THE BOOKSELLERS OF LONDON BRIDGE.

I MUST preface this paper with a few words as to its origin. As some of my readers may know, Mr. G. J. Gray of Cambridge has taken great interest in this subject. Besides contributing notes upon it to the pages of 'Notes and Queries,' he read a paper before the Bibliographical Society, a year or two ago, on William Pickering, the earliest of the London Bridge booksellers, to which he added a very full bibliography.

Mr. Gray's interests have lately been drawn into other channels, and knowing that I had also taken some interest in this subject, he very kindly made me an offer of his collection of notes, which I gladly accepted. These, and a few researches of my own, are the groundwork of this sketch.

To begin with, I must ask my readers to take themselves back in imagination to the days when old London Bridge was covered with houses. Approaching from the northern side, the traveller passed on to the bridge between two rows of gabled timber-fronted houses, which we may well believe were similar in all respects to those which are still standing in Holborn. The roadway between was narrow, only from twelve to twenty feet in

width, without any sidewalks, and probably paved with rough uneven stones. The overhanging gables of the houses must have shut out a great deal of light, while the wind made weird music with the rusty signs that swung overhead. These houses extended as far as the chapel of St. Thomas à Becket, which was built on the central pier of the bridge. Between this and the drawbridge there were more buildings, and so again from the drawbridge till you came to the great gateway at the southern end, with its gruesome ornament of human heads stuck upon poles. In addition to the gateway and the chapel, there appears to have been two other large structures upon the bridge in the days of Elizabeth, one of them being a wooden building brought from Holland and named Nonsuch House, gaudily painted and with gilded cupolas. Thus the aspect of the bridge must have been picturesque enough, though the charm of the houses may not have been appreciated by those who had to pick their way through the dark archways and along the narrow and generally dirty causeway that ran between the two sets of buildings.

These houses were inhabited at one time by wealthy city merchants. It seems incredible, because they must have been small and inconvenient, but Stow tells us so, and have we not also the famous story of Osborne the apprentice, who sprang from a window into the river below to rescue his master's daughter, and that master Sir William Hewet, Lord Mayor of London? This story also reminds us that there were shops on the bridge at an early date, but it was not until the

second half of the sixteenth century that we find any mention of a bookseller.

Difficult as it is to reconstruct the bridge in imagination, it is quite impossible to make out the positions of the booksellers' shops upon it, for we have nothing beyond the imprints in the books that came from them to guide us, and these are vague and unsatisfactory. But such as they are we must make the best of them until we can have access to the records of the Bridgehouse Committee, which probably would tell us more about the London Bridge booksellers than anything at present available.

The first bookseller's shop on London Bridge of which we have any certain knowledge was that opened by William Pickering at St. Magnus Corner, that is, close to the church of St. Magnus at the northern end of the bridge. All we know about Pickering is that he was one of the original members of the Incorporated Company, and that on a broadside of the dying speech of Lord Sturton, which he published in 1557, he described himself as dwelling upon London Bridge. There he continued until 1571, being succeeded in the same premises by Richard Ballard, Hugh Astley, and John Tap.

But before the close of the sixteenth century a second bookseller's shop was opened on the bridge by Thomas Gosson (said to have been a relative of Stephen Gosson, the author of the 'School of Abuse'), who already had a shop in Paternoster Row. Gosson's shop is described as being 'near the Gate,' that is, at the southern end of the bridge, but whether it was on the north or south of the

gateway, or upon which side of the street, we are left to guess. Thomas Gosson died in 1600, and was succeeded in 1607 by his son Henry, who carried on the business both in Paternoster Row and on the bridge until the year 1641. We have also a glimpse, a very momentary one, of a third bookseller on the bridge in the first quarter of the seventeenth century. The authority is a reprint by J. O. Halliwell, in his 'Literature of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries' (1851), of a chapbook, entitled, 'Love's Garland, or Posies for Rings,' etc. The imprint of the chapbook stated that it was printed for John Spencer, and was to be sold at his shop on London Bridge. That was in 1624, and it is the only record we have of Spencer. Very likely he published nothing else, though he may have carried on business as a bookseller for several years.

In 1633 a fire, said to have been caused by a careless servant placing a brazier of charcoal under some stairs in one of the houses, destroyed a large number of buildings at the north end of the bridge, including no doubt the house at St. Magnus Corner, then in the occupation of John Tap. The gap thus made was not refilled until 1645 or 1646, but there is evidence of a fourth bookseller's shop established on the bridge before that time. An edition of Scott's 'An Essay of Drapery,' printed in 1635, is preserved in the British Museum, and has the imprint of Stephen Pemell, 'to be sold at his shop upon London Bridge, neere the gate.' This again is a solitary survival, and nothing more is known of this publisher.

During the period of the Civil War, the booksellers' shops on the bridge appear to have been closed; but in 1659 trade revived, and a bookseller named Charles Tyus is found at the sign of the 'Three Bibles' on the middle of London Bridge. Who he was and where he came from have yet to be found out. The same remark applies to Charles Passinger, who carried on business at the 'Seven Stars' in the New Buildings, that is, in the buildings at the north end which replaced those destroyed in the second fire of 1666; but in all probability he was a relative, perhaps a brother, of Thomas Passinger, who succeeded Tyus at the sign of the 'Three Bibles.' Thomas Passinger died in 1688, and his will is in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury. Several passages in it are interesting, and I will venture to quote them:

'I give and bequeath vnto my . . . wife (Sarah), the incomb interest or profit of my stock or share in the English stock of the Company of Stationers for and during her natural life, shee continuing my widow; but at her death, or upon her marriage, I give & bequeath the stock itself to my kinsman Thomas Passinger, now my apprentice, and to my neece Sarah Passinger, equally to bee divided between them.'

'Item I give and bequeath to my kinsman Thomas Passinger, now my apprentice, after the expiration of his apprenticeship, all my copyes and parts of copyes and books and copperplates and things relating thereunto and foure silver spoones, as alsoe all my share in the Ballad warehouse of all the stocke and copyes of books and ballads which I now have in partnership with Mr. William Thackerye in a warehouse in Pye Corner. And my will is that the same books and ballads and Copyes of bookes and ballads shall bee kept in print as formerly in the said Warehouse to the expiration of his said apprenticeship.'

To the poor of the Company of Stationers

Passinger left a bequest of 40s., and among his minor legacies is the following :

‘Item, I give and bequeath to the public library at Guildford one booke of the value of forty shillings.’

The Guildford here mentioned is no doubt the town of that name in Surrey, of which perhaps Passinger was a native. But what is meant by the public library? The only library in the town in 1688, so far as I am aware, was that attached to King Edward VI.’s Grammar School in the High Street. A few months ago I had an opportunity of visiting Guildford, and great was my surprise and pleasure to find that the library of the Grammar School (though it is not mentioned in Mr. Blades’s list), is a chained library of between two and three hundred volumes, with the chains still attached to them. Unfortunately the man who showed me over had other duties, which prevented him from devoting much time to me, and I had to leave without being able to find out whether Passinger’s bequest was amongst the books. The printer’s legatee, Thomas Passinger the second, altered the sign of the ‘Three Bibles’ to the ‘Three Bibles and Star,’ and can be traced there until 1695. During the eighteenth century the house under its old sign was in the hands of Ebenezer Tracy and his sons.

The Fire of London, in 1666, destroyed for the second time the houses at the north end of the bridge, but they were quickly rebuilt, and the bridge became a more popular place than ever with the booksellers. Nor is this to be wondered

at. It was the only land communication between the two sides of the river, and must have been at all times a busy thoroughfare, and consequently a good position for trade. So between 1660 and 1750 the booksellers' signs multiplied, and amongst them we meet with 'The Red Lion' in the hands of A. Bettesworth; 'The Golden Bible,' in the occupation successively of T. Parkhurst and Joseph Collyer; 'The Hand and Bible,' held successively by T. Taylor and Elizabeth Smith; 'The Sun and Bible' in the Low Buildings, held by J. Williamson and H. Green; and 'The Black Boy' near the drawbridge, where John Back was succeeded by M. Hotham. There was also a house in the New Buildings apparently without a sign, tenanted by a bookseller named Benjamin Hurlock. But the most important house, at least during the first half of the eighteenth century, was 'The Looking Glass,' sometimes described as 'over against' and sometimes as 'under St. Magnus' Church,' and occasionally as 'in the New Buildings.' Josiah Blare, its first tenant, from 1670 to 1706, describes it in his will as being on the north-east side of the bridge, so that clearly it was one of the shops rebuilt after the Great Fire. The subsequent tenants of this house are most difficult to trace, owing to the fact that there was another house on the bridge with 'a similar sign, and also a third called 'The Looking Glass and Bible'; but so far as I have been able to work them out, Thomas Norris succeeded Blare, and James Hodges succeeded Norris in the same house, while Thomas Harris and Edward Midwinter appear to belong either to the

rival house or to 'The Looking Glass and Bible.' In no other way can I explain the overlapping of dates which occur in the chronology of this house. At any rate, Blare, Norris and Hodges were the most important tenants of 'The Looking Glass,' and of these James Hodges was the greatest. He began business about 1730, perhaps earlier, the precise date being uncertain. In 1750 he was elected deputy for Bridge Ward Without, and he subsequently held the high position of Town Clerk of the City of London. In 1758 he was knighted by George II. on presenting an address, and was thus not only one of the most important booksellers that ever lived on the bridge, but one of the few booksellers in London who ever obtained a title.

During the whole of the period we have been considering, the bridge was in a more or less ruinous condition, and the houses upon it were in the same state; in fact, it was no uncommon thing for these crazy structures to collapse suddenly and tumble headlong into the river below. Complaints as to their dangerous condition were constantly being made to the Corporation, which at length determined upon removing the houses altogether. The work of demolition began in 1758, which may be taken as marking the close of the history of the booksellers of London Bridge.

Having thus briefly sketched the chronological outlines of the London Bridge booksellers, I turn now to the literature that they sold. This mostly took the form of cheap and handy books suitable for supplying the packs of numerous pedlars and

hucksters who roamed about the country, and offered these 'chapbooks' for sale. Here is an advertisement issued by Thomas Norris in 1722 :

'At the afore mentioned place, all country chapmen may be furnished with all sorts of Bibles, Common Prayer, Testaments, Psalters, Primers and Horn books; likewise all sorts of Three sheet histories, peny histories and sermons, and choice of new and old ballads at reasonable rates.'¹

The ballads, which are mentioned last in Norris's advertisement, served the double purpose of affording amusement and conveying news. They were the means by which such events as fires, floods, battles, shipwrecks, murders, and monstrous births became the gossip of the countryside. Then there was the ballad historical or political, the ballad in praise of good ale, the ballad amatory, and last, but not least, a group of songs known as 'catches,' often very humorous and showing no

¹ One of the addresses given in it entitles me to mention in this connection another advertisement, which is to be found in the 'Postman' of September 27th, 1711 :

'If any author that is absent desires to have the press accurately corrected according to his copy, whether it be English, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, or French, let the printer leave the sheets at Mr. Cliffe's at the Bible and Three Crowns in Cheapside, Mr. Phillips at the Black Bull in Cornhill over against Sweeting's Alley, or Mr. Tracy at the Three Bibles on London Bridge, and it shall be done with all possible care and despatch by a person well read in Arts and Languages, who may be heard of at all these book-sellers as occasion shall require.'

Very likely this is not the earliest proof-reader's advertisement now extant, but until another is found it may pass as such. Ebenezer Tracy was also the proprietor of a quack nostrum warranted to cure all ills, to which he gave the name of Balsam of Chili, and advertised largely.

little skill in their compilation. As a rule these popular songs made no pretence to literary merit; they were the merest doggrel, but the names of one or two of their writers have been preserved to us. One of these was Thomas Deloney, a silk weaver, who flourished in the latter part of Elizabeth's reign. Another was Martin Parker, a royalist, who is chiefly remembered as the author of the Jacobite song, 'When the King enjoys his own again.' A third ballad writer was Martin Parker, who flourished between 1628 and 1680.

Printed on the coarsest paper with any old types, black letter for preference, and ornamented with old book blocks that can be traced back sixty or a hundred years earlier, there was nothing in the appearance of these sheets to tempt the purchaser. Yet the huckster could sell them faster than he could sell his ribbons and laces, more especially if he could troll out the song for the benefit of the crowd.

Each ballad had its appointed tune, thus one was to be sung to the tune of 'Wigmore's galliard,' another to that of 'O Man in desperation'; a third very popular air bore the title of 'Greene Sleeves.' Some had tunes specially composed for them, but generally they were set to some air that was already popular on the streets.

Many of these old ballads still remain to us—witness the Roxburghe, Bagford, Pepys, and Crawford collections—and they have been reprinted and described by several writers, one of the best written accounts being that given by John Payne Collier in his introduction to 'A Book of Roxburghe

Ballads,' printed in 1847. In this he traces the growth of the ballad in popular favour, giving the titles of several of the old plays in which they were mentioned. He further points out that in many instances the ballads issued by the London Bridge booksellers were only reprints, the originals being of much earlier date. William Pickering and Henry Gosson appear to have been the most prolific of ballad publishers, but it must not be forgotten, that we have no transcript of the Stationers' Registers after 1640, and further that previous to that date ballads, like school books and law books, had been made into a 'stock' by the Company of Stationers, and therefore no special entry in the registers was then necessary. On the whole, I think it would be found that Thomas Passinger or Thomas Norris, issued quite as many ballads as did either Pickering or Gosson.

These ballads were afterwards collected in book form, to which the collective title of 'Garland' was given, and these garlands were issued in great numbers by one and all of the London Bridge booksellers. To name but a few, Deloney, already mentioned, was the author of 'The Royal Garland of Love and Delight,' and 'The Garland of Good Will.' Then we meet with 'The Loyal Garland,' 'The Jovial Garland,' 'Robin Hood's Garland,' 'Constant Betty's Garland,' 'Celia's Garland,' and so on.

For the most part, these collections consisted of amorous songs, unclean both in thought and expression. 'The Loyal Garland,' however, had a mixture of Royalists' songs, and 'Robin Hood's

Garland,' as may be gathered from its name, was a collection of songs relating to that celebrated personage. A copy of the second edition of 'The Loyal Garland,' printed by J. R. for T. Passinger in 1686, is in the British Museum, and has on the title-page a wreath or garland, on the left of which is a portrait of King Charles II., and on the right one with the letters 'G. M.,' possibly George Monk.

Another class of book issued by the London Bridge booksellers, that had a large sale, was formed by jest books and collections of merry tales, some of them as old as the hills, and others attributed to and named after such jovial characters as Tarleton and Peele. One of the oldest of these collections, 'The Sackful of News,' was issued by T. Passinger, and amongst the issues of T. Norris and James Hodges, we meet with 'Joe Miller's Jests,' 'London Jests,' 'Oxford Jests,' and many more.

But the literature which, more than any other, set its seal upon the London Bridge booksellers was what Norris described in the advertisement already noticed as 'three sheet histories' and 'peny histories,' but which we know better under the title of chapbooks, the thrilling stories of love and adventure which formed the 'fiction issues' of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. Some of these were the abridgements of larger works, such as the romances of Guy of Warwick, Amadis of Gaul, the pleasant and delightful history of Palladine of England, the famous and delectable history of Cleocreon and Cloryana, the life of Virgilius, the history of Reynard the Fox, and the

story of Valentine and Orson. Others again were entirely made in England, of which the most noteworthy were 'Thomas of Reading,' from the pen of Thomas Deloney, 'The Seven Champions of Christendom,' and 'Tom of Lincoln,' from that of Richard Johnson. Then there was still another class, such as 'Tom Thumb,' 'The Sleeping Beauty,' 'The Children in the Wood,' and many others that have become household words in juvenile literature. These were the books which served to while away the long winter hours in country places, which were passed from hand to hand and from farmhouse to farmhouse, until they were thumbed out of existence. Speaking of this class of fiction, the late W. J. Thoms, in a preface to his 'Early English Prose Romances,' says:

'These narrations have strong and deeply-rooted claims upon our affections, for they were the delight of those from whom we spring—alike the study and admiration of Ladye Faire and gallant Knight, and the never-ending theme of the shepherd and the husbandman. High and low, gentle and simple, found solace in their contemplation; their recital cheered the forsaken damsel in her lonely bower, inspired the warrior with a bright and chivalrous bravery, and gladdened the hearts and roused the drooping spirits of the peasantry, who, when the labours of the day were at a close, gathered into an anxious circle round the narrator, and caught with greedy ears the tales of other days.'

There is not a doubt, I think, that if there had been public libraries in those days, these books would always have been 'out,' much, it may be, to the

horror of some of the ratepayers. On the whole these chapbooks were harmless in tone, and the cuts with which one and all were profusely illustrated, if they were lacking in originality or beauty of execution, helped to endear them to their readers. Nor did the chapbook pass away with the disappearance of the London Bridge booksellers. The towns of Nottingham, Tewkesbury, and Newcastle are all renowned as the centres from which these little booklets were issued in the early years of the nineteenth century.

But the pens of Thoms, Dyce, Halliwell, and Collier have made us familiar with these chapbooks and their history. It is rather to the miscellaneous publications, the 'odds and ends' of the London Bridge booksellers that I would like to call special attention.

Take, for example, a little duodecimo with a very long title, which I will abridge into 'Remarks on London,' that was published by Thomas Norris at the Looking Glass in 1722. The author was William Stow, who may have been a descendant of the great annalist.

In his preface he claims to have traversed 2,175 streets, lanes, courts, and other places, and to have covered 250 miles. The first part of the work consists of a street directory, a list of the churches and chapels in London, and a list of the fairs in England and Wales. Then follows an account of the General Post Office in Lombard Street from which I take a few notes that may interest some modern readers. Thus, a single letter cost three-pence to send eighty miles, a double letter sixpence.

Above that distance a single letter cost fourpence, while anything that weighed an ounce cost fourteen pence. The mails left London for various parts of England and Scotland three times a week, but to Wales and Ireland only twice, and the compiler was careful to add that the receipt and delivery of letters to Ireland, and indeed to all other foreign places, was very uncertain, as it depended upon winds. There were also district offices in various parts of London for the receipt and despatch of letters, and it was the custom to send the crier round every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday night, to give notice of the departure of the mails, and he was allowed to charge a penny for every letter he carried to the district offices. This custom was in use late enough to form the subject of one of the elder Hazlitt's essays.

This useful little book also included a description of the roads and cross-roads, a list of all the market towns and market days, a tide table and almanac, and a list of all the stage-coaches, with the names of the inns from which they set out.

Another curious publication was the 'Academy of Complements, or a New Way of Wooing. Wherein is variety of Love-Letters, very fit to be read of all Young Men and Maids that desire to learn the true way of Complements.' This was a small octavo of twenty-four pages, an abridgement of a very unclean book called the 'New Academy of Complements,' which, in its turn, took its title from a much earlier work called the 'Academy of Complements.' The original had nothing unclean about it, being principally a collection of dialogues,

songs and poems, taken from Shakespeare's plays, with a few examples in the art of letter-writing. Other versions of the work were issued under such titles as 'Wit's Academy or the Muses delight, being the Newest Academy of Complements,' and 'A Flying Post with a packet of choice new letters and complements.'

Again, amongst Norris's publications was one entitled 'Wit's Cabinet: A companion for Ladies and Gentlemen,' the first part consisting of the 'Interpretation of dreams,' according to which, to dream that your face is black, foreshows you shall live long, and to dream that one sees a stack of corn burnt down is a sure sign of dearth and famine. The fifth part of this book was entitled 'The Cabinet of Art and Nature unlock'd,' and consisted for the most part of conjuring tricks. The rest of the work was made up of letters of 'Love and Courtship from the Academy of Complements and choice songs.' A very similar publication was that issued by James Hodges in 1739, entitled 'The Curiosity or Gentleman and Ladys Library.' This was a medley in prose and verse, first published in York in 1738, the character of which may be gathered from a few quotations of the headings of various portions of it. It included: 'The Woman of Taste, or the Yorkshire Lady a Ballad Opera'; 'A New and Accurate Translation of Basia; or, the Pleasures of Kissing'; 'The Progress of a Female Rake'; to these Hodges added several more poems of a still more questionable character.

But it would be a mistake to suppose that the London Bridge booksellers had nothing better to

offer their customers than doggrel ballads and books such as I have just described. Much useful literature was to be found there. To Thomas Passinger of the 'Three Bibles' belongs the credit of having issued the first edition of 'Cocker's Arithmetick,' a work that went through so many editions as to need a small bibliography to itself. From the same house came Gervase Markham's 'Masterpiece, containing all the knowledge belonging to the Smith Farrier or Horse leech,' a work which long remained the best of its kind on the subject. Markham had been a soldier, and his knowledge of horses, as shown in this book, was extensive; not the least valuable part being the chapters which dealt with the tricks of dealers and jockeys.

Passinger also published a folio edition of the 'Travels of George Sandys'; and, in quarto form, the yet more remarkable 'Nineteen Yeares travels' of William Lithgow, who had travelled into the remote parts of Europe and Africa, had been frequently shipwrecked, and was almost tortured to death by the Inquisition in Spain.

Books on the science of navigation, then in its infancy, such as Robert Norman's 'New Attractive; The Safegarde of Saylers,' Martin Curtis' 'Art of Navigation,' or Richard Polters' 'Pathway to perfect sailing,' were to be met with in the shops of John Tapp and Benjamin Hurlock, where also, no doubt, could be obtained such charts and maps of the world as were then known. Some of the topographical works met with are amongst the most interesting of the publications of these London Bridge booksellers. One of them was entitled,

'The Pleasant Walkes in Moore fields,' and was from the pen of the versatile Richard Johnson, and was published in quarto by Henry Gosson in 1607. It contains much quaint history relating to the city of London, told in the form of a dialogue between a citizen and a stranger.

A second work of this class is a short but valuable history of the town of Faversham, in Kent, written by Thomas Shorthouse, a resident, and published by T. Passinger, in 1671, under the title of 'Monasticon Favershamienses or a survey of the Monastery of Faversham.' A third dealt with the virtues of the medical waters of the Spa at Scarborough, in Yorkshire, by a certain Dr. Robert Wittie. It gave rise to a good deal of controversy, but is chiefly interesting to us from the fact that the second edition of 1667 was printed at York by Alice Broad for Thomas Passinger.

Again, amongst the host of trivial works that were issued by James Hodges, there was a good sprinkling of books of a higher order, notably a collection from the poets, entitled, 'The Muses Library.' The collection was made by a lady, Elizabeth Cooper, was decently printed on good paper, and was issued in 1737, as a fairly thick octavo volume. It was intended to carry it on, but probably from lack of support it never got beyond the first volume.

Hodges also published the Works of William Tansur, the musician, whose publications contain, says his biographer, in the 'Dictionary of National Biography,' the earliest known copies of what were formerly familiar psalm-tunes. The works as issued

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by Hodges formed an oblong quarto volume, and included 'The Harmony of Sion,' and 'The Melody of the Heart,' with tunes to the various psalms, etc. The frontispiece shows the author, William Tansur, in his study, surrounded by books, and with a pleasant outlook from the window, evidently engaged upon the composition of some new score. Round this picture is a frame consisting of a musical stave and notes, and the words, 'Lord, tune my heart within my breast and frame it to thy holy will: And let thy spirit within me rest, which may my soul with comfort fill.' Above this again is a ribbon with the words 'Gloria in excelsis deo,' held by two cherubs. At the end of the first book is a woodcut of King David playing the harp. Again, at the end of the third book of the 'Harmony of Sion' is another portrait of the author.

Among other works of popular science published by Hodges, may be noticed 'The Laboratory, or School of Arts,' a second edition of which appeared in 1740. This work dealt with refining and assaying various metals, the art of making glass, and much other information useful to cutlers, pewterers, brasiers, and others. Then we meet with the 'Builder's Guide,' 'The Art of Painting in Miniature,' and the 'Young Mathematicians Guide,' in short with works upon every conceivable subject.

If the chapmen who dealt with the London Bridge publishers took many books like these into the country with them, they must be reckoned among the popular educators of their day.

HENRY R. PLOMER.