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978-1-108-04777-7 - *Typographia*, or *The Printers' Instructor*: Volume 1

John Johnson

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Typographia, or The Printers' Instructor

John Johnson (1777–1848) worked for a private press at Lee Priory, Kent, which published limited editions of poetry, prose and pamphlets, but was not financially successful. Moving to London in 1824, Johnson produced this two-volume work on printing, which had become a popular topic in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. As with Hansard's *Typographia* of 1825 (also available in this series), his knowledge of the history of printing is largely derived from secondary works, particularly those of Dibdin. The work was published in several formats, and contemporary reviewers noted Johnson's highly ornate typography and use of engravings more than the contents. Volume 1, in which Johnson was assisted by Richard Thomson, Librarian of the London Institution, covers the history of printing. It lists printers working in England up to the end of the sixteenth century, with bibliographical details of titles known to have been published by them.

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Typographia,
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VOLUME 1

JOHN JOHNSON



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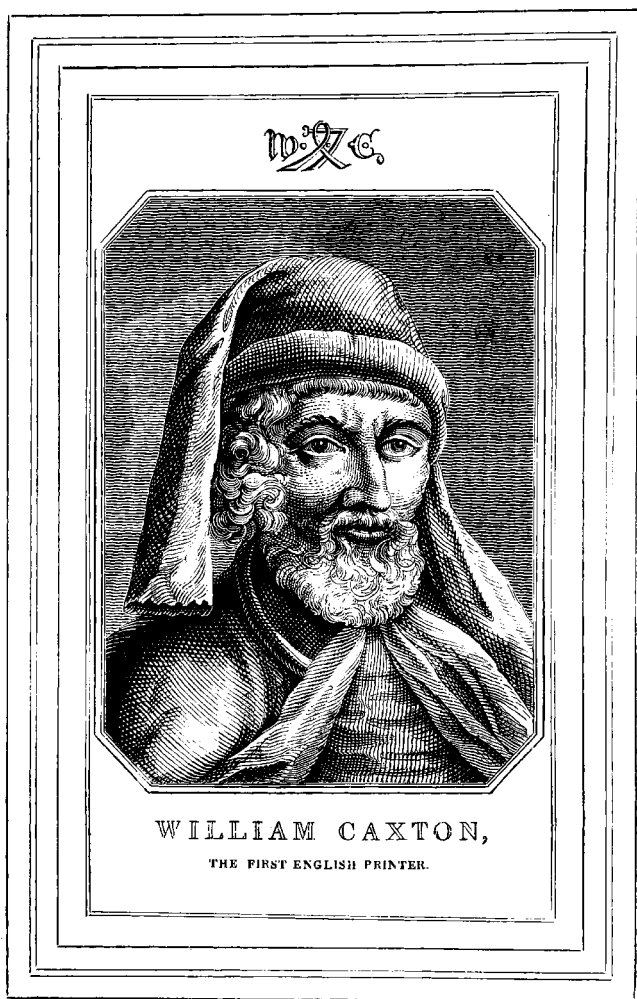
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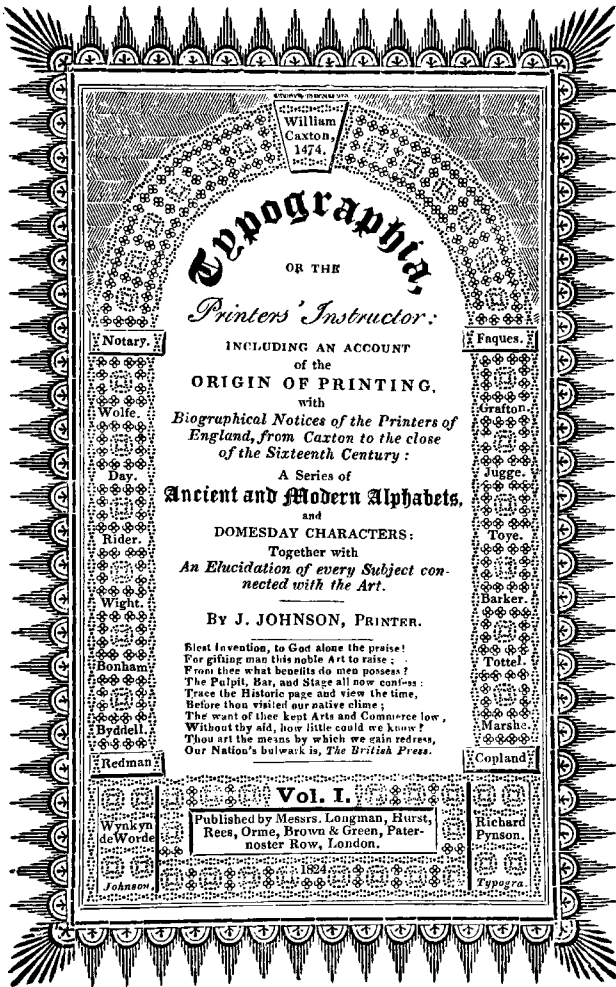
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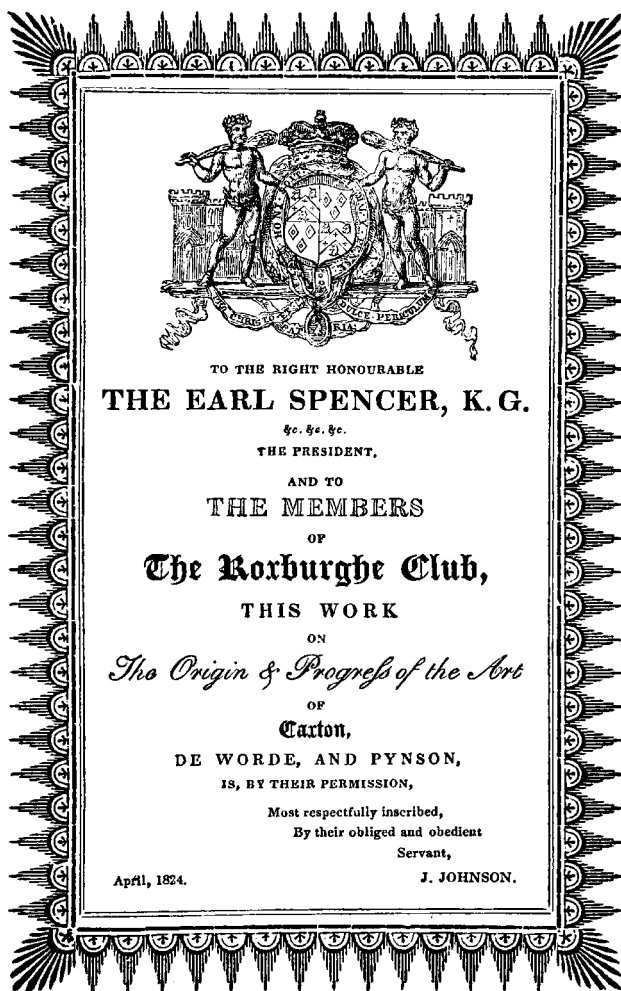
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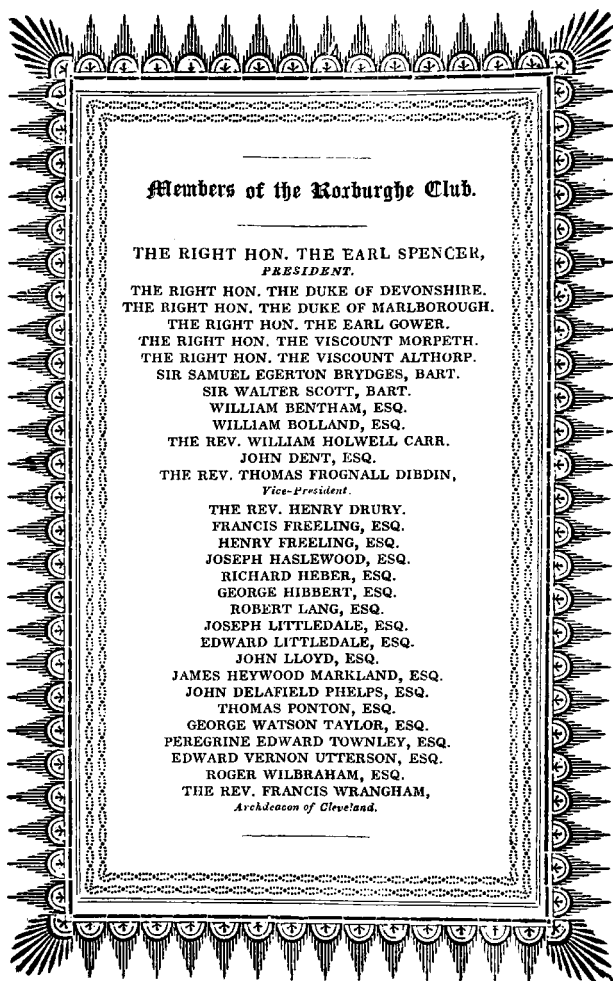


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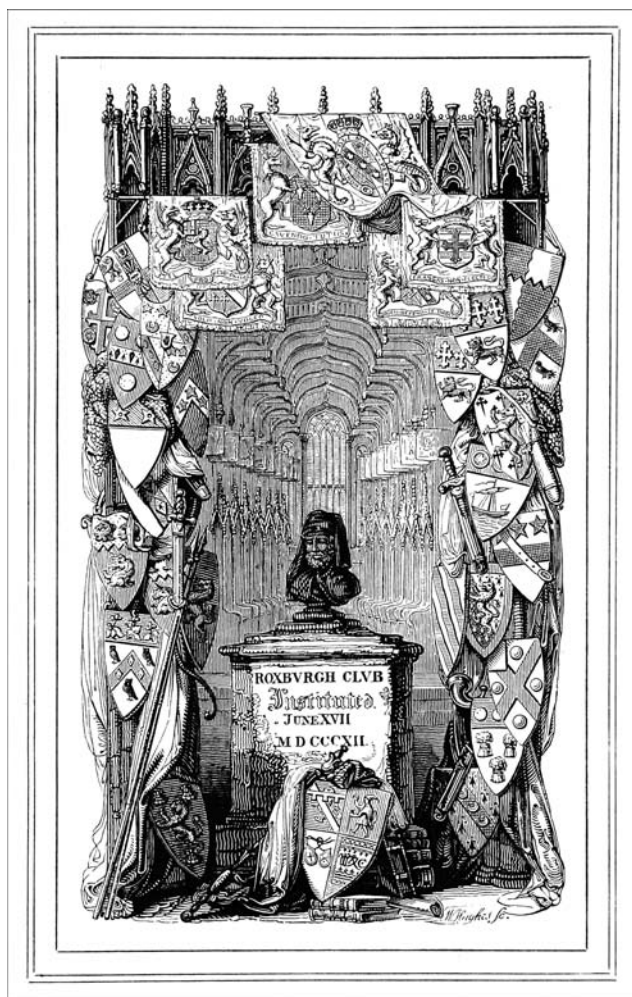
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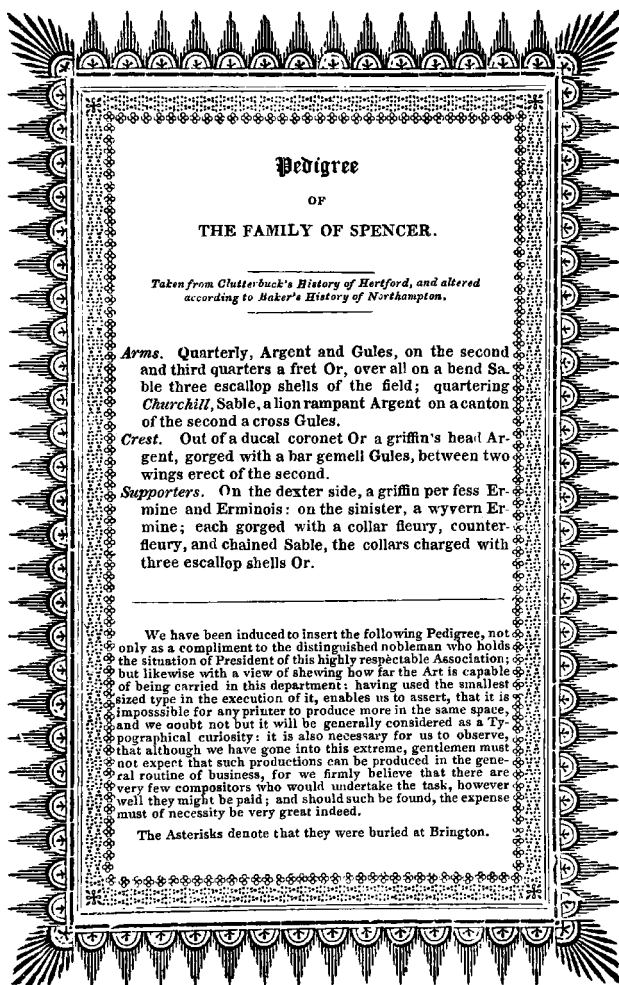
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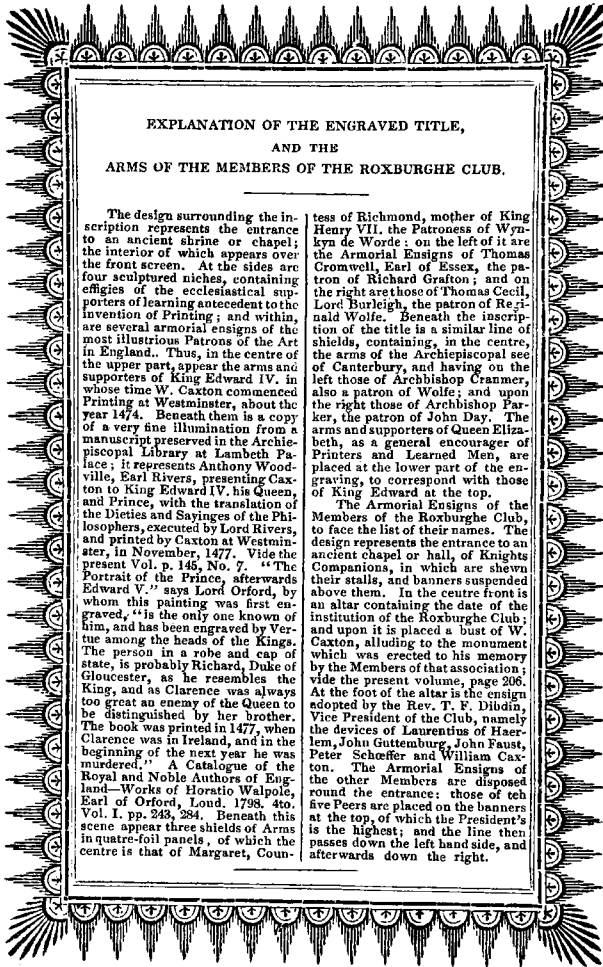


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PREFACE.

Now, Reader, ere this work you scan,
 Resolve to prove a candid man:
 Not, Critic like, seek faults to find,
 And ev'ry beauty leave behind;
 But, should a weed appear in sight,
 A flower cull to make it right;
 Act thus, you'll prove a candid soul,
 Judge not a portion, but the whole;
 This done, presuming you think fit,
 That others should in judgment sit;
 Let Justice at the scales preside,
 And strictest Truth the case decide.

HOWEVER Fancy may paint to our imaginations the importance of this "Divine Art," in what glowing colours must the picture afterwards appear, when we have explored the records of Time, and traced (in the Historic page) the various discoveries which have been made for the benefit of mankind: when these are contrasted with that which gave them birth, must they not sink (however great each may individually appear) into comparative insignificance!

We beg the candid and enquiring Reader to draw a parallel between the present state of society and that of the dark ages, in which mankind had so long remained under the arbitrary dominion of Idolatry and Priestcraft, when the devoted bigots, bound to her iron car with adamantine chains, were compelled to follow in her train: but no sooner did this bright luminary (the Press) burst upon Europe, than its brilliant rays, like the meridian sun, not only enlightened and invigorated mankind, but also dispelled the murky clouds which had for ages cemented the bonds of Ignorance and Superstition. How trebly blest and highly-favoured ought Britons to consider themselves, that, notwithstanding all the restrictions under which the Press in this country at present labours, we have yet to boast,

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through the blessings of a Divine Providence, more real freedom than any of our surrounding neighbours ever did, or even to this day enjoy.

We are now arrived at the period when we are called upon to put the seal to our labours in the present instance: that we have great reason to rejoice at this event, we feel persuaded the majority of our Readers would readily admit, if they were in possession of only a small portion of the difficulties with which we have had to contend; and although they were chiefly of a pecuniary nature, yet through them many others were produced; and no sooner had we overcome one barrier, than others equally formidable presented themselves to our view, every one of which was almost sufficient to have deterred us from proceeding further; yet, notwithstanding these trying circumstances, we are proud to state, that although we have had to ascend mountain after mountain for the last six years, yet our ardour has never once abated, and our minds, soaring far above all difficulties, were uniformly steady to the point, being anxiously and resolutely determined on its completion.

It was not without the greatest reluctance on our part, even though solicited by a great number of the best informed members of the Profession, that we were induced to commence the present undertaking, which was then intended (as our first Prospectus, dated July 20, 1818, shews), to have merely given an abridgement of the work, containing the most essential points connected with the Art; but, after having composed the first sheet, want of means to proceed necessitated us to let it stand over for the space of six months, during which period, having leisure to re-consider the subject, a patron kindly stepped forward and voluntarily proffered his assistance, upon which we determined to use our ut-

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most endeavour to make it not only deserving the notice of the members of the Profession, but also of the Literati and the Public in general; should our humble efforts be crowned with success in this particular, we shall then have arrived at the summit of our ambition.

For the pecuniary assistance just alluded to, we are greatly indebted to E. WALMSLEY, Esq. a gentleman well known not only to the Literary World, but also to the Public in general, as an admirer and encourager of the Fine Arts of this country; in proof of which, we need only refer our Readers to the very splendid works that he has brought forward. This gentleman kindly came to our aid, in order that the work might be completed in a style worthy the acceptance of a British Public: should our ardent expectations be realized, by its meeting with a favourable reception, it will thereby prove to this honourable gentleman, that his very kind friendship has not been ill bestowed; for, without which, the project must (in all human probability) have been consigned to the tomb of the Capulets.

Our Readers will perceive, that we have commenced the First Volume with a brief notice of the conflicting testimonies which have been advanced by the learned, both of this and other countries, with respect to the person or persons to whom, and the place to which, the merit is justly due for the discovery of this grand and noble invention. Many of these accounts are very amusing, particularly that given of *Coster* by *Junius*, which no doubt has induced many to give credit to him for what he asserted; but this must have been for want of giving the subject due consideration: and notwithstanding the inhabitants of *Haerlem* are holding annual festivals, erecting monuments, making public speeches, and parading the streets with their Burgesses, &c. at

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their head, in commemoration of their *Beloved Coster's* grand discovery of the Art, yet we are most firmly of opinion, however their pompous accounts may induce some to enlist under their banners, that *Lawrence Coster* (if such a one ever lived) is no more entitled to it than is the *Great Mogul*: and this point we shall most strenuously maintain, until we are satisfactorily answered with respect to our question of *rivalship* between *Mentz* and *Haerlem*, and the *Guttembergs* and *Coster*.

We beg to observe, that we consider the claims set up in favour of the *ideal* Oxford printer, whom *Atkyns* calls *Frederick Corsellis*, most completely set aside by the position which we have taken in favour of *Mentz*; consequently, how could this foreigner, or any other person, have been brought from *Haerlem*, when it is a great question if any one at that place even had a knowledge of the Art at the period mentioned.

The remainder of the Volume is principally occupied by *Biographical Notices* of the early *Printers*, with extracts from the *Colophons* and *Prefaces* of the works of *Caxton*, *De Worde*, and *Pynson* (embellished with engravings on wood of those portraits and devices which have already been discovered in the early productions of the Press), together with lists of the works of the *Printers*, down to near the close of the sixteenth century: the source from whence the greater portion of this information was derived, is the very valuable and curious work, entitled, *Typographical Antiquities*, by the Rev. T. F. DIBDIN: for the free use which we have made of it, and also for his kind offer of looking over the manuscript, should we deem it necessary, we beg his acceptance of our most grateful acknowledgments, humbly trusting that the work will meet his full approbation in every particular.

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We beg to acknowledge our obligations to DR. WILKINS, Librarian to the Honourable the East India Company, for favouring us with the loan of his Sanskrita and Bengalese types, which are introduced in the account of those languages; also to the REV. MR. BABER, one of the Librarians at the British Museum, for the use of his Alexandrian Greek types, which are inserted in the article on the Greek language; and to DR. FRY, for the favour of a number of the Alphabets which were used in his work, entitled *Pantographia*; our thanks are likewise due to those master printers who have kindly granted us the use of such characters as we stood in need of in the production of this work.

In the Second Volume we have principally followed the plan and arrangement of former *Grammars*, particularly that of *Smith*, who appears to have laid the foundation-stone for all his successors: and, notwithstanding several *Grammars* have been published since the above, yet in our Schemes for Imposing we have given a complete new feature, by introducing not only the crosses, but also the grooves; and although our scale was so confined, we have produced three forms of Eighteens, with the pages filled with words upon a *Pica en* measure only: these are followed by a general outline for the *laying down* of all *irregular matter* of every description. We have obtained types of the Greek Ligatures from all the matrices at present to be found in this country, and also added others which have been cut: there can be no doubt but compositors will more readily trace the signification of these obsolete characters by this means, than if they were engraved on a plate, because when met with in old reprints they will have the exact fac-simile to refer to. With respect to the Tables of Calculation, we shall merely observe, that we have carried them to

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a considerable length, which we trust will meet the views of the body of the Profession.

We particularly wish to call the attention of the Literati, the Profession, and the Public in general, to the articles on the *Domesday*, and the *Ancient and Modern Alphabets*; with respect to the former, we are of opinion that no explanation of them has ever been before the Public; therefore, from the number of *Topographical Works* which have been, and are continually printing, we trust that they will be received as a desideratum of no mean importance by the persons to whom the execution of such works are entrusted, or to those who from curiosity may be inclined to look into them: and, as to the latter, we may assert, without fear of successful contradiction, that an article upon this very important subject, embracing such a body of highly interesting and likewise useful information, never before appeared in any work of this description. Laborious indeed has been the task of collecting together the necessary information; and the vast number of learned authorities which of course have been consulted, would scarcely be credited if we were to state them. For the above valuable articles we are indebted to the kindness of a literary gentleman, who also assisted us in other portions of the work; but we most deeply regret that we are deprived (by his own particular request) of the gratification of inserting his name, and thereby paying him that tribute of grateful respect, which his praise-worthy and indefatigable exertions justly entitle him to; we can therefore only beg his acceptance of our most unqualified and sincere thanks, as a small return for his ardent zeal and disinterested friendship.

We shall now merely observe, that we have selected every article worthy of notice from our predecessors, which it is hoped will be found highly

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serviceable not only to the junior portion of the profession, but also to those of more advanced age, who doubtless will find much pleasure in the perusal, and also many useful and important hints.

We flatter ourselves that the Portraits, the Title Pages, and the Arms of the Members of the Roxburgh Club, will be considered as *chef-d'œuvres* of engraving on wood, and reflect the highest credit on the eminent Artists by whose ability they were produced: the Title Pages and the Coats of Arms were designed and drawn on the wood by Mr. WILLIAM HARVEY; the Title to the First Volume was engraved by Mr. JOHN THOMPSON, and that for the Second by Mr. G. W. BONNER. The Portrait to the First Volume and the Arms are the productions of Mr. W. HUGHES; in justice to whose skill and patient industry, we conceive it our duty to notice the very elaborate pains bestowed on the page of *Typographical Marks* in the Second Volume, which is allowed to be a wonderful performance. For the Portrait to the Second Volume, we are exclusively indebted to the ability of Mr. HARVEY, who not only made the first study, and afterwards drew it on the block, but he also obligingly favoured us by engraving it himself; for which particular mark of esteem, we publicly return him our warmest acknowledgments.*

We never, in our younger days, glanced into

* It would be an act of injustice to Mr. BRANSTON, Mr. WHITE, and other eminent engravers, if we omitted this opportunity of noticing, that it was not from any want of ability in those gentlemen that they were not engaged to execute any of the extra fine subjects above alluded to, there not being sufficient for all, we selected those whose hands were most at liberty at the moment: but we trust, ere long, to bring forth such works as shall call into action the united talents of the engravers on wood, and thereby prove to the public (with their liberal support) that the Art is capable of more than has generally been produced.

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Smith's Grammar, without feeling for the situation in which he was placed at its commencement; but little did we then think, that it would ever fall to our lot to tread in the same steps, and under similar circumstances; in proof of which we beg to introduce the following extract from his Preface:

"The publication of the following Essay is the result of a resolution to make a stand against the joint disasters that long have harassed me, and threaten to pursue me to the last confines of retreat: for though infirmities and ailments are become habitual to me; yet when their concomitant consequences presented themselves more ghastly to me, I was on a sudden prompted to think of guarding against their further incroachments: but knowing myself unable to do it by the usual exercise of my profession, I concluded to publish Proposals for printing this Grammar; which had the good effect, that in a short time so many declared themselves in favour of my undertaking, that I had no room to doubt of succeeding in it. And notwithstanding a considerable number of my Subscribers have proved Apostates since, the Work has nevertheless been continued, and is brought to a conclusion by the aid of the permanent encouragers thereof; and especially by the interest of some particular Well-wishers, who have shewn themselves so assiduous in promoting my expectations, that it demands my public acknowledgment. By these helps, and by having been permitted to print at prime cost, I have been enabled to carry this Grammar to its proposed length: but how it will be received by those who have not yet examined into the merits thereof, will soon appear by the success of the remaining Copies. In the mean time I shall use no art to gain the approbation of those who were under apprehension that this Work, being of a troublesome and expensive nature, if it was not done as it *should be*, would be better not done at all: since I am not ignorant, that our ideas of the same thing are not *always* the same; and therefore hope they will reverse their opinion, and judge more favourable of the whole."

We have inserted the above in order to shew the strong analogy which exists between the two cases: he was induced to undertake the task from bodily infirmities, we from mental affliction, brought on by the cruel and unjust treatment which we had experienced from those connected with the private Press at LES PRIORY; and although eight years have now rolled over our heads, during its lingering in Chan-

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cery, where, we are sorry to say, it still remains in *statu quo*, yet no sooner was the main link severed from the chain, than its former brilliant sun appeared only as the twinkling stars, and although for a time it emitted a faint glimmer, like the midnight taper, or the dying embers of a flame, till Hades at length cast his mantle over it, and closed the scene by sweeping from the spot every trace of its remembrance, and burying in oblivion all the former boasted pride of the once famed **PRESS AT LEE!!!**

We are well aware, from remarks which have already been made, that more is expected from us than would have been from any other printers; in answer to which, we beg to observe, that as perfection is not to be found in human nature, how can it reasonably be expected in this case? It never once entered into our imaginations that we were about (in the present instance) to produce a work that should soar above criticism; the very perturbed state of our minds, which has ever been upon the full stretch, was a complete bar to the accomplishment of so desirable an object. Thus much we can fearlessly assert, that no work has ever yet appeared, either in this or in any other country, wherein the difficulty of composition is so strikingly conspicuous as in the present undertaking; and notwithstanding it was stated by many of the profession to be impossible for us to accomplish the Schemes of the Impositions, the Tables, &c. &c. on our proposed confined scale, yet, great as the task appeared to others, who took only a superficial view of the subject, we were convinced to the contrary, and which opinion is now most satisfactorily proved, not having had occasion to widen or lengthen our page on any account whatever; this, in the common routine of business, not unfrequently occurs, therefore we trust that this very important feature will more than

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counterbalance the trifling defects which may be discovered in any portion of the work.

Truly gratifying must be the reflection to every serious and well disposed mind, after comparing the present state of the lower classes and the peasantry of this country, with what they were only a century back ; but more particularly with respect to the benefits which they have derived within the last thirty years : this must be attributed to those most noble and laudable institutions, the Sunday and National Schools, which reflect the highest credit on both the promoters and supporters of them ; for, by so doing, they have endeared their names to all those to whom instruction has thus been granted, and also erected to themselves a lasting monument of remembrance in the public mind : but if so much good has been performed by these establishments while in their infancy, during this very short period, what have we reason to expect will be the result after the lapse of another age ; for we find that the youth of the present day possess more knowledge, in consequence of the above institutions, than the adults of any former period. Pleasing as must be this thought to all those who duly consider the important advantages derived from the above sources, yet we may truly assert, that had it not been for the benefits conferred by means of the Press, we should not now have to boast (in all human probability) the foundation of the before-mentioned establishments ; this point, we are fully persuaded, no one will attempt to deny : and, if so, how can that Art be sufficiently prized which has conferred such inestimable blessings on the human race ; for without which mankind must have remained in ignorance as heretofore, blindly wading through the mazes of darkness, and have passed from this life without having been enabled to pay that respectful worship

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and adoration to that Divine Being to whom all stand indebted not only for their origin, but also for their present existence and hourly preservation.

Never let it, then, be said, that a British Public have encouraged the introduction of that machinery, &c. which can only tend to damp and destroy all the energy and talent of those who have hitherto upheld and exercised the Art, for the benefit of the rising and future generations; but let them receive that reward for their labour which their merit justly entitles them to, instead of being suffered to wander the streets spiritless and heart-broken for want of employment; which, we are extremely grieved to find, has too long been the case. How very different this, to what we have witnessed in our day, when compositors and pressmen were frequently in such request, that the masters would grant any boon to obtain the service of them: but now, alas! works are so hurried through the press, that men have not the chance of getting forward as they formerly had.

It has been our aim, throughout the present undertaking, so to acquit ourselves in the execution of this task, that we should not be liable to the accusation of having favoured any party in the subjects which it was necessary for us to notice; we have endeavoured throughout to maintain, that a reciprocity of interests exist between the employer and the employed, in order to the well conducting and furtherance of any branch of Art or Manufacture; and notwithstanding some may imagine that we have been too free in our remarks, yet we trust that the justness of our observations will fully convince all candid and unbiassed minds, that we have merely done our duty. Frankness and candour has been the compass by which we have ever steered, and we doubt not but it will ultimately conduct our little bark safe to its destined port.

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For our own parts, we never think of the benefits conferred on mankind by this Art, but we feel our bosoms swell with admiration of the Divine Being for this inestimable blessing ; we can even fancy that we perceive warm tints enlivening every colour of this heretofore brilliant picture, till at length its overpowering beauty outsteps Imagination's bounds, and we are ultimately lost in wonder and amazement.

April, 1824.

John Johnson



Go, little Work, unfold thy page,
 And cool the angry Critic's rage,
 Now burns his breast with ire :
 Lest he should call a judgment down
 And on thy margin reek his frown,
 May peace his mind inspire.
 Hope, Pity, Candour, call to aid,
 And for thy sheets now bid them plead,
 Lest he should send their doom :
 If from Truth's path he'll wildly roam,
 May Justice's sword strike firmly home,
 And send him to his tomb.