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Excerpt
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CHAPTER III.

A GROUP OF BOOK-LOVERS AND PUBLIC BENEFACTORS.

'If we were to take away from the Museum Collection [of Books] the King's Library, and the collection which George the Third gave before that, and then the magnificent collection of Mr. Cracherode, as well as those of Sir William Musgrave, Sir Joseph Banks, Sir Richard Colt Hoare, and many others,—and also all the books received under the Copyright Act,—if we were to take away all the books so given, I am satisfied not one half of the books [in 1836], nor one third of the *value* of the Library, has been procured with money voted by the Nation. The Nation has done almost nothing for the Library. . . . .

'Considering the British Museum to be a National Library for research, its utility increases in proportion with the very rare and costly books, in preference to modern books. . . . . I think that scholars have a right to look, for these expensive works, to the Government of the Country. . . . .

'I want a poor student to have the same means of indulging his learned curiosity,—of following his rational pursuits,—of consulting the same authorities,—of fathoming the most intricate inquiry,—as the richest man in the kingdom, as far as books go. And I contend that Government is bound to give him the most liberal and unlimited assistance in this respect. I want the Library of the British Museum to have books of both descriptions. . . .

'When you have given a hundred thousand pounds,—in ten or twelve years,—you will begin to have a library worthy of the British Nation.'—

ANTONIO PANIZZI—*Evidence before Select Committee on British Museum*, 7th June, 1836. (Q. 4785—4795.)

Notices of some early Donors of Books.—The Life and Collections of Clayton Mordaunt CRACHERODE.—*William* PETTY, *first Marquess of Lansdowne, and his Library of Manuscripts.—The Literary Life and Collections of Dr. Charles* BURNEY.—*Francis* HARGRAVE *and his Manuscripts.—The Life and Testamentary Foundations of Francis Henry* EGERTON, *Ninth Earl of Bridgewater.*

THE Reader has now seen that, within some twelve or fifteen years, a Collection of Antiquities, comparatively small and insignificant, was so enriched as to gain the aspect of a National Museum of which all English-speaking men might

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be proud, and mere fragments of which enlightened Foreign Sovereigns were under sore temptation to covet. He has seen, also, that the praise of so striking a change was due, in the main, to the public spirit and the liberal endeavours of a small group of antiquarians and scholars. They were, most of them, men of high birth, and of generous education. They were, in fact, precisely such men as, in the jargon of our present day, it is too much the mode to speak of as the antitheses of 'the People,' although in earlier days men of that strain were thought to be part of the very core and kernel of a nation.

But if it be undeniably true that the chief and primary merit of so good a piece of public service was due to the Hamiltons, Towneleys, Elgins, and Knights of the last generation, it is also true that the Public, through their representatives, did, at length, join fairly in the work by bearing their part of the cost, though they could share neither the enterprise, the self-denial, nor the wearing toils, which the work had exacted.

Now that the story turns to another department of the National Museum, we find that the same primary and salient characteristic—private liberality of individuals, as distinguished from public support by the Kingdom—still holds good. But we have to wait a very long time indeed, before we perceive public effort at length falling into rank with private, in the shape of parliamentary grants for the purchase of books, calculated even upon a rough approximation towards equality.

As Cotton, Sloane, Harley, and Arthur Edwards, were the first founders of the Library, so Birch, Musgrave, Tyrwhitt, Cracherode, Banks, and Hoare, were its chief augmentors, until almost ninety years had elapsed since the Act of Organization. Of the Collections of those

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More information

ten benefactors, eight came by absolute gift. For the other two, much less than one half of their value was returned to the representatives of the founders. And that, it has been shown, was provided, not by a parliamentary grant, but out of the profits of a lottery.

Bequest of Dr. Thomas Birch, January, 1766.

The first important addition to the Library, subsequent to those gifts which have been mentioned in a preceding chapter as nearly contemporaneous with the creation of the Museum, was made by the Will of Dr. Thomas Birch, one of the original Trustees. It comprised a valuable series of manuscripts, rich in collections on the history, and especially the biographical history, of the realm, and a considerable number of printed books of a like character.

Dr. Birch was born in 1705, and died on the ninth of January, 1766. He was one of the many friends of Sir Hans Sloane, in the later years of Sir Hans' life. When the Museum was in course of organization, Birch acted not only as a zealous Trustee, but he occasionally supplied the place of Dr. Morton as Secretary. His literary productions have real and enduring value, though their value would probably have been greater had their number been less. His activity is sufficiently evidenced by the works which he printed, but can only be measured when the large manuscript collections which he bequeathed are taken into the account. Very few scholars will now be inclined to echo Horace Walpole's inquiry—made when he saw the Catalogue of the Birch MSS.—'Who cares for the correspondence of Dr. Birch?'

Bequest of David Garrick, January, 1779.

Soon after the receipt of the Birch Collection, a choice assemblage of English plays was bequeathed to the Museum by David Garrick. Its formation had been one of the favourite relaxations of the great actor. And the study of

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Excerpt
More information

the plays gathered by GARRICK had a large share in moulding the tastes and the literary career of Charles LAMB. Thence he drew the materials of the volume of *Specimens* which has made the rich stores of the early drama known to thousands of readers who but for it, and for the Collection which enabled him to compile it, could have formed no fair or adequate idea of an important epoch in our literature.

Benefactions of Sir W. Musgrave.

Sir William MUSGRAVE was another early Trustee whose gifts to the Public illustrated the wisdom of SLOANE's plan for the government of his Museum and of its parliamentary adoption. MUSGRAVE shared the predilection of Dr. BIRCH for the study of British biography and archæology, and he had larger means for amassing its materials. He was descended from a branch of the Musgraves of Edenhall, and was the second son of Sir Richard MUSGRAVE of Hayton Castle, to whom he eventually succeeded. He made large and very curious manuscript collections for the history of portrait-painting in England (now *Additional MSS.* 6391-6393), and also on many points of the administrative and political history of the country. He was a zealous Trustee of the British Museum, and in his lifetime made several additions to its stores. On his death, in 1799, all his manuscripts were bequeathed to the Museum, together with a Library of printed British Biography—more complete than anything of its kind theretofore collected.

This last-named Collection extended (if we include a partial and previous gift made in 1790) to nearly two thousand volumes, and it probably embraced much more than twice that number of separate works. For it was rich in those biographical ephemera which are so precious to the historical inquirer, and often so difficult of obtainment, when needed. Nearly at the same period (1786) a

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More information

valuable Collection of classical authors, in about nine hundred volumes, was bequeathed by another worthy Trustee, Mr. Thomas Tyrwhitt, distinguished both as a scholar and as the Editor of Chaucer.

The Bequest of the Cracherode Collection.

But all the early gifts to the Museum, made after its parliamentary organization, were eclipsed, at the close of the century, by the bequest of the Cracherode Collections. That bequest comprised a very choice library of printed books; a cabinet of coins, medals, and gems; and a series of original drawings by the great masters, chosen, like the books and the coins, with exquisite taste, and, as the auctioneers say, quite regardless of expense. It also included a small but precious cabinet of minerals.

1799.

The collector of these rarities was wont to speak of them with great modesty. They are, he would say, mere 'specimen collections.' But to amass them had been the chief pursuit of a quiet and blameless life.

Life and Character of Mr. Mordaunt Cracherode.

Clayton Mordaunt Cracherode was born in London about the year 1730. And he was 'a Londoner' in a sense and degree to which, in this railway generation, it would be hard to find a parallel. Among the rich possessions which he inherited from Colonel Cracherode, his father—whose fortune had been gathered, or increased, during an active career in remote parts of the world—was an estate in Hertfordshire, on which there grew a certain famous chestnut-tree, the cynosure of all the country-side for its size and antiquity. This tree was never seen by its new owner, save as he saw the poplars of Lombardy, or the cedars of Lebanon—in an etching. In the course of a long life he never reached a greater distance from the metropolis than Oxford. He never mounted a horse. The ordinary extent of his travels, during the prime years of a long life, was from Queen Square, in Westminster, to Clapham. For

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Excerpt
More information

almost forty years it was his daily practice to walk from his house to the shop of ELMSLY, a bookseller in the Strand, and thence to the still more noted shop of Tom PAYNE, by 'the Mews-Gate.' Once a week, he varied the daily walk by calling on MUDGE, a chronometer-maker, to get his watch regulated. His excursions had, indeed, one other and not infrequent variety—dictated by the calls of Christian benevolence—but of these he took care to have no note taken.

Early in life, and probably to meet his father's wish, he received holy orders, but he never accepted any preferment in the Church. He took the restraints of the clerical profession, without any of its emoluments. His classical attainments were considerable, but the sole publication of a long life of leisure was a university prize poem, printed in the *Carmina Quadragesimalia* of 1748. The only early tribulation of a life of idyllic peacefulness was a dread that he might possibly be called upon, at a coronation, to appear in public as the King's cupbearer—his manor of Great Wymondley being held by a tenure of grand-serjeantry in that onerous employment. Its one later tinge of bitterness lay in the dread of a French invasion. These may seem small sorrows, to men who have had a full share in the stress and anguish of the battle of life. But the weight of a burden is no measure of the pain it may inflict. Mr. CRACHERODE looked to his possible cupbearership, with apprehension just as acute as that with which COWPER contemplated the awful task of reading in public the Journals of the House of Lords. And the sleepless nights which long afterwards were brought to CRACHERODE by the horrors of the French revolutionary war were caused less by personal fears than by the dread of public calamities, more terrible than death. During one

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Excerpt
More information

year of the devastations on the other side of the Channel, chronicled by our daily papers, Mr. CRACHERODE was thought by his friends to have 'aged' full ten years in his aspect.

The one active and incessant pursuit of this noiseless career was the gathering together of the most choice books, the finest coins and gems, the most exquisite drawings and prints, which money could buy, without the toils of travel. Our Collector's liberality of purse enabled him to profit, at his ease, by the truth expressed in one of the wise maxims of John SELDEN:—'The giving a dealer his price hath this advantage;—he that will do so shall have the refusal of whatsoever comes to the dealer's hand, and so by that means get many things which otherwise he never should have seen.' The enjoyment—almost a century ago—of six hundred pounds a year in land, and of nearly one hundred thousand pounds invested in the 'sweet simplicity' of the three per cents., enabled Mr. CRACHERODE to outbid a good many competitors. His natural wish that what he had so eagerly gathered should not be scattered to the four winds on the instant he was carried to his grave, and also the public spirit which dictated the choice of a national repository as the permanent abode of his Collections, has already made that long course of daily visits to the London dealers in books, coins, and drawings, fruitful of good to hundreds of poorer students and toilers, during more than two generations. From stores such as Mr. CRACHERODE's—when so preserved—many a useful labourer gets part of his best equipment for the tasks of his life. He, too, would enjoy a visit to the 'PAYNES' and the 'ELMSLYS' of the day as keenly as any book-lover that ever lived, but is too often, perhaps, obliged to content himself with an outside glance at the windows. Public libraries put him practi-

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More information

cally on a level with the wealthiest connoisseur. When, as in this case—and in a hundred more—such libraries derive much of their best possessions from private liberality, a life like Mordaunt Cracherode's has its ample vindication, and the sting is taken out of all such sarcasms as that which was levelled — in the shape of the query, 'In all that big library is there a single book written by the Collector himself?'—by some snarling epistolary critic, when commenting on a notice that appeared in *The Times* on the occasion of Mr. Cracherode's death.

On another point our Collector was exposed to the shafts of sarcastic comment. He loved a good book to be printed on the very choicest material, and clothed in the richest fashion. The treasure within would not incline him to tolerate blemishes without.—

'Nusquam blatta, vel inquinata charta,
Sed margo calami notæque purus,
Margo latior, albus integerque,
Nec non copia larga pergainenæ.—
Adsint Virgilius, paterque Homerus,
Mundi pumice, purpuraque culti;
Et quicquid magica quasi arte freti
Faustusque Upilioque præstiterunt.
. . . . . .
Hic sit qui nitet arte Montacuti,
Aut Paini, Deromique junioris;
Illic cui decus arma sunt Thuani,
Aut regis breve lilium caduci.'

In Cracherode's eyes, external charms such as these were scarcely less essential than the intrinsic worth of the author. 'Large paper' and broad pure margins are fancies which it needs not much culture or much wit to banter. But now and then, they are ridiculed by those who have just as little capacity to judge the pith and

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Excerpt
More information

substance of books, as of taste to appreciate beauty in their outward form.*

The solidity of those three per cents., and the plodding perseverance of their owner, were in time rewarded by the collection (1) of a library containing only four thousand five hundred volumes, but of which probably every volume —on an average of the whole—was worth, in mercantile eyes, some three pounds; (2) of seven portfolios of drawings, still more choice; (3) of a hundred portfolios of prints, many of which were almost priceless; and (4) of coins and gems—such as the cameo of a lion on sardonyx, and the intaglio of the *Discobolos*—worthy of an imperial cabinet.

The ruling passion kept its strength to the last. An agent was buying prints, for addition to the store, when the Collector was dying. About four days before his death, Mr. Cracherode mustered strength to pay a farewell visit to the old shop at the Mews-Gate. He put a finely printed *Terence* (from the press of Foulis) into one pocket, and a large paper *Cebes* into another; and then,—with a longing look at a certain choice *Homer*, in the course of which he mentally, and somewhat doubtingly, balanced its charms with those of its twin brother in Queen Square,—parted finally from the daily haunt of forty peripatetic and studious years.

Clayton Mordaunt Cracherode died towards the close of 1799. He bequeathed the whole of his collections to the Nation, with the exception of two volumes of books. A polyglot *Bible* was given to Shute Barrington, Bishop

* "Or must I, as a wit, with learned air
Like Doctor Dibdin, to Tom Payne's repair,
Meet Cyril Jackson and mild Cracherode there?
'Hold!' cries Tom Payne, 'that margin let me measure,
And rate the separate value of the treasure'
Eager they gaze. 'Well, Sirs, the feat is done.
Cracherode's *Poetæ Principes* have won!"
Mathias, *Pursuits of Literature*.

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Excerpt
More information

of Durham; a princeps *Homer* to Cyril Jackson, Dean of Christ Church. Those justly venerated men were his two dearest friends.

The next conspicuous donor to the Library of the British Museum was a contemporary of the learned recluse of Queen Square, but one whose life was passed in the thick of that worldly turmoil and conflict of which Mr. Crache-rode had so mortal a dread. To the Collector of the 'Lansdowne Manuscripts,' political excitement was the congenial air in which it was indeed life to live. But he, also, was a man beloved by all who had the privilege of his intimate friendship.

The Collector of the Lansdowne Manuscripts.

William Petty Fitzmaurice, third Earl of Shelburne, and first Marquess of Lansdowne, was born in Dublin, in May, 1737. He was the son of John, Earl of Shelburne in the peerage of Ireland, and afterwards Baron Wycombe in the peerage of Great Britain. The Marquess's father united the possessions of the family founded by Sir William Petty with those which the Irish wars had left to the ancient line of Fitzmaurice.

William, Earl of Shelburne, was educated by private tutors, and then sent to Christ Church, Oxford. He left the University early, to take (in or about the year 1756) a commission in the Guards. He was present in the battles of Campen and of Minden. At Minden, in particular, he evinced distinguished bravery. In May, 1760, and again in April, 1761, he was elected by the burgesses of High Wycombe to represent them in the House of Commons. But the death of Earl John, in the middle of 1761, called his son to take his seat in the House of Lords. He soon evinced the possession of powers eminently fitted to shine in Parliament. The impetuosity he had shown on the field

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