

REPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS.

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REPORT

PRESENTED TO

**The Cambridge Antiquarian Society,**

AT ITS TWENTY-FIFTH GENERAL MEETING,

MAY 9, 1865.

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ALSO

**Communications**

MADE TO THE SOCIETY.

No. XIV.

BEING No. 1 OF THE THIRD VOLUME.

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CAMBRIDGE ANTIQUARIAN COMMUNICATIONS

BEING

PAPERS PRESENTED AT THE MEETINGS

OF THE

Cambridge Antiquarian Society.

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No. XV

BEING THE FIRST No. OF THE THIRD VOLUME.

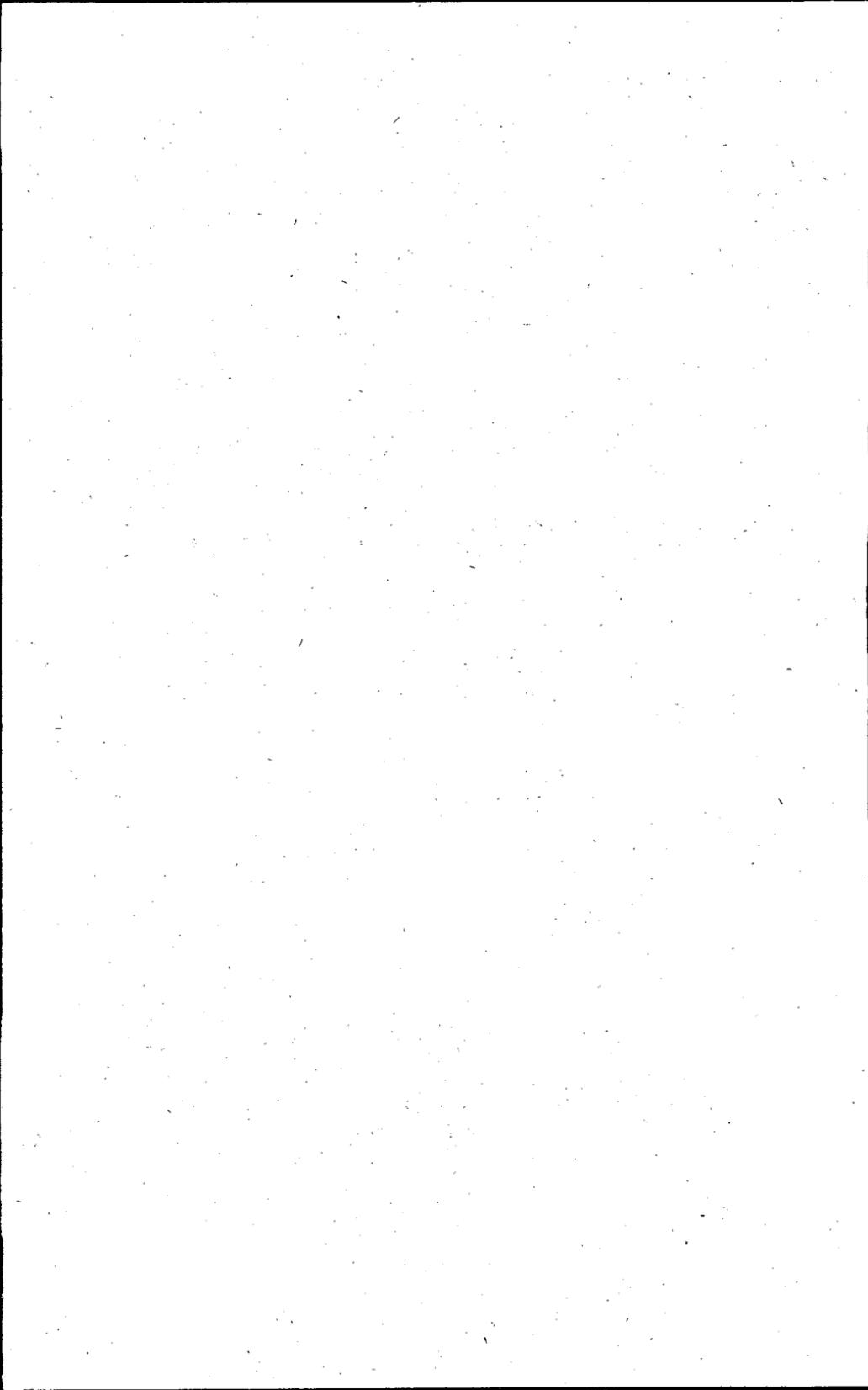
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CAMBRIDGE :

PRINTED BY C. J. CLAY, M.A.

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M.DCCC.LXV.



II. SOME ACCOUNT OF RICHARD SAULT, Mathematician,  
and one of the Editors of the *Athenian Mercury*.  
Communicated by CHARLES HENRY COOPER, F.S.A.

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[Read 7 Nov. 1864.]

THE register of St Andrew the Great, in Cambridge, records the burial there of Richard Sault, on 17 May, 1702.

No information has been obtained respecting the parentage or education of this person, whose name, during an apparently brief career, occurs in connexion with curious circumstances in our literary history.

On 17 March, 1690-1, appeared the first number of:

“*The Athenian Gazette*, Resolving Weekly all the most Nice and Curious Questions Propos’d by the Ingenious.”

The second number came out on 24 March, the title *Mercury* being substituted for *Gazette*, to oblige those in authority.

These two numbers were written by John Dunton, the noted bookseller, and Richard Sault, who in the third number were joined by Dunton’s brother-in-law, Samuel Wesley, sometime rector of South Ormsby, in Lincolnshire, and afterwards of Epworth in the same county, a man of ability and erudition, now principally remembered as the father of John and Charles Wesley, the founders of Methodism. Articles of agreement between

Wesley, Sault and Dunton relative to the *Athenian Mercury* are preserved. They bear date 10 April, 1691.

These three formed the Athenian Society, which met at Smith's Coffee House, Stocks Market, in the Poultry, where questions were sent by the penny post (postage paid).

The famous philosopher John Norris, rector of Bemerton, although he refused to become a member of the Athenian Society rendered much assistance. So extensive was his reading, so retentive his memory, that nothing could be asked but he could easily say something to the purpose.

Sir William Temple did not disdain to seek and give information in the columns of the *Athenian Mercury*, and the design had the warm approval of the Marquess of Halifax, Sir William Hedges, Sir Thomas Pope Blount, Sir Peter Pett, and other distinguished men of letters.

In the supplement to the fifth volume appeared an Ode to the Athenian Society by Jonathan Swift. This occasioned a depreciatory remark from Dryden, which Swift never forgot nor forgave.

The Athenian Society was also eulogised in verse by Daniel de Foe, Nahum Tate, Peter Anthony Motteux (the translator of *Don Quixote*), Elizabeth Singer (afterwards so well known as Mrs Rowe) and Charles Richardson. The latter, who appears to have enjoyed reputation at the period, is now wholly forgotten.

The *Athenian Mercury* was for a short time published weekly, then it appeared twice a week, and ultimately four times a week. Extra numbers and supplements were also published occasionally. The publication, which extended without interruption until 8 Feb. 1695-6, was resumed 14 May till 14 June, 1697, the work forming in all twenty thin folio volumes. Complete sets are very rare.

Notwithstanding the change in the name from *Gazette* to *Mercury* in the single sheets, each volume is entitled *The Athenian Gazette* or *Casuistical Mercury*.

Amidst much frivolous and some indecorous matter, the

*Athenian Mercury* contains many curious facts and speculations, with a profusion of odd learning.

From the *Athenian Mercury* was compiled *The Athenian Oracle* (Lond. 4 vols. 8vo. 1703-10), an abridgement of which was published in 1820 (Lond. 8vo.).

The supplements to the *Athenian Mercury* contained translations from foreign literary journals, and in 1692 the Athenian Society published (Lond. fo.) *The Young Student's Library*, containing extracts and abridgements of the most valuable books printed in England and [noticed] in the Foreign Journals. Prefixed is An Essay upon all sorts of learning, written by the Athenian Society, and the work comprehends A Discourse on the points, vowels and accents in the Hebrew Bible, by a member of the Athenian Society.

Charles Gildon wrote a History of the Athenian Society, Lond. fo. (James Dowlay) n. d.

The success of the *Athenian Mercury* led to rival publications. One of these was originally entitled, *The London Mercury*. It commenced 1 Feb. 1691—2. The 6th and 7th numbers have a cut representing an owl on the back of a raven. From the 9th number the title was changed to *The Lacedemonian Mercury*. This was conducted by the facetious Tom Brown and Mr Pate. Brown met the Athenian brethren at the Three Cranes, where the matter was discussed, and Sault being a gentleman of courage and a little inclined to passion was going to draw upon Brown for an uncivil reflection. Brown ultimately promised not to meddle any more with the *Lacedemonian Mercury*, and it was dropped. Dunton speaks of its flaming wickedness and blasphemy.

The first volume of the *Lacedemonian Mercury* finished with No. 31, May 27, 1692. The second volume commenced with No. 1, May 30, 1692. I have not met with any subsequent number.

Of the *Jovial Mercury* I have seen four numbers. No. 1

has no date; No. 4 is dated 17 March, 1692 [1692—3]. I have also seen four numbers of *The Ladies Mercury*, extending from 27 Feb. to 17 March, 1693 [1693—4]. In the first number is an Address to the Athenians, wherein it is stated that the undertaking was not at all intended to encroach on their province.

Poor Elkanah Settle in 1693 ridiculed the Athenian Society in a play which some call *The New Athenian Comedy*, and others the *Athenian Coffee House* (see *Biog. Dram.* i. 641; ii. 43). This however we are told had no success.

The opinions of the *Athenian Mercury* concerning Infant Baptism and the Society of Friends, occasioned the following publications:

1. A Rejoinder to the *Athenian Mercury*, Vol. 4. Numb. 18, concerning the Subject of Infant Baptism, published Saturday, November 28, 1691, 4 pp. fo. signed H. C.
2. The New Athenians no Noble Bereans: Being an Answer to the *Athenian Mercury* of the 7th Instant [June 1692], in behalf of the People called Quakers. 2 pp. fo.
3. The Second Part of the Athenians no Noble Bereans: Being an Answer to the *Athenian Mercury* of the 11th of the Fourth Month called June [1692], in behalf of the People called Quakers. 2 pp. fo.
4. The Third Part of the New Athenians no Noble Bereans: being an Answer to the *Athenian Mercury* of the 14th 4th Month called June [1692], in behalf of the People called Quakers. 2 pp. fo.
5. The Holy Scriptures Owned, and the Athenian Injustice Detected, By the Abused Quaker. 2 pp. fo.
6. The Doting Athenians imposing Questions, no Proofs, or Answer to their Questions and most apparent Mistakes, about the People commonly called Quakers, and their Profession. This being our 5th Answer to their Mercuries of the 7th, 11th and 14th of June last [1692]. 2 pp. fo. Postscript signed Charles Bathurst, John

Edridge, William Meade, Theodor Eccleston, William Ingram, William Crouch, George Whitehead, Walter Benthall, Thomas Barker.

In 1693 John Dunton published in 12mo. a work with this title:

“The Second Spira: Being a fearful Example of An Atheist, who Had Apostatized from the Christian Religion, and dyed in Despair at Westminster, Decemb. 8; 1692. With an Account of his Sickness, Convictions, Discourses with Friends and Ministers; and of his dreadful Expressions and Blasphemies when he left the World. As also a Letter from an Atheist of his Acquaintance, with his Answer to it. Published for an Example to others, and recommended to all young Persons, to settle them in their Religion. By J. S. a Minister of the Church of England, a frequent Visitor of him during his whole Sickness.”

Extracts from the prefatory matter are subjoined:

“Being often importuned by several of my nearer Acquaintance, to publish the following Relation, as an account that might be very useful to the Publick, particularly against Profaneness and Atheism; and finding my Business at present very urgent upon me, I have at last yielded to give the Papers and Notes which I took during the whole Visitation, to a Friend of mine, to put 'em in some kind of Method and Order for the Press: And having examined the Piece, now 'tis perfected, with the Original Notes and Papers which I drew myself, I find the substance and material Part very faithfully done.

“It cannot be expected by the Reader that the Stile and Words are verbatim the same as delivered, especially the two Letters, which are in the following Tract, but as far as I remember, and as my Notes will assist me, (in taking of which I used all the Sincerity and Care I could) I dare affirm that there's nothing material left out nor is there any

interpolations which are not genuine, I mean such as do not add to the Sense, but only expatiate, in order to give a plainer Notion and Idea of the Matter: But as to what that Miserable Gentleman delivered himself (who is the Subject of this Relation) both I and the Methodizer of my Notes have been superstitiously Critical to give them as near the Truth, and very Expressions, as we could, believing the Reader would not be displeas'd to have as Nice and Exact Account of that part of the Treatise as possibly could be met with. And though this unhappy Gentleman's name is omitted for weighty Reasons, mentioned in the following Pages: Yet if any one doubts the Truth of any Particulars in the following Relation, if they repair to Mr. Dunton at the Raven in the Poultry, they will receive full Satisfaction."

\* \* \* \*

*"The Attestation of the Athenians.*

Ovr Opinion is, That this Example may do a great Service to the Age, being a practicable Argument against Atheism and Irreligion. The Original Notes and Papers of the Divine that visited this unhappy Person during his whole Sickness, was communicated to a Member of our Society, and by him drawn up, and Methodiz'd as is mention'd in the Preface, which Preface was drawn up by the Divine himself."

*"The Attestation of Mr. Wolley.*

The Methodizer of this History being a Person of great Integrity, the Reader has not reason to question the truth of this printed Attestation here given concerning it; and what commendation I shall give of it, will be serviceable no longer than till thou hast perused it through; Thou wilt find such Wine in it as needs no Bush. This only I shall say, it well deserves thy serious and frequent Perusal; and I heartily wish those pious Gentlemen that have Estates would be instrumental in dispersing of 'em throughout the

whole Kingdom, that so all ranks of Men, especially the Youth of this Nation, might reap some advantage by this extraordinary and amazing Instance. This is the Sentiment and hearty Desire of thy cordial Friend in the Lord, R. Wolley, M.A.”

Richard Wolley, who signed the last attestation, was of Queens' College, Cambridge (A.B. 1667-8, M.A. 1671). He was a clergyman, the author of *Gallix Notitia*, or the present state of France (1687, 1691), and of other works published by Dunton.

The *Second Spira* had a prodigious run, thirty thousand copies being sold in six weeks.

Several clergymen came to examine Dunton as to the truth of the narrative. He took them to Sault, who seems to have satisfied some of them, especially Mr Jekyl, a London divine of great repute. Others, however, entertained a different opinion, especially as Sault could never give an account where Mr Sanders, from whom he said he had received the memoirs, lodged. In the end it became evident enough that the *Second Spira* was a work of fiction.

Dunton, although he appears to have acted as respects this book in perfect good faith, suffered greatly in his reputation when it was discovered that the public had been imposed upon. He asserts his belief that Sault had himself felt the terrors of conscience which he so powerfully depicted.

In connection with this remarkable work it may be stated that in 1697 appeared *A True Second Spira; or Comfort for Backsliders*; being an account of the death of Henry Halford, with some account of Elizabeth Boodger, by Thomas Sewell (Lond. 4to.). Subsequently was published, *The Third Spira*, being memoirs of a young English gentleman at Paris in 1717 (2nd edit. Lond. 8vo. 1724).

Sault, at the close of 1693, is described as Master of the Mathematical School in Adam's Court, Broad Street. In that

year he published (but with the date of 1694), at the end of William Leybourn's *Pleasure with Profit* (Lond. fo.):

“A New Treatise of Algebra according to the late Improvements. Apply'd to Numeral Questions, and Geometry, with a converging Series for all manner of adaffected Equations.”

Of this work he had an impression in 4to. for his own use.

In 1694 he published a translation of Malebranche's *Search after Truth*, it being announced that the translation had been seen, approved, and revised by John Norris of Bemerton. In the same year appeared a rival translation by Thomas Taylor, M.A. of Magdalen College, Oxford; sometime Master of Bicester School. This was advertised as revised by Edward Bernard, D.D., Thomas Creech, M.A., Dr King, Mr Whitfield, Christopher Codrington, Esq., Dr Willis and other gentlemen of the University of Oxford. It seems to have kept its ground: a second edition appearing in 1700, and a third in 1720.

In February, 1694-5, a droll project was set on foot for the establishment of Royal Academies, one of which was to be near the Royal Exchange, and the other in Covent Garden. 40,000 tickets were to be issued at 20s. each. Out of these 2000 were to be prizes, giving the fortunate holders liberty to choose any of the following accomplishments they should have a mind to learn; viz. languages, mathematics, writing, music, singing, dancing, and fencing. The mathematics were to be taught in Latin, French, or English by Mr Sault and Mr Demouivre (Houghton's *Collections for Husbandry and Trade*, 22 Feb. 1694-5. No. 134).

The *Philosophical Transactions* for Nov. 1698 contain:

Curvæ Celerrimi Descensus investigatio, analytica excerpta ex literis R. Sault, Math. D<sup>o</sup>.....[vol. xx. p. 425].

In 1699 Sault published a translation into English from the third edition in Latin of *Breviarium Chronologicum* by Giles Strauchius, D.D. Public Professor in the University of Wittemberg. A second edition, which appeared in 1704, was enlarged.

with all the most useful things omitted by the author taken from Bishop Beveridge's *Institutiones Chronologicae*, and Dr Holder's *Account of Time*, as also with the Epochas of the Principal Kingdoms and States of Europe, with Tables calculated to the Author's method. A third edition, wherein the translation is stated to have been faithfully compared with the original by another hand, appeared at Lond. 8vo. 1722. Sault's preface is given with this edition.

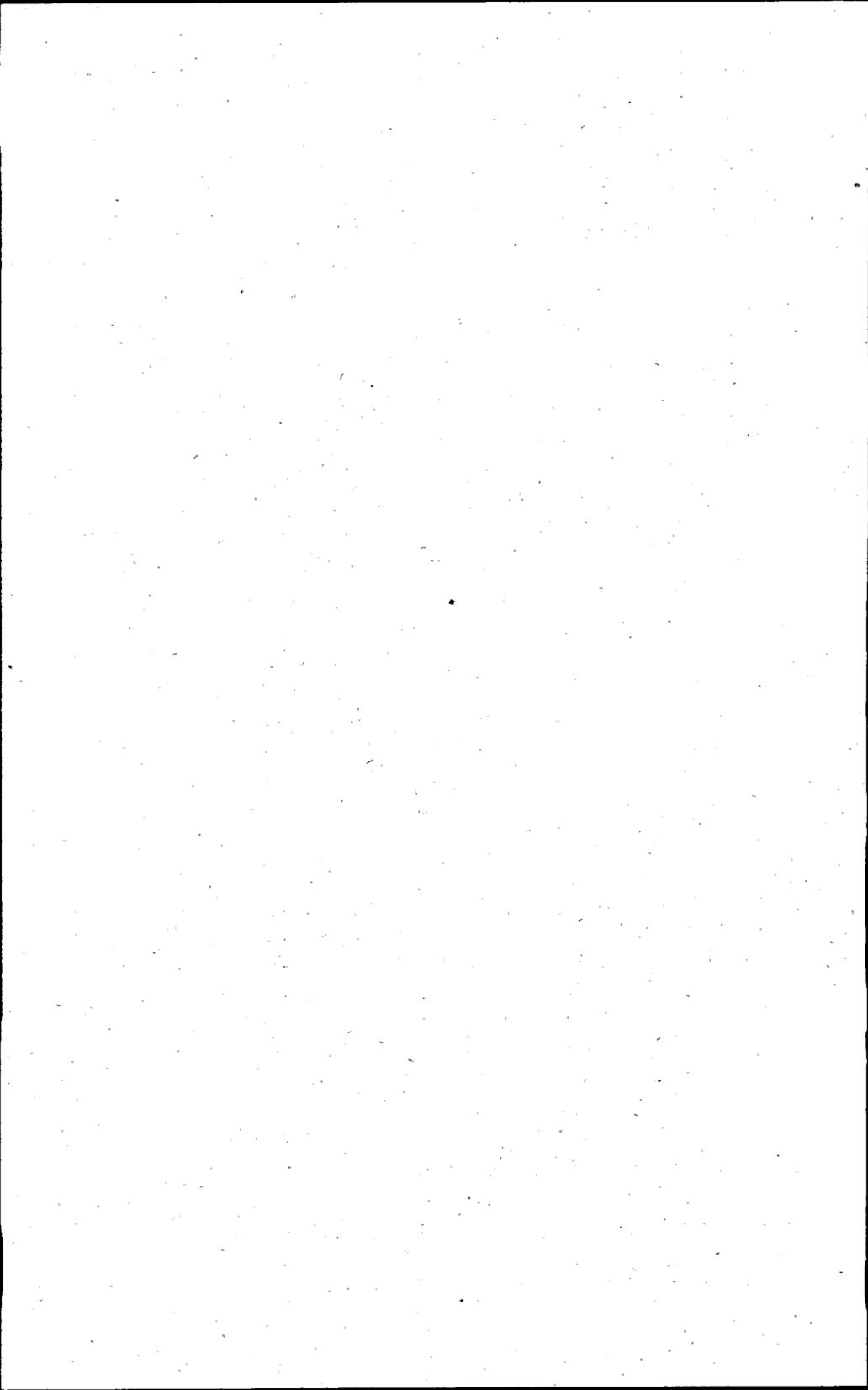
It was probably in or about 1700 that he removed to Cambridge, where, we are told, his ingenuity and exquisite skill in algebra got him a very considerable reputation.

He was not accompanied by his wife. She sent him a letter in which she alludes to his conjugal infidelity. This, in his reply, he confessed with penitence and sorrow. It does not appear, however, that they came together again.

In his last sickness he was supported by the friendly contributions of the scholars collected without his knowledge or desire. On his deathbed he made no allusion to the *Second Spira*, nor did he express any terrors as to his future state.

His funeral was attended by two worthy gentlemen, one of whom was a Doctor of Physic of Trinity College, who had visited him in his illness, and supplied physick gratis.

On the title-page of the third edition of his translation of Strauchius, Mr Sault is designated F.R.S. but his name is not found in the List of Fellows appended to Dr Thomson's *History of the Royal Society*.



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