

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-00917-1 - Reminiscences of Literary London from 1779 to 1853: With  
Interesting Anecdotes of Publishers, Authors and Book Auctioneers of that Period

Thomas Rees

Excerpt

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**Part I.**



*PATERNOSTER ROW*

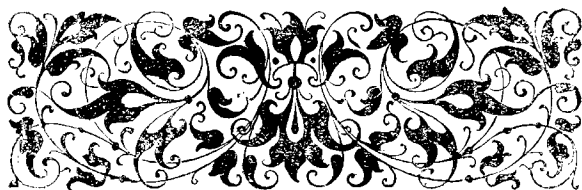
*AND ITS VICINITY.*

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## Part I.

### *PATERNOSTER ROW*

#### *AND ITS VICINITY.*

Paternoster Row, Past and Present, and its Booksellers—Harrison's Publications—Dr. Busby—Charles Cooke—Alexander Hogg—The Rivingtons—Booksellers' Signs—Annual Register—London Magazine—The Baldwins—The Robinsons—J. Scott—Alexander Chalmers and his Publications—The Longmans—Owen Rees—Thomas Hurst—Chambers' and Rees' Cyclopædia—Annual Review—W. Taylor and R. Southey—Authors and their Publishers—Lardner's Cyclopædia—Third Class of Booksellers—Trade Auctioneers—Peter Pindar—Rees' Cyclopædia—P. Courtier—Miss Mitford—W. Pinnock—Ave Maria Lane—Whittaker's—H. G. Bohn—Stationers' Court—Stationers' Hall—St. Paul Churchyard—Francis Newberry—Joseph Johnson—Sir Richard Phillips—C. Bowles—J. Mawman—Thomas Hood.

**N**EAR the close of the eighteenth century, "The Row," as it is now popularly called, contained two or more printing establishments, one of which was conducted by the late "George Woodfall," who had succeeded his father, Henry Sampson Woodfall, well known as the printer and publisher of the "Public Advertiser," in which ap-

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peared the far-famed "Letters of Junius." The latter was still living, and I had the pleasure of seeing him in the enjoyment of a "green old age," when I first visited London. Those daring epistles, with the newspaper in which they were published, excited intense curiosity during the course of their publication. There were also two houses of wholesale stationers; one belonging to the family of Key, and the other to Peter Wynn. The University of Oxford had, under the management of Mr. Gardner, a depot to supply the London trade with their editions of Bibles and Prayer-books. But with these, and a few other exceptions, the majority of the houses were tenanted by persons who were strictly, in the ordinary sense, Booksellers. The varieties of these may be classed under three divisions. The first comprehends publishers only, whose sale of books was confined to their own property. The second might be designated book-merchants, who were chiefly wholesale dealers, and carried on an extensive and important trade with country booksellers; they were also publishers upon a large scale, both of periodicals, under the designation of magazines, and reviews; and likewise works on general literature and science, of the larger and more important and costly descriptions. The third were chiefly retail

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traders, mostly in old books, but in some instances were publishers of pamphlets, and books of comparatively small expense.

In the first class, at the time under consideration, three persons were conspicuous, viz.: Harrison, Cooke, and Hogg. The first, on many accounts, is entitled to pre-eminence, as he took the lead in a class of publications which deserve great praise for valuable improvements in their editorial qualities, and particularly in pictorial illustrations.

It is not easy to pronounce decidedly the exact time when books of magnitude were first divided into small portions and issued periodically in numbers; but Harrison may be said to be one of the first persons who embarked, with much spirit and upon an extensive scale, in such a mode of publication. His first speculation of the sort was "The Novelist's Magazine," which embraced several of the larger standard and popular English novels then known. They were printed in octavo, in double columns, stitched up in small numbers, and published weekly, at sixpence each. The most striking feature of this publication, and one of its chief attractions, consisted of engraved embellishments. Harrison had the judgment to select artists of acknowledged merit, who afterwards rose to distinguished eminence; including Stot-

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hard, R. Corbould, Smirke, and Burney; whilst the engravings bear the names of Heath, Sharpe, Grignion, Smith, Milton, Neagle, etc. The "Novelist's Magazine," commenced by him in 1779, extended to twenty-three good-sized volumes. Its popularity may be estimated by the fact that, at one time 12,000 copies of each number were sold, weekly. The success of this work encouraged Harrison to publish, on the same plan, with embellishments by the same eminent artists, "The New Novelist's Magazine," a series of short tales; which was followed by "The British Classics," embracing the Spectator, Tatler, Guardian, Connoisseur, etc., of which a very large edition was sold. These publications still maintain their credit; and clean copies, with good impressions of the plates, are purchased at fair prices. He also produced a corresponding work, entitled "The Sacred Classics."

The same publisher embarked in another literary speculation, somewhat singular in its plan; a "General Geography," upon a large scale, extending to forty numbers, in quarto, closely printed. He engaged to supply its purchasers, without additional charge, with a pair of twelve-inch globes. Harrison published "The British Magazine," in 3 vols., with beautiful engravings of por-

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traits, views, and prints of historical and fancy subjects. These included also a large portion of Biographical, Historical, and Critical Essays, with Poetry. His next publication was "The Musical Magazine," which, in an octavo size, gave a selection of the works of the most eminent and popular composers, arranged for the piano-forte. The purchaser of the entire work was entitled to receive a square piano-forte. Dr. Busby, at that time a popular musical professor, was employed as editor, and the instruments were examined and attested by him. This gentleman was much employed by Sir Richard Phillips, in writing for the "Monthly Magazine," etc., and later in life made himself very conspicuous, and amenable to severe public criticism, by translating "Lucretius," and "giving living recitations of the translation, with tea and bread and butter," at his house in Queen Anne Street, to select parties of friends, who were invited to endure the one and relish the other. I was among the number, and must own that the display of poetry, oratory, and coxcombrery was lamentably ludicrous. Never did I behold a young man more vain, impudent, and heartless, than the juvenile Busby, and rarely, perhaps, has the diploma of "Mus. Doc." appeared more ridiculous and degraded than by the conduct and ap-

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pearances of the musical professor with his finical son. These gentlemen made a finishing exhibition of themselves on the re-opening of the famed Drury Lane Theatre, after its memorable rebuilding. It is very generally known that an Address was sought for amongst the authors of the age, and that in the mass presented was one from Lord Byron, accepted, and another from Dr. Busby rejected. The mortified and vain Doctor fancied that he could bring the committee to shame, if not repentance, by publishing his own poetry and prose, in a truly novel manner. Accordingly, he and his accomplished son were seen in the stage box of the theatre soon after its opening. At the end of the play the young gentleman leaped upon the stage, with his father's rejected address in one hand, and an opera hat in the other, and repeated the following lines:

“ When energizing objects men pursue,  
What are the miracles they cannot do?”

Here, however, the juvenile spouter was stopped by Mr. Raymond, the stage manager, and a constable, who handed the young gentleman off the stage. The “Rejected Addresses,” by James and Horace Smith, contain a good burlesque imitation of the Busby address.

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Amongst the periodicals of Harrison was "The Wit's Magazine," edited by Thos. Holcroft, and containing a variety of amusing articles both in prose and verse, written by the editor, by Mr. Harrison, and by other authors of talent. It was embellished with large prints, folded. His "Biographical Magazine," an 8vo. volume, contains small engraved portraits, with short notices of each subject, well executed.

Harrison issued two periodicals of smaller size, the "Pocket Magazine" and the "Lady's Pocket Magazine," which were published monthly, and embellished with portraits and a series of small engraved views of places, from drawings by the late J. M. W. Turner, R.A., who eventually became the most eminent landscape painter in the world. These works contained writings of several young authors, some of whom afterwards attained eminence; amongst them were my esteemed friends, the Misses Porter, and their brother, the poet, artist, and traveler. A frequent writer in these magazines was R. A. Davenport, who sometimes officiated as editor. Both Charles and Thomas Dibdin contributed many well-written and amusing papers; as did also Peter Cour- tier.

Contemporary with, and a near neighbour to



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Harrison, was John Cooke, who for many years carried on a large and successful business as publisher of periodical works. He was probably one of the earliest of the Paternoster Row booksellers who applied himself to this branch of trade, upon a large scale. The subjects and form of his books and their illustrations were, however, very different from those of Harrison. Cooke confined himself, for some time, to religious publications, the principal and most popular of which was Southwell's "Commentary of the Bible;" it had a large sale, and produced a profit of many thousand pounds. After the appearance, in numbers, of Chambers' "Cyclopædia," under the editorial care of Dr. Abraham Rees, Cooke published an imitation, with the name of Hall, as editor, of some merit, but inferior to its predecessor. All Cooke's publications were in folio, divided into small portions, and issued weekly, at sixpence each number; they were "adorned with cuts," which were of the old school, both as to drawings and engravings.

At an advanced age Mr. Cooke retired to the country, with a handsome fortune, and died, in 1810, at the age of 79. His son, Charles, continued for some time his father's principal publications; but he soon commenced a new course,

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which was attended with great success. The copyright of Hume's "History of England," belonging to Cadell and Longman, having expired, Cooke availed himself of the circumstance to publish an edition, with Smollett's Continuation, in weekly numbers, at sixpence each. It was neatly printed, and embellished with portraits and vignettes tolerably executed. Contemporaneously with this, he also published a series of the older popular English Novels, with attractive embellishments. The original drawings and paintings, from which the prints were taken, were exhibited in a picture gallery, at the rear of his shop. At a later time Cooke published an edition of Bell's "British Theatre," under the editorship of Richard Cumberland. Besides inheriting a handsome fortune from his father, he acquired a considerable increase by his own speculations. He built a new house in Epping Forest, where he lived a short time, and died, in the prime of life, after a painful operation performed by Sir Astley Cooper. Although my (Britton) finances would not allow me to purchase the whole of Harrison's and Cooke's publications, I bought some of them, at what is technically called "trade price," and must own that they not only afforded me much amusement and instruction, on repeated perusal and examination,