

<sup>228</sup>*Ibid.*,



felt obliged to have a re-think about the matter. The writer explained that Queen Eleanor was the lady scorned and that she forced Rosamond, who was the king's paramour to drink a cup of poison, the horrendous outcome of which was then described:

**her late beautiful face is disfigured, and the rose of her cheeks all dead and withering, her eyes distorted, and her whole body quite swelled up and labouring under horrid convulsions.**<sup>229</sup>

Jane Shore in turn came to experience extreme humiliation as she was brought to a demeaning end. She was condemned to a life 'doing penance through Cheapside bare foot and bare legged and afterwards gladly picking up the refuse of dogs, upon the dunghill and afterwards dying in a ditch'.<sup>230</sup>

These two romances were written in difficult, archaic language, beyond the comprehension of young children, as they were intended for an adult readership. There were no illustrations but the accounts had a brisk pace and lively appeal. Both stories were piracies from English chapbooks and the story of Fair Rosamond was regaled over seven short chapters which numbered a mere fifty two pages in all, but nevertheless the readers' interest was maintained throughout. King Henry, though married to Queen Eleanor, had heard of Rosamond's great beauty and 'become enamoured of her'. He couldn't sleep at night from thinking about 'the peerless rose of the world'. He therefore decided to visit her father's house 'and to that end took a progress into Oxfordshire'.<sup>231</sup> The King was destined to fall instantly in love with Fair Rosamond 'at the first sight she appeared in his eyes like an angel'. He commanded her to sit down directly opposite to him. Rosamond's 'pretty eyes' affected the royal appetite 'he so long gazed, that he forgot oftentimes to eat, taking in a long draught of love'.<sup>232</sup>

King Henry eventually succeeded in winning the love of the Fair Rosamond. Firstly he enticed her by bestowing upon her presents of costly jewels, and secondly by engaging

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<sup>229</sup>Ibid., p. xi.

<sup>230</sup>Ibid., p. xii.

<sup>231</sup>*The Unfortunate Concubines or the History of Fair Rosamond, Mistress to Henry II and Jane Shore, Concubine to Edward IV King of England.* (R. Cross, 28, Bridge Street, Dublin, 177?), p. 21.

<sup>232</sup>Ibid., p. 22.



the services and co-operation of her unscrupulous governess Alethea, by means of bribery. Fair Rosamond realised that she was in an invidious position as Henry was married, but the attraction 'to glitter near a throne, though but in a tinsel splendour' was overwhelming and besides King Henry had 'protested that if that vacancy happened, he would raise her to the dignity of the crown'.<sup>233</sup> There were occasions when the writer tended to moralise as when Lady Clifford discovered or 'accidentally espied' the King's love letter to her daughter. While she herself had no scruples about reading Rosamond's private mail, she decided, with the assistance of her Lord Clifford, to upbraid Rosamond 'for being a strumpet to the King'. Rosamond, when confronted with the evidence knelt down before them and pleaded her innocence. She 'solemnly protested to them that she was still a pure and unblemished 'virgin' and that she never yet had given up herself to the King's embraces'.<sup>234</sup> Lord Clifford remained unconvinced, despite his daughter's reassurance and he offered her this advice:

**What honour would it be to have it said, that Rosamond is King Henry's Concubine, and for unlawful love has lost her virtue? Consider child, if Chastity be gone, there's nothing left praise-worthy in a woman? Pride not thyself in being beautiful, it is falsely called so if those are not chaste.**<sup>235</sup>

Lady Clifford even suggested an alternative partner for Rosamond, one her father approved of, namely, Lord Fitz Walters, who had 'a passion' for her but whom Rosamond regarded with complete indifference.

Under instructions from King Henry, Rosamond's uncle placed her in private lodgings, where the king visited her. When Rosamond put up a spirited defence to preserve her 'virgin jewel' the king asserted his sovereign rights and claimed that

**kings have, you know, a peculiar prerogative and move in spheres above the common rank their privilege it is to have, many wives, when subjects are by law confined to one and therefore, although my Eleanor be Queen, yet Rosamond shall reign as well as she, and ever in my heart**

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<sup>233</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>234</sup>Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>235</sup>Ibid., p. 33.



**command as chief. We will be married first my Rosamond and then I hope you will not scruple it'.<sup>236</sup>**

The King's intentions towards Rosamond were in fact quite dishonourable as he plotted with Alethea that he might gain access to her bed, incognito. The scheme was one of great simplicity as Alethea explained it to His Highness:

**may it please Your Majesty ... the way that I would have you to take is this: that you should come visit my chamber tomorrow night, a little before bed-time: and I will leave you there alone awhile, till I have got my Lady Rosamond to bed, whereas I be with her every night, I will delay the time of my going to bed, as I sometimes do, till she is asleep, and I will bring your Majesty into the chamber and you shall go to bed to her in my stead.<sup>237</sup>**

Alethea was rewarded with a rich diamond ring for coming up with such a daring plan. It was put into operation the following night and it worked out exactly as planned by the worldly Alethea, to the amazement of even the most gullible reader. King Henry took the place of Alethea and when Rosamond made this discovery she simply resigned herself to her fate because:

**since things were gone so far she had better oblige the King, than to deny him that which he would take whether she could or no. And thereupon without resisting any further suffered the King to do what he pleased, which pleased the King so well, that before the morning light appeared, he pleased fair Rosamond also.<sup>238</sup>**

King Henry found Rosamond's presence in the palace uplifting but Queen Eleanor found it infuriating, so much so that 'she caused' her son to raise a war against his father in Normandy. The King was then obliged to leave Rosamond to the care of her uncle, while he departed from the country to fight his enemies. The lady scorned took full advantage of his absence to plot Fair Rosamond's death. Queen Eleanor gained entry into Rosamond's bower and having found 'Queen Rosamond arrayed like an angel ... compelled her to drink a bowl of poison, of which she died'.<sup>239</sup> Upon her return to court,

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<sup>236</sup>Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>237</sup>Ibid., pp. 46-47.

<sup>238</sup>Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>239</sup>Ibid., p. 64.



King Henry put many to death and imprisoned Queen Eleanor for life and 'building a famous sepulchre for Fair Rosamond ... soon after died himself'.<sup>240</sup>

### The History of Jane Shore

The beautiful femme fatale Jane Shore was no stranger to male admirers. From an early abduction attempt by Lord Hastings, to a forced marriage to Mr. Matthew Shore, to the later advances of King Edward IV who arrived in disguise at their shop, Jane's ruination was 'inevitable'.

Mrs. Blague was an unscrupulous friend and neighbour of Mrs. Shore as well as being the King's lace-maker. Just as Alethea conspired with King Henry, Mrs. Blague conspired with King Edward, in order to urge Jane Shore into allowing him to meet her in disguise, at her home. We were told that even though 'he courted her with all his rhetoric, yet she appeared averse to yield to his love'.<sup>241</sup> Mrs. Blague then laid another trap to ensnare Jane. Firstly, she obtained permission from Mr. Shore, to allow his wife to accompany her to court, to attend a ball. This was exactly in accordance with the King's wishes. At the ball the King seized his opportunity by first dancing with Jane and then later removing his mask to reveal his true identity, that he was none other than her suitor, who had arrived at her shop, and at Mrs. Blague's abode. Mrs. Blague took upon herself the role of adviser to a perplexed Jane Shore:

**Come come my dear Jane you must be no longer coy, nor deny the King's request ... you will glitter so near a throne, and enjoy so gallant a bedfellow, that I will warrant my child you will never have cause to repent of leaving a dull husband for so advantageous a change.**<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>240</sup>Ibid., p. 70.

<sup>241</sup>Ibid., p. 97.

<sup>242</sup>Ibid., p. 103.



Jane realised that the King could 'compel her to his bed' and that 'he never spared any woman in his lust'. She therefore left her husband under the pretence of visiting her mother, when in fact she had gone to live at the castle. When she failed to return after a week, her parents and her husband were resigned to the fact that she was 'lost'. Just then the scandalous news reached them 'of her being the King's concubine' which 'made a great noise in the city'.<sup>243</sup>

Jane Shore lived in great splendour at the court during the reign of Edward the Fourth, but her happiness was soon to end because the King died and the writer commented philosophically: 'Kings, though they are earthly gods must die like men, for they are made out of the same mouldering clay with other mortals'<sup>244</sup>. After the death of King Edward IV, Lord Hastings took Jane Shore as his concubine and she considered this 'the greatest honour she could then aspire to' besides 'he would also protect her against the Queen'.<sup>245</sup> Once again, she was to be thwarted in her plans as 'Lord Hastings was so far from being able to protect Jane, that he could not long protect himself'.<sup>246</sup>

The intrigue continued as the 'crooked-back' Richard, Duke of Gloucester, brother of the deceased King Edward had 'a wicked design to lay the crown upon his own head'.<sup>247</sup> He schemed with a friend of Lord Hastings', called Caterby in order to bring about the former's death. Lord Hastings was forced to agree to this in order to save Jane Shore, while she, in turn, was accused of plotting against the King, to bring about his death. Lord Hastings 'was led out into the green within the tower, he was there beheaded on a log, without staying for the formality of a scaffold'.<sup>248</sup> The story then reached its climax with the appalling fate that befell Jane Shore. Having transferred her jewels and valuable possessions to Mrs. Blague's, who 'cheated her of them all', she was visited by King

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<sup>243</sup>Ibid., p. 111.

<sup>244</sup>Ibid., p. 120.

<sup>245</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>246</sup>Ibid., p. 121.

<sup>247</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>248</sup>Ibid., p. 122.



Richard the Third's officers, who were under Richard's instructions to search for her. Their mission was successful and 'having seized her and stripped her of all she had, he caused her to appear before the ecclesiastical court'.<sup>249</sup> By a special order of His Highness, she was condemned to do penance for her notorious adulteries and for plotting against the life of the King with Lord Hastings. The humiliation of Jane Shore was absolute:

**having only her smock and over that a white sheet, and in one hand a lighted taper of wax and in the other a cross, in which manner she walked bare-footed all-through Cheapside and Lombard Street.**<sup>250</sup>

A severe proclamation was then put forth by royal command, which strictly prohibited anybody either to 'harbour the said Jane Shore in their houses or to relieve her with food or rayment'.<sup>251</sup>

The writer highlighted yet again the moral of Jane Shore's story, lest the reader might have been left in any doubt as to the inadvisability of becoming either a king's or a lord's concubine.

**Sure it must be extremely surprising that she who was served in plate and treated with the costliest viands that either art or nature could procure ... that she ... should ever be reduced to that extraordinary degree of misery as to be forced to sit upon a dunghill, and glad to eat the refuse of the dogs.**<sup>252</sup>

However, it was Jane Shore's lamentation at her death, which was designed to lay the deepest impression on readers, in order to discourage them from a life of vice. She professed to being 'happier now upon this dunghill than ever, I was in his princely arms, for O it was an adulterous bed indeed, a bed of sorrow it has been to me'.<sup>253</sup> She repented sincerely and secured peace of mind, and now exulted:

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<sup>249</sup>Ibid., p. 129.

<sup>250</sup>Ibid., pp. 129-130.

<sup>251</sup>Ibid., p. 131.

<sup>252</sup>Ibid., p. 133.

<sup>253</sup>Ibid., p. 137.



**O happy dunghill, how do I embrace thee, from thee, my pardoned soul shall soar to heaven, though in this ditch I leave my filthy and polluted carcase. O' that the name of Shore may be an antidote to stop the poisonous and foul contagion of raging lust forever.<sup>254</sup>**

The fears expressed by concerned contemporary writers on the evils attendant upon reading about the fate of the two royal prostitutes *Fair Rosamond* and *Jane Shore* were completely unfounded. Children couldn't possibly have understood the content of this crudely printed, miniature sized book. Adolescents would probably have read it for the entertaining storyline but would hardly have been encouraged to stray from the path of righteousness as the anonymous writer issued several warnings to them not 'to be taken in with the gaudy trappings of royalty and glittering pomps of the court'<sup>255</sup> and outlined the horrendous consequences of failing to do so.

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<sup>254</sup>Ibid., p. 139.

<sup>255</sup>Ibid., p. x



(iv) 'Penny Godlinesses' - The moral tales of Hannah More

The 'Penny Godlinesses' were listed in Appendix No. 221 to the *First Report of the Commissioners of Education*, 1825 but contemporary writers failed to mention that the moral tales of Hannah More (1745-1833) formed part of the reading literature in the hedge schools, possibly because they were unaware of this fact but more likely because they were so alarmed by the 'Penny Merriments', which they knew were being read. In any event, the 'Penny Godlinesses' of this formidable evangelical writer would have served as an antidote to the former.

Hannah More who was born in Gloucestershire, the fourth of five daughters of a High Church schoolmaster, led a most interesting and self-sacrificing life. Having carved out a very successful literary career in London, where she was favoured with the friendship of the distinguished Sir Joshua Reynolds, Samuel Johnson and David Garrick,<sup>256</sup> she decided in 1789, along with her sisters, to set up Sunday Schools for the poor in the neighbourhood of Cheddar in Somerset. Hannah met with stiff opposition from the local farmers who objected to her teaching the poor to read, an episode she later recalled in one of her stories *The Sunday School* when Farmer Hoskins complained that 'of all the foolish inventions, and new-fangled devices to ruin the country, that of teaching the poor to read is the very worst'<sup>257</sup>. After the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789, the Sunday Schools under non-Anglican control were looked upon as hotbeds of Jacobinism<sup>258</sup> and Hannah More was singled out once more for criticism, this time for producing a literate working class who eagerly read Thomas Paine's pamphlet *The Rights of Man*, which argued, after Rousseau, that it was only by the determination of the people that government could be legitimised.<sup>259</sup> She was rather unfairly charged with 'sedition,

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<sup>256</sup> Humphrey Carpenter and Mari Prichard. *The Oxford Companion of Children's Literature*, 1984, pp. 360-361.

<sup>257</sup> Richard D. Altick, *The English Common Reader*, p. 69.

<sup>258</sup> M.G. Jones. *The Charity School Movement*. (Cambridge University Press, 1938), pp. 153-154.

<sup>259</sup> Henry Blamires. *The Age of Romantic Literature*. (Longman Group Ltd., Longman House, Burnt Mill, Harlow, 1990), p. 13.



dissaffection, and a general aim to corrupt the principles of the community'<sup>260</sup>. In fact, when Thomas Paine's 'blasphemy' was being distributed by the chapman there was nobody more horrified than Hannah More as she bitterly complained that

**Vulgar and indecent penny books were always common but speculative infidelity, brought down to the pockets and capacities of the poor, forms a new aera (sic) in our history.**<sup>261</sup>

She defied her critics and confronted the problem by deciding 'to take over the whole of English popular literature for the greater glory of God and the security of the nation'<sup>262</sup>. She was prompted to do this by the importunate requests of her 'friend' Bishop Porteous, the bishop of London, who urged:

**her acquaintance with the habits and feelings of the lower orders, and her clear and vigorous style, as an irresistible call on her pen for some simple production, calculated to dispel the delusions so assiduously propagated among the vulgar.**<sup>263</sup>

What resulted from this was a long series of moral tales and ballads, known collectively as the *Cheap Repository Tracts*. For her method and manner of publication, she was indebted to her predecessor Mrs. Sarah Trimmer 'of whose, "Family Magazine" the cheap repository' was 'almost a continuation'<sup>264</sup>. Her tracts were designed to look like the pamphlets they were intended to supersede 'decked out with rakish titles and woodcuts', they were 'sent out like sheep in wolves clothing, to be sold by hawkers in competition with their old trash'<sup>265</sup> on the 3rd March 1795. By March 1796, the total number of tracts sold reached the staggering figure of 2,000,000.<sup>266</sup> Hannah More's success was unprecedented in the history of English books. The best known of these tracts was *The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain* (1795), which followed the usual format that readers had come to expect - virtue was always rewarded, usually by a chance encounter with a

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<sup>260</sup>Richard D. Altick. *The English Common Reader*, p. 73.

<sup>261</sup>Ibid., p. 74.

<sup>262</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>263</sup>Rev. Henry Thompson. *The Life of Hannah More*. (T. Cadwell, Strand, W. Blackwood & Sons, Edinburgh, 1838), p. 135.

<sup>264</sup>Ibid., p. 151.

<sup>265</sup>Richard D. Altick. *The English Common Reader*, p. 75.

<sup>266</sup>Ibid.,



benevolent and charitable individual while vice was suitably punished by either a term in jail, or, in extreme cases, by transportation or hanging.<sup>267</sup>

Fellow evangelicals in Ireland decided to re-publish the 'excellent tracts of Hannah More' to serve as an antidote to 'The books which had been published and circulated for the instruction and entertainment of the lower orders of the people', which 'were of the most immoral kind and inculcated principles the most pernicious'<sup>268</sup>. William Watson, the evangelical printer from No. 7, Capel Street, was appointed printer 'to the Cheap Repository for Religious and Moral Tracts', by the Association for Discountenancing Vice and Promoting the Knowledge and Practice of the Christian Religion. He was actually a founding member of this leading education society, which had been incorporated by an Act of Parliament in 1800 and which received as much as £102,000 in public funds between that date and 1827.<sup>269</sup> Watson's premises were used by this society for its meetings and they were also used by the Sunday School society which was founded in 1809 and which derived considerable financial aid from the Association for Discountenancing Vice.<sup>270</sup> This proved to be a successful commercial venture for Watson and the Association who employed him, as the tracts 'were received with such avidity that 120,000 were distributed in the first year to the poor at reduced rates'<sup>271</sup>. The moral tales read in the hedge schools included *Black Giles the Poacher*<sup>272</sup>, a tract which was issued in two parts, and concerned the main character Black Giles, who was reminiscent of Fagan in Charles Dickens' novel *Oliver Twist*, with his 'bad boys', his slovenly wife Rachel and his youngest son Dick, who was the only member of this family with any sense of integrity. It appeared in the first volume of the More tracts and was quite entertaining even though there was no shortage of 'self-improving' advice on offer.

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<sup>267</sup>Cornelia Meigs, Anne Thaxter Eaton, Elizabeth Nesbitt and Ruth Hill Viguers. *A Critical History of Children's Literature*. (The Macmillan Co., Collier-Macmillan Ltd., London, 1969), p. 74.

<sup>268</sup>Warburton et al. *History of the City of Dublin*, p. 891.

<sup>269</sup>First Report of the Commissioners of Irish Education Inquiry 1825, p. 31.

<sup>270</sup>Ibid., pp. 61-65.

<sup>271</sup>Warburton et al. *History of the City of Dublin*, p. 891.

<sup>272</sup>Hannah More. *History of Black Giles the Poacher, Cheap Repository Tracts, Vol. I*. (Dublin, William Watson, No. 7, Capel St., 180?)



The moving poem *Sinful Sally*<sup>273</sup> told of the sorry transformation of a comely maiden into 'the vilest harlot', one who atoned of her sins and sought redemption from her Saviour. In *Jack Brown in Prison*<sup>274</sup>, Hannah More stressed the virtues of forgiveness repentance, charity and human kindness. The main protagonist put the mistakes of his past life behind him and offered up thanksgiving to his Redeemer for his reclamation. In the last story *The Wonderful Advantages of Adventuring in the Lottery, or, The History of John Doyle*<sup>275</sup>, Hannah More reversed this theme as she set the conscientious John Doyle from his righteous path by putting the temptation of the lottery in his way. John was weak-willed and succumbed to every temptation as he plunged deeper into a life of crime. As God couldn't allow wrongdoing to go unpunished, this weakling was 'hanged, drawn and quartered', and Hannah More trusted that this would teach her young readers to avoid the evils attendant upon adventuring in the lottery.

Irish parents supplied their children with these 'Penny Godlinesses', not because they were didactic stories, full of self-improving advice and uplifting morals, but because they were, first of all, cheap to purchase, and secondly because Hannah More was capable of writing a very amusing story in a light-hearted vein, so that the reader could easily forget, that what she was really trying to do, was to save souls from eternal damnation.

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<sup>273</sup>Hannah More. 'The Gamester, to which is added The Story of Sinful Sally'. *Cheap Repository Tracts* Vol. 2.

<sup>274</sup>Hannah More. 'Jack Brown in Prison'. *Cheap Repository Tracts* Vol. 2.

<sup>275</sup>Hannah More. 'The Wonderful Advantages of Adventuring in the Lottery, or The History of John Doyle'. *Cheap Repository Tracts*, Vol. 2.



**BLACK GILES,  
THE POACHER.**

With some Account of

**A FAMILY WHO HAD RATHER LIVE  
BY THEIR WITS THAN THEIR  
WORK.**

IN TWO PARTS.

PART I

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

*The Hampshire Tragedy, a true Story.*



DUBLIN:

PRINTED FOR WILLIAM WATSON,

NO. 7, CAPEL-STREET,

*Or to the Cheap Repository for Religious and Moral Tracts*

*and by the Booksellers, Chapman and HAWKES,  
in Town and Country.*

PRICE ONE PENNY.

Fig. 28.1 Title page from *Black Giles, The Poacher, Part 1* from *Cheap Repository Tracts Vol. 1*. [Hannah More] 180-.



JUST PUBLISHED AND SOLD BY  
**WILLIAM WATSON,**  
 No. 7, CAPEL-STREET.

|   | Price 7d. |
|---|-----------|
| Two Wealthy Farmers, 7 Parts                | 5         |
| Two Shoe-makers, 5 Parts                    | 2         |
| Shepherd of Salisbury Plain, 2 Parts        | 2         |
| History of Tom White the Postilion, 2 Parts | 2         |
| History of Poaching Giles, 2 Parts          | 2         |
| History of Mary Wood the House-maid         | 1         |
| History of Charles Jones the Foot-man       | 1         |
| Beggarly Boy                                | 1         |
| Good Mother's Legacy                        | 1         |
| History of John Doyle                       | 1         |
| Two Soldiers                                | 1         |
| Life of William Baker                       | 1         |
| Gamester, and story of Sinful Sally         | 1         |
| Pilgrims, an allegory                       | 1         |
| Parley the Porter, an allegory              | 1         |
| Path to Riches and Happiness                | 1         |
| New Thoughts for the New Year               | 1         |
| Divine Model                                | 1         |
| Ship-wreck, and execution of Wild Robert    | 1         |
| Wife reformed                               | 1         |
| History of Mr. Fantom                       | 1         |
| Lancashire Collier Girl                     | 1         |
| Cottage Cook                                | 1         |
| The Sunday School                           | 1         |
| History of Hester Wilmot                    | 1         |
| Sorrowful Sam                               | 1         |
| Tawney Rachel, and The Bad Bargain          | 1         |
| 'Tis all for the Best                       | 1         |
| The Grand Assizes                           | 1         |
| General Resurrection                        | oh        |
| Two Sisters                                 | oh        |
| Happy Waterman                              | oh        |
| Husbandry Moralized                         | oh        |
| Carpenter                                   | oh        |
| Apprentice's Monitor                        | oh        |
| Horse Race                                  | oh        |
| Dram Shop                                   | oh        |

**Fig. 28.2** List of More's *Cheap Repository Tracts* published and sold by William Watson, No. 7, Capel Street.



## Black Giles, The Poacher

Black Giles the Poacher was a story told in two parts, possibly due to the popularity of the first part. It concerned a parasite called Giles, his slovenly wife Rachel, his 'bad boys', and his youngest son Dick. The latter had some redeeming qualities, but in general the family were petty thieves, with Black Giles himself, specialising in poaching and rat-catching. Giles was different from Hannah More's other creations such as Jack Brown or John Doyle, as he was confirmed in wrong doing. It was his way of life. His horizons didn't stretch beyond how he might pilfer his next meal or how his well-trained boys, might do it for him.

Hannah More disliked her main character intensely. He made no effort at self-improvement. He lived in a poorly kept house in Somerset, which he allowed to fall into disrepair. Giles didn't know the value of the saying 'a tile in time saves nine'<sup>276</sup>, and he laboured under the illusion that his 'decrepit house and ragged children would win compassion and charity'. Hannah More suggested that the opposite was more likely to be the case, as the rich were prone to be generous to those who had tried to raise themselves up in life. There was every likelihood that they would 'turn away disgusted from filth and laziness'.<sup>277</sup>

Giles had trained his boys in begging from early childhood. It was now their full-time occupation. They would lie in wait all day for a carriage to pass. Instead of one of them running out as soon as they heard the wheels approaching, and opening the gate to save the post-boy having to alight, Giles would 'set all his ragged brats, with dirty faces, matted locks and naked feet and legs' to work. When the carriage approached 'a whole covey of these little scarecrows' would 'start up, rush to the gate and all at once thrust out their hats and aprons'.<sup>278</sup> Hannah More suggested some useful work that these children

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<sup>276</sup>More Tracts 1. *'Black Giles, The Poacher'*, p. 4.

<sup>277</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>278</sup>Ibid., p. 5.



might have been engaged in, ranging from 'knitting at home', 'working in the field' or 'learning to get their bread in honest ways'.<sup>279</sup> She didn't suggest that the Giles children should enjoy reading, play or simple leisure activities. She believed that much danger lurched in these areas, she felt much more comfortable with the idea of children knitting and ploughing.

Black Gile's children were corrupted by their father. As soon as they grew too big for the trade of begging at the gate, he promoted them 'to the dignity of thieving on the Moor', where he kept 'miserable asses'. They would steal sand and coal and then Giles would send some of the biggest boys out 'with these lean and galled animals to carry sand or coals about the neighbouring towns'.<sup>280</sup> When committing these petty offences, they displayed great cunning and a keen awareness of safety. They would 'half milk a cow before the farmer's maid came with her pail'.<sup>281</sup> Wherever Black Giles stole food for his colts, he:

**took care never to steal stakes from the hedges at the same time. He had sense enough to know that the gain did not make up for the danger.**<sup>282</sup>

Hannah More's sense of humour emerged on occasions, especially when she described how Giles practised his trade as a rat-catcher. His practices were, not unexpectedly, of the dubious and nefarious kind:

**Whenever he was sent for to a farmhouse, his custom was to kill a few of the old rats, always taking care to leave a little flock of young ones alive, sufficient to keep up the breed - in order to carry on his trade.**<sup>283</sup>

He believed in forward planning and displayed sufficient talent in this area, to be ranked among the more successful thieves of his time

**and where any barn was over-stocked, he used to borrow a few from thence just to people a neighbouring granary which had none.**<sup>284</sup>

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<sup>279</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>280</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>281</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>282</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>283</sup>Ibid., pp. 8-9.

<sup>284</sup>Ibid., p. 9.



Then the reader was mystified by a subsequent event which Hannah More attributed to her master-thief, in which he displayed lack of foresight. It was incredible that a crafty thief like Giles would permit himself to be caught in the act of thieving or that he would chose the full view of the parson's barn door as a suitable place from which to carry on his business. As a result, we were told that Giles's rat catching activities were brought to an abrupt end, after he was caught 'one evening emptying his cage of young rats under Parson Wilson's barn door'.<sup>285</sup>

The same parson was anxious to help the Giles family and possibly to reform them. He targeted Dick, as he was 'the least hackneyed in knavery', and he gave him a pair of shoes, with the condition that he must attend Sunday school. Dick accepted the shoes, but he didn't get an opportunity to meet his commitment. His mother Rachel 'got the shoes into her clutches, then she pawned them for a bottle of gin and ordered the boy to keep out of the parson's sight'.<sup>286</sup> Dick's parents put obstacles in the path of his progress, at every opportunity. When he was employed by the ever-forgiving parson, to plant seeds in his garden, Dick approached the job with enthusiasm, as he followed the parson's directions meticulously. His father wasn't at all pleased when he saw this and he reprimanded Dick for 'working for the stingy old parson'.<sup>287</sup> Black Giles gave his son the following advice:

**To plant too many seeds to get rid of them fast, 'we are paid for planting not growing'. If they don't grow the snails and mice will be blamed.**<sup>288</sup>

Giles helped Dick to plant the seeds, setting a dozen seeds where he should only have set one. He then ordered his son to go into the parsonage to receive his pay, while he himself took 'care to secure about a quarter of the peck of beans for his own colt'.<sup>289</sup>

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<sup>285</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>286</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>287</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>288</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>289</sup>Ibid., p. 12.



Giles's other sons bore a greater affinity to their parents. They plundered ponds and trout streams, when the carp and tench were no bigger than gudgeons, not for material gain but just for the sheer pleasure of mischief-making:

**by this untimely depredation they plundered the owner of his property without enriching themselves. But the pleasure of mischief was reward enough.**<sup>290</sup>

Hannah More's obvious sense of fun added an entertaining dimension to an otherwise didactic story. She told how some fathers, like Old Jim Crib, whose son was transported for sheep stealing, held the Giles boys up as excellent role models for their sons. Old Crib complained to his boys 'that Giles's were worth a hundred of such blockheads<sup>291</sup> as Giles always had 'some little comfortable thing for supper, which his boys had pilfered in the day, while his undutiful boys never stole anything worth having'.<sup>292</sup>

Giles reaped his finest harvest when his victims were inside the church praying. He used to boast to his wife, that Sunday was to them 'the most profitable day of the week'. It was at this time that he would rob hens nests, steal a stray duck or some tools from neighbouring farm yards as well as thinning 'all the neighbouring pigeon houses'<sup>293</sup>. Rachel wasn't idle on Sunday either. This was the only day she had, to do all her washing and ironing as she was engaged in the work of the devil during the week 'telling fortunes and selling dream books and wicked songs'<sup>294</sup>. She displayed some entrepreneurial skill but very little integrity as she had no compunction about selling defective, and sub-standard products:

**Among her other articles of trade, one was to make and sell peppermint and other distilled waters. She made them without herbs and without a still.**<sup>295</sup>

Like her husband, she was very security conscious, and avoided going to the same house twice lest she would draw suspicion upon herself.

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<sup>290</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>291</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>292</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>293</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>294</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>295</sup>Ibid., pp. 13-14.



Hannah More told an intriguing story which highlighted the anomalies of the law, which allowed an honest man like Jack Weston to be convicted on the evidence of a dishonest man, like Black Giles the Poacher. Jack stood accused of having knocked down a hare and the informer was Giles. Jack pleaded guilty but he said he didn't consider what he had done to be a crime. It was an offence committed through ignorance:

**he did not think game was private property, and he owned that he had a strong temptation for doing what he had done.**<sup>296</sup>

The Justice who presided over the proceedings was also the parson, the benevolent Mr. Wilson, who had 'kindly visited and relieved' Jack during his long illness. Jack wished to reciprocate some of the generosity shown to him so he 'trained a pair of nice turtle-doves for Madam Wilson'<sup>297</sup>, but they were stolen and the chief suspect was the redoubtable Black Giles the Poacher. Ideas for an alternative gift occupied his mind when a fine hare ran across his path. Without a moment's hesitation, he knocked it down with the intention of presenting it later to Mrs. Wilson, who was quite partial to hares, as a token of his gratitude. Jack apologised for his mistake and offered to 'submit to whatever punishment Your Worship may please to inflict'.<sup>298</sup> Mr. Wilson was moved by his confession and touched by his gratitude but 'while he was sorry for the offender, he would not justify the offence'. The Justice, like Hannah More, was vociferous in his condemnation of poaching. This was one game law they wished to see upheld. The Justice warned Jack 'with poaching much moral evil is connected'<sup>299</sup>. He continued to preach along the same lines:

**Poaching is a regular apprenticeship for bolder crimes. He whom I may commit as a boy to sit in the stocks for killing a partridge, may be likely to end at the gallows for killing a man.**<sup>300</sup>

This was evidently intended for the reader's ears as Jack was already fully committed to the Christian ideals. The Justice then gave the reasons for his decision to send Jack to

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<sup>296</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>297</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>298</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>299</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>300</sup>Ibid., pp. 18-19.



prison. He had committed the offence, however unwittingly, and Giles had witnessed it. His own personal sympathies were with Jack but he had a duty to uphold the letter of the law:

**I know Jack Weston to be an honest youth, yet I must be obliged to make him pay the penalty. Giles is a bad man but he can prove this fact. Jack is a worthy lad, but he has committed this fault.**<sup>301</sup>

In the end Jack was rewarded for being an honest youth, as several farmers present, kindly agreed to advance a small sum each, in order to prevent Jack being sent to prison. He in turn agreed to work for them to repay this amount. Jack Weston had learnt a painful lesson. Not surprisingly then that he 'grew to abhor poaching, not from fear but from principle'.<sup>302</sup>

## Part II

### Black Giles, the Poacher. The History of Widow Brown's Apple-Tree

Black Giles took advantage of one of the weakest and therefore most vulnerable members of the community, the Old Widow Brown 'to hurt and oppress her'. Hannah More found this trait particularly reprehensible and she wrote at some length about it.

**I wonder how any body can find in his heart not to pity and respect poor old widows! There is something so forlorn and helpless in their condition, that methinks it is a call on every body, men, women and children, to do them all the kind services that fall in their way. Surely, their having no one to take their part, is an additional reason for kind-hearted people not to hurt and oppress them. But it was this very reason which led Giles to do both.**<sup>303</sup>

Giles and his sons stole every single onion in the Old Widow's garden and to deflect suspicion from themselves, they 'turned a couple of pigs into the garden, so that when the widow returned home', she would think that 'the pigs had been the thieves'<sup>304</sup>. They also took advantage of her hearing defect, to steal apples from her orchard, on a regular basis.

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<sup>301</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>302</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>303</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>304</sup>Ibid., p. 5.



They had the audacity to bring their jack asses in to the orchard, for transportation purposes, secure in the knowledge that Widow Brown was so deaf, she would never hear the asses, 'this Giles relied on as he wanted to stay out of prison'.<sup>305</sup> The Giles family became so avaricious that they decided to steal all the Widow's apples, while she was attending church on Sunday.

**In a trice the tree was cleared, the asses were whipt, and all was safe by the time the sermon was over.**<sup>306</sup>

Dick, the only Giles member with a social conscience, didn't approve of stripping the apple-tree bare. He begged 'that his father would leave the poor old woman enough for a few dumplings'<sup>307</sup> but his pleas were ignored. Giles realised that he had made an error of judgement however because he would draw suspicion upon himself unless he managed to plant the damning evidence elsewhere. He never had any qualms about implicating innocent parties in order to save himself, therefore

**he ordered his boys to throw the apples in Samuel Price's casement. Price was a very honest carpenter in that parish, who was at church with his whole family.**<sup>308</sup>

Even though poor Widow Brown was shocked and weakened by such a terrible occurrence, she still 'went to church again in the afternoon'<sup>309</sup>, and by sheer coincidence, she decided, on this Sunday above any other Sunday, to visit Samuel Price's house, on her way home. She felt the need 'to tell over again the lamentable story of the apples, and to consult with him how the-thief might be brought to justice'.<sup>310</sup> The sight which appeared before her eyes, when she entered Price's kitchen was most unexpected and took her by surprise. 'She saw her own Redstreaks lying in the window'. She quickly identified them as her own and screamed out 'Lass-aday, as sure as can be, here are my Redstreaks! I could swear to them in any court.'<sup>311</sup> Samuel Price had always believed that his sons were as honest as himself. It was therefore, with a mixture of disbelief and horror that he

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<sup>305</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>306</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>307</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>308</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>309</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>310</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>311</sup>Ibid., p. 9.



viewed the evidence of his eyes. Before long a large crowd has assembled around the door of his house as Black Giles had spread a rumour that Tom Price was the thief and 'he hoped the young dog would be transported for life'.<sup>312</sup> Such moral censure and indignation from Giles the Poacher could only be greeted with laughter. There were many comic elements in this scene, not least being the credulity of those who believed the word of a poacher but suspected Tom Price, who 'was the best boy'<sup>313</sup> in Mr. Wilson's Sunday School. His record was without blemish. This paragon of virtue had never once missed Sunday School 'since Mr. Wilson, the Minister had set up one in the parish'<sup>314</sup>, and he was in fact in attendance at this Sunday School when the theft took place.

Tom spent the entire night in prayer that his innocence might be proven. Giles spent the night, in quite a different way:

**He set off with his sons and their jack-asses, laden with their stolen goods. He was going to sell the apples at the next town, borrowing without leave, a lame colt, out of the Moor, to assist at carrying off his booty.**<sup>315</sup>

Tom continued to suffer while Giles the Poacher continued to prosper. While Price worked hard all day and 'prayed heartily night and morning'<sup>316</sup>, all he could look forward to was being bullied at Sunday School by the 'bad boys'. They jeered and taunted him with merciless cruelty:

**Who would have thought it? This is master's favourite! This is Master Wilson's sober Tommy! "The still sow sucks all the milk" says a third.**<sup>317</sup>

Hannah More would never permit the innocent to suffer for long. Tom's saviour was to be Dick Giles, the only good son among Giles's bad boys. The master went through the Ten Commandments, very laboriously, and soon the young thief confessed publicly, thereby exonerating Tom Price when he had done so,

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<sup>312</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>313</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>314</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>315</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>316</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>317</sup>Ibid., p. 13-14.



**Tom Price is as good a boy as ever lived; it was father and I stole the apples.**<sup>318</sup>

Tom automatically became a hero, with the whole school shaking hands with him. Mr. Wilson 'left the guilty boy to the management of the master', but as a minister and as a magistrate, he felt it incumbent upon him to go 'to the extent of the law in punishing the father'.<sup>319</sup>

Black Giles didn't live long enough to stand trial. He was 'lying in all the agonies of death', due to an accident, caused when a wall collapsed down on top of him. As in many other More tracts, the spirit of forgiveness and loving one's former detractors reigned supreme. 'Jack Weston, the same poor young man against whom Giles had informed for killing a hare, was kneeling by him, offering him some broth',<sup>320</sup> and Tom Price reached out the hand of friendship also, to one who had 'so sadly wronged'<sup>321</sup> him:

**Tom often brought him his own rice milk or apple dumpling.**

As was the pattern in these cases, Black Giles was in awe of this religion which would encourage those he had injured to be so forgiving and indeed so kind to him

**and Giles, ignorant and depraved as he was, often cried out, that he thought now there must be some truth in religion, since it taught even a boy to deny himself, and to forgive an injury.**<sup>322</sup>

Death bed conversions were a common feature of many moral tales and here Giles also repented on his death bed, that he might save himself and possibly his sons.

Mr. Wilson was determined to turn the downfall of Poacher Giles to his advantage in an effort to clear his neighbourhood of poachers for a considerable time to come. On the following Sunday he gave a moving discourse on the dangers inherent in leading a life of crime.

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<sup>318</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>319</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>320</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>321</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>322</sup>Ibid.,



**This together with the awful death of Giles, produced such an effect, that no poacher has been able to show his head in that parish ever since.<sup>323</sup>**

### The Story of Sinful Sally

Sinful Sally told her own sad life's story in a very engaging and moving style. It was a poetic rendering in ballad form. It contained some forty three stanzas, of four lines, each consecutive line rhyming, to facilitate rote learning. Sally won the reader's sympathy from the start as she begged him to:

**Come and drop a mournful tear  
O'er the tale that I shall tell.<sup>324</sup>**

The pathos was maintained in the second stanza as she summed up a ruined life, which had once held out such promise:

**I that ask your tender pity,  
Ruin'd now and all forlorn,  
Once like you, was young and pretty,  
And as cheerful as the morn.<sup>325</sup>**

She had lived a life of child-like innocence and simplicity. She had spent her time contentedly knitting, clad in her humble kersey gown and surrounded by a beautiful pastoral scene of leaping lambs and drooping willows. Her youth had been blissfully happy with her adoring parents and affectionate friends. Her life changed quickly as she approached eighteen years of age, when 'modest youths' came 'abounding, all to Sally of the Green'.<sup>326</sup> As her courting days began, her moral decline was imminent, and Hannah More regaled 'How poor Sinful Sally fell'. She was attracted to Sir William, who lived in a 'great abode', so she approached near his meadow 'Vainly wishing to be seen'. In this

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<sup>323</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>324</sup>More Tracts. Vol. 2. *The Gamester*, to which is added *The Story of Sinful Sally*. (Dublin: William Watson, No. 7, Capel Street, n.d.), p. 18.

<sup>325</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>326</sup>Ibid., p. 19.



she was successful but the encounter was to mark her first step on the road to moral ruin. Sir William exploited her innocence, as he

**Bid me quit my coat of scarlet,  
Blam'd my simple Kersey Gown;  
ey'd me then, so like a Varlet,  
Such as live in London town.<sup>327</sup>**

He wooed her with presents and colourful ribbons. Soon Sally fell victim to his crafty ways and within a short space of time, found herself 'a mistress to a rake'.<sup>328</sup> Her standards of morality plummeted. She no longer prayed or attended Church. She became the 'child of hell'.<sup>329</sup> She neglected her Bible reading, which was a serious oversight, but worse still, she offended good taste and sound principles by reading the offensive new novels on the market, so odious to Hannah More:

**Now I lay my Bible by  
Chuse that impious book so new  
Love the bold blaspheming lie,  
And that filthy novel too.<sup>330</sup>**

She moved to London 'Powder'd well, and puff'd, and painted', where she entered upon a career of prostitution. She out-shone all her rivals

**With skin so white and heart so tainted rolling in my chariot fine.<sup>331</sup>**

but she grew enormously proud and treated them with derision, considering herself to be far superior to them:

**When I meet some meaner Lass,  
Then I toss with proud disdain;  
Laugh and giggle as I pass,  
Seeming not to know a pain.<sup>332</sup>**

Then she heard an inner voice which told her that her life of pleasure was a life of sin. While she earnestly wished to be saved, and the reader wished her to be saved, sadly her own human shortcomings and failings caused her to sin again and to drag herself down

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<sup>327</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>328</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>329</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>330</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>331</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>332</sup>Ibid.,



once more. No reader could fail to be effected by Sinful Sally's plaintive cry to the Lord to save her, or to be touched by her own helpless response:

**Save me, save me, Lord I cry,  
Save my soul from Satan's chain;  
Now I see salvation nigh  
Now I turn to Sin again.<sup>333</sup>**

Her life of prostitution took its toll on her health and 'Sal' was 'cast upon the town'. She lured many youths with her 'wanton looks' and she also ruined them. Like the cruel spider who stretched his web wide to trap every fly only to poison them, so too Sally destroyed her victims. Her once troubled conscience no longer troubled her as she plunged deeper and deeper into sin. Any time feelings of guilt returned to haunt her, she drowned her sorrows in gin

**Now no more by conscience troubled,  
Deep I plunge in every Sin,  
True: my sorrows are redoubled  
But I drown them all in gin.<sup>334</sup>**

She then became involved in criminal activity as she kept company with a 'Band of Ruffian Rogues', who were partial to 'Fighting, cheating, drinking' and 'swearing'.<sup>335</sup> She became an accomplished criminal, teaching others how to steal and then becoming the receiver of stolen goods herself. It was immaterial to her whether there was a murder involved in the course of the robbery or that her youngest protégé Mark would hang for it. Her own safety was her only concern.

**Mark the youngest of the thieves:  
Taught by Sal he ventures further:  
What he filches Sal receives,  
'Tis for Sal he does the murder.**

**See me then attend my victim,  
To the fatal gallows, tree;  
Pleas'd to think how I have nick'd him,  
Made him swing while I am free.<sup>336</sup>**

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<sup>333</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>334</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>335</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>336</sup>Ibid.,



She took a fiendish delight also in contemplating the pending doom of her lovers, men like Jack who was now on his way to the gallows, while she remained drinking with Dick, her next intended victim. She gloated satanically

**Jack I laughing see depart,  
While with Dick I drink and sing!  
Soon again I'll fill the cart,  
Make this present lover swing.<sup>337</sup>**

Sal had been tempting providence for some time and with a puritanical belief in the wrath of God, Hannah interposed an ominous warning:

**See God's dreadful wrath arising,  
And the day of vengeance near!<sup>338</sup>**

She was then afflicted with a 'fierce disease', which had nothing to do with the wrath of God but it was due rather to her own licentious behaviour. Her physical decay was terrifyingly presented as a stark warning to others who might foolishly contemplate a life of prostitution:

**Here with face so shrunk and spotted  
On the clay-cold ground I lie!  
See how all my flesh is rotted,  
Stop, O stranger, see me die!<sup>339</sup>**

Sinful Sally couldn't fall any lower. She was sick and dying, when she turned to the Lord once more for help.

**In this Pit of Ruin lying,  
Once again before I die,  
Fainting, trembling, weeping, sighing,  
Lord to thee, I'll lift mine eye.<sup>340</sup>**

She begged Him for forgiveness that He might 'save the vilest harlot'. She had heard that the Lord could take sins that were once 'Red and scarlet' and transform them until they were 'white as wool'. She desired that the Lord might soften her hard heart and deepen her sense of guilt, as she humbly admitted to her faults:

**Saviour, whom I've pierced so often,**

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<sup>337</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>338</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>339</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>340</sup>Ibid., p. 23.



**Deeper still my guilt imprint,  
Let thy mighty Spirit soften  
This my hardened heart of flint.<sup>341</sup>**

Sally realised that His forgiveness was 'all-atoning', but felt perhaps that she was irredeemable

**Vain alas is all my grooming,  
For I fear the die is cast;  
True, thy blood is all-atoning  
But my day of Grace is past.<sup>342</sup>**

In a pitiful plea she cried out to her Saviour for help. She promised to place her faith in Him forever. Sally was at last redeemed:

**Saviour! hear me or I perish:  
None who lives is quite undone:  
Still a Ray of Hope I'll cherish  
'Till Eternity's begun.<sup>343</sup>**

### **The Wonderful Advantages of Adventuring in the Lottery, or, The History of John Doyle**

The title of this story could be equated with the headline captions in our modern newspapers, those which are designed specifically to attract the attention of the reader and to stimulate him to read on. Hannah More and the many deeply committed evangelists and conservatives of the 18th c. couldn't see any advantage whatever to adventuring in the lottery. They viewed gaming and playing the lottery as a source of much evil, as addictive and potentially damaging not just to the gamester but to his family.

Hannah More's solution to the problem was to encourage abstention rather than moderation. English children had read this many times in her religious tracts, and now it was the turn of the children of Ireland to read all about John Doyle's failing fortunes. The

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<sup>341</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>342</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>343</sup>Ibid., p. 23.



name of the location in the story was changed to suit the market place. On this occasion his son was sent not to a London school, but to a school well away from Dublin, where he would be 'less exposed to the company of wicked children'.<sup>344</sup>

John Doyle was employed as a servant in the home of a respectable merchant and 'from his uniform integrity, sobriety and diligence' he 'possessed the confidence of his master'.<sup>345</sup> He married a fellow servant, Mary Coates, seven years previously, and they had a six year old son. This happy, contented family was about to be shattered because of one unfortunate mistake. One fateful day John was sent on an errand for his master when he received a hand-bill from a man standing in the doorway of a lottery-office. He was fascinated by the message he read on the hand-bill and the promise it held forth as it

**invited all who had a mind to be rich in a hurry to seize the lucky hour of adventuring in the wheel of fortune: shewing them how many thousand pounds they would be sure to gain for one guinea.**<sup>346</sup>

Thoughts of self-improvement, becoming equal to his master and rising out of his own social class took root in the mind of John Doyle, and began to grow:

**... if I get the twenty thousand pound prize, or even one of the ten thousands, I will be as great a man as my master.**<sup>347</sup>

Hannah More regarded this as 'a woeful moment for poor John when this imagination fastened on his mind', which just served to prove the truth of what it said in the Bible, that 'the love of money' was 'the root of all evil'. John had the temerity to approach his wife about spending part of their wages on the lottery:

**Molly, we have just got one quarter's wages and the drawing begins tomorrow: suppose we try our fortune in the lottery.**<sup>348</sup>

One might wonder just how well John knew his wife, even the reader could predict that her reply would be well within the religious parameters. 'Not with my consent' was her riposte, and she added:

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<sup>344</sup>More Tracts 2. *The Wonderful Advantages of Adventuring in the Lottery, or The History of John Doyle*, p. 3.

<sup>345</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>346</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>347</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>348</sup>Ibid.,



**I think we are rich enough as we are, and ought to be thankful to God that we want for nothing<sup>349</sup>**

but John could see many possibilities that Molly's religious beliefs precluded her from seeing. He observed that it would do them no harm whatever to have more money, but Molly held firm to her view that this wasn't God's will:

**... for you know John, God is the best judge of what is good for us, and it is his providence has placed us in our present situation.<sup>350</sup>**

He remained unconvinced and wondered 'what harm' there could possibly be in their 'trying their fortune' in the lottery. Molly reminded her husband that this was not in accordance with the word of God:

**I know there is harm in covetousness: for the word of God says - be content with such things as you have - and he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent.<sup>351</sup>**

John persisted as he pulled out the hand-bill and enumerated the many wonderful advantages the lottery promised, but Molly remained steadfast in her convictions.

**she wisely observed that if there were so much to be got by those same tickets, it is strange that the people who sold them would not rather keep them for themselves.<sup>352</sup>**

John Doyle would be classified as a fool by his wife if he bought a lottery ticket and what's more, he would be failing in his duties as a father and son, if he spent their money so wantonly. In an emotional appeal to him, she reminded him of his family responsibilities:

**the child needs clothes. This is the time that you generally bring something to his old grandfather ... Sure (said she, while a tear stole down her cheek) you will not forget our dear Johnny.<sup>353</sup>**

John made the bold decision to ignore his wife's counsel. He lied to her that he had to go into town on business when he really intended going to the lottery office. His personality

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<sup>349</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>350</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>351</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>352</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>353</sup>Ibid.,



began to change as he entangled himself in a web of deception. He neglected his business and his temper became fractious. Molly suspected the reason for this sudden change in his conduct and she confronted him with it. He didn't deny anything but 'promised his wife, he would not throw away any more money on the lottery'. Molly 'thanked God for the resolution and prayed that he might have grace to keep it'.<sup>354</sup> Her prayer went unanswered, as her husband, who was easily misled, returned to his old habit. He was persuaded by the cunning office keeper that he should insure his lottery numbers:

**And I would recommend it to you as a friend, to insure at least 10 or 12 numbers that you may be certain of winning. Take my word for it, that's playing a sure game - Five guineas, Sir, for 6s 10d! Think of that.**<sup>355</sup>

He lost all his money and in an effort to raise more, he returned to his master's house where he stole a silver goblet and spoons, which he immediately pawned. The money, having been 'thus iniquitously raised', he returned to the lottery office:

**and arrived just time enough to lose it all, except a few shillings before that day's drawing ended.**<sup>356</sup>

John's moral decline was rapid, as he accompanied his new found companions to a public house, where 'the whiskey which he drunk to drown care soon inflamed him to madness' so that 'he considered suicide as his life was a burden'.<sup>357</sup> Commonsense prevailed however, and although 'his mind was in a kind of Hell'<sup>358</sup>, he didn't alter his ways or become penitent. On the contrary, he 'went from bad to worse'. One of his companions reprimanded him for behaving:

**like a blockhead, for being so much cast down by his losses, that if he only had spirit enough he might soon retrieve them all.**<sup>359</sup>

He swore John to secrecy and he revealed to him his plan for a highway robbery, on the Glasnevin Road. He furnished him also with a case of pistols. Unfortunately, this robbery was to end in the murder of an innocent man called Mr. Stewart who 'snapped a

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<sup>354</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>355</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>356</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>357</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>358</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>359</sup>Ibid.,



pistol, which missed fire; and both the robbers discharging theirs, shot him dead on the spot'.<sup>360</sup> Hannah More passed her own judgement 'but when a man once gives way to what is evil, it is impossible to say where he shall stop'.<sup>361</sup> The omniscient narrator was quite correct. The two murderers shared the money between them and spent the remainder of the night 'in houses of ill-fame'.<sup>362</sup> John had planned to dispose of his newly acquired funds by trying his fortune on the lottery, 'but he was afraid', and instead 'he slunk to his master's house at an early hour'<sup>363</sup>, in the hope that his crime would go undetected. Hannah interposed again to warn her readers that God was aware of the crime committed and that He rarely, if ever allowed wrongdoers to go unpunished:

**He little remembered that God's eyes saw it: and that His Providence seldom (if ever) suffers such wickedness to pass unpunished, even in this world.**<sup>364</sup>

When John returned home to his wife, with a pistol in his pocket, 'she trembled like an aspen leaf', the robbery and murder being by now, the talk of the town, she harboured her own suspicions. Days passed and John felt more secure, until one night, the Officers of Police 'entered his house to apprehend him'. His companion Reilly, 'had turned approver, to secure his own life'.<sup>365</sup> Molly clung to her trembling husband and shrieked all the way to Newgate Prison where she 'fainted away as soon as they entered the prison'. So great was her pain and affliction, that she sank beneath the weight of it and died, and 'her dying wish was that her husband would seek God's mercy and repent'.<sup>366</sup> John's guilt was clearly proven; and a 'concurrence of circumstances'<sup>367</sup> all confirmed it. He then called out for a 'long day' just as the judge was about to pass sentence but his Lordship had an important message for him:

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<sup>360</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>361</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>362</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>363</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>364</sup>Ibid., pp. 17-18.

<sup>365</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>366</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>367</sup>Ibid., p. 20.



**Unhappy man! you seem to have forgotten that in the murder of Mr. Stewart you allowed him no time. In a moment and without provocation, you sent a worthy person who had never harmed you into eternity; and the laws of God and man demand your forfeited life.**<sup>368</sup>

He condemned him to immediate death, which he hoped would serve as an awful warning to others. He could have led a happy, useful and respected life 'had not the diabolical love of money and the desire of hasty and unrighteous gain taken possession of his 'heart'. His Lordship shared Hannah More's aversion to the lottery. He too believed that 'it had proved the ruin of many',<sup>369</sup> and exhorted those listening to him:

**to abhor the thoughts of adventuring in it - to fly from it as a plague ... to consider it only as the cunning artifice of designing men, to enrich themselves, by holding out to the unwary multitude the chance of immoderate gain - a prospect which seldom, in one instance out of a thousand, ends in anything but disappointment.**<sup>370</sup>

The Judge castigated John for embroiling innocent victims like his 'amiable and virtuous' wife who died of a broken-heart ('here the prisoner groaned'), and his infant child, who would be left an orphan 'in a world that will be too forward to reproach him with his father's memory'.<sup>371</sup> The Judge told him also that God alone could save him by giving him remission of his 'crying sins'.<sup>372</sup> John's accomplice in the crime, the cowardly Reilly, was remanded back to Newgate to stand trial for two other robberies, while John was sentenced to be 'hanged, drawn and quartered' on the following Saturday, the 15th inst. The Judge added:

**and may the Lord have mercy on your soul.**<sup>373</sup>

Hannah More hoped that his fate would act as a deterrent to others. John:

**... was executed according to his sentence; and would to God that his history might prove a warning to all, against trying their fortune in the Lottery.**<sup>374</sup>

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<sup>368</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>369</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>370</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>371</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>372</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>373</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>374</sup>Ibid.,



The More tracts appealed to Irish parents and their children despite the lessons in morality, the reforming advice, and the sparsity of woodcuts or illustrations of any kind because Hannah More could tell an interesting story in simple, colloquial language and with a sense of merriment and light heartedness one doesn't normally associate with evangelical writers.

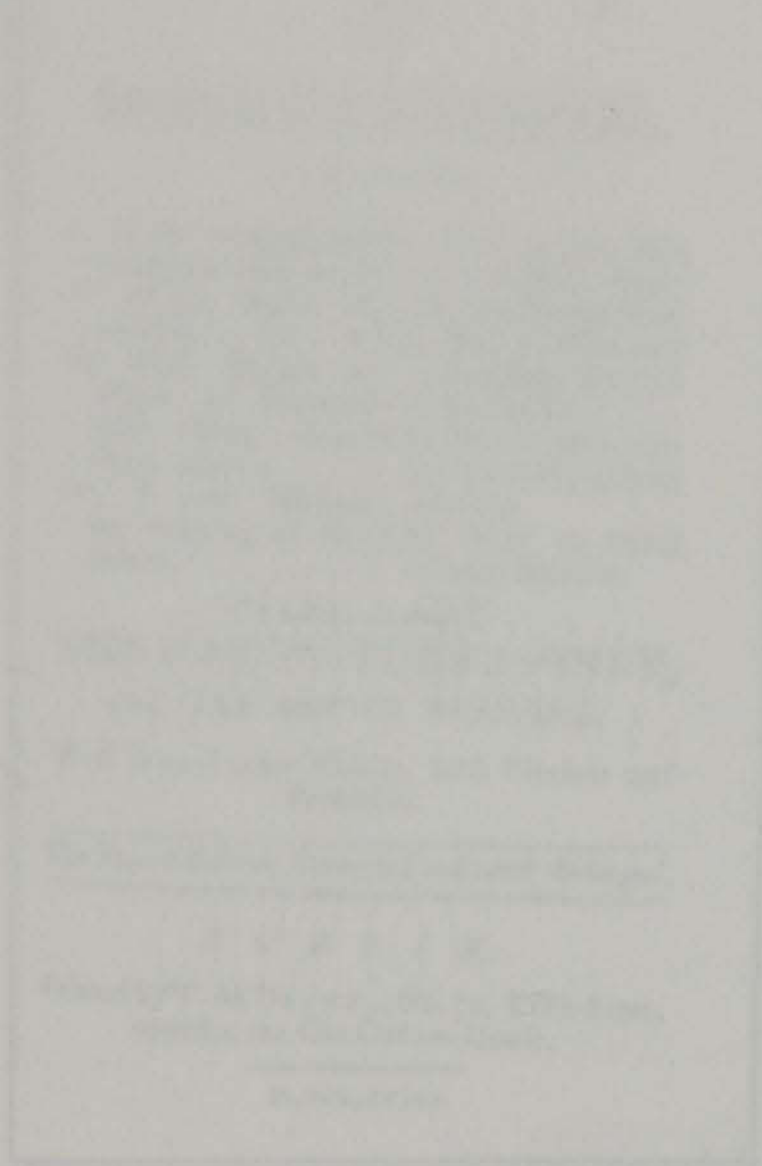


Fig. 29-1. Passage from *The Pleasant Art of Money-Gathering*, (1783).



THE PLEASANT  
A R T  
O F  
MONEY-CATCHING.

TREATING,

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| I. Of the Original and<br>Invention of MONEY.                               | V. How to save Mo-<br>NEY in Diet, Appa-<br>rel, and Recreations. |
| II. Of the Misery of<br>wanting it, &c.                                     | VI. How a Man may<br>always keep MONEY<br>in his Pocket.          |
| III. How Persons in<br>Want of MONEY<br>may supply them-<br>selves with it. | VII. How a Man may<br>pay his Debts without<br>MONEY.             |
| IV. A new Method<br>for ordering of Ex-<br>pences.                          | VIII. How to travel<br>without MONEY.                             |

*To which is added,*

THE WAY TO TURN A PENNY,  
OR, THE ART OF THRIVING.

With several other Things, both Pleasant and  
Profitable.

*The Fourth Edition, Corrected and much Enlarged.*

D U B L I N :

Printed by T. M'DONNELL, No. 50, Essex-street,  
opposite the Old Custom-House.

M, DCC, XCIII.

Fig. 29.1 Title page from *The Pleasant Art of Money-Catching*. [1793].



(v) 'Penny Godlinesses' – Utilitarianism and The Pleasant Art of Money Catching

Contemporary observers, such as the commissioner of education of 1825, who paid a visit to a hedge school in Sligo, automatically assumed from reading the title of *The Pleasant Art of Money Catching* that it was an unsuitable book of entertainment for children to read. A cursory glance at the table of contents would have revealed that far from being a work of fiction of questionable moral value, it was in fact a worthy precursor of the reading books published by the commissioners of national education in the 1830's, as it conveyed factual information and upheld similar attitudes and values.

*The Pleasant Art of Money Catching* was never intended for a juvenile audience. It was written in archaic language, interspersed with Latin quotations, biblical references and classical aphorisms. There were no illustrations to adorn the book and the level of complexity of the vocabulary employed demanded a comprehensive knowledge of the English language, by the reader. It was written in the form of a manual of sound advice and useful information for tradesmen, landowners and the self-employed. They were told how to manage their money and their time more efficiently, the pit-falls to avoid in order to retain their wealth, and thereby maintain their standing in society.

In the preface the writer poked fun at his readers and admonished them for being too eager to read about the pleasant art, and how to 'catch this coy mistress, and embrace her in their own arms'. He had no intention of imparting this valuable information in the preface 'for then the reading of the book would be needless'. He did however promise to show the reader, particularly those involved in business, how they might thrive, and the many 'several ways of turning a penny' in order to prevent 'many of those statutes of bankruptcy, which have every week taken up so much room in our gazettes'.<sup>375</sup> He

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<sup>375</sup>*The Pleasant Art of Money Catching*. (Dublin, T. McDonnell, 1793), p. v.



adopted a systematic approach to his topic by outlining the historical background to the invention of money, from biblical times. In chapter two attention was drawn to the misery and unhappiness caused by poverty, and to the advantages of possessing money. Those who belonged to the wealthy class had a distinct advantage over the poor with regard to their social status. The best jobs could be bought through bribery, a malpractice widely used in the 18th and 19th centuries. Money bestowed power and influence on the rich man. It absolved him from all sin and wrong doing. He could be as immoral and profligate as he wished. He could exploit decent people, but his money would exonerate him from all blame in the eyes of his admiring neighbours. His money also gave him a licence to speak an infinite deal of nonsense, while the poor but clever man was expected to know his place and to remain silent. This 'rich blockhead' by virtue of his wealth, was sure to 'be admired and applauded' but the poor and 'ingenious man' even though he 'could speak a thousand times more to the purpose', 'must not presume to contradict him'.<sup>376</sup>

The materialistic values of his time disheartened the writer, and he took a nostalgic look backwards to 'the better and wiser ages of the world' when 'virtue though clothed in rags, was more esteemed than the trappings of the golden ass'. In those primitive but wholesome times poverty was considered to be 'the badge of religion and piety', and wisdom and unworldliness were held 'in esteem amongst the wisest philosophers'<sup>377</sup>. But this golden age was past. The times had changed, and so had the people. His sadness was evident as he quoted from Latin, the rueful words of Ovid:

**Temporara mutantur et nos mutamur in illis**  
**The times are chang'd; and even we seem changed with the times to be.**<sup>378</sup>

The miseries and evils of poverty were exaggeratedly drawn in archaic language with biblical overtones:

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<sup>376</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>377</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>378</sup>Ibid.,



**For it wresteth and maketh crooked the best natures, which are forced by their necessities to do those things, which they blush to think of, while they are doing them.**<sup>379</sup>

The poor, he maintained, had no option but to lie, cheat and borrow, in order to disguise their poverty. They wished to disguise their poverty from their relatives in particular, as they might possibly disown them and would most certainly scorn and despise them. The exaggeration continued as he hypothesised on what the possible outcome might be if the rich man had no choice but to invite the poor man to dine with him. He speculated that the poor man would 'be placed at the lower end of the table, and carved unto the worst of the meat'<sup>380</sup>. He would probably be ignored by the servants who wouldn't pour him a drink and he would be jeered at by those at the upper-end of the table. He would have to endure the ignominy of adhering to the social conventions of listening in silence to 'the most palpable lies' and 'the absurdest nonsense'. Under the circumstances the writer advised the poor man to refuse any invitation to dine at the rich man's table because:

**aliena vivere quadra, miserrium**

**It is most miserable to live on the trencher of another man.**<sup>381</sup>

In the case of a borrower of money, the writer predicted that his imaginary fears would reach the level of paranoia. This slave to creditors would live like a prisoner-at-large. He would live in fear that every man he encountered might be a sergeant or a bailiff. He would confine himself to his house and refuse to answer a knock on the door 'for fear of meeting with a sergeant, to arrest him, or with a creditor, to ask when he shall be paid'.<sup>382</sup> His sleep would be disturbed with fearful dreams and the very idea of going to prison would terrify him more than death itself.

In chapter three he contemplated the causes of poverty. He mentioned the ordinary reasons for this miserable state to which he added the 'surprising storm in November 1703' and the 'dreadful fire of London', the exigencies of war which resulted in many

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<sup>379</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>380</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>381</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>382</sup>Ibid., p. 28.



becoming 'unavoidable losers' (sic.)<sup>383</sup>. He referred to the existing social order of rich and poor as being part of God's plan, an opinion which held currency in the 19th century, and which was mentioned in a well known Victorian hymn by Mrs Cecil Frances Alexander (1823-1895):

**The rich man in his castle,  
The poor man at his gate,  
God made them, high or lowly  
And ordered their estate.**<sup>384</sup>

Here he stated that both classes were interdependent, the poor relied on the rich for their sustenance but the rich exploited the poor:

**We know indeed, that by the Divine Providence, in the body of a Commonwealth, there must be as well poor as rich, even as a human body can't subsist without hands and feet, to labour and walk about, to provide for the other members, the rich be the belly which devours all, yet do no part of the work.**<sup>385</sup>

These social gradations were likewise adhered to by the compilers of the reading books, approved by the National Board in 1831. The commissioners of education also believed that this social division was all part of God's plan. In the *Supplement to the Fourth Book of 1850*, it was stated that:

**It is a general law which God has established throughout the world, that riches and respect should attend prudence and diligence; and as all men are not equal in the faculties of either body or mind, by which riches or respect are acquired, a necessity of superiority and subordination springs from the very nature which God has given us.**<sup>386</sup>

Upward social mobility was as difficult to achieve in the 18th century as it was later to be in the 19th century. When the poor moved up the social ladder to occupy positions of wealth and power, it occurred through a miracle of God:

**Yet God raiseth up as by a miracle, the children and posterity of these, oftentimes to possess the most eminent places, either in Church or Common-Wealth, as to become archbishops, bishops, judges,**

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<sup>383</sup>Ibid., pp. 35-36.

<sup>384</sup> William Henry Monk (ed.). *Hymns Ancient and Modern*. (London: William Clowes and Sons Ltd., 13 Charing Cross, n.d.).

\_\_\_\_\_ Mrs C.F. Alexander. 'All Things Bright and Beautiful'. p. 815.

<sup>385</sup>*The Pleasant Art of Money Catching*, p. 36.

<sup>386</sup> *Supplement to the Fourth Book of Lessons for the use of schools*. (Dublin, Wm. Curry, Jun. & Co., 1850), p. 143.



**commanders, generals in the field, secretaries of state, statesmen and the like.**<sup>387</sup>

In the National Board's *Fourth Book of Lessons* (1834), readers were warned that 'upward social mobility was very restricted and would be available only to the special few'.<sup>388</sup>

**It is, of course, not to be expected that many poor men should become rich, nor ought any man set his heart on being so.**<sup>389</sup>

The writer then outlined the human failings and weaknesses of men which led to their financial ruin. Possessors of ill-gotten gains through 'oppression, deceit usury and the like'<sup>390</sup> couldn't hope to thrive for long. He believed that these pretenders to wealth, that he was acquainted with, would have little to bequeath to their grandchildren and he quoted a Latin aphorism to substantiate his assertion

**DE MALE QUAESITIS VIX GADET, TERTIA HAERES  
It seldom is the grand'child's lot to be the heirs of goods not justly got.**<sup>391</sup>

He blamed the twin 'evils' of wine and women' for the downfall of men and contended that Bacchus and Venus were 'inseparable companions', whose friendship resulted in 'vicious living'. He believed that the man who was familiar with the one was never a stranger to the other:

**UNO NAMQUE MODO, VINA FENUSQUE NOSCRENT  
In one same way, manner and end, both wine and women do offend.**<sup>392</sup>

The conscientious attention to duty and work were considered to be the highest of the religious virtues in the 18th c. and indeed the 19th c. The writer referred to the sentiments expressed by the Apostle Paul to emphasise his own strong views on the duties of man and his intolerance of idlers 'Labour night and day, rather than be

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<sup>387</sup>*The Pleasant Art of Money Catching*, pp. 36-37.

<sup>388</sup>Lorcan Walsh. 'The Social, Political and Economic Content of Nineteenth Century Schoolbooks'. In *Oideas 33*, Fómhar (1988), p. 44.

<sup>389</sup>*Fourth Book of Lessons* for the use of schools. (John S. Folds, Son & Patton, 5 Bachelor's Walk, 1842), p. 225.

<sup>390</sup>*The Pleasant Art of Money Catching*, p. 37.

<sup>391</sup>*Ibid.*,

<sup>392</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 38.



burdensome, saith the Apostle Paul'.<sup>393</sup> The sin of idleness was so abhorrent to the writer that he would deny the idler the right to life. He considered him to be a burden on society, one of 'the drones of a common-wealth who deserve not to live', and while alive deserved to be deprived of his daily bread:

**QUI NON LABORAT NON MANDUCES**  
**He that laboureth not must not eat.**<sup>394</sup>

He noted that both country and city swarmed with these parasites, who didn't deserve to enjoy the fruits of the hard labours of others. Like Solomon he wished that 'the sluggard shall a scarcity of bread'.<sup>395</sup>

The National Board textbooks abounded with lessons promoting the merits to be gained from hard work, and stories in which the idler was generally taught a hard lesson. The themes of the 'busy bee' and the 'thrifty ant' were all pervasive in these lessons. They took the form of prose and in some cases poetry in order to facilitate rote learning. In the sequel to the *Second Book of Lessons* (1866), the Grasshopper who wasn't greatly enamoured by work sought sustenance from the assiduous Ant, only to be refused with the following poetic rebuff:

**Be prudent and mind what I say,**  
**Do not spend all your leisure**  
**In riot and pleasure**  
**But while the sun in shining, make hay.**<sup>396</sup>

A prose passage in the *Fourth Book of Lessons* (1842) told how another idle, half-starved grasshopper approached a well-stocked beehive and craved for some honey. The busy bee asked the grasshopper how he had spent the summer, to which the grasshopper thoughtlessly replied, 'I spent my time very merrily, in drinking, dancing, and singing ...'. This honest admission was rewarded with a curt rebuke from the busy bee that 'those who do nothing but drink and dance and sing in the summer, must expect to starve in the

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<sup>393</sup>Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>394</sup>Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>395</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>396</sup>Sequel No. 1 to the *Second Book of Lessons*. (Dublin: Alexander Thom, 87/88 Abbey St., 1866), pp. 32-34.



winter'.<sup>397</sup> Moral lessons were taught through interesting stories, lively jingles or lines of rhyming verse, which might well have had *The Pleasant Art of Money Catching* as their precedent.

Other causes of poverty and ruination included the neglect of inherited estates by those who never knew 'the pain and care in getting them'.<sup>398</sup> An injudicious choice of wife could also mark the beginning of financial problems. This generally occurred when men refused to adhere to the traditional custom of match-making and got married 'By matching themselves without advice of parents and friends' to most undesirable female partners, who turned out to be:

**Proud, foolish and light housewives, or such eternal clacks, that one were better to have his diet in hell, than his dinner at home, there to be troubled with her never ceasing tongue.**<sup>399</sup>

When these wilful gentlemen desired release from their 'eternal clacks', they tended to emigrate or to travel within Ireland 'from tavern to tavern to look for company, and in a word to spend anything, to live anywhere but at home in their own houses', when they were sure 'to have no quiet'.<sup>400</sup>

The writer's class consciousness reflected the reality of the times. He listed marrying beneath their class for the sake of 'a little handsomeness and eye-pleasing beauty' as a ruinous course of action for young gentlemen to take. He disapproved of the practice of marrying 'into a very mean and poor family without birth or breeding', because the poor relations of their spouses, were bound to exploit them for their money. One such misguided landed gentleman 'doated upon an ale-wife's daughter, and made her a lady, and then the devil made her prouder than those that are born so'.<sup>401</sup> He did allow that women of the 'meanest condition may make good wives' but that their husbands would

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<sup>397</sup> *Fourth Book of Lessons* for the use of schools. (Dublin: John S. Folds, Son & Patton, 5 Bachelor's Walk, 1842), p. 224.

<sup>398</sup> *The Pleasant Art of Money Catching*, p. 39.

<sup>399</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>400</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>401</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.



quickly take 'a surfeit of their beauties ... and fly abroad'.<sup>402</sup> At no stage did the writer condemn the infidelity and profligacy of these philandering husbands who

**not only doat upon others, but devise all the ways they can (being grown desperate) to give away or sell all they have.**<sup>403</sup>

His expectations and indeed those of the society at the time, were that women should know their place. In those circumstances his attack on the 'upstart gentle-woman' who 'oftentimes prove so wickedly imperious and proud' becomes comprehensible. He complained

**that they make no conscience to abuse, insult over, and make meer (sic) fools of their husbands by letting and disposing of his land, gathering up his rents, putting away and entertaining what servants they please.**<sup>404</sup>

He stated also that when women joined the ranks of the nouveaux riche they became incomparably proud and arrogant

**ASPERIUS NIHIL EST HUMILI, EUM SURGIT IN ALTUM**  
**There's nothing more perverse and proud than she, who is to wealth advanced from beggary.**<sup>405</sup>

In chapter four the writer promised to give the reader new directions on supplying 'themselves with money enough at all times'.<sup>406</sup> He started by condemning the 'loathsome disease' of idleness and he then recommended the virtue of time thrift. He was aware of the fact that not only was money being spent in coffee houses and weekly clubs but valuable time was also being squandered by the thoughtless 'not considering what they might have gained in that time, by their labour and what they might have saved by keeping in their shops'.<sup>407</sup> Timethrift and self-help were virtues highly rated in the 19th c. also. In the National Board textbooks the merits of these virtues were conveyed in biographical sketches of 'self-made' entrepreneurs. These were men with an insatiable hunger for work, who came from humble backgrounds, but who rose to a life of comfort

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<sup>402</sup>Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>403</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>404</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>405</sup>Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>406</sup>Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>407</sup>Ibid., pp. 52-53.



through their own hard endeavours. One such example was given in the story of William Hutton, who left school at seven years of age and went to work in a silk mill. Through sheer determination, hard work and ingenuity, he mastered the art of binding books. He then went on to become a printer and eventually he ended up as one of the richest men in Birmingham.<sup>408</sup>

To end this chapter he borrowed the Shakespearean theme of the value of true friendship. He urged every man 'by a dutiful diligence to get a friend'.<sup>409</sup> In Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*, Polonius laid his hand on his son Laertes's head and advised him, among other things, to value his friends. He said:

**The friends thou hast and their adoption tried,  
Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel<sup>410</sup>**

Here the writer endorsed these sentiments as he exhorted the reader to treat a friend with care, like a precious delicate object:

**as one would do a crystal or a Venice glass, to take him up softly and use him tenderly.<sup>411</sup>**

In chapter five and in subsequent chapters the writer verified the truth of his own opening statement, when he claimed:

**I think I have nicked the humour of the age, by adapting this treatise to everyman's use; for who would not willingly part with a shilling to save a pound.<sup>412</sup>**

Even though the chapter was entitled 'a new method for ordering of expenses' there was little that could truly be called 'new' in it. It consisted of ten hints on the careful management of money, the first three of which involved an elementary knowledge of book-keeping, to ensure that 'your comings-in be more than your layings-out'. The remaining seven points took the form of advice from the worldly wise. One should never

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<sup>408</sup>Supplement to the *Fourth Book of Lessons* (1850), pp. 16-20.

<sup>409</sup>op. cit.,

<sup>410</sup>*The Complete Works of Shakespeare, 'Hamlet'*. Act I. IV. p. 950.

<sup>411</sup>*The Pleasant Art of Money-Catching*, ppp. 56-57.

<sup>412</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 2.



entrust accounts to servants as they could embezzle small sums of money and as the writer noted 'many such small matters may amount to a great sum'. It would therefore be advisable for a man to look after his own business himself, thereby ensuring its success. Spending money should only follow, after saving money and the cautious writer believed in keeping money secure rather than investing it 'in the hopes of gaining for the future'. He adopted a serious business-like approach to shopping. He warned against resorting to hire-purchase methods for attaining goods and urged the reader to strive for a bargain at all costs, and never to risk financial loss by agreeing to become guarantor for another, not even a relation. In conclusion he recommended plain living 'fuller of substance than art' and judicious economising based on the principle that 'too much is vanity, and enough is a feast'.<sup>413</sup>

Chapter six, which was headed '*How to save money in diet, apparel and recreation*' gave an interesting insight into the social life of the upper middle classes of the time. They enjoyed prime cuts of beef and mutton without making any effort to buy them at a reduced rate. In contrast to the Italians, who were quite cost conscious, the Irish considered it undignified to shop at the market. It was a fact that in the city of Dublin alone members of the wealthy classes consumed 'more good beef and mutton, in one month, than Spain and Italy in a whole year'.<sup>414</sup> If they dined at a tavern, they would 'bespeak a dinner without ever demanding or knowing the price thereof'<sup>415</sup> until they had finished their meal, even though overcharging for food was a regular feature of life. When the bill or 'reckoning' would be produced, invariably it would be as long as a broker's inventory where

**sometimes thrice as much has been reckoned, as the meat and dressing hath been worth.**<sup>416</sup>

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<sup>413</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>414</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>415</sup>Ibid., p. 64.

<sup>416</sup>Ibid., p. 65.



The writer's advice on saving money in respect of apparel was little more than an attack on female excesses in this area. He estimated that it would have cost a tradesman just as much to set himself up in his trade as it would to 'newrig' his wife.<sup>417</sup> He regarded fashion as an important manufacturing enterprise which shouldn't be seen as 'that hydra which modern philosophers' represented her, but rather as an industry which gave a 'spring to our manufacturers'. It was the extravagant female, that 'chaos of depravity' who 'prostituted fashion', who irked him. He felt that she transgressed the limits of propriety in dress with her 'towering head-dresses and flaming lappets'. Her outlandish dress sense indicated to him that she seemed to have 'a propensity of quitting this terrestrial abode, in the pursuit of aerial castles, constructed by female imagination'.<sup>418</sup> Ostentatious dress and the use of cosmetics were not approved of by the utilitarians or evangelicals of this period. Hannah More would have approved of his condemnation of these female 'excesses'

**when apothecaries shops are ransacked and stripped, in order to make the luxury of art gloss over the imperfection of nature, when the inventors of false teeth realise vast properties through the influence of folly, and hips and rumps of astonishing shape and magnitude are parts of this surprising whole, chaos of depravity - WOMAN.**<sup>419</sup>

He commended the Quakers however for their neat and proper method of dressing. He found this mode very becoming 'especially for the fair sex, and worthy of being adopted by all rational beings'.<sup>420</sup>

Recreational pursuits didn't escape his quizzical eye as he dispensed useful advice and moral guidance to those engaged in these activities. He listed his directions in the form of ten points. In the first one he urged that recreations should be short and safe. They should be non-addictive and should not tax the mind too much, as the mind should be kept free for 'more serviceable and manly pursuits'.<sup>421</sup> The second point incorporated the

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<sup>417</sup>Ibid., p. 72.

<sup>418</sup>Ibid., p. 72.

<sup>419</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>420</sup>Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>421</sup>Ibid., pp. 73-74.



philosophy of Plato that a healthy body was conducive to a healthy soul and inner self, as men received new strength and vigour from recreation involving physical exercises, which enabled them 'to apply themselves with fresh assiduity to their respective employments'. He added 'in this case alone philosophy admits recreation'.<sup>422</sup> Thirdly, he warned the reader to avoid playing chess, as it could perplex and trouble the mind 'perhaps much more than the hardest study'.

The fourth point concerned the moral development of the personality, which was considered to be of crucial importance at this time, and any activity which hampered this development was to be avoided at all costs. Here there was an indication that the writer might well have been a clergyman as he threatened hell and damnation on those who ruined their good characters by disobeying the laws of God, with regard to recreation:

**for be assured, however you may flatter yourself with the idea of impunity, in the enjoyment of pleasures, which have iniquity for their basis, that the alarm-bell of conscience will sting your heart, and be your continual torment in this vale of misery, and that the rigorous justice of the Supreme Being, will thunder vengeance on your guilty head, even beyond the grave.**<sup>423</sup>

Fifthly, the recreation in question should not be so costly as to render the person anxious 'for the anxiety would take away the sense of pleasure'<sup>424</sup> and sixthly it was inadvisable to share leisure time with strangers 'whose humours and dispositions' one would be unacquainted with. The seventh point would suggest, once again, the writer's familiarity with Shakespeare's play '*Hamlet*' and in particular the character Polonius who advised his son Laertes 'neither a borrower nor a lender be'<sup>425</sup>. Here the writer advised the reader 'neither borrow nor lend money while playing'.<sup>426</sup> Eighthly, he told readers that they should be selective about the company they kept while at their leisure sports, and that they should be careful to avoid those who were 'given to quarrelling, swearing or

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<sup>422</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>423</sup>Ibid., p. 74.

<sup>424</sup>Ibid., p. 75.

<sup>425</sup>*The Complete Works of Shakespeare. 'Hamlet', Act I.IV., p. 950.*

<sup>426</sup>*The Pleasant Art of Money Catching, p. 75.*



cursing',<sup>427</sup> lest they should be contaminated themselves. His ninth point simply repeated his cautionary advice that one should never play for more than they were willing to lose. Finally, he offered a summary of his opinions and reiterated his utilitarian philosophy that recreation should not become a person's principle employment as this would lead to idleness and in time the individual would become little more than a 'satyr on society'.<sup>428</sup>

Chapter seven consisted of a repetitious account, some thirty pages in length on '*How a man may always keep money in his pocket*'. Having neatly summarised his method as follows:

**He ... must first be industrious in getting it; secondly, careful in keeping it; and thirdly, cautious in spending.**<sup>429</sup>

He proceeded to elaborate on the theme of industriousness and diligence. He recognised the importance of making decisive moves at the correct moment and just as Brutus spoke authoritatively to Cassius on this subject, in Shakespeare's play *Julius Caesar*, when he said:

**There is a tide in the affairs of men  
Which, taken at the flood leads on to fortune:  
Omitted, all the voyage of their life  
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.**<sup>430</sup>

the writer likewise advised the man who would like to make money to:

**sail while the wind blows fair and follow the current while the stream runs strong; for if fortune be followed while she smiles, it is more than probable she will continue to favour.**<sup>431</sup>

He then drew his favourite analogy when he compared money to a coy mistress, that could 'not be won without much courting: that is not without labour and industry'.<sup>432</sup> He relied heavily on the authority of Solomon's high encomium to diligence, and disapproval of slothfulness. Just as the National Board textbooks held up the industrious ant as a role

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<sup>427</sup>Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>428</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>429</sup>Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>430</sup>*The Complete Works of Shakespeare. 'Julius Caesar'. Act IV.III., p. 738.*

<sup>431</sup>*The Pleasant Art of Money Catching, p. 78.*

<sup>432</sup>Ibid., p. 78.



model for the lazy grasshopper, so too Solomon sent 'the sluggard to the ant to learn wisdom'. The slothful, according to Solomon had a near relation, a brother, who was the 'great waster'. The slothful could look forward to a life of hunger and poverty 'for that his hands refuse to labour: he ranks him amongst such wine-bibers, drunkards, and gluttons, that shall come to poverty'.<sup>433</sup>

The writer's account of how a man should keep money carefully was an amusing, anecdotal account of the foibles of human nature and the obsessive behaviour patterns of the spendthrift and the hoarder respectively. What baffled him was how a man who had laboured so assiduously to make money could part with it so carelessly.

He believed, that most people had the utmost difficulty in separating themselves from their hard-earned money. These people proved to be a greater menace to society because they tended to hoard money in chests and they avoided paying their taxes. This resulted in money being kept out of circulation and in the stagnation of trade and commerce. A more patriotic person by far was the prodigal spendthrift, who kept money in circulation and trade buoyant. Aristotle held him in higher esteem and he

**pronounced the prodigal spendthrift a greater benefactor to his country, than the griping miser; because every trade and vocation fared the better for him; as the tailor, haberdasher, vintner, shoemaker, hostler & c.**<sup>434</sup>

The writer caricatured the covetous person as the miser who clothed himself in sacking and survived on the minimum of rations. He was the one who trembled as he passed by a tavern door

**to hear a reckoning of eight shillings for wine and oysters: for his own natural drink ... is between the beverage of frogs, and a miserable sort of small-beer.**<sup>435</sup>

You would never see him at the shoe-makers or at the sempsters. The cultural world was a blank to him, he never attended a play, but read 'but their titles upon a post'. The only

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<sup>433</sup>Ibid., p. 80

<sup>434</sup>Ibid., p. 83.

<sup>435</sup>Ibid.,



ordinaries he patronised were the reasonably-priced ones in Copper-Alley that served Thomas-Street turkeys. Ale-houses he regarded as haunts of the devil and the 'pest of society', creations of Lucifer himself 'in order to ascertain his dominion over the human species'.<sup>436</sup> He ended this lively discussion by reminding the reader that he would have few friends unless his pockets were constantly full of money.

In his *'Arguments to keep Money'* a picture emerged of a class ridden society where money virtually guaranteed a person ascendancy in that society. Promotion and advancement depended much less on skill, talent and true merit than on material wealth, influence and preferment. Some 'few nimble fellows' had a monopoly in this area 'while the multitude' were 'only lookers on'. Therefore, the 'good reader' was strongly advised to keep his money. If he didn't, the only beneficiary would be 'the red-heeled usurer'<sup>437</sup>, who had no scruples about charging 'treble security, and cent, per cent. interest upon interest'<sup>438</sup>. He was warned also to pay his bills and stay out of debt or otherwise he would be arrested by some 'intolerably insolent' shop-keepers who were quick to forget past loyalties and honest dealings. He was critical also of those wealthy self-centred people who failed to discharge their debts to tradesmen in the city with the result that they went out of business and were obliged to 'shut up their shops and go into the Marshalsea, for debts which they could easily pay if their customers would discharge their accounts'.<sup>439</sup>

In a damning indictment of the society of the time, the writer cited instances of discriminatory treatment of the less well off. A man of moderate means, whose son excelled at university, would quickly find himself 'destitute of friends if his father have not money'.<sup>440</sup> Neither could a man hope to have his son apprenticed to a tradesman unless he could pay a substantial fee, which ranged from twenty up to as much as fifty

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<sup>436</sup>Ibid., p. 84.

<sup>437</sup>Ibid., p. 85.

<sup>438</sup>Ibid., p. 86.

<sup>439</sup>Ibid., p. 87.

<sup>440</sup>Ibid., p. 89.



guineas 'be his capacity and parts ever so conspicuous'. A father who failed to provide a handsome dowry for his daughter couldn't hope to 'provide a proper match for her'. Even if her personal accomplishments were impressive or her birth illustrious, they would count for little if her father couldn't supply a fortune for her. Sadly, the writer had to admit that merit no longer gained its just reward, as it had done in the past:

**for those days, when merit seldom failed of its just reward, are banished  
'like the baseless fabric of a vision'.<sup>441</sup>**

Even those in the humanitarian professions and vocations were guided by mercenary considerations. Doctors would not be 'at leisure to visit you', if your purse was empty. He alleged that 'pastors of every denomination' denied the poor the last rites and betrayed their 'Divine Master', as Judas had done 'by absenting themselves at that awful moment'.<sup>442</sup> He felt that this reprehensible behaviour was not 'generally the case' among pastors. He implied also that bribery was used in exalted places like the church, where 'a diligent scholar, after obtaining holy orders, is not able to open a church-door without a golden key'.<sup>443</sup> It was used in the army and navy where merit was not rewarded. The legal system favoured the wealthy who could win their law-suit through the use of bribery 'to support it, and water it as it were at the root'.<sup>444</sup> The justice of a case or the rights of an individual didn't apply in the case of the poor.

Chapter eight was written with the landed classes in mind, as they were instructed on '*How to pay debts without money*'. Firstly, they were advised to do an inventory of all their lands and houses, and to note these in a public register, thus obviating the necessity for a lawyer's costly services. In order to facilitate the extension of trade and commerce 'to all manner of persons', he suggested that the owner might 'make all cut-rivers navigable, where art can possibly effect it'.<sup>445</sup> The next requirement necessitated the co-operation of the public banks 'the great sinews of trade', whose function it was 'to make

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<sup>441</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>442</sup>Ibid., p. 90.

<sup>443</sup>Ibid., p. 91.

<sup>444</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>445</sup>Ibid., p. 104.



paper and all other commodities whatsoever, go in trade equal with other money'.<sup>446</sup> The fourth proposition he put forward was that a 'court of merchants and other considerable dealers' should be established to settle any disputes that might arise between tradesmen.

Chapter nine provided a welcome change of tone to a much more light-hearted approach as the writer looked at '*How a man may travel all Ireland over without a farthing of money, with an account of those who have tried the experiment*'.<sup>447</sup> The gentlemen in question were rogues and liars. They lived a life of luxury by duping credulous inn keepers, tapsters and gullible farmers, with plausible stories of their supposed misfortunes. It was written in the picaresque style, to entertain rather than to instruct the reader. The success of the rogue's enterprise depended largely on the image he presented of himself. A gentlemanly appearance and noble bearing were essential so that his first task was to transform himself 'into a brave man' with the assistance of 'a trusty tailor'. With a fine suit of clothes and being mounted on a capital gelding, he was now ready to ride 'upon his own bare credit'.<sup>448</sup> The writer didn't lend his approbation to this type of behaviour. On the contrary, he referred to him as 'this monster', who 'thus basely flies over a whole kingdom', as if he were 'a landlord in every county', gathering rents 'of none but gentlemen'.<sup>449</sup> He referred disdainfully also to the 'twin-brother to this false-galloper'. He was the one who cheated inn-keepers only or their tapsters. He did this by producing letters of commendation from 'such a cousin: wherein is requested that the bearer thereof may be used kindly'.<sup>450</sup> Having lied, cheated and forged letters, he would then exploit the master and his servants 'for some money, to draw whom, to his interest, he hath many books'.<sup>451</sup>

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<sup>446</sup>Ibid., p. 105.

<sup>447</sup>Ibid., p. 109.

<sup>448</sup>Ibid., p. 109.

<sup>449</sup>Ibid., p. 111.

<sup>450</sup>Ibid., p. 111.

<sup>451</sup>Ibid.,



Other great dissimulators were the 'Quacksalving Empericks'<sup>452</sup>, those 'beggarly mountebanks', who were 'perfectly ignorant, having no more skill than horse leeches', yet they pretended to have the cures for various diseases. They managed also to 'clap up their terrible bills in the market place'. The poor people paid these mountebanks for what they assumed were 'salutary recipes' only to purchase, by a cruel blow of irony, 'worse infirmities than those which they endeavour to expel'.<sup>453</sup>

The social conditions of the period in question were well illustrated in the section giving '*Directions for those who would thrive, showing how they may turn a penny to the best advantage*'.<sup>454</sup> It was possible, for the price of a single penny, to 'purchase a yard square (or three feet) of tolerable land'. The writer admitted that while this seemed improbable, it was an undoubted truth and he proved it mathematically. However, one might not wish to buy land at the bargain price of a penny, so he therefore suggested other uses a penny could be put to especially in the line of physic. He gave a list of fascinating medicinal cures, all of which were guaranteed to cure various ailments:

**You may buy a penny juice of liquourice to cure you of a cough, Venice treacle to make you sweat, or to expel any inward malady; jallop, to give you a purge; syrrup of lettuce to make you sleep; or if you have an issue for a penny you may have a diachilon plaister; also for a penny you may have a plaister of Paracelsus, or of oil of roses.**<sup>455</sup>

To discover what was happening abroad in the world, you could go to a coffee-house 'and there read (if you know how) all the public news-papers, discourse and command upon them'.<sup>456</sup> It was possible to drink 'a dish of (lac'd) coffee into the bargain, all for a penny'.<sup>457</sup> Having inferred that the level of literacy wasn't high, he suggested that the reader might purchase 'for your penny ... a book which has puzzled the greatest scholar this day in Ireland'. This was the famous horn-book for beginners, 'the initiating book to all learning'. He proposed moderation in food and drink, as over-indulgence led to

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<sup>452</sup>Ibid., p. 112.

<sup>453</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>454</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>455</sup>Ibid., p. 129.

<sup>456</sup>Ibid., pp. 129-130.

<sup>457</sup>Ibid., p. 130.



debilitation of the body and depletion of the purse. Adding a puritanical note he suggested that one could be content to live on a meagre diet of bread and water

**and there are several in the world who desire no better repast, and are not only well content, but highly pleased therewith.**<sup>458</sup>

He then gave a 'catalogue of a great variety of noble dishes', which would only cost a man 'in above two pence a day'. At no stage did he deviate from his strictly utilitarian outlook as each recipe was accompanied by a comment, with regard to its nourishing properties and its wholesome and healthful effects.

He nominated plain bread and water as 'having the first place of all food', but recommended its occasional use only. He did believe however that it made 'a good meal', 'being the foundation of dry and moist nutriment and of an opening cleansing nature'.<sup>459</sup> He gave many recipes where roots, grains, milk, eggs, water and bread were the main ingredients used. The first one which he lauded as 'a most noble and exhilarating meal', cost a mere farthing. What it was in fact was the humble plate of porridge, made with wheat flour or oatmeal and water but with an onion added. This 'exhilarating meal'<sup>460</sup> could be made 'thicker or thinner to taste', but he considered 'thicker' to be 'preferable for healthy people'. The second one was also for porridge, only this time an egg was added instead of an onion. If however, you wished to make it a 'noble meal', 'a little salt and bread'<sup>461</sup> might also be added.

The modern reader would marvel at these recipes and possibly balk at the very idea of consuming many of the noble and exhilarating meals they contain. Certainly the idea that water and vinegar, with a little sugar added, could possibly make, what the writer was pleased to call a 'pleasant drink', would never be acceptable to-day. Nonetheless we get an intriguing insight into the standard of living and indeed the mind set of the utilitarians of the 18th c., who could content themselves with a meagre diet of coarse, cheap food,

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<sup>458</sup>Ibid., p. 131.

<sup>459</sup>Ibid., p. 132.

<sup>460</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>461</sup>Ibid., pp. 132-133.



and set boundaries to their own desires by satisfying themselves 'with what only supplies the necessities of nature'.<sup>462</sup>

The proverbs which were so popular in the English reading textbooks of this period, comprised some nine pages of this book also. Once more the rationalist principles of the utilitarian philosophy were very much in evidence, with the emphasis on duty, hard work, prayer, frugality, fidelity, timethrift, a woman's place, avoidance of evil and employment of moderation. The attention to duty was clearly sacrosanct, to judge by the proverbs which said:

**Do your duty and fear not the consequence.**<sup>463</sup>  
**Get thy spindle and thy distaff ready, and God will send thee flax, i.e. let us do our duty and refer the rest to Divine Providence.**<sup>464</sup>

The mother had clearly defined duties which were expected of her.

**The foot on the cradle, and the hand on the distaff,  
Are certain signs of a good house-wife.**<sup>465</sup>

She was also expected to be subservient to her husband

**He who lets his wife to go every feast  
And his horse drink at every water, shall  
neither have good wife, nor good horse.**<sup>466</sup>

The 'femme fatale' could cause a man's financial ruin

**Gaming, women and wine  
While they laugh make men pine.**<sup>467</sup>  
**Whores affect not men but their money.**<sup>468</sup>

If you didn't work, then you had to suffer the consequences

**They must hunger in frost, who will not work in heat.**<sup>469</sup>

Self-sufficiency and frugality were highly commended

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<sup>462</sup>Ibid., p. 131.

<sup>463</sup>Ibid., p. 144.

<sup>464</sup>Ibid., p. 145.

<sup>465</sup>Ibid., p. 145.

<sup>466</sup>Ibid., p. 149.

<sup>467</sup>Ibid., p. 152.

<sup>468</sup>Ibid., p. 149.

<sup>469</sup>Ibid., p. 150.



**Better spare to have of thine own,  
than to ask other men.<sup>470</sup>**

To pray and to place one's trust in God were considered worth-while aspirations.

**He loses nothing who keeps God for his friend.<sup>471</sup>  
Use the means, and trust God to give a blessing.<sup>472</sup>  
Prayer and Provender hinder no journey.<sup>473</sup>  
Help thyself, and God will help thee.<sup>474</sup>**

Moderation was what man should strive after.

**A little in quiet is the only diet.<sup>475</sup>**

He ended with a childish quip.

**Too much of one thing is good for nothing:  
And therefore, lest I should tire my reader,  
I will put an end to these proverbs.<sup>476</sup>**

In a ten page essay entitled *Serious advice to all those who desire to thrive in the world*<sup>477</sup> the writer summarised the main issues in his book, in a series of thirty points. as he repeated his message over and over again to the patient reader. However he relieved the monotony by his dramatic conclusion in 'An Essay on Morality'<sup>478</sup>, which was given in the form of a homily in which he voiced stern puritanical views. He warned that intoxication and bad company were contributory factors to temptation, but that the main sources were 'private meetings with women', 'wanton books', 'lewd pictures',<sup>479</sup> and gazing on beauteous faces. All of these, he considered to be 'the beginnings of evil, and the most innocent of them' were 'seldom left immaculate'.<sup>480</sup> He advised the reader to avoid temptation,<sup>481</sup> and 'to be aware of the adultery of the eye'.<sup>482</sup> He then outlined what

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<sup>470</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>471</sup>Ibid., p. 146.

<sup>472</sup>Ibid., p. 147.

<sup>473</sup>Ibid., p. 150.

<sup>474</sup>Ibid., p. 152.

<sup>475</sup>Ibid., p. 151.

<sup>476</sup>Ibid., p. 152.

<sup>477</sup>Ibid., p. 153.

<sup>478</sup>Ibid., p. 175.

<sup>479</sup>Ibid., p. 175.

<sup>480</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>481</sup>Ibid., p. 176.

<sup>482</sup>Ibid.,



happened to the virtuous woman, that 'crown of creation', when she was 'betrayed with false promises to part with her purity'.<sup>483</sup> He considered prostitution to be a particularly odious vice and the prostitute to be the lowest form of humanity, one who would even sell herself to the devil. He alleged that:

**having prostituted herself to one, becomes a common sewer, and receives the filth of all; baser than a beast, voluntarily hiring out her body, to those whose faces are more frightful than a dead man's skull; and was the devil to assume a human shape, and proffer a purse of gold, she would be his prostitute.**<sup>484</sup>

He warned the reader against the prostitute's flamboyant exterior and corrupt interior, and her potential to physically infect those she managed to gull:

**Be not deceived, the fine gay flirt is a meer cheat in everything; not only her dress, but face is borrowed, and what is enough to electrify you with horror the hollow wrinkles in it are patched and daubed over with paint like a decayed sign-post. Like a stately tomb she is showy without, but she is all rottenness (sic) and stench within ... this land syren sallies forth, as the extender of Satan's empire to gull mankind: and by spreading her fiery infection; she maims as many as would fill an hospital, and communicates all the distempers that are to be found in one.**<sup>485</sup>

He gave the example of New Prison or at Kilmainham Jail, where many young men in the bloom of their youth owed 'all their misfortunes to debauchery', and to 'abandoned females' who 'proved their destruction'<sup>486</sup>. He was evidently intent on instilling fear into his prospective sinners as he asked them to look inside their hospitals to see the appalling physical ravages and pain that could result from a promiscuous lifestyle.

**look into your hospitals and you will see the shocking examples of licentious lust, wretches dying with excessive sickness, their heads swelled to an enormous size, their eyes ready to start out of them, their tongues hanging from their mouths, and filthy spittle drivelling down their deformed lips; their corrupted bodies and ulcerated limbs causing a most intolerable stench; add to this, the unhappy creatures scream when the red-hot caustics are applied to their sad sores; Good God; what a**

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<sup>483</sup>Ibid., p. 176.

<sup>484</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>485</sup>Ibid., pp. 176-177.

<sup>486</sup>Ibid.,



**complicated scene of misery, agony and horror; Ah, it is not to be equalled on earth, and it can only be exceeded in Hell.**<sup>487</sup>

He concluded on a gentler note by referring to the exemplary behaviour of the heroic leader Alexander the Great, who was great, not just because of his conquests 'but for disdaining to dishonour the beautiful daughter of the unfortunate Darius, in resisting his passion for the captive princess, he conquered himself, who was the conqueror of the world.'<sup>488</sup> The writer suggested that if the sinner could only subdue all the other passions of his corrupt nature, then he would 'become a worthier man than this triumphant hero'.<sup>489</sup>

*The Pleasant Art of Money Catching* was a vade-mecum for the self-employed, and those who wished to economise, and to lead useful, and frugal lives of self-denial and piety. Throughout this very grave book, there were moments of levity, but they were all too fleeting. One of the most striking features of the book was how closely it mirrored the social conditions described by the 18th century novelists Richardson, Fielding and Smollett, with its picture of appalling inequities, class divisions, prejudices against women, corruption in high places and narrowness of outlook, which were so much a feature of this age. It is indeed ironic that a book which promoted the utilitarian philosophy and which upheld so many of the values and attitudes later conveyed in the national education commissioners' reading books, should have been offensive to the visiting commissioner of 1825 to the Sligo hedge school, especially in light of the fact that this book couldn't possibly have been read by children, as it was clearly intended for an adult readership.

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<sup>487</sup>Ibid., pp. 178-179.

<sup>488</sup>Ibid., p. 179.

<sup>489</sup>Ibid., p. 179.



## PART II

### 'Penny Histories' - Chivalric and Neo-Chivalric Medieval Romances

#### Introduction

Chivalric and neo-chivalric romances were by far the most popular of the chapbook literature, to judge by the printers' lists and advertisements for the 18th and 19th centuries. In Ireland they consisted of re-prints of English texts which were imported to this country by Irish publishers and printers, engaged in piracy.<sup>490</sup> Medieval romances originated in France during the latter half of the 12th century and within a little over a century went into a decline, at which stage they flourished in Germany and England. The English romances were a modification of the French *Chanson de geste* - the lengthy narrative poems, written for a warrior society, whose central theme was the establishment and defence of nations - christian nations in particular, whereas the chivalric romances, like *Guy, Earl of Warwick* emphasised the search for individual identity within an already established society. Now jousts and single combats took the place of battles in defence of christendom.<sup>491</sup>

By the late 14th century the romance was as popular and vigorous as ever, but there was a discernible change in the romance audience. No longer was it the preserve of the nobility. It had now broadened out to include 'country families and the middle classes with their aspirations of dignity and courtliness'.<sup>492</sup> The enthusiastic cultivation of what by the 15th century were outmoded attitudes, expressed in chivalric romances can be attributed to three different reasons. The first one was the emergence of modern armies, which of course meant the doom of feudal chivalry. Secondly, influential new trading towns

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<sup>490</sup>Niall Ó Ciosáin. *Print and Popular Culture in Ireland, 1750-1850*, p. 72.

<sup>491</sup>Lee C. Ramsey. *Chivalric Romances* (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1983), p. 3.

<sup>492</sup>Lee C. Ramsey. *Chivalric Romances*, p. 209.



multiplied in the 15th century which gave rise to a very wealthy middle class, who were only too happy to lend their support 'to the embattled remains of the separatist feudal aristocracy'.<sup>493</sup> The emergence of this middle class brought with it 'a new desire on the part of literate men and women to understand themselves as ... individuals' and chivalric romance 'offered a literary form in which to work out the implications of the individuality'.<sup>494</sup> It was however, the nobility themselves, the Dukes of Burgundy who gave the symbolisms of chivalry vitality in the 15th century. It was in the court of Duke Philip of Burgundy and his wife the Duchess Margaret, sister of the English King Edward IV, that William Caxton was encouraged to begin his series of translations from French into English. Thirdly, the fall of Constantinople in 1453 with the consequent expansion of Turkish power in the Balkans and Eastern Mediterranean, stimulated a renewed interest in the early medieval tales of chivalry. *The Renowned History of Valentine and Orson* exemplified the spirit of the age, with its romanticised story of the crusading cycle. The audience for the romances both in England and France had consisted largely of the nobility and those associated with the nobility, but the audience broadened out to include the lower classes, in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>495</sup> Consequently the romances produced in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century were, as Margaret Schlauch described them in her book *Antecedents of the English Novel* (1963) 'Jejeune romantic concoctions ... belated representatives of the medieval school, sometimes pretending to a connection with Charlemagne or King Arthur', and were inferior by far 'to Caxton's offerings of the same genre'.<sup>496</sup>

In the latter part of the 16<sup>th</sup> century there was another resurgence of interest in chivalric prose romance, fortified 'by the desire of the nouveaux riches to assimilate themselves to a dignified older tradition'. The Tudor sovereigns also liked to heighten their prestige and standing, by adopting 'the outward trappings of archaic medievalism'.<sup>497</sup> However,

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<sup>493</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>494</sup> Lee C. Ramsey. *Chivalric Romances*. Citing R.W. Hanning 'The Individual in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century Romance', p. 3.

<sup>495</sup> Lee C. Ramsey. *Chivalric Romances*, p. 11.

<sup>496</sup> Margaret Schlauch. *Antecedents of the English Novel*, p. 165.

<sup>497</sup> Lee C. Ramsey. *Chivalric Romances*, p. 3. Citing R.W. Hanning 'The Individual in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century Romance'.



by the late 16<sup>th</sup> century the genuine chivalric romances were reinforced, firstly by a whole wave of translations, mainly from Spanish and then by imitations, whose literary worth was negligible as Schlauch noted 'The translated romances of this period are, briefly speaking, of the type that drove the good knight of La Manche mad'<sup>498</sup>. She was referring to Anthony Munday's output as translator, which was quite considerable and comprised the books of the Palmerin cycle. These included romances such as *Omades de Gaulle*, *Palmerin de Olivia*, *Palmerin of England*, which appeared between 1581 and 1594, and also *Don Belianis of Greece* which appeared in 1598.

The old-fashioned romance fell into a very trite and dilapidated condition with new editions, and re-written truncated editions keeping printers busy, catering for a market completely different from, and much wider than, the original aristocratic one. Richard Johnson was a late 16th century writer who recognised a lucrative market just waiting to be served, and he published *The Seven Champions of Christendom* between 1596-1597, which was to enjoy an avid readership for the next three centuries. Emmanuel Forde followed in his footsteps and produced a series of chivalric romances such as *Parismus*, *Prince of Bohemia* (1598), and its sequel *Parismenos; Ornatus and Artesia* (1607); and the *Famous History of Montelyon Knight of the Oracle* (1633) which proved to be just as popular.

The Irish chapbook market reflected a similar trend as cheap re-printed editions of the chivalric romances formed a significant part of the reading material of the poor, who in turn passed them on to their children to take with them as practice reading books in the hedge schools. A selection of four of these chivalric romances which were perennially popular in the hedge schools will now be reviewed – *The Renowned History of Valentine and Orson*; *Guy, Earl of Warwick*; *Fortunatus*; and *The Seven Champions of Christendom* [Table 8.1/8.2] as well as the classic pre-medieval romances of *The Story of*

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<sup>498</sup> Margaret Schlauch. *Antecedents of the English Novel*, p. 165.



*Reynard the Fox; The Seven Wise Masters of Rome along with its female variant The History of the Seven Wise Mistresses of Rome.*

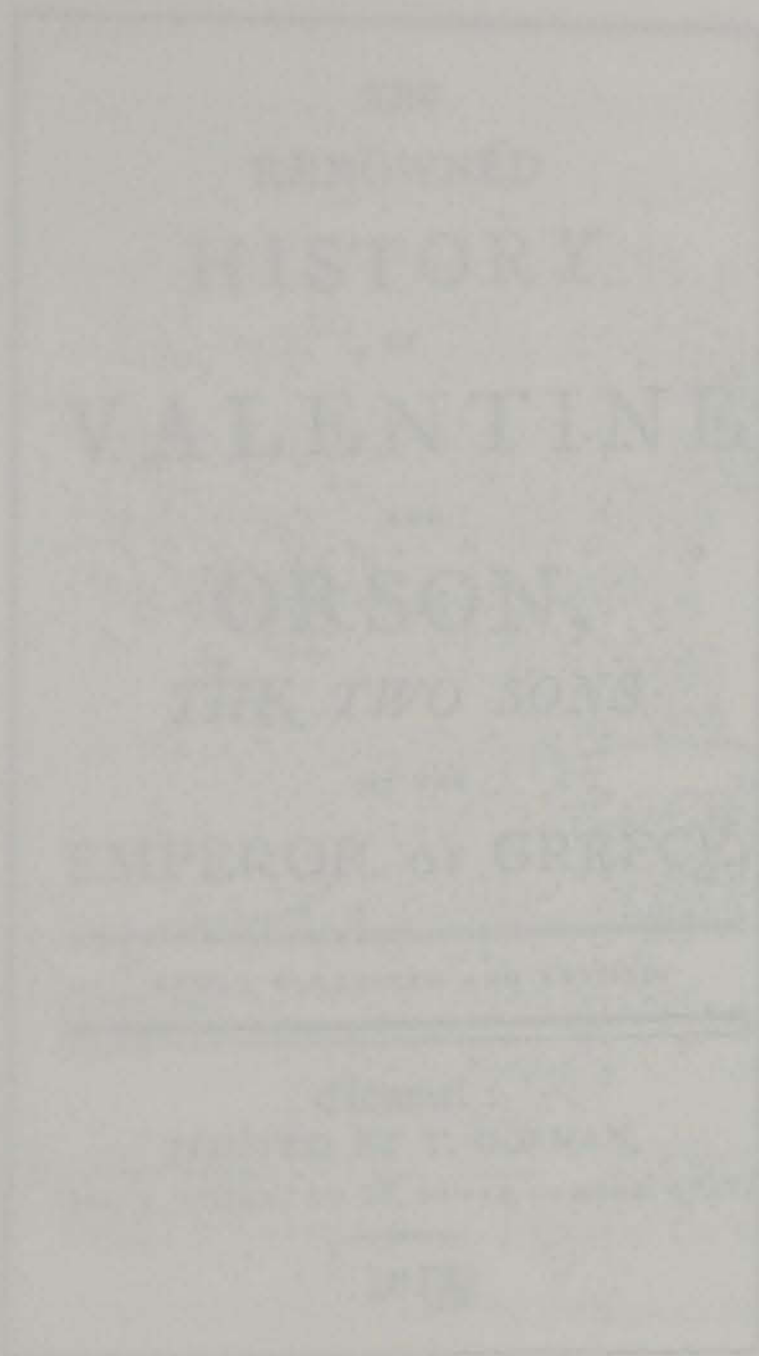


Fig. 30.1



Fig. 30.2

Fig. 30.1 Title page of *The Reasoned History of Valentine and Orson, The Two Sons of the Emperor of Greece*. (1652)

Fig. 30.2 Frontispiece of *The Reasoned History of Valentine and Orson*.



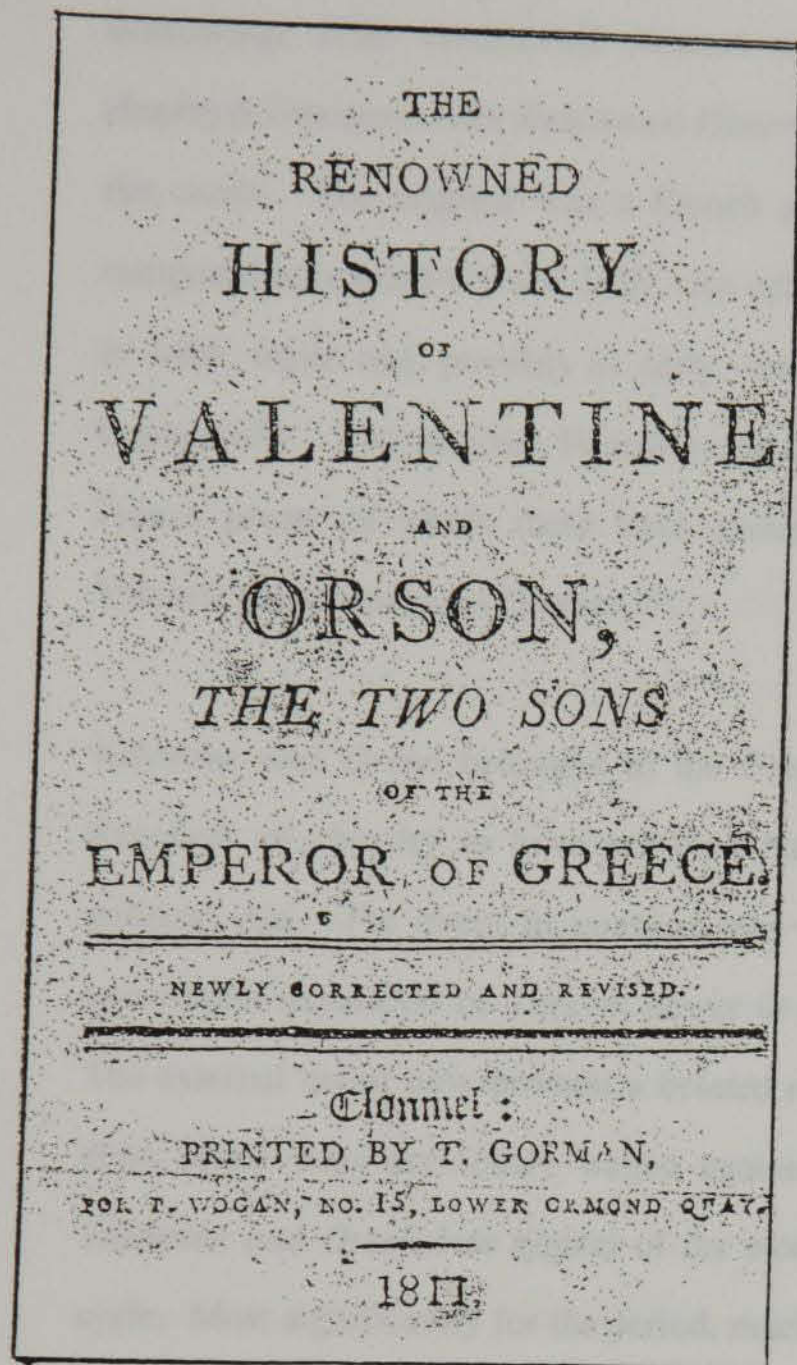


Fig.30.1



Fig.30.2

Fig. 30.1 Title page from *The Renowned History of Valentine and Orson, The Two Sons of the Emperor of Greece*. [1811].

Fig. 30.2 Frontispiece to *The Renowned History of Valentine and Orson*.



## The Renowned History of Valentine and Orson

Borrowings from continental sources represented quite a considerable element in chapbook literature. *The Renowned History of Valentine and Orson*<sup>499</sup>, was very much in this mode. The original was a French prose romance *Valentin et Orson*, which was composed between 1475 and 1489. An edition of it was printed at Lyons, by Joc. Maillet in 1489, while one, possibly as early, was printed by Wynkyn de Worde and William Coplande<sup>500</sup>. The original French romance was based upon a lost fourteenth century French poem, of which there were several versions in other languages, for example *Valentin and Namelos* in German.<sup>501</sup>

*Valentine and Orson* belonged to the Charlemagne cycle and it was one of the few romances of chivalry to have survived the middle ages. One reason for this was a political one. The event in question was the fall of Constantinople in 1453 and the consequent expansion of Turkish power in the Balkans and the Eastern Mediterranean. The external threat now brought a belated revival of literary interest in the early feudal epics about wars previously waged against saracens both in Spain and Palestine.<sup>502</sup> *Valentine and Orson* was typical of the more romanticised prose tales of the crusading cycle. Most significantly for the period, much space was devoted to accounts of fictitious wars against the saracens, centred about Constantinople.<sup>503</sup> This romance had the unique distinction of surviving up to the 20th century in England as it was in popular demand in 1919 when the number of editions was estimated to have been incomplete at seventy four,<sup>504</sup> and in Ireland, the Dublin printers C.M. Warren printed copies as late as 1850.<sup>505</sup>

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<sup>499</sup>*The Renowned History of Valentine and Orson. The Two Sons of the Emperor of Greece.* (Dublin, C.M. Warren, 21 Upper Ormond Quay, n.d.).

<sup>500</sup>John Ashton. *Chap-Books of the Eighteenth Century.* (London, 1882), p. 109.

<sup>501</sup>Henry Watson. *Valentine and Orson.* (Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, Amen House, E.C. 4, 1937), p. x.

<sup>502</sup>Margaret Schlauch. *Antecedents of the English Novel,* p. 50.

<sup>503</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>504</sup>Henry Watson. *Valentine and Orson.* Ed. Arthur Dixon.

<sup>505</sup>M. Pollard. *Dublin's Trade in Books 1550-1800.* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1989), p. 223.



The *Renowned History of Valentine and Orson* was a long, complicated account, with forty one chapters, and one hundred and forty four pages of very small print, without any illustrations to heighten interest. Despite its loose structure and many intricacies of plot and intertwining sub-plots, this remained a lively and entertaining story, which would have suited advanced students of English with remarkable powers of concentration. The finest chivalric virtues were upheld in it. Its heroes were bold, unselfish, and constant in love, courteous and devout, models of every knightly virtue. There was however one chink in the chivalric armour and that was the dependence of Valentine on Pacolet's magic horse to extricate himself and his friends from life-threatening situations. With this notable exception Valentine and Orson remained for generations of readers 'an epitome of chivalric character and adventure'.<sup>506</sup>

The story commenced on similar lines to that of *The Seven Wise Masters*. Here also we have the credulous King, whose innocent wife was framed by a jealous lady or possibly an evil adviser. King Pepin of France banished his good Queen Bertha, all on the word of 'a false old woman who first brought her into disgrace with the King ... and afterwards to be banished his bed, while she in a cunning manner brought in her daughter, in the Queen's stead'.<sup>507</sup> When Pepin discovered the treachery of this wicked woman, he restored Bertha as Queen. She was later to become mother to the famous Charlemain the puissant.<sup>508</sup> King Pepin's sister Bellisant was to suffer a similar fate to that of her sister-in-law, when she became wife of Alexander, the Emperor of Constantinople. The betrayer in this instance was the Arch-priest of Constantinople, one whose amorous advances fair Bellisant swiftly repulsed. The scorned lover complained to the King that Bellisant 'wandereth in her love, giving that to another which is proper only to yourself'.<sup>509</sup> The seal of the confessional forbade him from betraying the 'name of him

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<sup>506</sup>Henry Watson. *Valentine and Orson*, p. xi.

<sup>507</sup>*The Renowned History of Valentine and Orson. The Two Sons of the Emperor of Greece*, (Dublin: C.M. Warren, 21 Upper Ormond Quay, n.d.), p. 4.

<sup>508</sup>*Ibid.*,

<sup>509</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 6.



that thus betrays your bed; and what is worse she daily desires your death'.<sup>510</sup> The Emperor lost control and behaved in a most unchivalrous fashion by violently attacking his pregnant wife, when:

**he took her by the hair of the head and dragged her about the chamber in a most inhuman manner, so that the blood besmeared her face.**<sup>511</sup>

The terrified Empress protested her innocence only to be called a whore and a deceitful liar, and with that he 'dashed her head against the ground'<sup>512</sup> so forcefully that her attendants thought she was dead. Lady Bellisant craved mercy on her bended knees from an unyielding Emperor. Only that she had noble connections, being sister to 'the valiant Pepin of France, he would have made her fry in the fire, as an example to all false ladies'.<sup>513</sup> He banished her out of the kingdom, to be attended only by a squire named Blandiman.

Shortly after her forced exile, Bellisant arrived in the forest of Orleans and was immediately forced to stop due to severe birth pains. While Blandiman departed to seek assistance, Bellisant gave birth to 'two fair sons in the desolate forest'.<sup>514</sup> Fate was about to deal Bellisant two further cruel blows 'for as she lay under the tree, there suddenly came a huge bear most terrible to behold and took up one of the infants in her mouth'.<sup>515</sup> Bellisant pursued the bear but failed to save her child. In her absence, King Pepin just happened to be passing through the forest, which was the first of many such coincidences in this story, when 'he spied, lying under a tree alone, the other son of Bellisant'<sup>516</sup>. He ordered his squire to pick up the child, who was duly transported to Orleans, baptised and given the name Valentine. In the meantime Bellisant's first born was carried to the bear's cave, where he was placed among her own four young bears, who astonishingly didn't devour him. This development impressed the bear so much that she 'showed a bearish

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<sup>510</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>511</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>512</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>513</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>514</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>515</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>516</sup>Ibid., p. 17.



kind of favour towards it, insomuch that she kept it, and gave it suck among her young ones, for the space of one year'.<sup>517</sup> The child grew up enormously strong, ferocious and wild. He was called Orson as he had been nursed by a bear, but his fame spread as the Wild Man of the Forest, the unconquerable one.

Valentine also grew up brave and strong and defeated the pagan saracens without any difficulty. He had however, two bitter enemies, the dimwitted, jealous minded sons of King Pepin, Haufrey and Henry, who were constantly plotting against his life. However, Valentine's main pre-occupation was a desire to conquer the Wild Man of the Forest, Orson. Before long he achieved his ambition, but quickly developed a close friendship with his victim, so much so that they went to Aquitaine together to assist Duke Savory, who had requested aid from King Pepin against the 'false pagan the Green Knight'. It was here that a link was forged, however clumsily, between the main plot and the subplot. The 'gentle reader' was informed that Bellisant had made her way to the Giant Ferragus's castle in Portugal and that the Green Knight was Ferragus's brother.<sup>518</sup> The Duke of Aquitaine had offered his daughter Fezon as a prize for the knight who would be brave enough to vanquish the Green Knight. It was Orson who struck the final blow thereby winning for himself the fair Fezon's hand in marriage. He then granted mercy to the Green Knight on two conditions, one was that he would renounce paganism and the second was that he would inform King Pepin how he was conquered.

The Green Knight then made a most interesting revelation to Orson with regard to his royal lineage while at the same time he offered his sister Clarimond's hand in marriage to Valentine 'the most hardy knight in the world'. If the brothers wanted further details on their parentage, he claimed that this could 'be more amply confirmed by the Brazen Head, now in the custody of my sister Clarimond'.<sup>519</sup> Later that night Valentine was advised by a celestial creature to leave quickly with Orson for the castle of Ferragus to meet

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<sup>517</sup>Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>518</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>519</sup> Ibid., pp. 70-71.



Clarimond and to discover his identity. Before his departure the Green Knight presented him with a ring to give to his sister while he himself headed for France. Just then Blandiman arrived in King Pepin's court and explained what had happened to his sister Bellisant, after which the king concluded that Valentine and Orson must be his own nephews.

The second half of this romance was full of magic and charm, interspersed with many battles. Constantinople was besieged by the Soldan of Egypt, and King Pepin arrived in Rome to seek assistance from the Pope in order to help the Emperor in his fight against the Soldan and the saracens. This help having been obtained, the christians were still outnumbered. They retired into the city 'and there being begirt with a close siege, endured great Famine'. This story line ended abruptly with the words 'where we must leave them'.<sup>520</sup>

The next exciting episode took place at the Clarimond's castle, with the arrival there of Valentine and Orson. The Lady Clarimond offered Valentine a choice between engaging in combat with the seneschal of the palace in order to gain entry, or of parting with the Green Knight's ring. He chose the former option and won for himself the lady's affections because of his 'resolute hardiness'.<sup>521</sup> Valentine easily overcame the seneschal in a joust and they then entered the chamber of the castle only to behold a dazzling array of diamonds, rubies and other precious stones. Within four pillars of jasper, stood the Brazen Head, and it spoke these words to the spellbound brothers:

**Thou famous Knight of Royal parentage, art called Valentine the Valiant, of whom it may be truly said that there was never the like came before me. Thou art he only who deserves the Lady Clarimond, thou art the son to the Emperor of Greece, and thy mother's name Bellisant, sister to King Pepin of France, who by wrong suggestion, is banished her country and her husband's bed.**<sup>522</sup>

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<sup>520</sup>Ibid., p. 80.

<sup>521</sup>Ibid., p. 82.

<sup>522</sup>Ibid., p. 86.



The Brazen Head further revealed that Valentine's mother Bellisant was in Portugal, in the castle of the Giant Ferragus, who had kept her there for twenty years, that King Pepin was his uncle and the Wild Man his brother. Valentine fell upon the bosom of his beloved brother Orson, and they embraced each other after which Valentine restored the gift of speech to Orson by cutting the thread which grew under his tongue. He even found time to propose to the Lady Clarimond, who accepted his proposal and she agreed also to renounce paganism.

Their joy was suddenly eclipsed however by the treachery of Clarimond's brother the Giant Ferragus, but the reader was obliged to wait in suspense to hear the remainder of that story line as the focus moved to a magical dwarf called Pacolet, who was the resident necromancer in Ferragus's castle. By his art, Pacolet had constructed a little wooden horse with magical properties

**in the head of which he had so artificially fixed a pin, that every time he mounted him he would turn the pin towards the place he would go and suddenly he would be there without danger.<sup>523</sup>**

When Pacolet observed what had just happened in the palace, he used his magical wooden horse to make a trip to Portugal to inform Ferragus of Clarimond's conversion and her intended marriage to a christian knight. Ferragus was exceedingly angry and he swore that he would be revenged on them both.

He prepared his fleet and sailed towards Clarimond's castle where, when he arrived, he 'at first dissembled his treachery and desired to be baptised'.<sup>524</sup> He feigned delight that Clarimond was to marry so valiant a knight. He invited his sister and the two knights to accompany him to his castle in Portugal. They were completely duped by him as they accepted his invitation in good faith only to be cruelly betrayed by Ferragus and 'In the dead time of the night he caused them to be bound in chains'<sup>525</sup>, which grieved Clarimond so sorely that she contemplated suicide. Shortly afterwards, they arrived at the castle of

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<sup>523</sup>Ibid., p. 88.

<sup>524</sup>Ibid., p. 90.

<sup>525</sup>Ibid., p. 91.



Ferragus where Valentine and Orson were placed in the dungeon. Purely fortuitously, Clarimond was allowed to meet the Empress Bellisant and was able to bring her news about her two sons, who had been separated from her since birth. Pacolet was to offer comfort to the ladies and invaluable service to Valentine and Orson, as he released the two brothers from the dungeon and all of the prisoners from the castle.

**by his art had opened the gate of the castle and they followed him down to one of the ports where he had provided a ship, that went to Clarimond's castle.<sup>526</sup>**

Pacolet conveyed them to the city of Aquitaine but Ferragus assembled a mighty army and sailed to Aquitaine also to revenge himself on Valentine and his sister Clarimond. Ferragus arrived with a great army of saracens and the Duke of Savory raised the siege with all his armed men, but what he didn't know however was that Valentine, Orson and Pacolet were among his men.<sup>527</sup> This was to prove a most fortunate coincidence for the Duke as he was captured by the saracens and carried to Ferragus's tent. Orson resolved to free him with the assistance of Pacolet. Dressed in the arms of a dead saracen, he arrived at the tent where the Duke was confined, and to the great delight of the christians managed to set him free. They cried aloud 'Long Live the Duke of Aquitaine which made the saracens raise the siege and fly'.<sup>528</sup> More celebrations followed, this time they were of a matrimonial nature as Orson married the lovely Fezon, with great pomp and due solemnity. In the meantime, the proud Giant Ferragus was hungry for revenge so he sought assistance from King Tompart to conquer his enemies and he made a special request for the services of Tompart's enchanter Adrimain. No explanation whatsoever was offered as to the connection between these characters, or as to who exactly King Tompart was or the dominions over which he ruled.

A concentrated effort was required from the young reader to follow the fluctuating fortunes of the main characters in the romance as events quickly superseded one another.

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<sup>526</sup>Ibid., p. 93.

<sup>527</sup>Ibid., p. 96.

<sup>528</sup>Ibid., p. 97.



Valentine and the Green Knight came into the city accompanied by 2,000 men to fight the saracens. The battle was fierce and bloody as King Pepin 'ran upon the Soldan so violently that he beat him to the earth ... and Valentine hewed down the Soldan's chief standard'.<sup>529</sup> Despite such heroic performances the Soldan succeeded in taking Valentine and the Green Knight as prisoners but Pacolet came to their assistance and once more they were transported on his magical wooden horse 'which rose up in the air so swiftly that in a little while they were at Constantinople in the Emperor's palace'.<sup>530</sup> The Emperor and King Pepin were victorious over the Soldan and the latter suffered the death penalty by being 'hanged on the highest tower of the palace, in sight of the pagan host'.<sup>531</sup> After such harrowing scenes, gentler ones normally followed. In this case when the battle was ended, a reconciliation took place between the Emperor and his wife Bellisant whom he had banished from the kingdom. The Emperor tearfully embraced his ever-loyal wife. He apologised and sought a thousand pardons for all the hardships he had caused her, and 'great was the joy on all sides'.<sup>532</sup>

King Tompart had by now arrived in Aquitaine, as requested by the Giant Ferragus, and he was accompanied by his enchanter Adrimain. The latter embarrassed Pacolet when he stole his magical horse, abducted Clarimond from Aquitain and then presented her to King Tompart, who flew through the air with her on the magical horse. However Tompart landed in India where the king of that country had been beheaded, and Clarimond was led to his palace. Meanwhile Pacolet took his revenge on Adrimain by cutting off his head.<sup>533</sup> Valentine and Pacolet then went to Antioch in quest of Clarimond and it was here that one of the most exciting adventures took place. The King of Antioch ordered Valentine to fight a fierce looking dragon, as punishment for entering his land without paying tribute. He agreed to do so, on one condition that the king would convert

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<sup>529</sup>Ibid., p. 104.

<sup>530</sup>Ibid., p. 106.

<sup>531</sup>Ibid., p. 107.

<sup>532</sup>Ibid., p. 115.

<sup>533</sup>Ibid., p. 115.



to christianity, 'to which the King agreed'.<sup>534</sup> Valentine rammed his axe down the dragon's throat, and had him beheaded. He returned triumphantly to the city where he was greeted by the King and his wife Rosamond, whose father was the tempermental Giant Brandiffer. Valentine succeeded also in converting the King to the christian religion.<sup>535</sup>

Giant Brandiffer was enraged by his son-in-law's treachery. He was of a similar volatile disposition to the Giant Ferragus. Both of them despised christians but relished bloody battles. Then Brandiffer launched an attack against Antioch with an army of 100,000 pagans. He successfully laid siege to the city and took the King prisoner. Suddenly he put him to death, 'and crowned himself King of Antioch'.<sup>536</sup> On his way back to his realm, he encountered a storm at sea, which forced him to stop at Greece. At that very moment the Emperor and the Green Knight just happened to be riding past, so that they 'fell into the hands of Brandiffer's soldiers, who took them prisoners'.<sup>537</sup> Bellisant tried to save them with the help of Orson but failed, as Brandiffer had scouts on watch, and he escaped on sea, back to his own dominions, 'where he caused the Emperor and the Green Knight to be confined in a cave among some other christians'.<sup>538</sup>

The writer suddenly jerked the reader into the next story line, which was to do with Clarimond. She remained in India and in order 'to preserve her chastity from the Indian King, she feigned herself mad'<sup>539</sup> and all efforts to cure her failed. The reader's mental agility was tested at this juncture as yet another King was added to an already overcrowded cast. Valentine and Pacolet arrived in King Tompart's dominion to enquire after Clarimond. They heard no tidings of her, only that Tompart had been slain by the King of India. When Valentine heard that King Lucar was preparing to invade the King

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<sup>534</sup>Ibid., p. 119.

<sup>535</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>536</sup>Ibid., p. 121.

<sup>537</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>538</sup> Ibid., p. 123.

<sup>539</sup>Ibid., p. 122.



of India's dominions he determined 'to put himself into his service, which King Lucar, accepted upon condition, he would go to the King of India and in his name bid him defiance'.<sup>540</sup> King Lucar was really sending Valentine on a suicide mission but once more, fortune favoured him, as Rosamond, who once loved Valentine, summoned him to her chamber 'and told him she was married to King Lucar, by the command of Brandiffer her father', but that she possessed a ring from the King of India, which was a love token. She gave this ring to Valentine with the following instructions:

**that when Lucar bringeth his host, I will come with him and then if there be any valour in him, he may carry me whether he pleases.**<sup>541</sup>

Valentine took her advice and delivered the message and instead of being put to death, he was nobly treated. He was then sent back with letters of response to King Lucar's defiance. King Brandiffer was well aware of the answer that was sent and with his army of 200,000 saracens, he eagerly anticipated the battle against the Indian King.

The aforementioned Indian King was not just concerned with the pending battle, as his mind was pre-occupied with his beloved Rosamond. Before the enemy was in readiness to oppose him 'he ran towards the lady's pavilion, where Rosamond seeing him, gave the rest of the company the slip and ran into his arms'.<sup>542</sup> Rosamond was a woman of considerable determination and she had planned on escaping with the King of India. It was a straightforward plan:

**she rode forth pretending to take the air, of which she gave the King of India notice; hereupon he issued out of the postern and took her horse by the head and her into the city to the great grief of King Lucar, her husband.**<sup>543</sup>

Brandiffer then received disturbing news that King Pepin and the Emperor of Greece had laid siege on Angory. He resolved to stay with Lucar and to send Valentine and Murgalant to raise the siege. The situation was critical and therefore necessitated

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<sup>540</sup>Ibid., p. 123.

<sup>541</sup>Ibid., p. 124.

<sup>542</sup>Ibid., p. 125.

<sup>543</sup>Ibid., p. 125.



recourse to the magical powers of the enchanter Pacolet who carried a message from Valentine to Orson, who was in King Pepin's camp, in which he explained everything to Orson. This omnipotent dwarf promised Orson that he would 'put the saracen's whole army into your power and at the same time take care of Valentine'.<sup>544</sup> Naturally enough Orson agreed and Pacolet operated his magic 'in the dead of the night', when he cast the whole army into a profound sleep. This allowed King Pepin to enter the host with his 60,000 men. He then set fire to the tents and killed any that were capable of offering resistance. Unfortunately Murgalant was killed with a dart as he tried to escape. Here the reader is left wondering where King Murgalant fits into the story and what his connection is with the Giant Brandiffer, King of Antioch. In any event Valentine was incensed by what happened and blamed Pacolet for making him break his promise to Brandiffer.<sup>545</sup> The christians and King Pepin took the city by 'putting the saracens to the sword'.<sup>546</sup> Valentine was now left with the painful task of bringing the dead body of King Murgalant to India and the embarrassing task of informing Lucar of the 'loss of the whole army'. Brandiffer was outraged and accused Valentine of treachery but Lucar interposed to prevent a quarrel. The Indian King was set to do battle but he completely misjudged the situation as 'contrary to his expectation he lost and was taken prisoner by Valentine'.<sup>547</sup> Lucar was well satisfied with this new development and ordered that the Indian King should be brought before him that he might exact revenge for the death of his brother King Tompart.

The drama continued with the announcement by a messenger sent to Brandiffer, that King Pepin had conquered Angory. Brandiffer's response to this latest news revealed some startling revelations for Valentine. He stated: 'I hope to set our country free. I have there in a strong castle, the Emperor of Greece and the Green Knight, who at my coming home shall suffer death.'<sup>548</sup> Clearly this was a crisis requiring a magical solution, one only

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<sup>544</sup>Ibid., p. 126.

<sup>545</sup>Ibid., p. 126.

<sup>546</sup>Ibid., p. 127.

<sup>547</sup>Ibid., p. 128.

<sup>548</sup>Ibid., p. 128.



Pacolet could have performed, which he did by delivering the Indian King from prison and by putting Brandiffer into his hands.<sup>549</sup> When the King of India was liberated, he carried Brandiffer with him into his own country, and was met by Rosamond who was frightened at the sight of her father. In the morning when Lucar discovered that the prisoner had escaped and had taken Brandiffer with him he 'caused the guards to be drawn along the streets at horses' tails and afterwards hanged'.<sup>550</sup>

Intrigues followed sharply upon each other as the reader was treated to a story of betrayal by Pepin's two disloyal sons Haufrey and Henry. In the absence of their father, in the Holy Land with Orson, they contrived a plot to deliver them into the hands of the pagans. Haufrey took the initiative in this evil conspiracy in order to win himself a wife. He offered to betray his father and the twelve peers of France if Brandiffer would allow him to marry his daughter Galazy. Brandiffer 'though a pagan' thought that the proposal was so villainous that he decided to teach this unnatural son a lesson by sending Haufrey with 'a letter to his daughter Galazy, in which he gave an account of his treachery and then ordered her to commit him to the same prison with the Emperor and the Green Knight'.<sup>551</sup> Brandiffer imprisoned the twelve peers of France also and thereby ransomed Lucar from Valentine. He also decided that this would be an opportune time to attempt the subversion of France. Valentine witnessed the approach of Brandiffer's army and once again he called upon Pacolet's magical service. Pacolet 'departed to the host of King Lucar' and by his enchantment, he brought him back to Angory 'and made a present of him to Valentine'.<sup>552</sup> This provided a solution to his immediate problem but there was another one of still greater urgency which commanded his attention - how to be re-united with his beloved Clarimond, who was still in the King of India's palace, feigning madness.

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<sup>549</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>550</sup>Ibid., p. 129.

<sup>551</sup>Ibid., p. 130.

<sup>552</sup>Ibid., p. 132.



Valentine masterminded a plan which involved the use of disguise. He passed himself off as a physician, who specialised in the cure of madness and he quickly earned a reputation for himself.<sup>553</sup> As a result the King of India invited him to cure Clarimond, which Valentine gladly agreed to, but his only concern was how he would escape from the palace with her. The escape was one which would have appealed to the youthful imagination as Valentine 'espied Pacolet's horse in a secret place in the chamber and well knowing the use of him, he with Clarimond and his squire mounted immediately, and rode through the air to Angory, where they were joyfully received, and the marriage rites performed'.<sup>554</sup>

The honeymoon period was cut short as Valentine was called upon to do battle against the pagans. This he did with complete success, and he then approached the dungeon where the Emperor, Orson and the other christian knights were imprisoned and he liberated them. Events were listed here with mesmerising speed. No sooner had the prisoners celebrated their release than Orson fell in love with Galazy, and as Fezon had died, this left him free to marry his new love and by her he had a son, which they called Osayr.

The battles were set to continue as Brandiffer arrived in Angory and began a siege with his host. When the Emperor got news of this 'he with Orson, the Green Knight and a 1,000 men took shipping'.<sup>555</sup> During their passage home, they were attacked by a fleet of saracens. A bloody battle ensued but the christians overthrew them. The climax to this long and detailed story occurred here when the Emperor rather foolishly ordered his soldiers to put on the arms of the dead saracens, a move which was to have fatal consequences for himself.<sup>556</sup>

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<sup>553</sup>Ibid., p. 133.

<sup>554</sup>Ibid., p. 134.

<sup>555</sup>Ibid., p. 135.

<sup>556</sup>Ibid., p. 136.



Angory was now under siege for a month and Valentine resolved to do battle with the saracens. At this time Emperor Alexander and his soldiers, disguised as saracens entered the haven. The Emperor had landed his men when the unthinkable happened:

**Valentine ... mistaking his father for their leader ... with great force ran against him and thrust his spear through his body.<sup>557</sup>**

When Valentine realised he had killed his own father 'he went into a swoon'. Having composed himself and remounted, he approached the enemy 'like a man careless of life'. He encountered the hapless Brandiffer and 'with one stroke clove his head'. This brutal act sent the saracens into flight, but the christians pursued them and slew many thousands until nightfall, when they finally returned to the city. Next morning they buried the dead christians with due respect and honour. There was great lamentation for the Emperor of Greece who was interred in the city of Angory. Valentine and Orson crowned the Green Knight, King of Angory before departing for Greece to give the sad news to Lady Bellisant.

After so many bloody battles, encounters with giants, magical flights and romantic dalliances, the writer decided on a spiritual ending for this romance, one befitting two noble christian soldiers who fought to defeat paganism. Valentine fell dangerously ill and was given notice of his imminent death in a vision.<sup>558</sup> Orson too, saw a glorious vision which revealed to him that there were no certainties in this life. This effected him so deeply that he lived out the rest of his days as a hermit, surviving only on roots and herbs. He left his estate and his children to the care of the Green Knight, and he then 'retired to the woods where he continued to the end of his days'.<sup>559</sup>

Despite the fantastic nature of this French romance, it was difficult not to see it as more than just the story of two brothers, while allowing that they were central in all events. Of equal prominence, in a very convoluted story, was the emergence of the reign of

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<sup>557</sup>Ibid.,

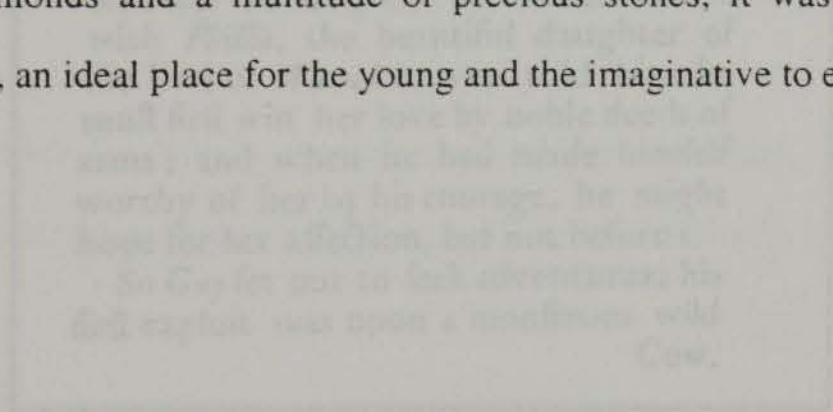
<sup>558</sup>Ibid., p. 137.

<sup>559</sup>Ibid., p. 138.



Charlemagne, and the interminable wars of Europe with the Islamic forces. There was also a strong undercurrent of the stormy unrest which faced the government of France of those times.<sup>560</sup> This was hardly the standpoint from which young readers viewed it however. For them Valentine and Orson represented those high ideals of honour, chivalry and religious idealism. They read avidly of christian knights bravely fighting to vanquish pagan saracens in order to preserve christianity from its enemies. Leaving the shameful treatment of the pregnant Bellissant aside, fair ladies were generally treated according to the laws of chivalry. Damsels in distress were rescued from danger by chivalrous knights as Clarimond was by Valentine.

Readers valued Valentine and Orson because it provided an escape route to a magical place above the clouds, where wooden horses could fly. This world of sheer fantasy contained an awesome Green Knight, benign and malign giants, a hostile enchanter named Adrimain and an affable dwarf enchanter called Pacolet. It had bloodletting and heroics, a talking Brazen Head encased within four pillars of jasper in a chamber studded with rubies, diamonds and a multitude of precious stones, it was an enthralling and enchanting place, an ideal place for the young and the imaginative to escape to.



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<sup>560</sup>Robert Collison. *The Story of Street Literature*. (J.M. Dant & Sons Ltd., London, 1973), p. 20.





*The Story of GUY, Earl of WARWICK.*

**T**HE famous *English* Champion *Guy*, was born in *Warwick* : When he was but a Boy, he was so expert at wrestling, boxing, and all other exercises, that none of his companions dared to encounter him. As he grew up, he fell in love with *Phillis*, the beautiful daughter of the Earl of *Warwick*, who told him he must first win her love by noble deeds of arms ; and when he had made himself worthy of her by his courage, he might hope for her affection, but not before t

So *Guy* set out to seek adventures ; his first exploit was upon a monstrous wild Cow.

Fig. 31.1 Page from *The Story of Guy, Earl of Warwick*, from *The Child's New Play-Thing or, Best Amusement*.



(i) The Story of Guy, Earl of Warwick

By far the most popular of chivalric romances was *The Story of Guy, Earl of Warwick*. Guy was an English hero of romance and legend, whose great exploits were first written down by an Anglo-Norman poet. The Anglo-Norman original, *Gui de Warewic*, was believed to have been composed between 1232 and 1246.<sup>561</sup> By the 14th century, fiction was confused with fact, and Guy was regarded as an historical figure.<sup>562</sup> Margaret Spufford who drew copiously from the collection of the famous English diarist Samuel Pepys (1633-1703) for her expert knowledge in this area, referred to two versions of this story, one very long one which gave Guy a noble lineage. In this he was remotely descended from Cassivellaunus, King of the Belgae and the immediate heir of a nobleman, from Northumberland. The expensive quarto was aimed at the gentry, while the short version was a twenty-four page octavo, which catered for a different social audience, and simply presented Guy as the son of the Earl of Warwick's steward, one who was rejected by the Earl's daughter Phyllis, as he was 'but young and meanly born'.<sup>563</sup> The first printed version of the medieval manuscript has been variously ascribed. Carpenter and Prichard<sup>564</sup> credited Wynkyn de Worde with having done so c. 1500, while John Ashton<sup>565</sup> and Victor E. Neuburg attributed it to Richard Pynson. Neuburg added that numerous printed editions followed Pynson's - 'Wynkyn de Worde, William Copland and John Cawood'.<sup>566</sup>

The story was set in late Anglo-Saxon times, during the second great wave of Danish invasions. The history was inaccurate as in so many other non-historical romances. The scene of action included much of Europe, and extended into Africa and the Middle East. During the Middle Ages, Guy of Warwick was not 'a literature of the common people.

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<sup>561</sup>Lee C. Ramsey. *Chivalric Romances*. (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1983). p. 48.

<sup>562</sup>Ivor H. Evans. *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*. Centenary Edition. (Cassell & Co. Ltd., 35 Red Lion Square, London WC1, 1870), p. 497.

<sup>563</sup>Margaret Spufford. *Small Books and Pleasant Histories*, p. 225.

<sup>564</sup>Carpenter and Prichard. *The Oxford Companion to Children's Literature*, p. 233.

<sup>565</sup>John Ashton. *Chap-Books of the 18th century*, p. 138.

<sup>566</sup>Victor E. Neuburg. *The Penny Histories*. (London, 1968), pp. 8-9.



Its place was the court'<sup>567</sup> ... 'The common man of the Middle Ages probably had his literature, but it was an oral literature'.<sup>568</sup> After the Middle Ages, *Guy of Warwick* enjoyed a vigorous old age, being a prominent piece of popular literature in the 18th c. 'To many readers both in the Middle Ages and since, Guy of Warwick has seemed the prototype of chivalric romances'.<sup>569</sup> The adventures of Guy of Warwick, originally conceived as entertainment for an adult feudal aristocracy, became by the 18th and early 19th centuries the reading matter for unsophisticated persons of a quite different sort, including children.<sup>570</sup>

The Irish chapbook story of Guy which was added to *The Child's New Play-Thing* was a miniature edition, drastically reduced to a mere four pages, in simplified form with large print. The story was embellished with a woodcut which showed Guy with an axe in his hand, stoutly confronting a wild cow, of mean demeanour and unnatural dimensions. This unsophisticated rendering of the famous romance did have the satisfying happy ending, unlike the longer English chapbook edition, and it would certainly have entertained its very young readers. The story told how Guy fell in love with Phyllis, the beautiful daughter of the Earl of Warwick. To win her love he had to prove his valour by noble deeds of arms. His first exploit involved a series of adventures which concerned the afore-mentioned monstrous wild cow 'whose Horns were four feet long, and exceeding sharp; her eyes glared like fire, and she was so terribly fierce and strong, that she destroyed both Man and Beast'.<sup>571</sup> Guy found her a challenging opponent. Even though he gave her a forceful blow on the forehead which 'made her fall back on her rump', she managed to recover herself and to renew her attack with even greater fury. She almost killed him, but he managed to jump aside and bring her once more to the ground by hitting her under the ear. The beasts of the forest were frightened by her terrible roars and Guy 'was many times in great danger of being caught upon her horns', which he

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<sup>567</sup>Lee C. Ramsey. *Chivalric Romances*. (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1983), p. 7.

<sup>568</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>569</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>570</sup>Margaret Schlauch. *Antecedents of the English Novel*, p. 82.

<sup>571</sup>*The Child's New Play-Thing*. 'The Story of Guy, Earl of Warwick', p. 116.



avoided quite dexterously. Wounded several times about the head, the wild cow collapsed and 'with a horrid groan expired'.<sup>572</sup> The death of this monstrous cow was greeted by much rejoicing and to immortalise the achievement 'one of her ribs was hung up in Warwick Castle, and is to be seen there to this day'.<sup>573</sup>

Guy travelled to France for his next adventure and in a French forest he encountered the giant Rumbo, who was

**so large and tall, that he could step over a house with as much ease as we step over a kennel; or peep into the steeple of a church and toll the bells with his fingers.**<sup>574</sup>

The giant was much stronger than Guy, but this did not deflate the hero who used avoidance techniques to conquer the giant. The giant having casually uprooted a large tree to launch his attack, Guy 'nimblely avoided his blows and watching an opportunity, with one blow, cut off all the giant's toes, so that he fell to the ground'.<sup>575</sup> Guy was not modest in victory. In a triumphalist fashion, he addressed the hapless giant 'Well monster, dost thou think my sword will cut now?'<sup>576</sup> The giant pleaded for his life and offered to become Guy's servant, to which request Guy acceded.

Further along the forest they observed a lion and a dragon fighting together. When the lion could fight no longer, Guy approached the dragon and delivered him 'a swingeing blow with his sword'. The dragon retaliated furiously but Guy, being an excellent swordsman, inflicted so many excruciating wounds that the embattled dragon attempted to stretch forth his wings and take flight. Guy, seizing his opportunity, once more thrust 'his sword under the wing of the dragon quite to the heart, killed him on the spot'.<sup>577</sup> The lion displayed fine presence of mind as he came fawning to Guy 'and laid himself down at his feet in token of gratitude for his deliverance'.<sup>578</sup>

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<sup>572</sup>Ibid., p. 117.

<sup>573</sup>Ibid., p. 117.

<sup>574</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>575</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>576</sup>Ibid., p. 118.

<sup>577</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>578</sup>Ibid.,



After these successful adventures and many other notable exploits, Guy returned home to England where he married his beloved Phyllis and where he was promoted to Earl of Warwick, following the death of her father.<sup>579</sup> The Irish reader was then allowed to believe that the happy couple lived out the rest of their days in matrimonial bliss, as the story ended here. In the English chapbook, which was true to the original, Guy's marriage had no sooner taken place then the hero decided that he should leave his wife to go on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Phyllis was distraught but understood that it was his desire to honour God which prompted his decision. There were no recriminations, the parting was most dignified 'so with exchanging their rings, and melting kisses, he departed'.<sup>580</sup>

He didn't cease being a brave knight when he left home, nor did he desist from performing acts of valour. When on his journey, he met an 'aged person oppressed with grief, for the loss of fifteen sons, whom Armarant, a mighty giant, had taken from him and held in strong captivity'<sup>581</sup>. Guy borrowed the old man's sword and knocked boldly at the giant's gates. The giant vowed to beat his brains out but Guy remained unmoved by the insult and taunted the giant with these derisive words 'Sirrah, thou art quarrelsome; - but I have a sword has often hewn such lubbards as you asunder'.<sup>582</sup> He then drew an abundant flow of blood from the giant's shoulders with his sharp blade. The giant responded in kind by flinging his club so forcefully that our hero collapsed, but finally 'Guy killed this broad black dog, and released divers captives that had been in thrawldom a long time'.<sup>583</sup> He then presented the keys of the castle and his fifteen sons to the appreciative old man.

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<sup>579</sup>Ibid., p. 119.

<sup>580</sup>*Guy, Earl of Warwick*. (Aldermay Church Yard, London, n.d.). Cited in Victor E. Neuburg. *The Penny Histories*, p. 16.

<sup>581</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>582</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>583</sup>Ibid., p. 18.



Guy then came to a graveyard and took up a worm-eaten skull, which he addressed in a philosophical vein, as he underpinned the frailty of human existence; and how death comes to all, irrespective of rank.

**Perhaps thou wert a Prince, or a mighty Monarch, a King, a Duke or a Lord - But the King and the Beggar must all return to the earth ... Perhaps thou mightest have been a Queen or a Dutchess, or a Lady varnished with much beauty; but now thou art wormsmeat.<sup>584</sup>**

There is a possibility that Shakespeare may have borrowed from *The Story of Guy, Earl of Warwick*. The similarities would be obvious to a reader familiar with the scene from *Hamlet* where Prince Hamlet took up the skull of Yorick, the former court jester and addressed it as follows:

**Alas, poor Yorick; - I knew him Horatio; a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy; he hath borne me on his back a thousand times ... now get you to my lady's chamber, and tell her, let her paint an inch thick, to this favour she must come; make her laugh at that.<sup>585</sup>**

But Guy had another giant to kill, which soon put an end to his introspection. On his return home from the Holy Land he discovered that the Danes had invaded and forced King Athelstone to take refuge in the invincible city of Winchester. As the Danes could see no way of winning the city, it was decided that the giant Colburn should fight on their behalf. Guy volunteered to do combat for the English, and quickly sent the Danes on their journey back to their own country after the defeat of Colburn.<sup>586</sup> The modest hero refused all honours from the king but he did reveal his true identity to him, whereupon the king 'embraced his worthy champion'. Guy then opted for a reclusive lifestyle as he withdrew to a cave where he lived like a hermit 'very pensive and solitary'. When his final hour came, and as he lay dying, he sent a messenger to Phillis, his long abandoned wife, who had been engaged in giving alms to the poor and in building a large hospital for aged and sick people. This ministering angel hastened to her Lord Guy. There was much

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<sup>584</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>585</sup>*The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*. (The Hamlyn Publishing Group Ltd., London, 1976), p. 976.

Hamlet. Act V.1., p. 976

<sup>586</sup>Ibid., p. 22.



pathos in the final scene as 'with weeping joy they embraced each other. Guy departed this life in her tender arms'.<sup>587</sup> Phillis died just fifteen days after him.

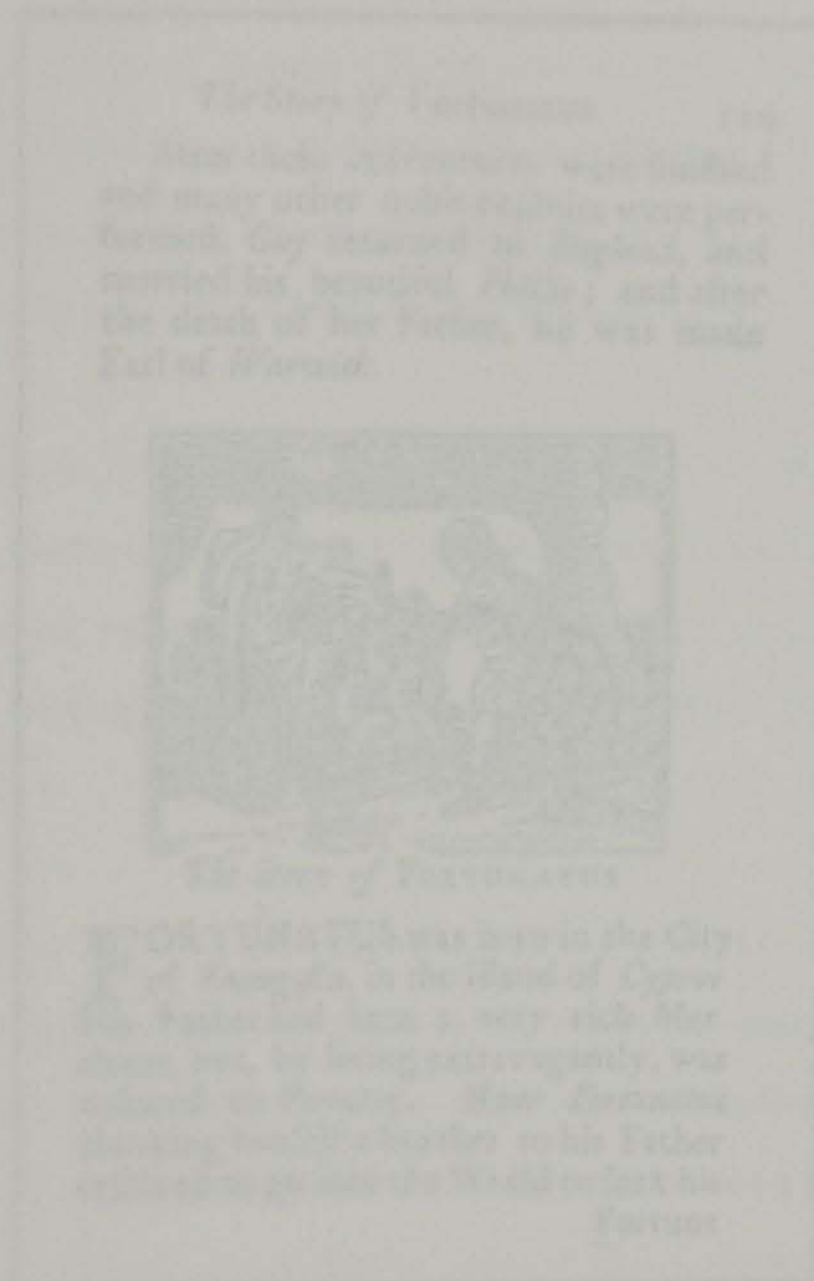


Fig. 28.1. Page from *The Story of Pericles*, from *The Child's New Play-Thing*, 1844.

<sup>587</sup>Ibid., p. 23.



After these Adventures were finished and many other noble exploits were performed, *Guy* returned to *England*, and married his beautiful *Phillis*; and after the death of her Father, he was made Earl of *Warwick*.



*The Story of FORTUNATUS*

**F**ORTUNATUS was born in the City of *Famagosta*, in the Island of *Cyprus*. His Father had been a very rich Merchant, but, by living extravagantly, was reduced to Poverty. Now *Fortunatus* thinking himself a burthen to his Father resolved to go into the World to seek his Fortune.

**Fig. 31.2** Page from *The Story of Fortunatus*, from *The Child's New Play-Thing, or Best Amusement*.



### The Story of Fortunatus

The *Story of Fortunatus*, which Wordsworth recalled so fondly in *The Prelude* V.ii, was first published in Augsburg in 1509. There was also a French edition of 1656 in Rouen entitled '*Histoire des Aventures de Fortunatus*'. The earliest English edition would appear to have been that of Thomas Churchyard in 1676. There were two Dutch translations also, one of 1650 and a perfect but curious edition of 1682 entitled *The Right, pleasant and variable trachical history of Fortunatus, whereby a young man may learn how to behave himself in all worldly affairs and casual chances*.<sup>588</sup>

The English chapbook, *The History of Fortunatus* followed the original romance fairly accurately, unlike the Irish chapbook eight page abridgement which told quite a different story. It did however retain the two important motifs of the magical purse that never emptied and the wishing hat which, when worn, transported a person wherever they wished to be.

This truncated story was also included at the end of *A Child's New Play-Thing*, its purpose being to amuse the child and it was written legibly and coherently to facilitate his ready understanding. It was adorned with an illustration of a muffled maiden in a forest, with a most unlikely background of houses. The lady had handed a purse to a gentleman. Fortunatus was the son of a considerably reduced rich Cypriot merchant who lived extravagantly and was reduced to poverty because of his weakness. The Irish version bore some resemblance to the English one with regard to Fortunatus's adventures in the forest, when he defended himself against the bear, but colourful details were added to the Irish version. 'Fortunatus defended himself so well with his sword, that at last he cut off one of the toes of the bear, so that he fell from the bough on which he stood, and broke his back'.<sup>589</sup> He then met the lady whose eyes were muffled. She was aptly named

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<sup>588</sup>John Ashton. *Chap-Books of the Eighteenth-Century*, p. 124.

<sup>589</sup>*The Child's New Play-Thing. The Story of Fortunatus*, p. 120.



Fortune and she presented the equally appropriately named Fortunatus 'with this purse which will never be empty' and he duly thanked her 'and was very glad for such a present'.<sup>590</sup>

Fortunatus mishandled his new found wealth. He lived like a prince and spent money carelessly. He travelled all over the world and visited all the courts in Europe. His appearance was so splendid that he outshone all the kings and princes in the world. He then came to the city of Constantinople 'where the Grand Seignior kept his court, who shewed him all the riches of his palace, gold and silver and diamonds in abundance'.<sup>591</sup> He revealed to him his most prized jewel, his wishing hat. When he wore this hat, it transported him 'over cities or mountains, seas or oceans'<sup>592</sup>, wherever he desired to be. Here the writer used his favourite descriptive adjective, to quantify the extent of Fortunatus's surprise. He was 'prodigiously surprised at the account of this hat', and he tricked the Grand Seignior into allowing him to test its weight. While testing it he wished himself to be transported to his own country, upon which 'he flew out of the window, and left the Grand Seignior in the utmost rage and confusion'.<sup>593</sup>

The avaricious Fortunatus was soon to be taught a lesson by one of his own ilk, the beautiful but cunning daughter of the King of England, with whom he had fallen hopelessly in love. 'She told him if he would discover to her how he came to be possessed of so much wealth, she would grant him her affections'.<sup>594</sup> The gullible Fortunatus revealed the source of his wealth to her and she mixed a sleeping dose with his wine. While he was asleep 'the princess cut off his purse, and sewed her own in its place'.<sup>595</sup> When he awoke and put his hand in his purse to give money to the servants, he realised that he had been duped by the princess. He gained some fleeting satisfaction

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<sup>590</sup>Ibid., p. 121.

<sup>591</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>592</sup>Ibid., p. 122.

<sup>593</sup>Ibid., p. 122.

<sup>594</sup>Ibid., p. 123.

<sup>595</sup>Ibid., p. 124.



however when he in turn duped her, as he caught her in his arms and wished that they could be transported together to a secluded desert. Immediately, they found themselves sitting under a tree, in a lonesome forest. Hardly surprisingly 'The princess was prodigiously frightened at being carried away in this manner'<sup>596</sup>, but she quickly gained control of the situation by duping Fortunatus yet again. She feigned illness and requested him to fetch some fruit for her from the tree, that she might revive herself. Fortunatus agreed to the lady's request and while he scaled the tree, he absent mindedly deposited his hat on her head. Young readers could have easily predicted the next move, despite some confusion likely to arise due to an error in page numbering, as page 121 followed 124 and next came page 126. Nonetheless the momentum was maintained as the princess wished she was back home in the safety and luxury of her father's court 'and no sooner had she spoke, but she was gone in a moment, leaving Fortunatus in the tree, without either his hat or his purse'.<sup>597</sup> This marked the climax in the story, which was dramatised still further as Fortunatus ate one of the apples he had picked for his devious princess, when to his utter horror 'two large horns immediately sprouted from his head'.<sup>598</sup> Just then the reader may have felt that the name Fortunatus was a misnomer, until his luck changed when an old hermit came up to him and told him that 'if he would eat one of the apples of another tree, which grew just by, his horns would fall off'<sup>599</sup>, which was precisely what happened.

These occurrences deeply affected the personality of Fortunatus who became a reformed character. He promptly decided to teach the beautiful princess a lesson. He took a selection of each of these apples to court where he contrived, successfully, to leave one of them in the princess's apartment. The reader was allowed instant satisfaction as the greedy princess 'seeing such a beautiful apple lying upon the table'<sup>600</sup>, behaved true to her nature and indulged herself, thereby growing two large horns out of her head. Fortunatus

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<sup>596</sup>Ibid., p. 124.

<sup>597</sup>Ibid., p. 121.

<sup>598</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>599</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>600</sup>Ibid., p. 121.



then disguised himself as a physician and came to court to remove the horns. In no time he had cured the princess, whose emotions were captured by the writer in familiar style as he told the reader that 'she was prodigiously rejoiced'. Ironically, she produced his magic purse in order to remunerate him but in the meantime Fortunatus donned his old wishing hat, which he took from a peg in her room and 'wished himself with her in his own country; where they found themselves in a moment'.<sup>601</sup> Not satisfied with this the reformed Fortunatus 'upbraided her with stealing his purse, he put her into a nunnery, and left her to spend the rest of her life in repentance and devotion'.<sup>602</sup> There was a moral to this story which was clearly spelt out for the reader:

**great riches are a great burthen and that having our wishes, often leads us to miseries and misfortunes.**<sup>603</sup>

Fortunatus was sufficiently sobered by his experiences to throw his old magical hat and overflowing purse in the fire, thus disposing of temptation for all time.

The Fortunatus of the English chapbook left the secret of the virtues of the hat and purse, as a legacy to his sons. When he lay dying

**he declared to them the virtues of his Purse and that it would last no longer than their lives. He also told them the virtues of his Wishing Hat, and commanding them not to part with those Jewels, but to keep them in common, and live friendly together, and not to make any person privy to their virtues.**<sup>604</sup>

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<sup>601</sup>Ibid., p. 126.

<sup>602</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>603</sup>Ibid., p. 127.,

<sup>604</sup>*The History of Fortunatus*. (Aldermay Church Yard, Bow Lane, London, n.d.). Cited in John Ashton. *Chap-Books of the Eighteenth-Century*, pp. 136-137.



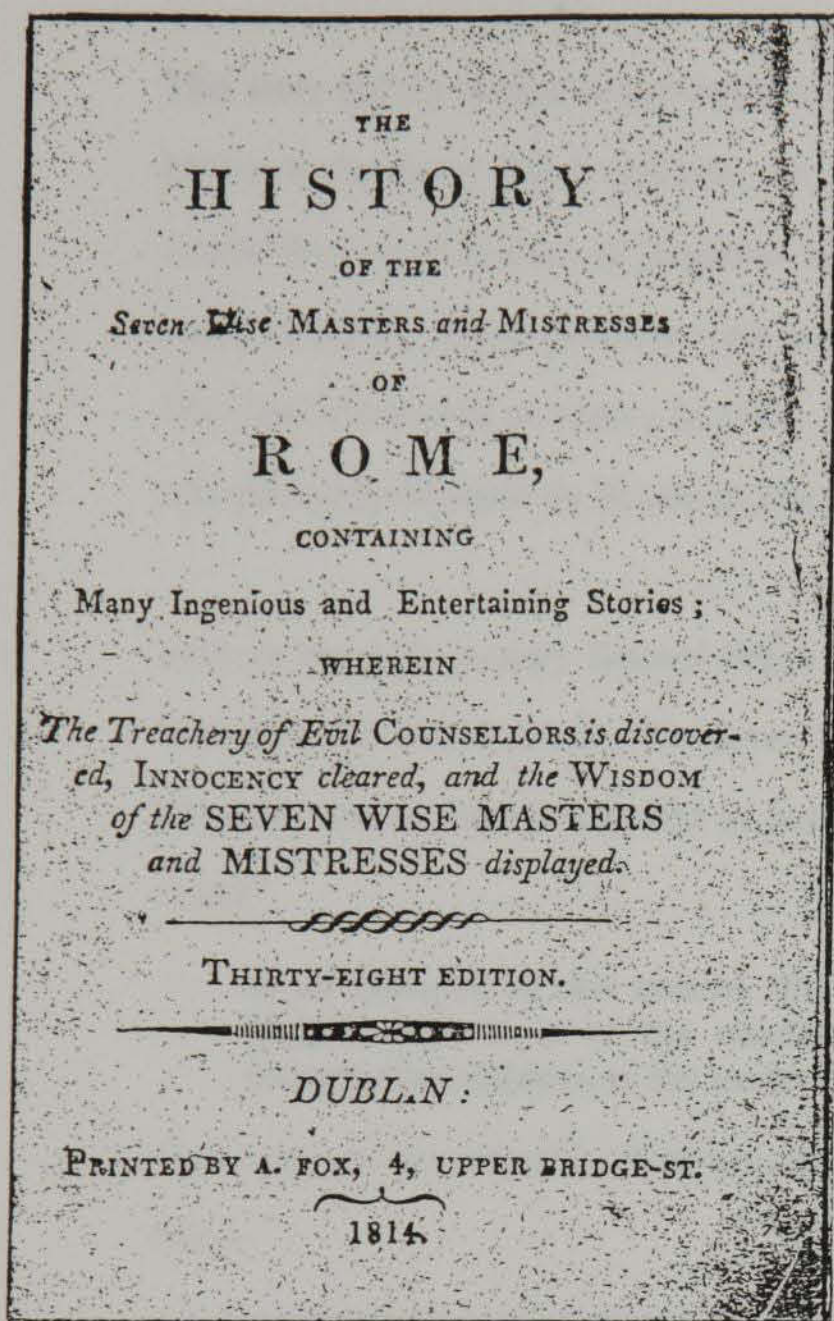


Fig. 32.1



Fig. 32.2

Fig. 32.1 Title page from *The History of the Seven Wise Masters and Mistresses of Rome*. [1814].

Fig. 32.2 Frontispiece to *The History of the Seven Wise Masters and Mistresses of Rome*.



## The Seven Wise Masters of Rome

This story had its origins in pre-medieval times and was presented in the cycle of stories known as the *Seven Sages of Rome*, the prototype for which was *The Book of the Seven Counsellors or Parables of Sendeban or Sandabar*, an Indian philosopher who lived about 100 B.C. These parables were printed in Hebrew only, first at Constantinople in 1517 and afterwards at Venice in 1544. By the 12th century it had reached Europe and was printed by Wynken de Worde as *The Seven Wise Masters*<sup>605</sup> around 1515.

Later in the 17th century Samuel Pepys had in his collection a threepenny abbreviated version of the medieval story *The Seven Wise Masters* with a preface which claimed that the work was so highly regarded in Ireland, that it was used in schools as an English reader:

**of all histories of this nature, this exceeds, being held in such esteem in Ireland that it is of the chiefest use in all the English schools for introducing children to the understanding of good letters.**<sup>606</sup>

This view was reinforced by Kirkman, who translated it from French in 1674. He stated that it:

**was held in such estimation in Ireland, that it was always put into the hands of young children after the hornbook.**<sup>607</sup>

Samuel Pepys had collected *The Seven Wise Masters* in the 1680's together with a 17th c. imitation - *The Seven Wise Mistresses* in extended octaves.<sup>608</sup> The latter was included in the second part of this Dublin chapbook version published in 1814.

Senior students with advanced reading skills would have understood these two long stories. There were no illustrations to relieve the tedium but readers knew that they could

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<sup>605</sup>George Ellis. *Specimens of Early English Metrical Romances*. (London. Henry G. Bohn, York Street, Covent Garden, 1848), p. 405.

<sup>606</sup>Margaret Spufford. *Small Books and Pleasant Histories*. (Cambridge University Press, London, 1981), p. 74.

<sup>607</sup>Barry, Florence Valentine. *A Century of Children's Books*. (London, 1922), p. 11.

<sup>608</sup>Margaret Spufford. *Small Books and Pleasant Histories*, p. 225.



easily skip the many short stories within the main story itself, without losing out on the dramatic ending in each case. In the preface to this late 17th century version of *The Seven Wise Masters*, the 'Corteous Reader' was told that the aim of the story was to teach the reader a lesson through the 'allurement of tales and fables'.<sup>609</sup> The author fulfilled his promise as he told how the second wife of Emperor Pontianus, attempted, through treacherous means, to get her stepson Dioclesian executed for having rejected her amorous advances. Each night the inventive Empress related a story for Pontianus about an imperious son who dispossessed his father, and each day, in order to counteract her propaganda, the seven wise masters, who were the boys' tutors, recited stories about the treachery of women. The objective was to buy time, in order to stay his execution.

The second Empress was the daughter of the King of Castille, and there were many references in the story to sons and heirs to the Kings of Egypt, France and Spain. The story itself was rich in symbolism as outlined in the chapbook preface:

**To give the meaning of this moral, it is thus. The Emperor may signify the world, who but having one only son - who is Man - him to bring well up is all his care. But man losing his own mother - who is Reason and Divine Grace - falling into the hand of the step-mother - signifying Sin - who is an Empress of great bewitching: and one that commands the world: she works by all possible means the confusion of man and would prevail against his weakness, but that a star from heaven - by which is meant Goodness from above - instructs man how to avoid the allurement of sin, by not opening his mouth to bid her welcome and the better to prevent her mischief, he hath sent Seven Wise Masters, which are seven liberal sciences, to give him wholesome instructions.**<sup>610</sup>

The latter claim would appear to be quite erroneous as the seven wise masters, far from representing the seven liberal sciences were in fact astrologers, diviners, and magicians 'who examine the child's absorption of their teaching by putting olive leaves under his pillow, and read his future in the stars'.<sup>611</sup> By consulting the planets they found that if the Prince went to court at that time, as the Empress desired and the Emperor had requested, 'he should die a violent death and yet it appeared to them, that if he went not, they should

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<sup>609</sup> *The Seven Wise Masters and Mistresses of Rome*. (Dublin, A. Fox, 4 Upper Bridge Street, 1814), The Preface.

<sup>610</sup> *The Seven Wise Masters and Mistresses of Rome*. (Dublin, A. Fox, 4 Upper Bridge Street, 1814), p. 1.

<sup>611</sup> Margaret Spufford. *Small Books and Pleasant Histories*, pp. 224-5.



lose their heads, which they resolved to do, rather than hazard his life, whom they entirely loved.<sup>612</sup> Fortunately this pending tragedy was averted when the young Prince 'viewed the firmament and found the constellations more propitious; provided 'he abstained from speaking seven days, he should escape the death then threatened'.<sup>613</sup>

No sooner had her stepson Dioclesian arrived at court than the Empress adopted the role of temptress 'and grasping him with eager joy she strove to draw him to her alcove but he still refusing, although in silence she grew the more enamoured and with a thousand dear entreaties urged him to speak and satisfy her longings'.<sup>614</sup> He wrote his rejection to the Empress, who reacted angrily as she 'tore off her royal ornaments, rending her garments and her beautiful face, crying aloud for help',<sup>615</sup> but when the Emperor and his nobles arrived at the scene of the pretended crime, the Empress lied as she 'declared that the prince casting his lascivious eyes upon her beauty, would have forced her to his lawless lust and that in struggling, he had abused her, as they might behold'.<sup>616</sup> The Emperor made no attempt to investigate the truth of her wild allegations but decided peremptorily on the execution of his own son. However his nobles prevailed upon the Emperor to give Dioclesian a fair trial for his life.

The Empress was 'sorely grieved' at the stay of execution and for the next seven days, the Prince was duly condemned and then saved, as seven exempla were given against him by the Empress and seven in his defence by the wise masters. The exempla which were recited by his stepmother each night, took the theme of disloyal treacherous sons. Those which were recounted by the seven masters, during the day, took the theme of the machinations of evil perfidious women. The climax, which the reader had been kept waiting for, for so long, occurred at the end of seven days, when it was safe for Prince Dioclesian to speak and to defend himself. This he did with the most dramatic effect.

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<sup>612</sup>*The Seven Wise Masters*, p. 9.

<sup>613</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>614</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>615</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>616</sup>*Ibid.*



Firstly, he requested the presence of the Empress, together with all her chambermaids, who made a nervous entry. The moment of truth had finally arrived. Prince Dioclesian directed the Emperor:

**Sir, behold the chambermaid that standeth there in green - whom you know the Empress loved above all others - command her to be unclothed before us all, and see what she is.<sup>617</sup>**

The Emperor was somewhat coy about acquiescing to such a request. Dioclesian boldly urged:

**If it be a woman, it is my shame, if not let the shame abide in her. When she was unclothed, she appeared to be a man, whereat they wondered.<sup>618</sup>**

The Emperor then resolved the issue when he commanded that his unfaithful wife and her paramour Ribauld should be burnt alive. She deserved to die for three reasons, according to the Emperor, one was that she had committed adultery, secondly she had falsely and unjustly tried to incriminate his son and thirdly she had incited him every day to put his own son to death.<sup>619</sup> It was left to the judges and justices to pronounce the final sentence against the Empress and Ribauld. The main villain in the piece would appear to have been less harshly dealt with, as the severest punishment was undoubtedly meted out to Ribauld, while both were sentenced to cruel forms of death. She was to 'be bound to a horse's tail, and drawn through the streets of the city, to the place of execution and there to be burned to death',<sup>620</sup> whereas Ribauld was to be 'quartered and smitten to pieces' and his flesh 'cast to the hounds' so 'that the beasts and birds of the air' should devour him.

The lesson in the story was that evil and wrongdoing lead to harsh retribution while goodness and integrity merit their own reward. After the Emperor had died honourably, his son Prince Dioclesian, aided by the good counsel of the seven wise masters, ruled the Empire with great wisdom. Consequently, he exceeded his predecessors in riches and was much loved by the seven wise masters:

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<sup>617</sup>Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>618</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>619</sup>Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>620</sup>Ibid., p. 71.



**His masters so loved him above all others in the world, that many times they put themselves in great peril and jeopardy of their lives for him and so ended their days in joy and honour to the praise of Almighty God.<sup>621</sup>**

### The History of the Seven Wise Mistresses of Rome

This story was the female variant of *The Seven Wise Masters*. The seven wise mistresses served a similar function to their male counterparts, the only difference being that the females had mysterious names, such as Halicuja, Wardula, Circe, Penthisilea, Deborah, Dejunari and Boadicea.<sup>622</sup>

The Empress Lucretia, upon the death of the Emperor, and on the advice of her Consul, entrusted her daughter Sabrina, to the care of the seven wise mistresses. Similarly, the seven wise mistresses consulted the planets about the advisability of returning the Princess to court and thereby they saw the design against her life. Sabrina, like Dioclesian, had to remain silent for the space of seven days, in order to preserve her life. The Empress Lucretia therefore handed her a pen and paper to explain the reason for her silence. She replied in verse and her words were to prove truly prophetic, as events unfolded.

**Thro' learning which doth me adorn,  
I very plainly see,  
The star under where I was born  
Proves hazardous to me,  
And I in bed have lately dream'd  
What shortly shall ensue,  
That I seven times shall be  
condemn'd  
In judgement sent by you.<sup>623</sup>**

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<sup>621</sup>Ibid., p. 72.

<sup>622</sup>Ibid., p. 80.

<sup>623</sup>Ibid., p. 83.



In this story the treacherous deed was perpetrated by the traitorous Radamentus, the Empress's Counsul, who, when he had viewed Sabrina's 'incomparable beauty, was presently fired with lust' and resolved 'if possible to debauch her, and so bring about her destruction'.<sup>624</sup> He made an attempt upon her honour while she was in the garden but the 'Royal Princess turning about with a scornful gesture gave a repulse to his lascivious request' but Radamentus's love quickly turned to fury and then to revenge so that 'running out of the garden, he cried out that he saw the princess with a man under a fig-tree committing the foul sin of fornication'.<sup>625</sup> Like the reactionary Emperor, the Empress Lucretia automatically suspected her daughter and wished that: 'the day of her birth had been the day of her burial', and instantly ordered that Sabrina should be burned at the stake.<sup>626</sup> Fortunately the seven wise mistresses of Rome interceded on her behalf to the Empress and requested that a day be appointed for her trial and 'if the twelve judges of your Empire find her guilty, let her be condemned in form by the law'. Sabrina was then imprisoned.<sup>627</sup>

A similar routine followed here where Radamentus gave his seven different exempla, in the form of complaints and the seven mistresses replied with their own exempla. Finally, on the seventh day Sabrina could speak and she defended herself by accusing:

**Radamentus of committing fornication with a pretended gentleman of his bedchamber, who being brought, and the Princess insisting to have his sex examined, confessed HIMSELF a WOMAN.**<sup>628</sup>

The Empress then resigned her dignity and handed power over to Sabrina, who was crowned Empress. One of her first duties was to pass sentence on her detractor Radamentus and his concubine. She pronounced:

**That you shall both be taken away from this place to the place from whence you came and from thence to be drawn at the horses tails, thro'**

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<sup>624</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>625</sup>Ibid., p. 84.

<sup>626</sup>Ibid., p. 85.

<sup>627</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>628</sup>Ibid., p. 135.



**the city, to the place of execution and there under the common gallows be consumed to ashes.<sup>629</sup>**

The story would appear to have been deliberately extended beyond its climax which rendered the ending very tedious for the reader. After the death of the old Empress, the Gauls invaded the Empire but were overthrown. King Alexander of Germany then married Sabrina, and they had two sons. The King of Macedonia proclaimed war on Germany and defeated King Alexander, who managed to escape while in disguise. The story ended disappointingly with the following philosophical words being uttered by Alexander to his incomparable wife Sabrina:

**Be comforted incomparable lady ... none are exempted from the frowns of fortune and we must look upon afflictions of this life as the incentives to prepare us for a better in the world to come, where no ambitious enemy can invade or annoy our felicity.<sup>630</sup>**

### The Story of Reynard the Fox

*The Story of Reynard the Fox* was famous for many centuries and rivalled the *Seven Wise Masters* in antiquity. A poem in Flemish, called '*der Reinart*', was known in the 11th c. and in two verses of the Troubadors, attributed to Richard I; the names of Isegrim the Wolf and Reinhart the Fox were to be found.<sup>631</sup> The poem *Ysengrimus*, was known in Low German, French and Latin in the 12th c.<sup>632</sup> One of the most artistic productions of the poem appeared in 1860 by Thomas James Arnold after the German version by Goethe who ennobled the subject by his poem in 1794.<sup>633</sup>

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<sup>629</sup>Ibid., p. 140.

<sup>630</sup>Ibid., p. 144.

<sup>631</sup>John Ashton. *Chap-Books of the Eighteenth Century*. 'Reynard the Fox'. p. 95.

<sup>632</sup>Carpenter and Prichard. *The Oxford Companion to Children's Literature*, p. 449.

<sup>633</sup>Thomas James Arnold. *Reynard the Fox*. (London, Trübner and Co., Paternoster Row, 1860), p. iii. Preface.



The earliest edition of the prose story was preserved in the Grenville Library at the British Museum. It was a black letter octavo in Dutch and was printed at Gouda, near Rotterdam in 1479. William Caxton based his translation on this work and it was published in 1481. *The Story of Reynard the Fox* had been current in Western Europe for well over three hundred years, continually throwing out new branches. One branch of it at least would have been familiar to some of Caxton's readers from Chaucer's '*Nun's Priest's Tale*',<sup>634</sup> which he had printed among the *Canterbury Tales* in 1478.<sup>635</sup> Caxton's translation was so successful that he re-printed it in 1489. A further edition, by Wynkyn de Worde, appeared about 1515,<sup>636</sup> and finally, there was an edition printed by Thomas Gaultier in 1550.<sup>637</sup>

Two versions of the story will be reviewed - *The History of Reynard the Fox* which was published on the English chapbook market in 1780, pirated copies of which found their way into the Irish hedge schools. One such copy was printed in Belfast in 1814 entitled *The Most Pleasing and Delightful History of Reynard the Fox*. The second version which will be reviewed was appended to the children's text-book *The Child's New Play-Thing*, dated 1819, entitled '*The Story of Reynard the Fox*'.<sup>638</sup>

The English chapbook version was quite condensed. It consisted of nine pages and eight short chapters, each with a crude illustration and a title heading. Despite these limitations a lively, simple account was presented, which was well within the understanding of children and it was written in a humorous and entertaining style. In chapter one the heading informed the reader that there was '*a great feast, proclaimed by the Lion, at which the Wolf, his Wife and the Hound complain against Reynard the Fox*'. Isegrim the

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<sup>634</sup>William Caxton. *Reynard the Foxe*, (1489). (David Paradime Developments Ltd., Claridge House, 32 Davies St., London W1, 1976), p. 1.

<sup>635</sup>Neville Coghill and Christopher Tolkien. *Chaucer the Nun's Priest's Tale*. (George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd., 1970). First published 1959.

<sup>636</sup>N.F. Blake. *William Caxton and English Literary Culture*. (The Hambledon Press, 102 Gloucester Ave., London NW1 8HX (U.K.), 1991), pp. 259-260.

<sup>637</sup>E.G. Duff. *Fifteenth Century English Books*. (London, 1917), pp. 99-100.

<sup>638</sup>*The Child's New Play-Thing*. "*The Story of Reynard the Fox*". (Dublin, D. Wogan, 28 Merchant's Quay, 1819).



Wolf had just grounds, to complain as Reynard the Fox 'that false creature' made a violent entry into his house and then 'befouled' Isegrim's 'children in such a rank manner that they became instantly blind'.<sup>639</sup>

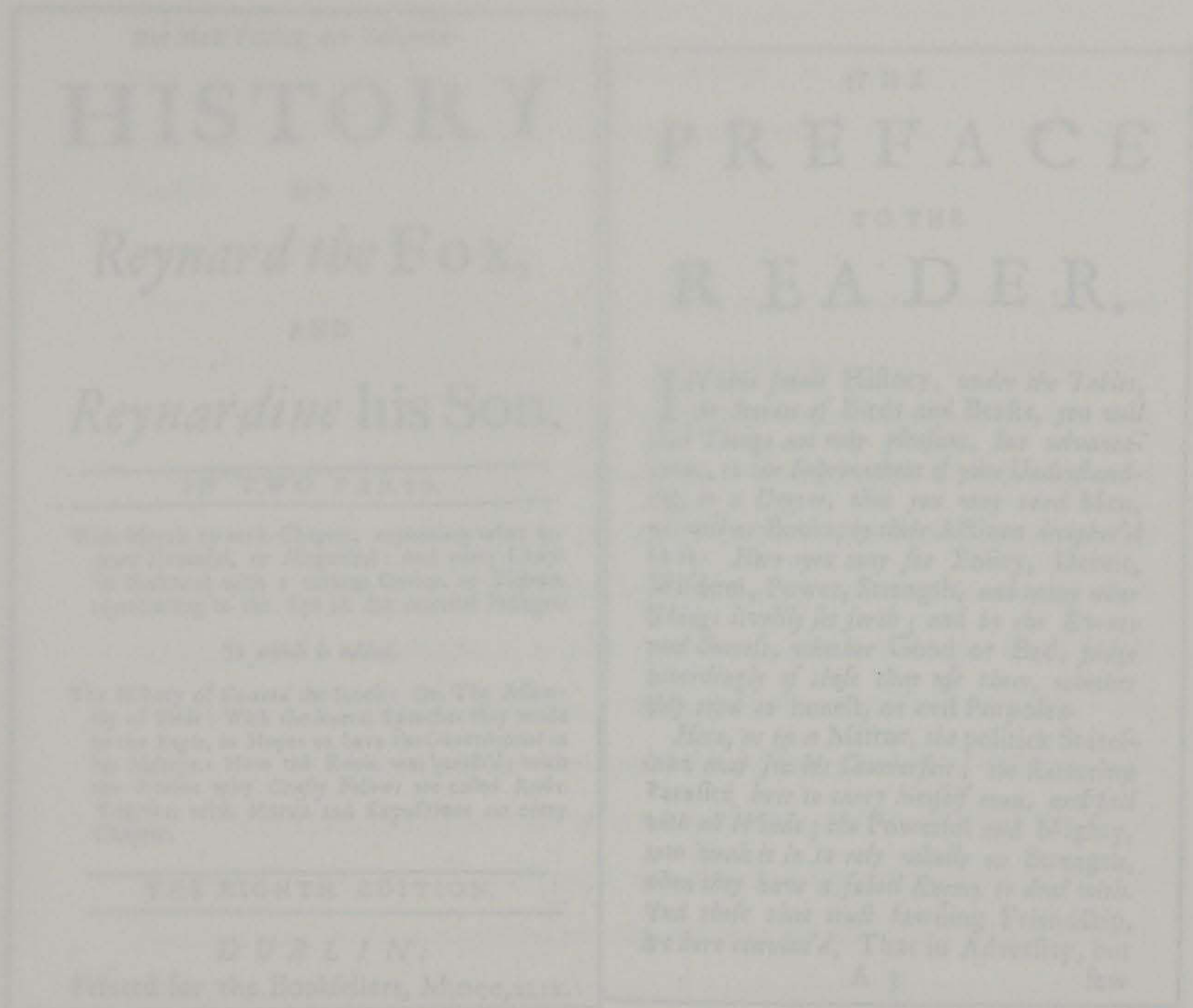


Fig. 33.1

Fig. 34.1

Fig. 33.1 Title page from *The Most Pleasant and Delightful History of Reynard the Fox, and Reynardine his Son* (1780).

Fig. 34.1 Preface to the Reader from *The Most Pleasant and Delightful History of Reynard the Fox, and Reynardine his Son*.

<sup>639</sup>*The History of Reynard the Fox*. (Aldermary Church Yard, Bow Lane, 1780), p. 97.



The Most Pleasing and Delightful

# HISTORY

OF

*Reynard the Fox,*

AND

*Reynardine his Son.*

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IN TWO PARTS.

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With Morals to each Chapter, explaining what appears Doubtful, or Allegorical: And every Chapter illustrated with a curious Device, or Picture, representing to the Eye all the material Passages.

*To which is added,*

The History of *Cawood the Rook*: Or, The Assembly of Birds: With the several Speeches they made to the *Eagle*, in Hopes to have the Government in his Absence: How the Rook was banish'd; with the Reason why *Crafty Fellows* are called *Rooks*. Together with Morals and Expositions on every Chapter.

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THE EIGHTH EDITION.

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D U B L I N :

Printed for the Booksellers, M,DCC,XLIX.

Fig.33.1

Fig. 33.1 Title page from *The Most Pleasing and Delightful History of Reynard the Fox, and Reynardine his Son*. [1769].

THE

# P R E F A C E

TO THE

# R E A D E R.

**I**N this small History, under the Tables, or Stories of Birds and Beasts, you will find Things not only pleasant, but advantageous, to the Improvement of your Understanding, to a Degree, that you may read Men, as well as Books, by their Actions decipher'd in it. Here you may see Policy, Deceit, Wisdom, Power, Strength, and many other Things livelily set forth; and by the Events and Success, whether Good or Bad, judge accordingly of those that use them, whether they tend to honest, or evil Purposes.

Here, as in a Mirror, the politick Statesman may see his Counterfeit; the flattering Parasite how to carry himself even, and sail with all Winds; the Powerful and Mighty, how weak it is to rely wholly on Strength, when they have a subtil Enemy to deal with. And those that trust fawning Friendship, are here convinc'd, That in Adversity, but  
A 3 few

Fig.34.1

Fig. 34.1 Preface to the Reader from *The Most Pleasing and Delightful History of Reynard the Fox, and Reynardine his Son*.



Curtis the Hound complained that Reynard stole his pudding during a cold winter period, but Tibert the Cat interjected to assert his claim to ownership of the pudding because he had stolen it out of the mill, when the miller lay asleep. The Panther interrupted Tibert to give an eye witness account of Reynard's shameful treatment of Kayward the Hare who innocently approached Reynard for religious instruction. He promised to teach Kayward the Credo but instead practically choked him to death, but for the timely entrance of the Panther.

Chapter two gave '*Grimbard the Brock's Speech on Behalf of Reynard*'.<sup>640</sup> It was indeed fitting that Reynard's defence should have been conducted by his own nephew, who possessed his uncle's wit and cunning as he attacked his detractors and revealed their many weaknesses. He maintained that in the past Isegrim had tried to cheat Reynard of his plaice, leaving him nothing but the bones. He reminded them of the unseemly incident over the flitch of bacon, which tasted so good that Isegrim devoured it, even though Reynard had secured it at great personal danger to himself. He defended Reynard's morals also, while he admitted that Reynard did lay with Isegrim's wife, it had happened seven years prior to his marriage. Grimbard then posed the question 'so what credit gets he by slandering his wife, when she is troubled at it?'<sup>641</sup> The final episode of this chapter was a farcical scene replete with rhetorical questions, which asked what could Kayward the Hare possibly have expected from his tutor when he had failed to learn his lesson, but a liberal amount of corporal punishment? Had Curtis not stolen the pudding himself and who could possibly have blamed Reynard for taking away stolen goods from a thief? It was indeed scurrilous to suggest that a fine, upstanding 'gentleman', like Reynard, one who was constantly directed by the counsel of a priest, who fasted daily and wore a hair shirt and became a vegetarian, one who abandoned the luxury of a castle for the penury of a hermitage, one who distributed his wealth to live on

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<sup>640</sup>Ibid., p. 98.

<sup>641</sup>Ibid., p. 99.



alms and to do penance for his sins, should be guilty of any wrongdoing. Children would certainly have been greatly amused by this story.

Chapter three contained *'The Cock's complaint against Reynard and the King's answer'*. The evidence against Reynard continued to mount. This was illustrated by the dramatic entrance of Conticleer the Cock, with his dead daughter, the Hen Cople, who had been beheaded by Reynard, and who was carried in on a bier, and on each side were two grieving Hens. He accused Reynard of having killed no fewer than fifteen of his children, by feigning loyalty to the King and claiming to have become a monk. The King immediately agreed to send Bruin the Bear to summon Reynard to appear before him.<sup>642</sup>

Chapter four was headed *'Bruin the Bear unfortunate in his Message to Reynard the Fox'*. This was perhaps an understatement in the light of the events that unfolded, as the King sent his most inept subjects on a mission for which they were totally unsuited. Bruin the Bear was easily duped with the lure of honey combs, which, naturally enough could only have been secured from a dangerous inaccessible place - a great oak tree with two great wedges in it, with an open cleft. Bruin couldn't resist this open invitation to a honey feast 'and thrust his head into the cleft quite over his ears, while the fox perceiving, pulled out the wedges'. In the midst of hideous roars Reynard gloated 'Is the honey good Uncle? do you like it? Pray do not surfeit yourself with it?'<sup>643</sup> Hostile neighbours then arrived and Bruin realised that drastic action was called for. He wrenched his head out of the tree, at the cost of his skin and ears, only to be confronted by a mob who 'beat him most woefully'. He returned to court in this painful and pitiful condition and the King swore to exact revenge on Reynard, such as would 'make him tremble'.<sup>644</sup>

The heading to chapter five told of another abortive mission, this time it was *'Tibert the Cat's Embassy to Reynard, with the Bad Success of it'*. Tibert was just as prone to

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<sup>642</sup>Ibid., p. 100.

<sup>643</sup>Ibid., p. 101.

<sup>644</sup>Ibid., p. 101.



temptation as his predecessor. The bait Reynard used for the cat was the parson's barn which he knew was overrun with mice. He had visited this barn himself and had stolen a fat hen. It was therefore a reasonable assumption by Reynard to expect snares to have been set for his capture. Predictably, Tibert was ensnared and once again Reynard gloated as he asked 'Tibert, dost thou love mice?'<sup>645</sup> The worst was yet to come as an angry, staff wielding, parson arrived 'and coming to Tibert, smote him with a great Staff and struck out one of his eyes'.<sup>646</sup> The cat, although half-blinded, determined to fight for his life, he 'leaped between the Parson's legs and fastened his claws into them; which when his wife saw, swore she would rather lose the whole offering of seven years than see him so abused'.<sup>647</sup> The bawdy humour in this story would indicate that it was intended for an older audience, but nonetheless it was widely appreciated by a younger one as well. Tibert finally extricated himself and returned roaring to the court. The King was once again incensed and held another council on how to be revenged on the wily fox.

Chapter six recorded *'The Brock's Embassy to Reynard, the Fox's Confession and their approval at Court'*. It was left to Grimbard the Broc, who had defended his Uncle Reynard so expertly in chapter two, to undertake the important assignment of escorting his uncle to court. On this occasion Reynard feigned sincerity and good faith and spoke in conciliatory tones. He agreed to return to court without any form of protest, in order to clear his name and shame his slanderers. On their journey to the palace, Reynard made an emotional confession to Grimbard:

**I have greivously offended against Canticleer the Cock and his children; my uncle Bruin the Bear and Tibert the Cat; nay I've abused and slandered the King and Queen; I have betrayed Isegrim the Wolf by calling him Uncle, when he is no kin to me.**<sup>648</sup>

No sooner had he uttered these moving words than Reynard reverted to his true form, as his greedy eyes wandered after the Pullen. When checked for this breach of good faith, Reynard's ready wit saved him yet again: Much aggrieved, he protested his innocence:

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<sup>645</sup>Ibid., p. 103

<sup>646</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>647</sup>Ibid., p. 103.

<sup>648</sup>Ibid., p. 104.



**You wrong me nephew ... my eyes wandered not; I was just saying a Pater Noster for the Souls of the Pullens I have formerly slain, in which devotion you hindered me.<sup>649</sup>**

By chapter seven, Reynard and Grimbard had reached the court and the reader was informed that 'Reynard's Excuse Before the King His Trial and Condemnation' were about to commence. Reynard, although extremely nervous, assumed an unruffled demeanour as he strode in proudly to conduct his own defence:

**My Liege, if Bruin's crown be bloody with stealing honey; and Tibert loses her eye by getting into the Priest's barn to steal mice, when they should have been diligent in your majesty's embassy, can I help that?**

and even though his final words were full of pathos:

**O my dread Soverign I am as innocent as the child unborn, however use me as you please.<sup>650</sup>**

he was, nevertheless, found guilty and condemned to be executed. Just when Reynard appeared to be doomed, he pulled off a masterful stroke. He requested an opportunity to make a full confession before he died. The King agreed and Reynard exploited his opportunity by appealing to the greed of the King and Queen. He suggested that there had been a plot against the King's life. He explained how his father had uncovered the King's treasure, hidden in the ground, while digging one day, but as his father desired Bruin to be King 'he sent for his wife, Isegrim the Wolf and Tibert the Cat amongst whom it was agreed to murder your Majesty'.<sup>651</sup> But Reynard claimed that he stole the treasure and removed it, and that when his father made the discovery 'he for madness hanged himself'. Reynard proved to be an astute judge of character as 'The King and Queen hearing this, hoping to get from Reynard this treasure, released him from the gibbet'.<sup>652</sup> He was pardoned but he was warned that if he re-offended he and his family would be ruined.

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<sup>649</sup>Ibid., p. 105.

<sup>650</sup>Ibid., p. 105.

<sup>651</sup>Ibid., p. 107.

<sup>652</sup>Ibid., p. 107.



In chapter eight, which was headed 'Reynard Restored to Favor and Preferred', the reader was left in no doubt as to who the hero was. The wily old fox, having outwitted all his adversaries and having spent most of his time gloating over the folly of his fellow creatures, was promoted to the exalted position of Lord of the Council and Chief Governor, by His Majesty. His enemies Bruin and Tibert were destroyed while Reynard returned home triumphantly to Malepordus to great feasting and rejoicing. Reynard conducted himself with the gravitas which his high office demanded and solemnly expressed his appreciation for the love and honour shown to him. He vowed to be their friend and servant forever. With great dignity of bearing, he shook hands with each in turn and they then departed.

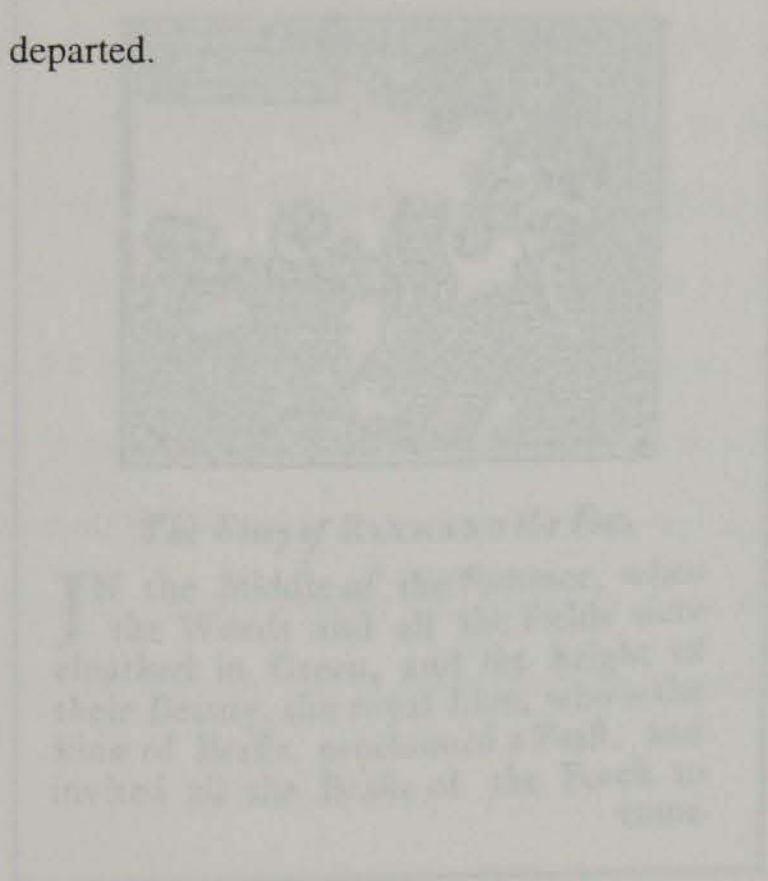


Fig. 14.2. Page from The Story of Reynard the Fox from The Library of the University of Toronto.



*The Story of Reynard the Fox.* 127

urthen, and that the having our wishes often leads us into miseries and misfortunes. Wherefore, taking the Hat and the Purse, he burned them in the fire; and ever after lived in a quiet and comfortable state.



*The Story of REYNARD the Fox.*

**I**N the Middle of the Summer, when the Woods and all the Fields were clothed in Green, and the height of their Beauty, the royal Lion, who is the king of Beasts, proclaimed a Feast, and invited all the Beasts of the Forest to come

Fig. 34.2 Page from *The Story of Reynard the Fox*, from *The Child's New Play-Thing or, Best Amusement*.



## The Story of Reynard the Fox

This chapbook version was an abridged, simplified one, which would have been read avidly by young children, being well within their range of comprehension. The story was embellished by a faded woodcut which showed Noble the Lion, King of the animals at the head of six of his animal subjects and flanked by two others. The story was greatly condensed but nonetheless remained reasonably faithful to Caxton's translation, with two notable exceptions.

The earthy humour which characterised so many of the 19th century chapbooks was evident in the animals' accusations against Reynard. Bruin the bear accused the wicked fox of violently entering his house in his absence and of blinding his children by urinating all over them.<sup>653</sup> The Keyward the Hare story remained true to the original. Isegrim the Wolf accused Reynard the Fox of deliberate misrepresentation. Isegrim sent Reynard to the mare to enquire as to how much her foal cost. Reynard returned saying that the price was written on the mare's hind foot but as he was illiterate, he suggested slyly that Isegrim should check for himself. When Isegrim was about to check the price of the foal, the mare gave him a blow on the head and to quote the beleaguered Isegrim 'almost beat my brains out'.<sup>654</sup>

Bruin the Bear and Tybert the Cat went to summon Reynard to Court, as instructed, by the King, but Reynard duped them both by the enticement of honey and mice respectively. The third set of emissaries to Reynard were Bellin the Ram and Keyward the Hare. Reynard was now about to display a sinister aspect to his character as he left Bellin at the door, while he invited Keyward in to write the superscription to his letter, to his Majesty, the Lion. When inside he 'seized the poor hare by the throat, and twisted off

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<sup>653</sup>*The Child's New Play-Thing. "The Story of Reynard the Fox"*, (Dublin, D. Wogan, 28 Merchant's Quay, 1819).

<sup>654</sup>*The Story of Reynard the Fox*, p. 128.

<sup>654</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 129.



his head, which he put into a little bag and immediately returned to the Ram and hung it about his neck'.<sup>655</sup> In a business-like fashion, he instructed Bellin to return on his own to Court and he insisted that Keyward, would overtake him in due course. When the Ram was about to deliver the letter to his Majesty, the drama heightened for the reader because 'behold there was nothing but the head of poor Keyward'.<sup>656</sup>

The Lion was by now in the greatest rage imaginable, but the enigmatic Reynard arrived in court voluntarily, to conduct his own defence. He answered all the charges made against him by exploiting the weaknesses of his detractors, by evading issues and, by barefaced lying

**'As to my friend Isgrim the Wolf, I told him no more than the Mare told me ... As to my cousin Bruin, he was seeking for honey when he should have been doing your Majesty's business ... The same may be said of Tybert the Cat. And as to the death of poor Keyward, it is plain that Bellin must have done it himself'**<sup>657</sup>.

The culminating episode of the Reynard mock-epic was a hilarious burlesque of the chivalrous jousts. The combat between Isgrim the Wolf and Reynard was arranged with all the formalities of medieval chivalry. Lists were prepared and the Lion as King of the Beasts presided, the knightly rituals were observed but the device employed by Reynard to win his victory had little to do with chivalry and much to do with his own wily nature. Having overcharged his bladder beforehand, he saturated his tail with his own urine, and used it with devastating effect during the combat, to blind his opponent 'when they began to fight, he whisked it two or three times in the eyes of the Wolf and quite blinded him'.<sup>658</sup> The Wolf then begged for quarter and Reynard was automatically declared the victor. The Lion allowed Reynard to go free but with the following warning, that 'if ever any complaint came against him again, he should certainly be hanged'.<sup>659</sup> A purified

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<sup>655</sup>Ibid., p. 131.

<sup>656</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>657</sup>Ibid., p. 132.

<sup>658</sup>Ibid., p. 133.

<sup>659</sup>Ibid.,



version by Goethe appeared in poetical form in 1793, which was translated by T.F. Arnold in 1860. Reynard the Fox served for Goethe as a useful and amusing means of expressing satirical ideas on the diverse passions of men and on the peculiarities of society. This he did under safe animal disguises.<sup>660</sup> The Royal Lion, the voracious Wolf, the sly Fox, the timorous Hare also represented human types and served as a basis for a satirical attack on human weaknesses. The coward, the flatterer, the deceiver, the seducible wife, the dull ursine male relying on his physical strength, all these were 'simply exaggerations of human types seen under a feral guise'<sup>661</sup>.

A copy printed in Dublin in 1749 entitled *The Most Pleasing and Delightful History of Reynard the Fox and Reynardine his Son*, also outlined the allegorical nature of the story when the reader was told that

**Here, as in a Mirror, the politick Statesman may see his counterfeit: the flattering Parasite how to carry himself even, and sail with all Winds; the Powerful and Mighty, how weak it is to rely wholly on Strength, when they have a subtil Enemy, to deal with. And those that trust fawning Friendship, are here convinc'd, That in Adversity, but few will stand by them.**<sup>662</sup>

Just as the *Seven Wise Masters of Rome* was rich in symbolism so too was *Reynard the Fox*, although it is highly unlikely in either case, that children concerned themselves with their subtleties of meaning, but rather read them as very interesting and entertaining stories.

<sup>660</sup>Goethe. *Reynard the Fox*. Translated by T.J. Arnold, pp. iv-v.

<sup>661</sup>Margaret Schlauch. *Antecedents of the English Novel*. (London, Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 79.

<sup>662</sup>*The Most Pleasant and Delightful History of Reynard the Fox and Reynardine his Son*. (Dublin: printed for the Booksellers, 1749). The Preface to the Reader.



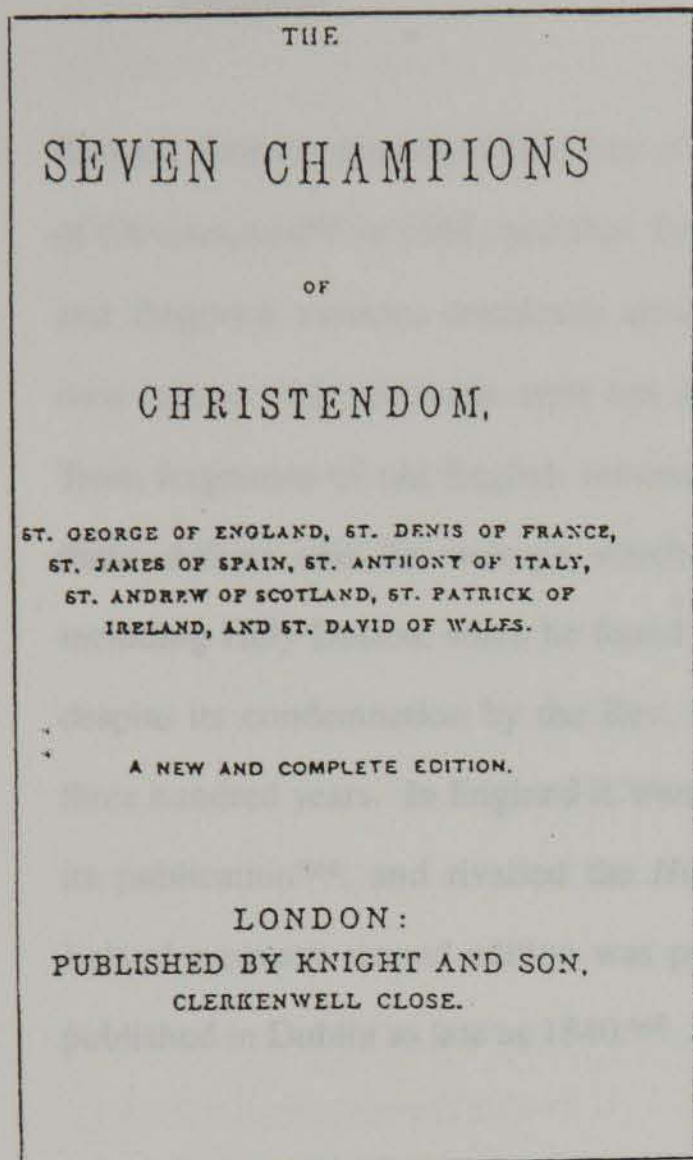


Fig.35.1

Fig. 35.1 Title page from *The Seven Champions of Christendom*. [Richard Johnson 1596-1597.]

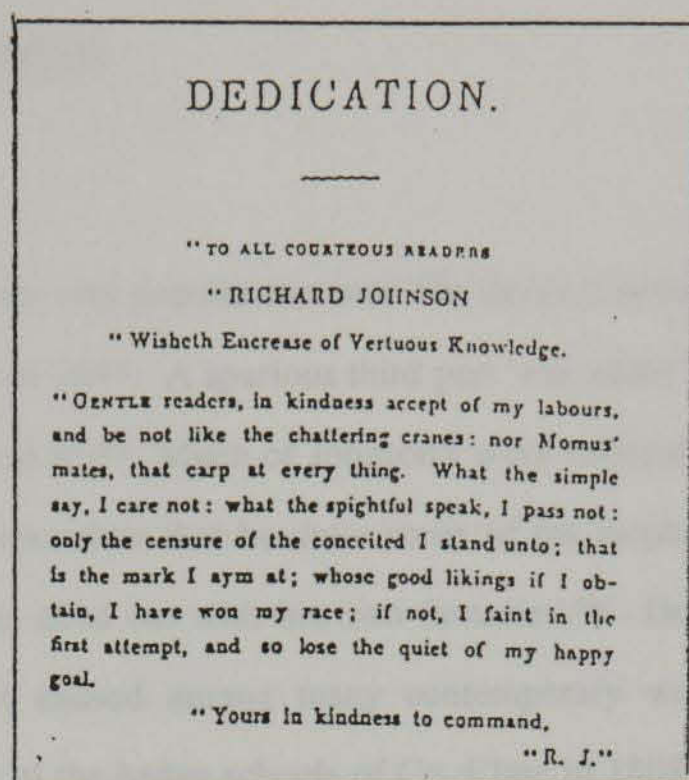


Fig.35.2

Fig. 35.2 Dedication from part one of *The Seven Champions of Christendom*.

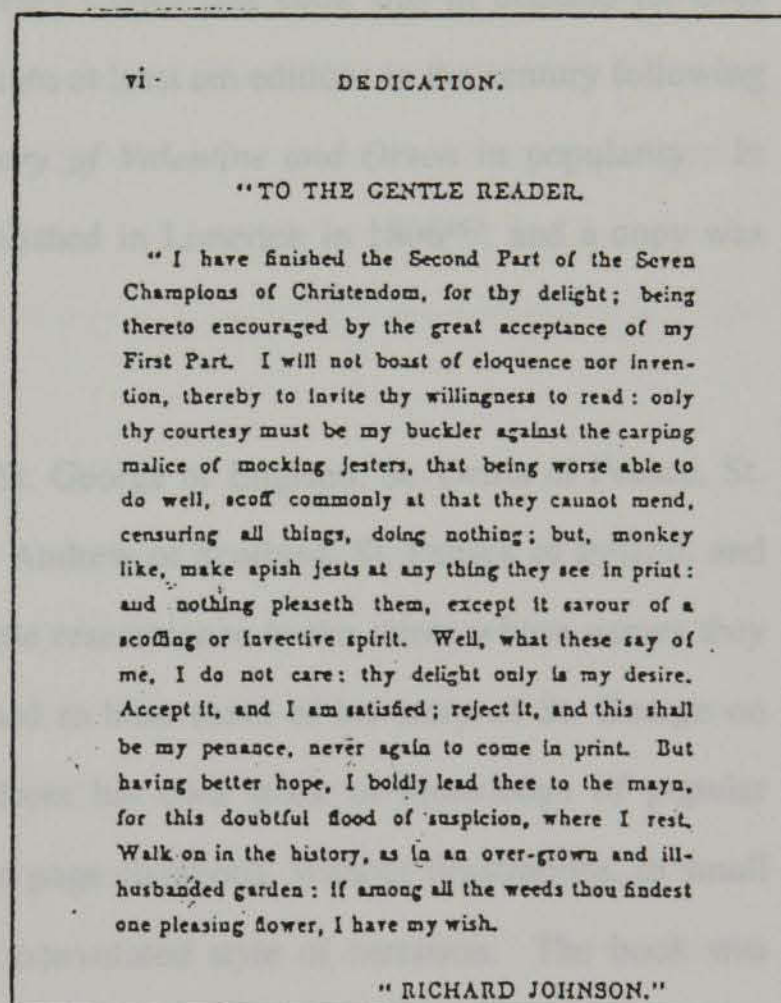


Fig.35.3

Fig. 35.3 Dedication from part two of *The Seven Champions of Christendom*.



(ii) The Seven Champions of Christendom

Part One

Richard Johnson published Part One of this very popular romance *The Seven Champions of Christendom*<sup>663</sup> in 1596, and Part Two in 1597. A spurious third part 'was added to it, and chapbook versions drastically abridged it'.<sup>664</sup> Much of Johnson's work reflected his own unique and inimitable style but it was clear that he drew some of his inspiration 'from fragments of old English romances, eked out with his own fantasies'.<sup>665</sup> Despite these defects and the outrage which it caused among many contemporary writers, including Hely Dutton, when he found it in the hedge schools of Co. Clare in 1808, and despite its condemnation by the Rev. Henry Cooke this book was in demand for over three hundred years. In England it 'went into at least ten editions in the century following its publication'<sup>666</sup>, and rivalled the *History of Valentine and Orson* in popularity. In Ireland a twenty second edition was published in Limerick in 1806<sup>667</sup>, and a copy was published in Dublin as late as 1840.<sup>668</sup>

The seven champions in question were St. George of England, St. Denis of France, St. James of Spain, St. Anthony of Italy, St. Andrew of Scotland, St. Patrick of Ireland, and St. David of Wales. The heroes bore little resemblance to the saints whose names they were assigned. Although Johnson seemed to base some of his story of St. George on medieval legends, he created the rest from his own stock of knowledge of popular romances. The result was a four hundred page chapbook, without illustrations, in small print, with a loose plot structure and a convoluted style of narration. The book was written for adults, and the vocabulary employed was of a higher order of difficulty than

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<sup>663</sup>Richard Johnson. *The Seven Champions of Christendom*. (London: Knight and Son, Clerkenwell Close, n.d.).

<sup>664</sup>Carpenter and Prichard. *The Oxford Companion to Children's Literature*, p. 478.

<sup>665</sup>J.R.R. Adams. *The Printed Word and the Common Man; popular culture in Ulster 1700-1900*. (Belfast, 1987), p. 57.

<sup>666</sup>op. cit.,

<sup>667</sup>Pádraig de Brún, 'Some Documents Concerning, "Valentia - Erasmus Smith School" 1776-1795', p. 81.

<sup>668</sup>J.R.R. Adams. *The Printed Word and the Common Man*, p. 57.



one usually finds in these chapbooks. Adolescents with a comprehensive knowledge of English would have relished this book. It had many attractive features which included adventure, enchantment, bloodletting, and romance to hold the young imagination captive. It would have been apparent to the reader from the outset that the narrative was firmly rooted in the world of fantasy and make-believe.

Richard Johnson showed his patriotic pride and national bias in his choice of St. George, the patron saint of England, as the greatest hero among the seven champions of christendom. His life and adventures were elaborated on at far greater length. He was the saint who offered leadership when a crisis occurred and was the only one of the seven who was never defeated in combat or lured by the seductive charms of female spirits. Every aspect of his life was described in heroic terms from his unnatural birth 'the infant was taken alive from the bed of its creation' by use of 'the proper instruments of incision', to the imprint on his chest of 'the lively image of a dragon', and 'upon his right hand a blood-red cross, and a gold garter on his left leg', to his extraordinary upbringing in a cave by the fell enchantress Kalyb.<sup>669</sup>

St. George's daring deeds were the first ones to be recounted, and the Irish chapbook version of these events entitled '*The Story of St. George and the Dragon*'<sup>670</sup> would appear to have been drawn from this source.<sup>671</sup> His most memorable encounter was his famous dragon fight against a dragon who had been terrorising the country of Egypt for twenty-four years and whose appetite could only be appeased by the 'body of a real virgin, whom he swalloweth down his envenomed throat'. Only one virgin remained in Egypt, and this was the King of Egypt's only daughter Sabra. Her father, King Ptolemy promised any knight who could slay the dragon, his daughter's hand in marriage and the throne of Egypt after his death. The gory details of this encounter between St. George and the dragon laid

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<sup>669</sup>Richard Johnson. *The Seven Champions of Christendom*, p. 4.

<sup>670</sup>*The Child's New Play-Thing. The Story of St. George and the Dragon*, pp. 111-114.

<sup>671</sup>Margaret Spufford. *Small Books and Pleasant Histories*, p. 253.



a lasting impression on the young John Bunyan along with many other blood-thirsty readers, who were told that:

**From the wound, there came such an abundance of black venom, that it spouted on the armour of the knight, which by the mere force of the poison, burst in two.<sup>672</sup>**

The slaying of the dragon was particularly vivid:

**He smote the dragon under the wing, where it was tender and without scale ... From whence there issued such an abundance of reeking gore, as turned all the grass in the valley to a crimson hue, and the ground, which was before parched up by the burning breath of the dragon, was now drenched in the moisture that proceeded from his venomous bowels.<sup>673</sup>**

St. George was now entitled to claim Sabra as his bride but he had a jealous-minded rival to contend with, and in his choice of character Johnson clearly showed his racial prejudice, as he picked the black King of Morocco, the evil Almidor, for this role. Almidor poured poisonous lies into the gullible King Ptolemy's ears in an effort to discredit the hero, telling him that he:

**Overheard a deep-concerted plan of treason, laid between your daughter and the English knight; for she hath given him a solemn pledge of love, and with that pledge a promise to forsake the faith of Egypt ... and will embrace the christian doctrine. Nay, she forsakes not only Mohammed, but her father.<sup>674</sup>**

The king reacted by ordering St. George to deliver a letter to his kinsman, the soldan of Persia. St. George did so little knowing that the letter contained a request for his execution. Upon receipt of King Ptolemy's letter the soldan condemned him to death but first imprisoned him for thirty days as a punishment for not showing respect to the pagan god Mohammed. What followed was one of Johnson's more imaginative scenes. St. George was placed under heavy guard of one hundred men until the time of his execution, having first been disrobed of all costly apparel and clothed in base and servile weeds. In the distance he could hear the terrible roaring of two lions, that 'for the space of four days had been restrained from food and natural sustenance'<sup>675</sup>. No doubt St. George was aware

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<sup>672</sup>Richard Johnson. *The Seven Champions of Christendom*, p. 12.

<sup>673</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>674</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>675</sup>Ibid., pp. 20-21.



that he was about to become their next meal. He experienced the extremes of emotion, extreme fear at the sound of the lions' cries and extreme anger because he was an innocent victim. He turned the latter emotion to his advantage when he became so enraged that he assumed a lion's strength. He devised a daring plan by renting 'his amber coloured hair from his head, with which he wrapped his arms',<sup>676</sup> and as soon as the starving lions thrust towards him eagerly, with gaping mouths and open jaws, 'he courageously thrust his sinewed arms, that were covered with the hair of his head, into their throats, whereby they were presently choked, and then he pulled out their hearts'<sup>677</sup>. After this display of superhuman strength, the soldan wisely 'caused the dungeon wherein he was kept, to be doubly fortified with crow bars'. For the next seven years St. George languished in prison 'feeding upon rats and mice and creeping worms, which he caught in the dungeon'.<sup>678</sup> While he was there King Ptolemy forced Sabra to marry Almidor, and she was crowned Queen of Morocco.

The individual adventures of the other six champions were not quite so spectacular but they all had one thing in common, the inclusion of virgins in the story line, which would appear to have been Johnson's obsession. Take for example, the experiences of St. Denis of France who spent seven hungry years in Thessaly and was forced to feed upon the berries of an enchanted mulberry-tree. Having done so he was suddenly transformed into the likeness of a hart but the trunk of the tree began to talk to him in verse, in a hollow female voice, as she explained:

**By birth I was the daughter of a king  
Though now a breathless tree and senseless thing  
... Seven years in shape of hart, thou must remain  
And then the purple rose, by Heaven's decree,  
Shall bring thee to thy former shape again,  
And end at last they woeful misery:  
When this is done, be sure you cut in twain  
This fatal tree wherein I do remain.<sup>679</sup>**

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<sup>676</sup>Ibid., pp. 21-22.

<sup>677</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>678</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>679</sup>Ibid., p. 28.



When seven years had elapsed, St. Denis regained his human shape once more, having consumed purple roses which 'his trusty steed' had brought to him 'betwixt his teeth'.<sup>680</sup> He wasted no time but struck the root of the mulberry tree, then a mighty flame burst forth and when it was extinguished 'there ascended from the hollow tree a naked virgin',<sup>681</sup> who turned out to be the King of Thessaly's daughter, the proud Eglantine.

The next saint to come under scrutiny was St. James of Spain. St. James found that his life was endangered when he visited Jerusalem and attempted to gain the reward offered by the King of Jerusalem Nebuzaradan, for the warrior who would slay the first wild beast in the forest. St. James performed the feat by killing a deformed loathsome looking boar, who 'drank the blood of human creatures, and devoured their flesh'.<sup>682</sup> He presented the boar's head to the king and expected to be given the king's beautiful daughter Celestine as a reward, instead he was bound by the law of Judah which dictated that 'he should be subjected either to an untimely death or instant banishment as he was an uncircumcised man'.<sup>683</sup> St. James requested 'to be shot to death by a true virgin'. Celestine interceded with her tyrannous father King Nebuzaradan and secured his banishment from the kingdom.<sup>684</sup>

St. Anthony of Italy behaved like a true champion also when he arrived in Thracia, at the castle of the mighty giant Blanderon. He read the verses which were 'graven' over the principal gate which stated that the giant was holding the King of Thracia's daughters as prisoners in his tower, and that the maidens would appreciate it if some brave warrior would try his 'strength against the giant's power'.<sup>685</sup> St. Anthony accepted the challenge and confronted the boastful giant who was soon forced to beg for mercy, as St. Anthony

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<sup>680</sup>Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>681</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>682</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>683</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>684</sup>Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>685</sup>Ibid., p. 41.



decapitated him. Rosalinde who was a prisoner in the castle and one of the Thracian king's daughters, looked over the wall and saw the headless giant and the seemingly dead body of the champion. Being overcome with guilt, she intended to take her own life when St. Anthony groaned 'whereat she stopped her remorseless hand over'.<sup>686</sup> In due course Rosalinde took St. Anthony to a broad pond with six milk-white swans, who were in fact her six sisters that the giant Blanderon had turned into the shape of swans while he was overcharged with wine. He had intended raping them but they prayed so earnestly that they were saved by a miracle. In the case of Rosalinde, he 'restrained his filthy lust' but kept her 'ever since a most pure virgin, only with sweet inspiring music to bring him to his sleep'.<sup>687</sup> St. Anthony comforted her and brought her back to her father's court. The King of Thracia was so happy to behold his long lost daughter 'that he swooned in his daughter's bosom'<sup>688</sup> but his joy was short lived. Upon discovering the fate of his six other daughters, he 'rent his locks of silver hair, which time dyed with the pledge of wisdom'<sup>689</sup>. From then on he dressed in mourning clothes and commanded all the members of his court to do likewise as he planned a visit to Blanderon's castle.

Johnson connected the adventures of St. Andrew of Scotland with St. Anthony's encounters. The champion of Scotland arrived in Thracia where he saw the dead giant lying upon a craggy rock and where he heard the bitter moans of the Thracians and their king.<sup>690</sup> The king explained to him how the giant Blanderon had transformed his six beautiful daughters into swans. Andrew sympathised with the king but at the same time reprimanded him for his worship of false gods. In exchange for his life, the King of Thrace, agreed to convert to the christian faith and St. Andrew turned the swans to their former human shapes. The ladies were now 'the joyfulest creatures under heaven' as they 'passed to the night in their father's company',<sup>691</sup> but once again the King of Thrace's joy

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<sup>686</sup>Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>687</sup>Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>688</sup>Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>689</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>690</sup>Ibid., pp. 52-54.

<sup>691</sup>Ibid., p. 56.



was short lived. He made the discovery that Rosalinde had eloped with St. Anthony and that his six other daughters had left in pursuit of St. Andrew, who in turn, had gone in pursuit of his friend St. Anthony.

Johnson now forged a link between the adventures of St. Andrew and those of St. Patrick of Ireland, when St. Patrick was led 'by the queen of chance' into a wilderness inhabited by wild satyrs. There he heard the cries of ladies in distress and 'espied afar off a crew of bloody-minded satyrs, hauling by the hair of the head, six unhappy ladies through many a thorny brake and briar'<sup>692</sup>. Even though he was outnumbered by thirty to one, the valiant St. Patrick 'sheathed his sharp-pointed falchion in one of the Satyr's breasts',<sup>693</sup> and the others fled in terror. It transpired that the ladies in question were the daughters of the King of Thrace, who had spent seven years in the shape of swans until St. Andrew restored them to their human forms.

Finally, the seventh christian champion St. David of Wales found himself at the Emperor of Tartary's court where he was appointed the champion to fight the emperor's son. Unfortunately the latter was killed in the encounter.<sup>694</sup> The angry emperor got his revenge by offering a challenge to the champion, that if he would venture into the enchanted garden of the magician Ormandine and bring his head back to Tartary, that he would not only spare him his life, but that he would give him the crown of Tartary after his death. This was of course a trap as the only champion who could possibly have fulfilled the emperor's requirements was St. George.<sup>695</sup> By this coincidence Johnson managed to link the stories of the two champions together. When St. David approached the enchanted garden his courage failed him, especially when he saw that it was encompassed by a hedge that burned continuously, with deformed creatures sitting on top of it, and skies which were filled with blazing comets. He then found a sword encased in

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<sup>692</sup>Ibid., p. 60.

<sup>693</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>694</sup>Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>695</sup>Ibid., p. 63.



a rock of stone, with a verse which informed him that if he could remove it Ormandine's magical powers would cease, and he would conquer him. However, when he attempted to remove the sword, he was overcome by a heavy sleep, in which state he was to remain for seven years.<sup>696</sup> In the meantime St. George managed to escape from prison by digging 'himself a passage through the ground, till he ascended just in the middle of the soldan's court',<sup>697</sup> and eventually he arrived at the enchanted garden where St. David lay asleep. St. George was destined to be the knight who was to remove Ormandine's sword from the enchanted rock, and when he did so Ormandine conducted him to the cave where St. David was sleeping, surrounded by four singing virgins. But just as St. David awoke Ormandine died.

Johnson now had to devise a plot whereby he could re-unite St. George with Sabra who was married to Almidor. He thought of an ingenious plan when he sent the chivalric knight in disguise as a palmer to the court of Queen Sabra. The charitable queen had dispensed alms to a hundred poor palmers, for the space of seven years, in honour of the English knight she loved 'named St. George, whom she affected above all the knights in the world'<sup>698</sup>. When she saw St. George she told him of the striking resemblance which he bore to 'the bravest knight that ever buckled on steel helmet'<sup>699</sup>. On hearing this he cast off his palmer's weeds and introduced himself to Sabra, who was overjoyed. She reassured him that 'she continued for his love a virgin, through the secret virtue of a golden chain steeped in tiger's blood, which she wore seven times double about her lovely neck'<sup>700</sup>. She requested that they elope, as far away as possible from her loathsome spouse Almidor. St. George agreed to do so and they set out for the Grecian court to attend the nuptials of the Emperor. It was here at the Grecian Emperor's court that all the

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<sup>696</sup>Ibid., p. 64.

<sup>697</sup>Ibid., p. 66.

<sup>698</sup>Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>699</sup>Ibid., p. 79.

<sup>700</sup>Ibid., p. 81.



champions finally met, after their seven years separation. A solemn jousting was held for seven days and the Emperor picked the seven saints as his chief champions.<sup>701</sup>

The seven champions of christendom were rarely diverted for long in pleasure seeking so they faced their next major challenge together, which was to bring the evil Almidor to book, along with his troops of Moors and Negroes. As the reader expected, St. George defeated Almidor and the christians slaughtered the Moors, who were on the point of fleeing. When Almidor refused to convert to christianity St. George ordered 'the appointed executioners to cast him into the boiling cauldron: which incontinently they performed, to the terror of all the beholders'.<sup>702</sup> The Moroccan peers had no hesitation in electing St. George as their lawful king, as few people bemoaned the death of Almidor. This episode was hastily concluded by St. George handing over the running of the country to four of the principal peers of Morocco while he marched to Egypt to confront the treacherous Ptolemy, Sabra's father, who had been responsible for his seven years incarceration.<sup>703</sup>

St. George did battle against the king and his troops and obliterated the enemy quite effortlessly, but he was filled with so much pity at the sight of King Ptolemy and his remaining troops bearing olive branches, followed by thousands of weeping women and children, that he pardoned the king and sounded the retreat.<sup>704</sup> The occasion was marked by celebrations which lasted for an entire week when a knight arrived from England with news that Sabra was to be burned at the stake for murdering the Earl of Coventry. King Ptolemy was so overwhelmed by the news that he committed suicide, leaving King George to succeed him as King of Egypt. After his coronation, he journeyed to England at speed to assist Sabra and the reader was kept on edge as he made his mission of mercy.<sup>705</sup> St. George arrived just in time to defend Sabra, as the King of England had

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<sup>701</sup>Ibid., p. 84.

<sup>702</sup>Ibid., p. 102.

<sup>703</sup>Ibid., p. 103.

<sup>704</sup>Ibid., pp. 105-106.

<sup>705</sup>Ibid., p. 108.



commanded the executioner to set the stake on fire. St. George fought courageously against the Baron of Chester, who was the challenger, and cut away his arm and shoulder. When Sabra discovered that the brave knight was none other than St. George 'she fell into a dead swoon for joy'<sup>706</sup>. The happy couple were re-united and the King of England held open court for them for a month, after which time St. George, Sabra and a page set out for Persia, to meet up with the other six champions.<sup>707</sup>

On their way they came to 'the country of the Amazonians, a land inhabited by none but women',<sup>708</sup> where the Queen of Amazonia presided over a barren land. St. George played the part of the christian knight by coming to the aid of the queen, who was the victim of a revenge attack by the necromancer Osmond, whose amorous advances she had rejected some twelve years previously. The necromancer had plunged Amazonia into darkness by cutting out the daylight. He also left the enchanted tower 'the mortar whereof he mingled with virgin's blood' in charge of a 'mighty and terrible giant'.<sup>709</sup> Johnson's vivid description of the awesome giant made compelling reading. His head was 'three times larger than the head of an ox; his eyes larger than two pewter dishes and his tooth standing out of his mouth more than a foot'.<sup>710</sup> The encounter which followed was dramatically and colourfully conveyed. St. George was more than equal to the challenge as he thrust his sword far into the giant's open mouth, which made his mouth smoke like a fiery furnace. His eyes rolled around like brands of flaming fire, and the blood issued so fast from his mouth that his courage failed him and he was forced to beg the champion's mercy.<sup>711</sup> St. George agreed to this provided the giant revealed the secrets of the tower which would lift the spell and restore daylight to the ladies of Amazonia, and provided also that he would become his servant, a proviso he would soon come to regret.<sup>712</sup>

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<sup>706</sup>Ibid., p. 123.

<sup>707</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>708</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>709</sup>Ibid., p. 125.

<sup>710</sup>Ibid., p. 127.

<sup>711</sup>Ibid., p. 128.

<sup>712</sup>Ibid.,



Having been reunited once again with Sabra, the champion decided to go for a long walk, leaving her and seven of her virgins defenceless against the monstrous giant, who was now their servant. The 'lustful giant' 'ravished seven of the queen's maidens and afterwards devoured them alive into his loathsome bowels'.<sup>713</sup> Sabra only managed to save herself by deforming her visage 'with the venom of a toad',<sup>714</sup> so that he loathed her ugliness and wandered away. When St. George returned home and discovered Sabra's chain 'besmeared in blood' he assumed that the giant had strangled her and he was just about to strangle himself when the dying giant intervened by confessing to his crimes and informing the champion that Sabra was alive but that 'her bright beauty was changed into a loathsome leprosy'. St. George searched until he found Sabra grieving under the branches of a mulberry tree. The Amazonian Queen came to the rescue however as she restored Sabra's former beauty to her 'by the secret virtue of her skill',<sup>715</sup> after which the couple set out on the next stage of their journey to Persia.

The interest of the reader was given a boost by the unexpected announcement that Sabra was about to give birth, as they made their way through the forest. She had no wish for St. George to be present at the delivery and with prophetic words she compared her situation to that of Bellisant, the noble Queen of France:

**Forsake my present for a time, and let me, like the noble queen of France, obtain the favour of some fairy to be my midwife, that my babe my be as happily born in this wilderness, as was her valiant sons Valentine and Orson, the one of them was cherished by a king and the other by a bear.**<sup>716</sup>

St. George prayed while Sabra gave birth 'to three goodly boys' aided by the fairy queen Prosperine and her fairies, who supplied three cradles for them. As Sabra was famished with hunger after her labours, St. George went to hunt for food.<sup>717</sup> The new born infants

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<sup>713</sup>Ibid., p. 131.

<sup>714</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>715</sup>Ibid., p. 133.

<sup>716</sup>Ibid., p. 134.

<sup>717</sup>Ibid., p. 137.



were left unprotected and fell victims to the wild beasts of the forest - a lioness, a tigress and a she-wolf, who snatched them from their cradles, and bore them to their secret dens. This of course was reminiscent of what happened to Bellisant's infant son Orson, who was suckled by a she-wolf. In this instance, however, Sabra's sons were saved by St. George who noticed the beasts at the foot of a hill 'and his three pretty babes sucking from their dugs and their most unkind milk'. He cut off their heads with his keen-edged sword and delivered his 'pretty babes' safely into the loving arms of Sabra, who laid 'them sweetly upon her breasts'.<sup>718</sup> It would be difficult to find a more contrasting scene, with such extremes of emotion from the violent to the tender, but this was part of Johnson's style. Scenes of brutal savagery were generally followed by light-hearted scenes of celebration or romance. As soon as St. George's three sons were christened by the King of Bohemia and two princes, at his court - the eldest Guy, the second Alexander, and the third David, the couple made their way to Egypt, where they received a tumultuous welcome. Within three months, Sabra was crowned Queen of Egypt, amidst festivals, tilts and tournaments. Even though St. George was the chief organiser of these celebrations, he felt duty bound to return to arms and to honour the true chivalric tradition of knighthood.

In the meantime, the six other champions were battling bravely against the pagans in Persia, a battle which raged for five days. Even though they had only 100,000 men as against the soldan's 300,000 men, they defeated them convincingly and the soldan was lucky to escape alive. Such was the extent of his desperation however, that he commissioned the magical services of the infamous necromancer Osmond. In return for restoring him to his former glory, the soldan promised Osmond that he would make him 'king over twenty provinces, and sole commander of the ocean'.<sup>719</sup> Osmond provided an imaginative solution to the challenge offered, as he devised a love charm to lure the christian champions from the field of battle to a tent of love. He commenced his magic

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<sup>718</sup>Ibid., p. 138.

<sup>719</sup>Ibid., pp. 144-145.



with evil charms which could raise a multiplicity of spirits, which he directed towards the christian army. He caused the spirits to bring about total darkness, followed by a tempest, all of which failed to daunt the courage of the six champions. It took the entrance of spirits in the form of beautiful virgins to distract the heroes and they were lured away from the field of battle into the love tent. Here they lay 'sleeping in pleasure upon the laps of infernal furies'<sup>720</sup> when St. George arrived and ordered them to behave like men

**... look about like men ... will you bury all your honours up in the ladies laps? ... arise, and tear the womanish attire, surfeit not in silken robes, put on your steely corselets.**<sup>721</sup>

At these words, the champions 'like men amazed, rose from their ladies bosoms, and being ashamed of their follies, they submissively craved pardon'.<sup>722</sup> The battle was renewed and the christian champions slew 200,000 soldiers in seven days. The soldan and his petty kings were taken prisoner. Later the soldan took his own life, and Osmond terminated his life also by self-inflicted torments.

St. George took over the government of Persia and established christian laws. He distributed six kingdoms belonging to the crown of Persia to the other six champions. He had now gained conquest over three imperial diadems Egypt, Persia and Morocco, and

**through every country that they marched, there flocked to them an innumerable company of pagans, that desired to follow him into christendom, and to be christened in their faith.**<sup>723</sup>

St. George then discharged his army and everyone was rewarded according to his worth and entitlement. He invited the six champions to his native country of England to take their ease, after so many bloody encounters and dangerous battles. They accepted the kind invitation and when they arrived in London 'their entertainments were so honourably performed'<sup>724</sup> that Richard Johnson could scarcely find words to describe it, he would have needed 'the eloquence of Cicero and the rhetoric of Caliope'<sup>725</sup> to do so. On this

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<sup>720</sup>Ibid., p. 150.

<sup>721</sup>Ibid., p. 152.

<sup>722</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>723</sup>Ibid., p. 155.

<sup>724</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>725</sup>Ibid., p. 155.







## The Seven Champions of Christendom

### Part Two

Part two of *The Seven Champions of Christendom* connected the adventures of the seven saints with those of St. George's three sons, Guy, Alexander and David. The three sons had been sent to three different kingdoms for specialist training and were now back in London to visit their parents, who were both overjoyed at their arrival. The royal banqueting continued through the night into the next morning when St. George 'commanded a solemn hunting for the welcome of his sons'.<sup>727</sup> This happy family outing ended in a tragic accident, when Sabra, in her efforts to keep pace with the others, slipped from her saddle, collapsed and died. The family and the citizens of London were plunged into deep sorrow. St. George left his sons under the control of the English King and set out with the other six champions, on his pilgrimage towards Jerusalem.

The next episode involved St. George's three sons, who were constant visitors to their mother's tomb. So great was their love for her, that they vied with each other to see who might provide the most compelling evidence of 'the truest love to their mother's dead body'.<sup>728</sup> With this aim in mind, they competed to see which of them might devise a gift of great rarity to offer up to the deceased Sabra. This resulted in a family brawl between the jealous brothers, two of whom were poised to kill the third one, when Sabra appeared from her tomb 'a most terrible and ghastly shape'.<sup>729</sup> She reprimanded her sons and told them she didn't want them making her tomb a spectacle of more death, and instructed them to unite and go to the aid of their valiant father, who was on his way to Jerusalem. If they disobeyed her orders, she threatened to haunt them.

From thereon in they lived in brotherly concord and having received the honour of knighthood from the king, they departed the shores of England, to make the journey to

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<sup>727</sup>Ibid., p. 158.

<sup>728</sup>Ibid., p. 162.

<sup>729</sup>Ibid., p. 164.



France. Their adventures in the kingdom of France bore some similarities to those of the seven champions. Scarcely had they arrived, when they heard 'the rueful cries of a distressed woman'<sup>730</sup>, as they rode through a forest on the borders of Lusitania. They eventually reached the distressed virgin who was 'tied by the locks of her own hair to the trunk of an orange tree', and there were 'three cruel and inhuman negroes standing ready to despoil her'.<sup>731</sup> St. George's sons 'sheathed their angry weapons in their loathsome bowels'<sup>732</sup> and slew the three of them. The 'virgin in distress'<sup>733</sup> introduced herself as the daughter of the once powerful Duke of Normandy, who was deposed by the jealous minded King of France and was obliged to spend seven years in hiding with her in the solitary woods. Before the knights arrived she explained how the 'merciless tawny moors' had mistreated her elderly father, and this gave Johnson yet another opportunity to display his racial prejudice.

**these merciless and wicked minded negroes with violent hands took my aged father, and most cruelly bound him to the blasted body of a withered oak ... (grim dogs of Barbary) they left my father fast bound unto the tree.**<sup>734</sup>

Her father died and the knights courteously offered to assist her with his burial. They buried him under a chestnut-tree, 'where they left her behind them bathing his grave with her tears'.<sup>735</sup>

Johnson used the castle of Loeger as a base, and the evil deeds of the Knight of the Black Castle as a vital link, connecting St. George's adventures and those of his three sons. The champions arrived in Damasco, where they accepted the hospitality of a courteous Jew who had fallen from power. He was once the principal commander and chief owner of a magical fountain, so precious, 'that it was valued to be worth the kingdom of India'.<sup>736</sup> A

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<sup>730</sup>Ibid., p. 166.

<sup>731</sup>Ibid., p. 166-167.

<sup>732</sup>Ibid., p. 167.

<sup>733</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>734</sup>Ibid., p. 168.

<sup>735</sup>Ibid., p. 169.

<sup>736</sup>Ibid., p. 171.



furious giant 'made conquest of his wealthy fountain',<sup>737</sup> and removed fourteen of the jew's twenty one children. The six champions took it in turn to attempt to defeat the giant but they were forced to yield to his mercy. However when 'the heroical champion of England, St. George'<sup>738</sup>, fought the giant, he won without difficulty and he freed the prisoners, which proved that he was superior all to the others in strength and resilience.

Beautiful but distraught virgins featured strongly in part two also. The champions came to a low valley, where they found an 'image of fine crystal, the picture and lively form of a beautiful virgin ... all bespotted with blood'.<sup>739</sup> An elderly shepherd sat by the image of his daughter as he bitterly bewailed her loss. He sought help from the seven champions to seek revenge for her death. He had two beautiful daughters and Leoger, the Knight of the Black Castle desired one of them in marriage. The shepherd gave him 'the eldest daughter, but the other girl was more beautiful and the knight wanted her also'. The dishonourable knight contrived a plan, whereby he might be allowed to take away the second daughter as well. His wife had just given birth to a 'goodly boy' and Loeger pretended that she required the help of her younger sister whom she loved 'more dearly than her own soul'.<sup>740</sup> The shepherd granted his request but his plan failed, as he hadn't anticipated rejection of his advances by the young, spirited lady, who stated that she would rather die than submit to his wicked desires. The merciless Loeger strangled the honourable lady with her own silken scarf, and then rode off, leaving the dead body behind him. One of Loeger's squires became suspicious of his master and returned to the scene where he discovered the body. He reported the brutal killing to her married sister and she immediately entered her murderous husband's chamber

**she called him traitor, and like a fierce tigress with the dagger that she brought in her hand, before his face she cut the throat of the innocent babe, and threw it to him on the bed.**<sup>741</sup>

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<sup>737</sup>Ibid., p. 172.

<sup>738</sup>Ibid., p. 177.

<sup>739</sup>Ibid., p. 183.

<sup>740</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>741</sup>Ibid., p. 188.



She had intended killing her unfaithful husband as she threw the dagger at him 'but it rebounded back into her hands', so that she thrust in into her heart and killed herself. In the meantime the champions determined to fulfil the promises they made to the honour of knighthood and to this end they proceeded towards the island where the Knight of the Black Castle had his residence.<sup>742</sup>

The sons of St. George were destined to come to the aid of Loeger's daughter Rosana. They overheard a conversation between Rosana and her dying mother, who sought help from her daughter, to revenge her dishonour at the hands of her adulterous husband. She handed her dying mother, paper, pen, and ink, so that she could write to her disloyal husband, giving the cause of her death as being due to 'his unreasonable cruelty'<sup>743</sup>. Her mother died and Rosana's lamentations made the skies resound. St. George's sons introduced themselves and offered to assist her in her pitiful plight. She explained to the knights that her mother had been Queen of Armenia and that she had fallen in love with the Knight of the Black Castle who treated her most abominably. When he had dishonoured her, she was 'a shame unto her country, and a stain unto her kindred'.<sup>744</sup> She was banished from Armenia and lived in unfrequented woods, where she delivered her own child, with the assistance of 'nymphs and fairies dancing in the night by Prosperine's commandment'<sup>745</sup>. The birth was marked by a fantastic occurrence also, because 'nature had pictured upon my bosom, directly betwixt my breasts, the lively form a purple rose'<sup>746</sup>. This was why her mother named her Rosana, although the reader could be forgiven for thinking that it had more to do with the wild fantasies of Richard Johnson. The knights 'took Rosana by the hand, and promised never to depart from her company till they had safely conducted her to the Black Castle'.<sup>747</sup>

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<sup>742</sup>Ibid., p. 191.

<sup>743</sup>Ibid., p. 193.

<sup>744</sup>Ibid., p. 197.

<sup>745</sup>Ibid., p. 199.

<sup>746</sup>Ibid., p. 200.

<sup>747</sup>Ibid., p. 200.



The seven champions were the first to arrive at Leoger's castle, where they observed the owner walking along the top of it with his necromancer and seven sturdy giants. A long and bloody battle occurred between the giants and the champions and Johnson didn't neglect to mention the gruesome details:

**the giants were quite discomfited and slain: some lay with their hands dismembered from their bodies, weltering in purple gore' some had their brains sprinkled against the walls: some lay in channels with their entrails trailing down in streams of blood: and some jointless with bodies cut in pieces, so that there was not one left alive to withstand the christian champions.**<sup>748</sup>

The Black Knight was on the verge of committing suicide when the necromancer foiled his attempt and promised to use his art to lure the champions into danger. This he did by conjuring up female spirits and invisible creatures who turned into 'the likeness of certain knights'<sup>749</sup> and led them into a trap as 'they fell down into a cave' where they were plunged into darkness and found themselves treading upon dead men's bones. Shortly after this eerie experience, they 'espied a secret window' and 'a bed most richly furnished with curtains of silk and golden pendants'.<sup>750</sup> The temptation to lie down was succumbed to by six of the champions, while St. George acted as watchman. They fell into an enchanted sleep and St. George probably wished that he had also so that he might have avoided the horrors that unfolded. He came face to face with the necromancer, whose visage was lean, pale and wrinkled and whose locks of black hair hung down to his shoulders 'like to wreaths of envenomed snakes'.<sup>751</sup> After an unfriendly warning to St. George he vanished from the cave by means of magic, invisible to the naked eye. St. George took stock of his surroundings, he saw that the walls were sprayed with blood, the bones of human bodies were underfoot 'which appeared not to be very long since their flesh was torn off'<sup>752</sup> but his survey was interrupted by the entrance of a mighty winged serpent of elephantine proportions but with only two feet. This grotesque creature was open-mouthed and deformed. Johnson described the violent encounter between man and

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<sup>748</sup>Ibid., p. 206.

<sup>749</sup>Ibid., p. 207.

<sup>750</sup>Ibid., p. 208.

<sup>751</sup>Ibid., p. 209.

<sup>752</sup>Ibid., p. 210.



beast at length, until finally St. George managed to 'clove' the monster in two pieces so that she 'yielded up her detested breath unto the brittle air'.<sup>753</sup> St. George returned to his six companions but as soon as he sat on the enchanted bed he 'fell into a heavy and dead slumber'.<sup>754</sup>

The magic of Leoger's necromancer was used by Johnson to bind the main plot and the sub-plot. He concocted an evil scheme whereby the seven champions would sleep eternally:

**by his develish arts he caused lamps to burn continually before the entry of the cave, the properties whereof were so strange, that so long as the lamps continued burning, the champions should never be waked.**<sup>755</sup>

Johnson's fantastic imagination reached new levels of absurdity when the necromancer divined that the only way the champions could re-awaken, was if the lamps could be extinguished by water from an enchanted fountain, erected in the middle of the court and heavily guarded by spirits. He added a further condition that:

**the water should never be obtained but by a virgin which at her birth should have the form of a rose lively pictured upon her breast.**<sup>756</sup>

The alert reader would know exactly who was intended for this task. St. George's valiant sons were on their way to the Black Castle, in the company of Rosana who had no idea of the important task she would be obliged to fulfil. On their way into the castle they met an old shepherd who revealed to the sons that the seven champions were inside as they sought to revenge the deaths of his two daughters. The sons were quite shocked by this disclosure because they had travelled extensively in pursuit of St. George and now they would meet him in the worst possible circumstances.

As soon as the gates of the Black Castle 'flew open', they saw the enchanted lamps burning at the entry of the cave where the champions lay asleep. No sooner had they read

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<sup>753</sup>Ibid., p. 212.

<sup>754</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>755</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>756</sup>Ibid., p. 212.



the directives on how to awaken the sleeping saints, which were outlined in verse on a silver tablet, than they set about meeting the conditions. As the knights approached the fountain, a strange and terrible looking griffin suddenly attacked them. While the knights fought off the griffin Rosana displayed considerable presence of mind as she 'took up a helmet that was pulled from one of the knights heads ... she filled it with water, wherewith she quenched the enchanted lamps'.<sup>757</sup> The magical spell was lifted and Leoger with the aid of his necromancer:

**caused two airy spirits, in the likeness of two dragons to carry him swiftly through the air in an ebon chair.**<sup>758</sup>

The seven champions were now wide awake and feeling somewhat embarrassed at having spent seven days in a trance. St. George was re-united with his three sons. He 'was so ravished with joy, that he swooned in their bosoms', which was standard practice on these joyous occasions. Rosana bade farewell to all the knights, who gave her ten diamond rings as presents, and she went in quest of her father Leoger.

Rosana tracked down her father successfully and her initial greeting to him was far from cordial. She asked him:

**Is it thou that art that forgetful and disloyal knight which left the unfortunate Queen of Armenia, with so great pain and sorrow, big with child, among those unmerciful tyrants, her countrymen, which banished her out of her country, in revenge of thy committed crime.**<sup>759</sup>

She handed him the letter from the deceased Queen of Armenia, her mother. He was so overcome by this that he committed suicide but not before Rosana could reveal her true identity to him or before he had an opportunity to express his deep repentance. She was sufficiently convinced of his sincerity to promise to bury him in her mother's tomb. By a happy coincidence the necromancer arrived on the scene, he repented to Rosana for his 'late disgraces' and he agreed to her request to use his art to transport her, with Leoger's body, to her mother's grave. Towards the end of this sombre episode Johnson introduced

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<sup>757</sup>Ibid., p. 221.

<sup>758</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>759</sup>Ibid., p. 237.



a magical flight in an iron chariot, with flying dragons, to take the reader into fantasy land as 'they fled through the air more swift than a whirlwind, or a ship sailing on the seas in a stormy tempest to Armenia'.<sup>760</sup> The grim tale continued as they opened the Queen's sepulchre and laid Leoger's body upon the lady's consumed carcass. This macabre scene was followed by a double suicide, to complete the tragedy. Firstly, Rosana 'took forth a naked sword ... and putting the pommel to the ground, cast her breast upon the point'<sup>761</sup> then the necromancer, having buried Rosana in her parent's grave, enclosed himself within the walls of the monument of the stately tomb 'where he consorted chiefly with furies and walking spirits, that continually fed upon his blood'.<sup>762</sup>

The seven champions paid a visit to the Emperor of Rome, where they were well received and treated most hospitably. On one occasion, they were walking along the Tiber with the Emperor when he decided to visit his daughter Lucina, who was a professed nun, in the local nunnery, little realising the fatal results this visit would bring. The susceptible St. George fell victim to Sr. Lucina's charms, and he professed his love to her. The virtuous Lucina, killed herself rather than succumb to the champion. Her young brother Lucius sought revenge against St. George with the assistance of one hundred knights but he was badly defeated by the champions and 'rather than die a coward, he killed himself'.<sup>763</sup> The Emperor interred his body with his sister Lucina's and swore vengeance against St. George.

The Emperor of Grecia's court in the city of Constantinople was the counterpoint for the last major episode recorded by Johnson. The Emperor had heard so much about the amazing achievements of the seven champions that he desired to meet them. They arrived amidst great pomp and a day of tournaments was appointed as part of the festivities. St. George gave a spectacular display as he overthrew the proud Sicilian King.

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<sup>760</sup>Ibid., p. 244.

<sup>761</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>762</sup>Ibid., p. 245.

<sup>763</sup>Ibid., p. 252.



He also defeated the mighty giant, who was the brother of the Sicilian King, at which stage the Emperor's daughter Alcida bestowed her glove upon the champion. The other champions paid homage to the Grecian ladies, who reciprocated their affections 'that every one had his mistress and in their presence, they long time fixed their chief delights'.<sup>764</sup> Johnson left them indulging themselves in the Emperor's court and returned to the adventures of St. George's three sons. A connection was made here between the main plot and the sub-plot, as the adventures of the three valiant knights brought them into contact with Pollemus, the renowned Grecian Emperor's son. The unfortunate Pollemus fell in love with Dulcippa, a lady of mean parentage, who was denied entry to the court. Once the two lovers arranged to meet secretly in a valley when Dulcippa was carried away by an ugly two-headed monster, known as the Two-headed Knight, a grotesque Johnsonian creation. He was

**an inhuman tyrant, surnamed the knight with the two heads, who was a ravisher of virgins, an oppressor of infants ... This tyrant was bodied like unto a man, but covered all over with locks of hair: he had two heads, two mouths, and four eyes but all red as blood.**<sup>765</sup>

This two headed ravisher of virgins carried Dulcippa into another country, where he intended to torment her. When Pollemus arrived to meet his betrothed and found only her silver scarf, he 'was oppressed extremely with sorrow, fearing Dulcippa was murdered by some inhuman means',<sup>766</sup> so he decided to go in quest of her with his page Mercurio. They escaped from the palace and boarded a ship for a journey that lasted three days and three nights. On route they encountered a galley and by yet another coincidence 'the knights thereon were the sons of the English champion'. One of the greatest accomplishments of Richard Johnson was the skill with which he managed to connect the two plots through a maze of complex story lines. Admittedly, the link was sometimes tenuous but it nonetheless provided the reader with an overall picture. The Prince of Constantinople Pollemus and St. George's three sons became acquainted and they sailed forward together in the direction in which Dulcippa had been taken by the Two-headed

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<sup>764</sup>Ibid., p. 259.

<sup>765</sup>Ibid., p. 261.

<sup>766</sup>Ibid.,



Knight. A poor countryman informed them that the country was called Armenia and that it was ruled by a furious monster, called the Two-headed Knight, who had recently taken a lady prisoner. The prince went into a swoon while the knights pledged their assistance and promised 'never to forsake his company, till they saw his lady delivered from her torments, and he safely conducted home into his own country'.<sup>767</sup>

They hadn't long to wait before they could honour this promise. The following morning they heard the pitiful cries of a woman. In the distance they could see a pillar of stone 'and thereat was bound a woman, naked'. Pollemus immediately recognised Dulcippa 'his lady and lovely mistress' and 'covered her body and took her in his arms, whilst the other knights unbound her'.<sup>768</sup> The two-headed monster approached and the three knights engaged him in 'as terrible a battle ... as ever was fought by any knights'.<sup>769</sup> Johnson gave a dramatic account of the decapitation of the two-headed monster by two christian knights, one per head, after the third knight had 'struck an overthwart blow with his trusty sword upon his knee ... he cut it clean asunder'. Johnson had more to add:

**that leg and all fell to the ground, and the two-headed knight fell on the other side to the earth ... The other two brethern, seeing this, presently cut off his two heads.**<sup>770</sup>

St. George's sons had a clear victory and returned in triumph to the Prince of Constantinople whom they had left comforting his distressed lady. Three days later, they all set sail for Constantinople, that Pollenus might be re-united with the Emperor, his father, and that Dulcippa might be made acceptable to him.

Dulcippa, who was concealed in a black veil and Pollemus who was dressed in black arms, entered the palace, 'where they found the emperor and the seven champions, with many other princes, in the great hall'.<sup>771</sup> One of St. George's sons requested the Emperor to give his judgement with regard to the predicament of the couple. He was informed that

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<sup>767</sup>Ibid., p. 264.

<sup>768</sup>Ibid., p. 265.

<sup>769</sup>Ibid., p. 266.

<sup>770</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>771</sup>Ibid., p. 267.



they had suffered many hardships for one another but because of the difference in social status between them, their parents rejected their avowals of love for one another. To support his claim to Dulcippa and to prove that he was 'the faithfulest knight, against all knights whatsoever'<sup>772</sup>, Pollemus and the three knights took on four hundred black knights in combat and defeated them. The Emperor gave his judgement afterwards, which was favourable to Pollemus and Dulicppa, and the scene ended happily for all concerned, with the emperor being re-united with his prodigal son, with Pollemus and Dulcippa, having received his blessing, and with St. George taking 'delightful comfort ... in the presence of his children'.<sup>773</sup>

Part two ended with the separate accounts of the unusual deaths of the seven famous champions of christendom. The first saint who prepared to meet his creator was St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland. St. Patrick took the unusual step of digging his own grave in advance of his death and then living in it. Firstly,

**he desired an enclosure to be made ... the inhabitants condescended, and built him a four-square house of stone, without either window or door, only a little hole to receive his food in: wherein they closed him up, never to be seen more alive, by the eyes of mortal men.**<sup>774</sup>

Generous Irish people kept him supplied with food which they brought to him at convenient times, and 'they delivered it in at the aforesaid hole'.<sup>775</sup> St. Patrick spent three years in this enclosure, doing penance day and night, kneeling on the bare ground and bitterly repenting of his former offences. During this time his nails had grown so long that he managed to dig his own grave. His final moments were peaceful, as he gently departed this life 'he laid him down in the grave that his own nails had digged, and gave up the ghost'.<sup>776</sup> A chapel was built in his honour called St. Patrick's Chapel and a monument was erected at his burial place. Sick people made pilgrimages to this

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<sup>772</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>773</sup>Ibid., p. 268.

<sup>774</sup>Ibid., pp. 268-269.

<sup>775</sup>Ibid., p. 269.

<sup>776</sup>Ibid.,



monument in order to gain a cure. Johnson rated St. Patrick highly as he claimed world-wide fame for him, so much so that:

**to this day he is intituled one of our Christian Champions, and the saint for Ireland: where in remembrance of him, and of his honourable achievements done in his lifetime, the Irishman as well in England as in that country, do as yet, in honour of his name, keep one day in the year a festival, wearing upon their hats each of them a cross of red silk, in token of his many adventures under the christian cross.<sup>777</sup>**

Richard Johnson consistently indulged himself when it came to references to his own country and to St. George, England's patron saint. His death resembled the pattern of his life. It was dramatic, moving and heroic. Having painted an idyllic picture of England's countryside and the beautiful city of Coventry, Johnson gave a doleful account of the terror experienced by its inhabitants, because of the infectious dragon on Dunsmore Heath. According to the prophecy 'a christian knight never born of a woman should be the destroyer thereof'.<sup>778</sup> St. George knew that he was the knight in question, and with his usual gallantry 'he rode forward with as noble a spirit as he did in Egypt, when he there combated with the burning dragon'.<sup>779</sup> St. George killed the dragon, just as the reader expected that he would but the dragon's sting was to prove fatal for the brave knight. He returned wounded but victorious to the city of Coventry, where he was greeted most royally by all the inhabitants and his three sons, who gave 'him the honour that belonged to so worthy a conqueror'.<sup>780</sup> He presented them with the dragon's head, which up until now had instilled such fear throughout the country, but his own life was quickly ebbing away:

**what with the abundance of blood that issued from his deep wounds, and the long bleeding without stopping the same, he was forced in his sons' arms to yield up his breath; for whom his three princely sons long lamented.<sup>781</sup>**

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<sup>777</sup>Ibid., p. 270.

<sup>778</sup>Ibid., p. 281.

<sup>779</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>780</sup>Ibid., p. 281-282.

<sup>781</sup>Ibid., p. 282.



All England mourned St. George's death for a full month and the King declared the 23rd day of April, St. George's Day. He ordered 'a solemn procession about the king's court, by all the princes and chief nobility of the country'<sup>782</sup> on that day. He paid the highest tribute of all to St. George when he decreed, with the consent of the whole kingdom, that the patron saint of England 'should be named St. George, our christian champion'.<sup>783</sup>

A further one hundred and seventeen pages were added by an anonymous writer to make up part three of this story. It concerned the valiant acts of the sons of the seven champions, in defence of christianity. There were St. George's three sons, Sir Guy, Sir Alexander and Sir David; St. Denis's son, Sir Turpin; St. James's son, Sir Pedro; St. Anthony's son, Sir Orlando; St. Andrew's son, Sir Ewin; St. Patrick's son, Sir Phelim; and St. David's son, Sir Owen.<sup>784</sup>

Several novelty elements were introduced here, not least being the resurrection from the dead of the seven champions of christendom. This resulted from a miracle which took the form of a dream whereby a hermit called Sylvanus was informed that the champions were not wholly dead but could be resuscitated upon the application of the herb bazil to the roots of their tongues. As soon as this was done the champions were once again revived to their full strength and vigour.<sup>785</sup> Other original features were a talking sea-god or merman, a necromancer called Bandito who sold his soul to the devil, although this had been a favourite theme with dramatists and musicians in London since Marlowe produced his *'Tragicall History of D. Faustus'* in 1589,<sup>786</sup> its treatment here was unique. Another skillful variation of a theme was the metamorphoses of a vice ridden people into animals whose natures they resembled. The inhabitants of the earthly paradise Scobellum, a land lush and fruitful, were being punished by the gods for their human

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<sup>782</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>783</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>784</sup> Ibid., p. 283.

<sup>785</sup> Ibid., p. 308.

<sup>786</sup> John Ashton. *Chap-Books of the Eighteenth Century*, p. 38.



weaknesses – pride, greed, avarice and sloth.<sup>787</sup> It took the bravery of Saints George, Patrick, Anthony and James, who quenched the fire in the enchanted Golden Cave, by defeating two centaurs and two giants respectively, to restore the people to their human shapes.<sup>788</sup>

Part three was notable also for its many classical references<sup>789</sup> and poetic descriptions of calm seas and raging seas,<sup>790</sup> features which may well have appealed to John Bunyan or William Shakespeare. However, the most memorable scenes were humorous ones which generally contained giants, who despite their enormous physiques, usually proved to be both weak and cowardly. Sometimes comedy was achieved by using two combatants of contrasting appearance, such as Sir Owen, when he faced the giant Gylon in single combat. Sir Owen was majestic in appearance while the giant presented a pathetic front arriving on foot with only a dwarf to attend upon him, armed with a primitive iron club.<sup>791</sup> Comedy was achieved also by giants with fearsome names behaving in a cowardly fashion as when Brandamore the Stout and Pandaphilo the Cruel took flight after the defeat of the Thracian army by the christians.<sup>792</sup> There were less gory battle scenes, fewer decapitations of giants and more humour and entertainment in this part and the writer also managed to contrive a happy ending. The seven champions however were barely ensconced in their respective homes when the writer decided that they should be 'buried in their former sepulchres'<sup>793</sup> but their sons were invited by the Emperor of Constantinople to the nuptials of his son Prince Rosinda to the beautiful Lucinda. A tournament was held to celebrate this happy occasion at which the valiant sons distinguished themselves. The emperor was so impressed that he presented the nine

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<sup>787</sup> Richard Johnson. *The Seven Champions of Christendom*, p. 347.

<sup>788</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 186.

<sup>789</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 313.

<sup>790</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 348.

<sup>791</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 330-331.

<sup>792</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 304.

<sup>793</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 355.







### (iii) Conclusion

The criminal biographies and books of entertainment provided children with pleasure excitement and sheer escapism. They gave them a taste for literature and a love of reading, just as they had done for the great English poets and writers of the 18th century when they were children, the only difference being that Irish children were allowed to read the chapbooks in the hedge schools whereas in England they were not considered quite 'respectable'. The greatest playwright in the English language, William Shakespeare (1564-1616) could hardly be said to have suffered any ill-effects from being acquainted with medieval romances such as *The Story of Guy, Earl of Warwick* or *The Renowned History of Valentine and Orson*, a work which remained a bestseller for over four centuries. Few would argue that *The Seven Champions of Christendom* which was a bestseller for over three centuries, had a deleterious effect on the puritan writer John Bunyan (1628-1688) or that the chivalric romances did any discernible damage to Dr. Samuel Johnson, James Boswell, Charles Lamb or William Wordsworth. On the contrary they planted in them, the seed of artistic creativity which would grow in time to produce some of the finest writers, playwrights and poets of the English language. Contemporary readers were entertained by the chivalric romances. They provided an escape route from a world of care and strife, to a world of sheer magic and absolute fantasy, a world appreciated by adults and children alike.

Children would not have been adversely affected by the *History of Fair Rosamond and Jane Shore* because they couldn't possibly have read it as it was intended for adults. Even for advanced students of English, it could only have had the most chastening affect, because of its clearly identifiable moral lessons. *The Pleasant Art of Money Catching* was also intended for an adult readership but it was hardly likely to have been a popular choice of book by more mature readers because of its turgid style, complex language and difficult classical aphorisms, biblical references and Latin quotations. The moral tales of Hannah More would certainly have held an appeal for children, although lacking in



illustrations, they were well written in simple language and in a witty, light-hearted style. Hannah More always had an interesting story to tell even if it was of the self-improving, pietistic variety.

Those who found chapbooks objectionable in Ireland were primarily, high ranking church clergymen of all denominations, rival educational establishments to the hedge schools, successive commissioners of education, and members of the Dublin Society who carried out the statistical surveys, all of them supporters of the establishment. Leaving aside their well-documented suspicion of hedge schools, it would be fair to suggest that had the chapbooks been found in the Kildare Place Society schools, all of the aforementioned would have been just as vocal in their condemnation. This was, after all, an age when liberal thinkers such as the 17<sup>th</sup> century philosopher Locke and his 18<sup>th</sup> century follower Rousseau and conservative thinkers like Trimmer and More and utilitarians alike, treated works of the imagination or works of fiction, with the deepest suspicion. Locke regarded fairy tales as 'perfectly useless trumpery',<sup>795</sup> Rousseau believed that there was no room in a child's world for fanciful works of the imagination, because 'children require the naked truth'<sup>796</sup> and Sarah Trimmer denounced *Cinderella* as 'a compendium of vice' and condemned *Robinson Crusoe* as a dangerous book 'which led to an early taste for a rambling life'.<sup>797</sup>

Until the 1740's it was customary for adults to treat children like miniature adults. It was only when Thomas Boreman produced his ten miniature sized volumes humorously titled *Gigantic Histories* that the first book of entertainment for children had arrived. Next came John Newbery (1744) who created a permanent and profitable market for childrens' books.<sup>798</sup> He followed Locke's philosophy which stated that learning to read should be a pleasant diversion for children rather than an onerous task. Childrens' books continued to

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<sup>795</sup>John Locke. *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*. (London: T. Davison, 1801), p. 150. Works Vol ix.

<sup>796</sup>Mary Thwaite. *From Primer to Pleasure*, p. 66. Citing 'Emile' Book II, p. 77.

<sup>797</sup>R.C. Churchill. *The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature*, p. 512.

<sup>798</sup>Whalley and Chester. *A History of Children's Book Illustrations*, p. 21.



have a didactic purpose however and included the obligatory moral, the only difference being that Newbery was a gentle preacher, unlike the puritan writers of the 17th century, he 'stressed the difficulty of avoiding naughtiness, rather than the more intricate philosophy of avoiding sin'.<sup>799</sup>

Hannah More expressed her disapproval of the widespread publication of juvenile books in her own successful book called *Coelebs in search of a Wife* (1808) in which she wrote:

**We have so many elementary books, the youthful mind, which was formerly sick from inanition, is now in danger of a plethora ... The mass of childrens' books ... protracts the imbecility of childhood. They arrest the understanding instead of advancing it.**<sup>800</sup>

Ironically it was she more than any other evangelical writer who successfully penetrated the juvenile book market in England with the publication of her Cheap Repository Tracts (1795-1798). They were read in the hedge schools also, not, one suspects as moral tales but as entertaining stories.

Nor was it just the leading evangelicals in Ireland and England who considered chapbook fiction a threat to the morals of young readers. In France, a contributor to the periodical '*Moniteur*', writing in 1853, noted the results of a commission appointed by the French government to investigate the results of book-hawking, which decided that 'of the nine millions of works which that system scattered broadcast among the populace, eight-ninths, that is to say, eight millions, were books more or less immoral'.<sup>801</sup> A similar state of affairs could be reported from America. The first American writer of children's books, the evangelical Samuel Griswold Goodrich (1793-1860), famed for his much pirated Peter Parley tales, the creation of which he attributed to the influence of Hannah More, saw much evil in chapbooks. Like Hannah More and the Kildare Place Society's book subcommittee [Ch. 6], he too set about counteracting the evil influences of these books by

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<sup>799</sup>Cornelia Meigs, Thaxter Anne Eaton, Elizabeth Nesbitt and Ruth Viguers Hil. *A Critical History of Children's Literature*. (The MacMillan Co., Collier-Macmillan Ltd., London, 1969), p. 59.

<sup>800</sup>Humphrey Carpenter and Mari Prichard. *The Oxford Companion to Children's Literature*, p. 361.

<sup>801</sup>*The Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, vol. iii. October, 1866, p. 72. Cited in Whelan, Eileen T. '*Primary School Readers in Ireland 1800-1870: social and pedagogical aspects*', p. 36.



writing stories for children, in order 'to feed the young mind upon things wholesome and pure, instead of things monstrous, false and pestilent'.<sup>802</sup>

In Ireland the chapbooks continued to hold a strong attraction for children, because the call of the imagination was too strong to be denied and even though the re-print industry collapsed following the revision of the Copyright Act in 1801, to include Ireland, chapbooks still found their way not only into the native schools but also into the newly established national schools of 1831. It took the national education commissioners seven years to eradicate the chapbooks completely from the education system despite having at their 'command resources practically unlimited'<sup>803</sup> [Ch. 6]. No doubt Dr Doyle was correct when he stated that the chapbooks provided a form of escapism for the poor people, a place of refuge from the memory of past sufferings, the pain of which could be alleviated when they read the popular tales which had been 'suited to the deranged taste of a distracted people'.<sup>804</sup>

In fact the popularity of the chapbooks in Ireland continued well into the 19th century. The English novelist William M. Thackeray (1811-1863) recalled how he spent a rainy day in Galway in 1887 confined to his hotel room and how he was greatly entertained when he read a selection of chapbooks which he had purchased on a fair day in Ennis. Thackeray was an astute observer who summed up very succinctly why chapbooks could never have found acceptance in an age which placed so little trust in the imagination. He expressed the view that the '*Adventures of Mr James Freney*', the most notorious of the chapbooks, possessed much to stimulate the fancy and imagination of the young, but afforded little by way of comfort to the moralists, rationalists or evangelicals, who regarded such fiction with the deepest suspicion and disdain.<sup>805</sup> This would account for the strong condemnation expressed by the Hibernian Bible Society who considered such

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<sup>802</sup>John Rose Townsend. *Written for Children*, p. 31.

<sup>803</sup>*Report from the Commissioners of Primary Education (Irl)*, Powis, p. 119.

<sup>804</sup>*The Life, Times and Correspondence of the Rt. Rev. Dr. Doyle*, Vol. i, p. 322.

<sup>805</sup>W.M. Thackeray. *The Irish Sketch Book*. (London: Smith & Elder, 1887), p. 155.



works to be 'foolish legends' with the capacity to poison 'the minds of youth'<sup>806</sup> or R.L. Edgeworth's dismissal of them as 'disgusting trash'<sup>807</sup> and the Rev. Henry Cooke's opinion of them as being 'exceedingly promiscuous and in general very bad'.<sup>808</sup>

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<sup>806</sup>P.J. Dowling. *The Hedge Schools of Ireland*, p. 82.

<sup>807</sup>Fourteenth Report of the Commissioners of Education 1806-1812. App. No. 3. Letter from Richard Lovell Edgeworth Esq. to his Grace the Lord Primate.

<sup>808</sup>First Report of the Commissioners of Education 1825 (xii). App. Evidence Rev. Henry Cooke, 5 January, 1825, p. 820.















