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Thomas Frognall Dibdin  
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# Reminiscences of a Literary Life

VOLUME 1

THOMAS FROGNALL DIBDIN



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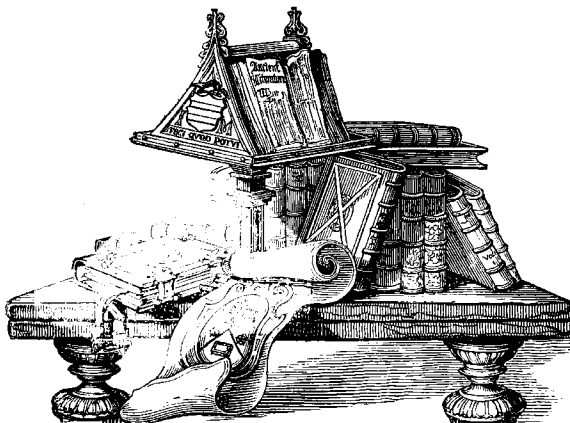
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REMINISCENCES  
OF  
A LITERARY LIFE;

BY THE REVEREND

THOS. FROGNALL DIBDIN, D.D.



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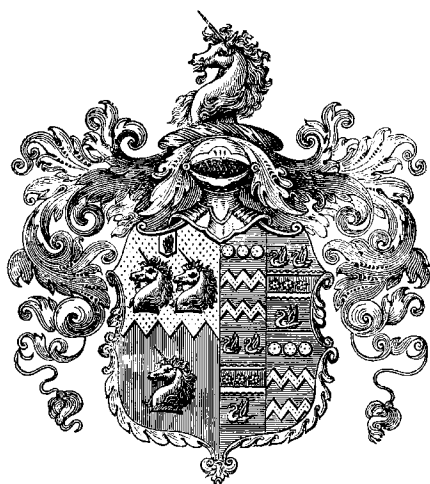
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TO  
SIR FRANCIS FREELING, BART.

&c. &c. &c.

THIS WORK  
IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED

BY HIS

AFFECTIONATE FRIEND

AND

FAITHFUL SERVANT

THE AUTHOR.

## P R E F A C E.

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“KEEP to *Things* as much as possible, and leave *Persons* as much as possible alone.” “Do not over-feed us with Anecdotes of *Books*, but give us as much *Personal Anecdote* as you please.” Such was the conflicting advice, by Letter, as well as by word of mouth, under which I sat down to the composition of this Work. Recollecting however that an ancient Bard of high classical authority had said that “the *middle way* was the safest,” I resolved to abide by his advice; and to guide my adventurous “chariot” between objects too *passive* on the one hand, and too *active* on the other. It remains to be seen with what degree of failure or success.

Dr. Johnson has somewhere told us that *Auto-biographies*, even of the humblest individuals, are not written without some specific benefit derivable from their perusal. I will hope therefore that from a steady and impartial examination of the contents of these



pages, some profit may accrue to the Reader. It must not, however, be concealed, that the task of composition has been at times both of difficult and delicate execution. On the one hand, there has been such an excess of matter, or abundance of materials (from which to make a judicious selection), as to perplex me in the extreme; for a literary course of some thirty-five years is not one of ordinary occurrence. On the other hand, I have had to struggle with difficulties so as to avoid giving offence by the introduction of *some* names or circumstances in preference to *others*; and, above all, have my anxieties prevailed in bringing forward, by way of illustration, or evidence, the testimonies, in the form of letters, of the LIVING and the DEAD. But, if my heart have not greatly deceived me, I am willing to believe that I have, in no one instance, wounded the feelings of the former, or tarnished the memories of the latter.

The *suppression* of such evidence would have been childish, and unworthy of an individual who has mixed so long and so largely in the world as myself. I have lived in vain if I cannot boast something like such treasures as these: and if, by the introduction of

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such “Testimonies,” I have unwittingly contrived to throw my own narrative into comparative shade, I shall be to the full as well pleased if the reader derive additional gratification in consequence. To me, at this period of life, and under the operation of circumstances which have suddenly come upon me as in the hour of darkness and difficulty, I look upon this portion of my “Reminiscences” as upon the bright and beautiful part of life’s picture. I estimate and treasure these “Testimonies” as my BEST —my ONLY wealth: binding them about me as “*ornaments of grace unto my head, and chains about my neck\**.” I am also much deceived, if, in the perusal of some of these letters (for I will not institute the invidious task of comparison between them) the reader be not as agreeably *instructed* as *surprised*. It must not be concealed however that, in committing many of them to the press, I have been deeply sensible of what I have lost by the DECEASE of several of their Authors. Yet, in the length of period described,

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\* See page 300. The only *infidelity* of which I consider myself to have been guilty, has been, in some instances the *qualifying*, in others the *suppression*, of a portion of the commendation bestowed.

it were both unwise and unreasonable to suppose that ALL should have been preserved to witness this public evidence of the value of their communications.

In re-introducing, as it were, my former works—of which the ensuing pages may be said to give a sort of *apperçu*—I have endeavoured equally to avoid a prolixity which might be wearisome, and a brevity which might be superficial or obscure. But some latitude of recital may be tolerated in the account of those more costly and elaborate performances upon which the patronage of the Public has been so decidedly bestowed; and if that patronage have not led, in the end, to the enrichment of the author, it has cheered him in gloom and invigorated him in despondency\*. Upon *four* works alone † there has been an expenditure, and consequent risk, of TWENTY THOUSAND POUNDS. Perhaps the personal history of literature exhibits not *many* instances of greater courage and daring. But I was never willing to believe that an unwearied industry in the production of works of a *good tendency* could ultimately be overlooked by my coun-

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\* See page 815, post.

† *The Spencer Library, Ædes Althorpianæ, Bibliographical Decameron, and The Tour.*

try ; whilst I felt, and yet strongly feel, that the quantity of *employment* it occasioned, in addition to my own, was a species of PATRIOTISM which might challenge the approbation of the wise and the good. Indeed, on the present occasion, the support which I have derived from so numerous and so respectable a *List of Subscribers* seems in some measure to be a confirmation of the truth of this position ; except that, in many instances, the warmth of individual friendship may have been the *preponderating* motive of action.

It was my first intention to have incorporated in these pages one entire chapter designated as “*Flowers of the Olden Time* ;” but my materials increased so abundantly, and appeared to be of such varied and edifying interest, that I resolved, rather than execute such a task superficially, to omit it altogether.

“ Full many a FLOWER is born to bloom unseen,  
And waste its fragrance in the desert air.”

One of the greatest Collectors, in times past, of these “*Flowers*,” was the celebrated ARCHBISHOP PARKER :—whose MSS., deposited in Corpus College, Cambridge, are *yet* to be made known. Here also are deposited

the Original THIRTY-NINE ARTICLES OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, with the subscribing autographs of the respective bishops; of late rendered familiar to us by the very curious and instructive volume of Dr. Lamb\*. Considering that Nasmith was the first to break ground in this very extraordinary collection of MSS. collected by the Archbishop, and

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\* Dr. Lamb's work is a quarto volume, printed at the University Press of Cambridge in 1829, of which only 250 copies were struck off. It is "curious and instructive," as containing, 1. An Historical Account of the Thirty-Nine Articles, from the first promulgation of them in 1553, to their final establishment in 1571, *with two plates of fac similes*. 2. An exact copy of the Articles of Edward VI., in 1553, at the end of the little book entitled "*Catechismus Brevis Christianæ Religionis*." The parts printed in red ink were omitted in the Articles of 1562. 3. An exact copy of the Latin Manuscript of the Articles of 1562; each page, line, and word corresponding with the original, with *fac similes of the signatures of the Archbishops and Bishops*. 4. A facsimile of the "LITTLE BOOK," to which the Act of Parliament of 13 Elizabeth refers. 5. An exact copy of the English MS. of the Articles of 1571, each page, line, and word corresponding with the original; *with fac similes of the signatures of the Archbishops and Bishops*. 6. The Latin edition of Day, printed under the direction of Bishop Jewel in 1571. 7. The English edition of Jugg and Cawood, printed under the direction of Bishop Jewel in 1571. Each of these pieces has a distinct pagination. The reader can scarcely doubt of the importance of such a work in something beyond a merely *bibliographical* point of view.

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F. Andinet. sc.

SALT CELLAR OF ARCHBISHOP PARKER.

DESIGNED BY R. B. HARRADEN, FROM THE ORIGINAL IN CORPUS COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

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that his Catalogue\* professes to contain only the heads or titles of the several pieces examined, posterity is under no small obligation to him for his exertions †.

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\* His catalogue was published in the Latin language in 1777, 4to. with a copy, by Tyson, of Hogenberg's rare portrait of the Archbishop facing the title. It must not be supposed that the contents of this volume have an exclusive reference to theological subjects. Far from it: philology in every department will be found in it; and *poetry* and epistolography in English as well as in Latin. *Inter alia*, look at page 54, for a specimen of the "Romance of St. Grayl."

"*Thanne passeth forth this storye with al  
That is cleped of som men SEYNT GRAAL,  
Also the SANK RYAL icleped it is  
Of mochel peple with owten mys.*"

But, as a whole, this library is yet a sort of TERRA INCOGNITA.

† It had been a joyous day for me, some six years ago, to have been present at the commemoration of the close of the third centenary, or jubilee, celebrated at Corpus, of the election of their illustrious Archiepiscopal President to the Mastership of the College. On that *emphatic* occasion, all the plate left to the College by the Archbishop was exhibited upon the banqueting-table.

The OPPOSITE ENGRAVING of the *Salt-cellar* of the Archbishop is taken from a drawing by R. B. Harraden, Esq. of Cambridge, from the original plate—of silver and gold: being precisely one half the dimensions of the original. The drawing is now in the possession of His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury, at Lambeth; he being the NINETEENTH successor of Matthew Parker. It is most faithfully executed by the burin of M. Audinet.

But although the “*Flowers*” of which I had contemplated the gathering, might not have been of such ancient growth or pungent fragrance as those in the library of Archbishop Parker, yet, I think, from the subjoined specimen\*, the reader would not have ob-

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\* Of all men, living or dead, it strikes me that not ONE would have relished the ensuing “anecdote” more than the late Sir Walter Scott, Bart. :—and I feel abundantly persuaded that he would have contrived to have brought the venerable EARL OF SHREWSBURY, or some similar character—for the sake of his *speech*—into one of his historical novels. I selected this “sparkling bit” from a very grave but wholesome treatise—supposed to have been written by our *Archbishop Himself*, and printed in the black letter by Jugge, without date, in the reign of Elizabeth—having for title, “*The Defence of Priestes Marriages*,” 4to.

“It chanced that there came a French ambassador to the king’s highness, King Henry the Eight (I trust God hath his soul) with letters, I trow, from the French king, not long before that sent to him from the holy father of Rome. This ambassador, sitting at the counsel table, began to set up a stout countenance, with a weak brain, and *carped* French exceedingly fast; which he thought should have been his only sufficient commendation of them all, that were at the table, that he could speak so readily. The matter of his talk was universal everywhere. But the substance was, partly, much noting the *gluttony of Englishmen*, which devoured so much victual in the land: partly, magnifying the great utility and necessity of the *French tongue*, which he noted to be almost throughout the world *frequented*. And in his conference, he marvelled of divers noblemen that were present, for that they could not keep



jected to a more general acquaintance with them.

him talk, or yet could not so much as understand him, to perceive his great wit.

“ Among the number of the lords, there sat the old honourable Captain, the Lord *Earl of Shrewsbury*, looking at his meat, and gave neither ear nor countenance to this *folie* man, but gave others leave to talk, and sat, as he might, shaking head, and hands, in his palsy, which was testimony enough, whether he were not in his days a warrior, lying abroad in the field, to take *air* (qu?) of the ground. This French ambassador was offended with him; and said, ‘ What an honour were it for yonder Old Nobleman, if he could speak the French tongue. Surely, it is a great lack to his nobility?’ One of the lords that kept him talk, asking first leave of this *monsire* to report part of the communication to the Lord Shrewsbury, made report thereof, yet in most courteous manner, with easy and favourable rehearsal, as might touch a truth.

“ When he heard it, where before his head, by the great age, was almost grovelling on the table, he roused himself up in such wise, that he appeared, in length of body, as much as he was thought ever in all his life before. And knitting his brows, he laid his hand on his dagger, and set his countenance in such sort, that the French *hardie* ambassador turned colour wonderfully. ‘ Saith the French whoreson so?’ saith he; ‘ marry, tell the French dog again, by sweet St. Cuthbert, if I knew that I had but one pestilent French word in all my body, I would take my dagger and dig it out—before I rose from the table. And tell that *tawnie* whoreson again, howsoever he have been hunger-starved himself at home in France, that if we should not eat our beasts, and make victual of them as fast as we do, they would so increase beyond measure, that they would make victual of *us*, and eat us up.’

“ When these words were reported again to the French

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PREFACE.

The principal, and indeed besetting, difficulty against which I have had to struggle, has been the constant introduction, if not obtrusion, of *Self*. I have been inevitably compelled to put that "Self" in the foreground, as it were, of every picture delineated; but not, I trust, at the expense of injuring the effect of the middle or background of the composition. The reader will perhaps admit the impracticability of rendering the matter otherwise; but to console, or to reconcile him, he may be assured that in most instances the middle or background will be found to be the *most picturesque* or *instructive* portion of the picture. To keep up the metaphor. TIME, which is of so much use in mellowing the colours and blending the tints of the *pencil*, seems to be not less occasionally serviceable in harmonising the productions of the *pen*. Much that may appear raw or glaring, in the following pages, may, in the course of a few revolving years,

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guest, he spoiled no more victual at the dinner after that, but drank wondrous oft; which, whether it was his *convenance*, because he had left talking, or whether for that he was inwardly dry, the reporter of this tale could tell me no further; but said, that his eyes were never off him [the Earl of Shrewsbury] all that dinner while after!"—P. 128.

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assume a milder and a more mellow tone. The hand, which has recorded the events or characters described therein, will have ceased to act; and we may be then induced to tolerate, for the sake of the *Dead*, what with reluctance we should concede to the claims of the *Living*. Posterity will hold with an even hand the balance of literary merit and literary claims; and in that balance I hope to be found among those writers “who,” in the language of Johnson, “have given ARDOUR TO VIRTUE and CONFIDENCE TO TRUTH.”

T. F. D.

*Exning Vicarage, Dec. 1, 1835.*

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