GRUB STREET.

BY HENRY CAMPKIN, ESQ. F.S.A.

[Read at an Evening Meeting of the Society, May 13, 1867.]

The street which for ages bore, and earned its notoriety under, the name of Grub Street is a dingy thoroughfare running from Fore Street, Cripplegate, on the south, to Chiswell Street, Finsbury, on the north, and it is situate, for the greater part of its length, in the Ward of Cripplegate Without; its northern extremity lying beyond the city boundary. The joint Wards of Cripplegate Within and Without cover a space replete with interesting associations and ancient land-marks, among which not the least important, one can hardly say the most conspicuous, seeing that it happens to be quite hidden from the eye of the casual wayfarer, is the remarkably perfect fragment of the old Wall of Roman London, abutting upon the churchyard of the venerable church of Saint Giles, Cripplegate. And that churchyard itself, with its tombstones now all laid level with the ground, its soil never to be again disturbed for purposes of sepulture, what a charmingly secluded city oasis it is! and notably so "in the spring time of the year." Then are its bright green grass, its freshly robed trees, indeed, a welcome retreat to the citizen, who can spare a few minutes to step aside from the busy throng and muse among, and be almost surrounded by, relics of the past, the very noise and hum of the streets barely audible, while the twitter of the birds upon the branches above his head haply transports him in imagination to some distant hamlet wherein, it may be, his own boyish days were spent. And he will think, too, of the far *off times of internecine war, and dread of assaults from ever-*watchful foes, as he gazes upon the massive, smoke-blackened, time-spared bastion, one of many such which jutted out from the grey old guardian walls that girded round the ancient city of our forefathers.

Turning for a moment to the church, with its not unpicturesque, though, architecturally considered, somewhat nondescript and piebald tower, whose lower half is still composed of stones that have borne the brunt of time and weather for centuries, while its upper portion has been replaced by brick, we know that its registers bear upon their pages entries of the births, marriages, and burials, not only of rich London traders of bygone fame, but also of the progenitors of some of the greatest living nobles of our land. Enough is it to mention here the well remembered name of Egerton, the connection of which family, and the titles borne by it, with the locality, has been long preserved in Pridgewater Gardens, Bridgewater Square, and Brackley Street. Nor, digressing yet further for a brief moment, would it be an unworthy question to ask, whether that masque of masques, *The Masque of Comus*, written by Milton at the early age of twenty-five, may not have partially owed the selection of its author to some Cripplegate acquaintanceship between the city-born, city-educated, and city-dwelling poet, and the lordly owner of so goodly a portion of Cripplegate Ward? We know that, twice or thrice at different periods of his life, Milton kept house in, or in immediate vicinity to, this ward, and so what more likely than that he was an actual resident or sojourner on the Egerton property at the very period of his composition of this exquisite Poem? For it will be recollected that this Masque was performed before the Earl of Bridgewater at Ludlow Castle; that the chief performers in it were members of the Earl's family; and that Henry Lawes, the composer of the musical accompaniments to it, that " Harry " whom Milton has commemorated in one of the most beautiful of his sonnets, as he

> ——— " whose tuneful and well-measured song
> First taught our English musick how to span
> Words with just note and accent,"

when he published *Comus* to the world as a work " not openly acknowledged by the author," dedicated it to the young Lord Brackley, one of the performers in it, and the heir to and next holder of the Earldom of Bridgewater. It may fairly be assumed therefore that Milton, while preferring the anonymous with regard to his " Masque," as a species of composition hardly suited to the earnestness of his nature,—indeed, in later life, he spoke and wrote, as Todd has pointed out, in somewhat contemptuous terms, of

——————— "Court amours,
Mix'd dance, and wanton *mask*,"

yet stood in a more intimate light towards the Egerton family than that of a mere literary worker ready to supply the commodity required at a stipulated price, as has been the custom in all ages of writers of the "Grub Street" order; and this intimacy was, no doubt, as suggested above, due to the fact that the Peer and the Poet were actual neighbours. And this being so, and living, as he must have lived, under the very shadow of Grub Street, what more logical than that John Milton should have been regarded as a Grub Street author, by the city dispensers of street nomenclature? What though his poetry be of a far different stamp from that of those unhappy writers whose lucubrations and whose lives have identified the epithet of "Grub Street" with every thing that is mean or degrading in English literature? Given the determination to re-christen a street utterly divorced from all poetic associations; a street, too, which, as no duplicate of it existed, save one somewhere about Horseferry Road, Westminter, and lo! it is robbed of its identity, and not at all improved in its character, by the imposition upon it of a transformation of name as senseless and mischievous as it was needless. But if a new name was deemed so indispensable by the authorities, whose fiat in such matters no one could dispute, why not have taken that of the only known dweller in the street, whose literary labours have won for him imperishable fame? The name of John Foxe, the martyrologist, a plain-spoken man, who called a spade a spade, and who never dressed his statements in holiday phraseology, might far more fitly have been affixed to the corners of a street that knew him living, and that, like him, was too literal to have ever had any romantic aspirations after the lofty or the sublime. Or there was another plain-spoken Englishman, who was born and who both lived and died in the vicinity, one to whom, doubtless, every alley and *cul de sac*, and every grade of dwellers thereabouts, were familiar as the sun at noonday, *Daniel Defoe*, "restless Daniel," "unabashed Defoe," as Pope maliciously styles him in the *Dunciad.* No accusing spirit would have arisen from his grave had Grub Street blushed into new life under the shield of his popular patronymic. Anyhow, the name of Milton should have been held too sacred for an alliance with so ill-favoured a thoroughfare. But John Foxe's name would have served best, especially as, in 1735, the Notes and Queries of its day, *The Weekly Oracle*, in reply to the question, "Why is a bad author commonly called a Grub Street author?" suggests that "One very remarkable writer lived there;"—to wit, the aforesaid John Foxe—"and it is very probable the saying might take rise from him, the Papists often calling him by way of contempt the Grub Street author, and his work the Grub Street writings."

Grub Street, topographically speaking, in its best days, could not have been an unpleasant quarter of the town to dwell in. Its upper end opened upon Finsbury fields, and, until the time when archery ceased to be of importance, it was, as Stowe informs us, "inhabited by bowyers, fletchers, bowstring-makers, and such like occupations," which occupations being gone, archery gave "place to a number of bowling-alleys and dicing-houses, which," the honest old chronicler says, "in all places are increased and too much frequented." Dr. Johnson's dictionary-definition is familiar to all but the veriest few: "*Grub Street*, the name of a street in London much inhabited by writers of small histories, *dictionaries*, and temporary poems; whence any mean production is called Grub Street."

The doctor's pompous biographer, Sir John Hawkins, supplies a more ample and a much more jaundiced definition; he tells us that "during the Usurpation a prodigious number of seditious and libellous pamphlets and papers, tending to exasperate the people and increase the confusion in which the nation was involved, were from time to time published. The authors of these were for the most part men whose indigent circumstances compelled them to live in the suburbs and most obscure parts of the town; Grub Street then abounded with mean old houses, which were let out in lodgings, at low rents, to persons of this descriptions, whose occupation was in publishing anonymous treason and slander."

Mr. Peter Cunningham, from whose *Handbook of London* the last quotation has been taken at second-hand, states that "the first use of the term Grub Street, in its present offensive sense, was made by Andrew Marvell," from whose *Rehearsal Transprosed* he gives the following extracts:

"He, honest man, was deep gone in Grub Street and polemical divinity."

"Oh, these are your non-conformist tricks; you have learnt this of the puritans in Grub Street."

"I am told that preparatory to that they had frequent meetings in the city; I know not whether in Grub Street with the divines of the other party."

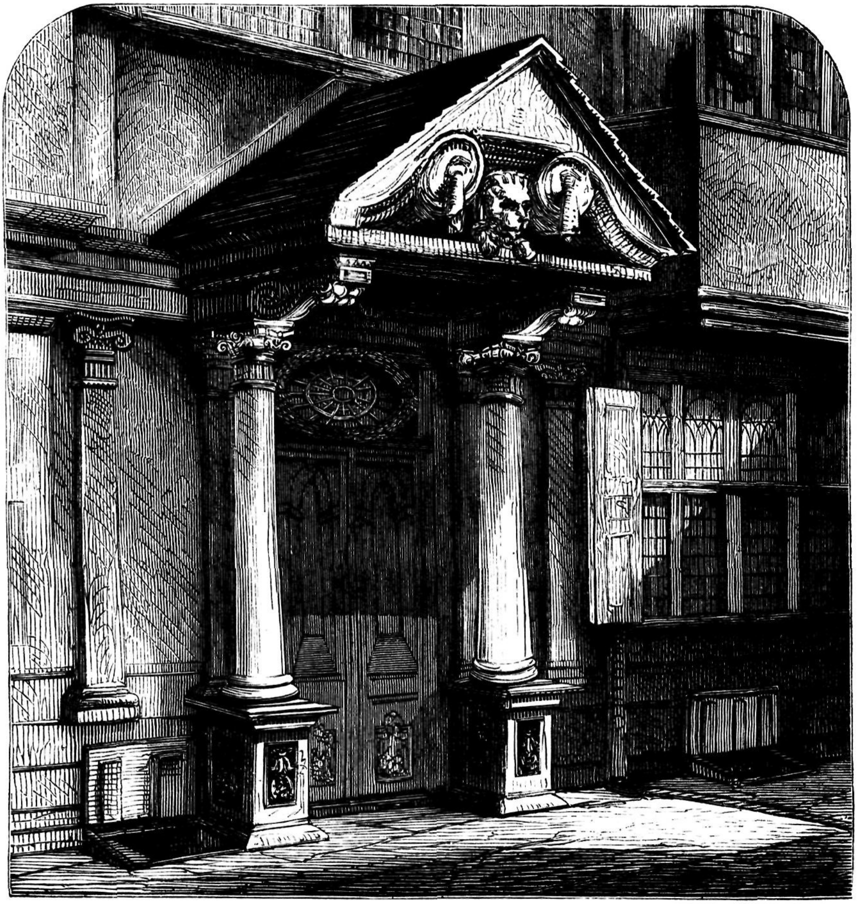
"Mr. Hoole," according to Boswell, "told Johnson he was born in Moorfields, and had received part of his early instruction in Grub Street. 'Sir,' said Johnson, smiling, 'you have been regularly educated.' In pleasant reference to himself and Mr. Hoole, as brother authors, he often said, 'Let you and I, Sir, go together and eat a beefsteak in Grub Street.'"

The character given to this street by Sir John Hawkins, as a street abounding in "mean old houses," applies to it as fully now as at the time when he wrote. The requirements of the Metropolitan Railway have led to the levelling of several of these houses on both sides of the way; but the street still is, if one may use the phrase, "riddled" as of old with courts, blind alleys, and small quadrangles to a surprising extent, some of them intersecting each other in such a way as almost to lead to the question whether they have not been so constructed in order to afford to pickpockets, and other offenders, means of escape from pursuit and capture by the police. Hanover Court, and its interlacing tributaries, will furnish an apt illustration of what is here meant. Yet how must this site have degenerated from its original grandeur if one can accept as truth an inscription on one of its houses, transcribed no longer ago than Saturday, May 11th, 1867: *Gresham House, once the residence of Sir Richard Whittington, Lord Mayor* 1314. *Rebuilt* 1805.

In Mr. Mark Lemon's "Up and down the Streets of London" will be found a view, from a drawing, made in 1809, of a handsome porch and part of a house then standing in Hanover Court, all traces whereof have for some time since disappeared, but the view furnishes one with a notion of the kind of house in which the wealthy of London were wont to dwell "in the brave days of old," and the author, by the courtesy of the publishers of Mr. Lemon's interesting volume, is happy to be enabled to accompany his paper with an engraving of it.

Another somewhat interesting site, as marking the difference between what it was and what it is, is Haberdashers' Square, on the west side of the street. Maitland, writing well-nigh a hundred years ago, describes this place as "genteel, with new well-built houses; the court," he says, "is square, and inclosed in with palisade pales, except a handsome passage to the houses round about, and in the middle a dial. This court was made out of two old ones, viz. Paviors' Court and Robin Hood Court." Some of the smaller modern suburban squares will furnish us with a tolerable idea of what this "genteel" square originally was. It had its inclosed space, turfed most probably, and in its centre, a then not unusual piece of out-door furniture, a sun-dial; an agreeable outlook, this, for the tenants of its houses, which, no doubt, afforded quiet and economical homes to men who lived by the labour of their brains. Now, in this year of grace 1867, you find the place a squalid quadrangle, no vestige remaining of the inclosure with its "palisade pales." The dial, also, has of course long vanished. Two of its sides still show the "genteel" houses which were "new well-built houses" when Maitland penned his description. They have sloping tiled roofs, with dormer windows in them; a third side would seem, for some reason or other, to have been pulled down and rebuilt some sixty years ago or thereabouts; and these latter houses have an inferior aspect as compared with their older opposite neighbours. The fourth side is formed by the backs of the houses in Grub Street. The quadrangle now is generally ornamented, for the greater part of the week, with parallel lines of washed wearing apparel, hung out to dry, while troops of children make the pent-up area unusually vocal with their "sweet voices;" nor is the organ-grinder long absent from so inviting a playground, the entrance being

Plate IX.



PORCH AND PART OF A HOUSE,

FORMERLY STANDING IN HANOVER COURT, GRUB STREET.

too narrow to admit any wheeled carriage drawn by horses. Every room in every house is in all probability the home of a distinct family, and as this is no doubt equally the case with all the houses in all the courts and alleys in this densely populated locality, one can hardly conceive that any author, however humble his attainments, how scanty soever his means, would prefer to follow his vocation in the midst of the sights and sounds of the Grub Street of our day, masked though it be under the more mellifluous appellation of Milton Street.

The only chapter in the "romance of real life" connected with Grub Street, has relation to a certain Henry Welby, who, in the troublous times of the first Charles, to wit, in the year 1636, departed this life at his house in Grub Street, at the age of fourscore years and four, having lived there, "unseene of any," for four and forty years. He was called the hermit of Grub Street; was the possessor of a good estate in Lincolnshire; and the tradition ran that he was thus led to immure himself in his Cripplegate hermitage in consequence of a younger brother having attempted to murder him. His portrait, how taken and whether faithful or not this deponent knoweth not, represents him as a bearded old gentleman, meditating over his book, and is well-known to the collectors of engraved English heads.

Admitting that Grub Street furnished homes to the great bulk of the poorer class of writers, compilers, index-makers, translators, and the like, no reason would seem to exist for jumping to the conclusion that the majority of its author-inhabitants were one whit more immoral or dishonest than their more gifted and more prosperous contemporaries; there was as much need then, comparatively speaking, for steady, plodding, industrious labourers in the field of literature, as there is now; and there being in those benighted times no penny steamboats, twopenny omnibuses, or threepenny railway trains, to whisk a man hither or thither, as necessity or whim may dictate, it was specially needful that literary workers, call them jobbers if you will, should reside almost within ear-shot of their employers. Little Britain, from two centuries to a century and a half ago, was the great emporium for booksellers and publishers; the printers and type-founders carried on their businesses, as many of the latter do now, hard by—there is still a Type Court in Grub Street. What, consequently, more to the purpose, more business-like, than that the supplyers of the material which printers put into *small pica* and *long primer*, *brevier* and *bourgeois*, and booksellers lived by the sale of, should have their little colony as near to these latter as local convenience would allow? Indeed, all other considerations apart, this way of living was once the universal way: guilds, and fraternities, and congregations of traders in the same line of business, nearly all had their special spots; why not, then, the working bookmakers? And Grub Street being, it may be presumed, an eligible neighbourhood, Grub Street became their abiding place. But, as time wore on, and London continued to stretch forth its ever-lengthening arms over the green fields around it, and facilities of locomotion increased, the more respectable of the Grub Street authors vacated their old residences, until few of their fraternity remained, save the improvident, the self-indulgent, the dependent, and the unprincipled; and thus ultimately Grub Street became synonymous with all that was mean, scandalous, filthy, and libellous, in a word, with the dregs and scum of our literature; till it would seem, in the time of Queen Anne and the first George, no man, no woman, no institution of any mark, able to buy off their slanderers, was safe until he, she, or it had rendered up the black mail demanded, and not always then.

Yet, even then, it may safely be averred, a much larger proportion of the writers obnoxious to the nickname of Grub Street authors were unfortunate rather than criminal, poor in pocket rather than impure in principle, and such an one was he who, further on, will be selected as a type of the Grub Street author of Doctor Johnson's days; and the latter, it will have been observed, with his usual justness of view, in the definition already cited, while he classes "writers of small histories, dictionaries, and temporary poems" under the epithet "Grub Street," bestows not a thought upon the wretches who live by systematic slander, deeming them, and rightly, a miserable minority, entitled to the honour of a connection with literature on no terms whatever. He knew, in fact, by his own early and bitter experience, the extreme difficulty with which a struggling man of letters, depending upon his pen alone, is enabled to keep to the path of rectitude; in short, he knew that in his own first years in London, when his garments were too shabby to permit of his showing himself in daylight, and when, not always sure of his next day's dinner, he devoured voraciously behind a screen in Cave's office the viands compassionately sent to him from his bookseller-patron's own table, the term Grub Street author was, in its best sense, applicable to no one more truly than to himself; and, hence, he allowed no sneer against Grub Street authors to escape from his pen while compiling that famous dictionary of his.

In the Pope-and-Swift era, literature almost lived upon the smiles of the great, and the patronage of political leaders. A witty pamphlet, or a stinging satire, wherein, rather by ridicule than argument, a statesman was covered with contempt, or dust thrown into the eyes of the nation touching some nefarious project in which it was deemed needful " to make the worse appear the better reason," was sure, if it achieved its object, of a reward out of all proportion to its intrinsic merits.

What writers were more unscrupulous than Pope and Swift, when it suited their purposes to be so? And who more unforgiving? Yet this duumvirate bandied about the term " Grub Street " more freely than any scribblers of their day, while no scribbler of their day was more amenable to the accusation of Grub Street, in its worst sense, than themselves, although Pope did write that severe couplet:—

> Let Budgell charge low Grub Street to my quill,
> And write whate'er he please—except my will.

But, then, they not only moved in high circles, and were courted by men in power; they were also writers of such transcendent ability, that they could royally hold their own against a whole republic of assailants. For all that, however, they roused against themselves such a nest of hornets, and were so unable to shake them off that a continual war was going on between them and their antagonists, and so much dust and so much smoke did the combat engender, that, as the old epigram has it, "none could tell which party had the day."

Then was it, however, that "Grub Street," as a power in the state of literature, engrossed universal attention; Dunciads and anti-Dunciads smothered all contemporary effusions upon the counters of the booksellers, and anarchy for a while convulsed the literary world.

Still, as Swift took up the cudgels more on behalf of his friend Pope than as a personal matter, he could look with a more unbiassed eye at what was going on, and accordingly in his pages we get glimpses which his wasp-like little associate never affords to us.

The sardonic Dean sometimes pretended to take the Grub Street pen-wrights under his protection. In the introduction to the "Tale of a Tub" he tells his readers, that "the productions of the Grub Street brotherhood have of late fallen under many prejudices: it has been the perpetual employment of two junior start-up societies to ridicule them and their authors as unworthy their established post in the commonwealth of wit and learning. Their own consciences will easily inform them whom I mean; nor has the world been so negligent a looker-on, as not to observe the continual efforts made by the societies of Gresham and of Will's to edify a name and reputation upon the ruin of OURS," constituting himself a Grub Street author for the nonce, for the sake of a side blow at the Royal Society, which then held its meetings at Gresham College, and at which he seems to have been as fond of poking his fun as was Hudibras-Butler before him; while his allusion to the Society of Will's applies, of course, to the gatherings of the more prosperous brothers of the pen who in his day made that celebrated coffee-house their usual rendezvous.

We have a reference in another place (in one of his letters to Stella) to the probable results upon the small fry of literature of the halfpenny tax at that time, *id est* the early part of the year 1712, about to be imposed upon the daily, weekly, and other fugitive pamphlets and broadsheets wherewith the town was then inundated, and wherein writers of high character, low character, and no character were wont, either from party or patriotic motives, or hopes of place or pay, to give utterance to their views on the great political questions, or social or moral topics, of the day; and under the weight of which halfpenny tax, in common with others of lesser note, the most eminent and kindliest censor of the times the world ever saw, the *Spectator*, sunk in less than a year; an attempt made to resuscitate it, some eighteen months later, resulting in a half-year's brief existence only. "Grub Street," he says, "has but ten days to live; then an Act of Parliament takes place that ruins it, by taxing every half-sheet a halfpenny."

In 1726 Grub Street is still a fertile theme for the Dean's exercitations. This time a curiously parsimonious habit of his friend Pope falls under his satiric lash. In some verses, which he styles *Advice to the Grub Street Verse Writers*, he thus addresses them:—

I know a trick to make you thrive;
  O, 'tis a quaint device:
Your stillborn poems shall survive,
  And scorn to wrap up spice.

Get all your verses printed fair,
  Then let them well be dried;
And Curll must have a special care
  To leave the margin wide.

Lend these to paper-sparing Pope,
  And when he sits to write,
No letter with an envelope
  Could give him more delight.

When Pope has filled the margin round,
  Why then recall your loan;
Sell them to Curll for 50 pound,
  And swear they are your own!

Whoever has seen those parts of Pope's manuscript translation of Homer, preserved in the British Museum, written as they are upon the backs of old letters and other odd scraps of writing paper, will at once see the point of Swift's good-humoured fling at the poet's singular habit.

It would seem that the great purveyor of what may more properly be styled Grub Street literary ware, in the Pope-and-Swift days, was the notorious Edmund Curll, and although there is some reason for believing that Pope, when he was inclined to mystify the world occasionally, and, for reasons known to himself, to draw attention, obliquely, to his own name, actually made use of Curll, yet both he and Swift were never tired of pouring upon Curll's devoted head the vials of their wrathful wit. But they raked the dunghills for epithets to bestow upon their butt; and so rank and gross is the filth with which they enveloped him, that no one even now can touch the subject without soiling his fingers. There yet remain some two or three of these flings at Curll and his way of business which may still be perused without a blush; as for instance in these

"Instructions to a Porter how to find Mr. Curll's Authors:—

"At a Tallow Chandler's in Petty France, half-way under the blind arch, ask for the Historian.

"At the Bedstead and Bolster, a musick-house in Moor fields, two Translators in a bed together.

"At the Hercules and Still in Vinegar Yard, a Schoolmaster with carbuncles on his nose.

"At a Blacksmith's shop in the Friers, a Pindaric writer in red stockings.

"In the Calendar room at Exeter Change, a Composer of Meditations.

"At the Three Tobacco Pipes in Dog and Bitch Yard, one that has been a Parson; he wears a blue camblet cloak trimmed with black; my best writer against revealed religion.

"At Mr. Summers, a thief catcher's in Lewkner's Lane, the man that wrote against Mr. Rowe's Plays.

"At the Farthing Pye House in Tooting [Tothill] fields, the young man who is writing my new Pastorals.

"At the laundress's at the Hole in the Wall in Cursitor's Alley, up three pair of stairs, the author of my Church History; you may also speak to the gentleman who lies by him in the flock bed, my Index Maker.

" The Cook's wife in Buckingham Court; bid her bring along with her the similes, that were lent her for her next new play.

" Call at Budge Row for the gentleman you used to go to in the Cock loft; *I have taken away the ladder, but his landlady* has it in her keeping.

" I dont care if your ask at the Mint [in Southwark,] for the old beetle-browed Critic, and the purblind Poet at the Alley over against St. Andrew's Holborn. But this as you have time."

Of course, many of these allusions, or they would have had no point, had reference to then living writers. For instance, "the Cook's wife in Buckingham Court" was Mrs. Centlivre, the writer of several sparkling Comedies, some of which still keep possession of the stage, and whose husband was Yeoman of the Mouth to George I. She is said to have written "a ballad against Pope's Homer before he began it."

This Curll must have been an arrant knave, a disgrace to the honorable calling of a publisher, and few but the outcasts of the author-craft can have had dealings with him. It was his fate to be exposed in the pillory for his scandalous publications. And for printing, in false Latin, a pirated edition of an Oration on Dr. South, the Westminster schoolboys inveigled him to their school-ground, and there tossed him, to more than his heart's content, in a blanket.

There was a *Grub Street Society* and a *Grub Street Journal.* Of the Grub Street Society little, if anything positive, is known. That it was not composed of Grub Street authors may fairly be assumed. *The Grub Street Journal* was certainly not conducted by Grub Street authors properly so called. Pope is asserted to have had a hand in it; and Mr. Crossley (of Manchester) the envied possessor of a copy of it, gives it a very high character. He tells us (*Notes and Queries*, 1st ser. vol. vii. p. 383) that, " whether Pope wrote in it or not, it seems to have been used as a vehicle by his friends for their attacks upon his foes, and the war against the Dunces is carried on with great wit and spirit in its pages. *It is by far the* most entertaining of the old newspapers, and throws no small light upon the literary history of the time." Whoever has the earliest volumes of *The Gentleman's Magazine* at hand, will find in that valuable miscellany a regular series of extracts from *The Grub Street Journal*, wherein Mr. Crossley's eulogium upon it will be seen to be pretty well borne out.

Let no one fancy that, because he finds a name gibbeted in the *Dunciad*, its owner deserves to be "damned to everlasting fame." No! In that wonderful satire, perhaps at once the most brilliant and the most malicious composition of its kind ever written, the lash is laid alike upon the writer who has suffered for conscience' sake and upon him who has no conscience at all; upon the author whose worst crime it was to be a feeble wielder of his only weapon the pen, and upon the more masculine one, whose hand was as ready at the rapier as at the writing-desk. One of the latter sort, Ambrose Philips, knowing how sickly a pigmy his angry assailant was, contented himself with hanging up at Button's Coffee-house a rod, with a threat inscribed beneath it, to the effect that the first time he met Mr. Pope there he would chastise him with that instrument of schoolboy torture.

Of the readable productions, "temporary poems," as the good old doctor styles them, "of the Grub Street class," a very fair opinion may be formed by consulting the first fifty or sixty volumes of *The Gentleman's Magazine;* the taste of the days when Sylvanus Urban was a thought or two less precise than in these prim times. There were also two or three other monthly periodicals, which the success of our old friend Sylvanus called into being. One was *The London Magazine,* which was ably conducted, and ran side by side for a good many years with Cave's popular miscellany. Another, called *The Town and Country Magazine*, was the depository of all the scandal of the passing hour, and in that serial, if any where, may be found samples of as "loud" Grub Street as, with the aid of asterisks, dashes, initials, and inuendoes, any printer with the terrors of the law before his eyes would dare to print.

As to the Grub Street writer himself, his habitat and his domestic surroundings, it may be questioned if any written description could ever hope to approach the masterly *tableau vivant* left to us by Hogarth in his well-known engraving of "The Distressed Poet." Indeed the more one studies any of the works of that great pictorial teacher, the more one is struck with his inimitable excellences in the delineation of his stories. Not only do his men and women intelligibly tell their tale, but every cat, dog, bird, or insect that he introduces is a more or less important contributor to the story; nay, the furniture and accessories are frequently among the most essential of its interpreters, and not, as is the case with the ruck of so-called artists, merely flung in to fill up what would otherwise be vacant spaces on the canvas.

Take the picture to which attention here is called. Look at the poor versifier himself, sitting on the lower end of his truckle-bed, fruitlessly racking his brain for a simile or a rhyme, for that he is at best but a mere versifier is evidenced by that rhymester's *vade-mecum* lying by his elbow, Bysshe's "Art of Poetry." The subject of his poem is *Riches*, and this idea is further played upon by the painter in the tattered map of the gold mines of Peru, wafered on the wall behind his poverty-stricken hero. Then, as a contrast to the golden dreams of the rapt scribe, look at the stern realities surrounding him. Here we behold an irate milk-woman pointing to her long score, and almost audibly screaming into the ear of that pretty woman, his patient wife, that that long account must be liquidated ere any more dairy produce passes into their garret; for that the poet's abode is a garret its sloping roof alone sufficiently testifies. The poor fellow's wardrobe, ah! what scantiness of possessions in that direction is revealed by the fact that, while he covers his nether limbs with his long skirted gown, his wife is busied darning and patching his one pair of breeches; and that there are no victuals in their cupboard is shown by the open door of that receptacle, and the vain researches of the one mouse engaged in a resultless exploration of its corners and crevices. Nor must we omit to notice a painful addition to his miseries, in the person of a crying baby, lying on the pillow in his rear. Still, thanks chiefly to the never-ceasing care of his wife, who, as we see, keeps his garments, as far as she can, in presentable order, our author, when he walks abroad, goes as a gentleman; for that he wears a sword, we are reminded by one of those then indispensable appendages to a gentleman's costume lying on the floor, whereon also lies his laced coat, of which pussy and her two not over-plump kittens hold for the moment undisputed possession. Add to this, that, partly absorbed by her sartorial difficulties, and yet more bewildered by the scolding milk-woman's threats, the poor wife fails to perceive that a gaunt dog is helping himself to a bone on a plate, conveniently enough for his purposes placed on a chair, but which, it may be depended on, was destined to still another picking before its consignment to his "vile uses," and our description of this admirable picture need be continued no further. Yet, protesting against the enormity, and in the same breath thanking him for that he has, in this portraiture of "The Distressed Poet," handed down to us the only known likeness of that much-abused man of letters, Lewis Theobald, the Shakespearian commentator, the original monarch assigned by Pope, in his *Dunciad*, to the vacant throne of Dulness; his only offence, a great one it is true, being that he had produced a better edition of Shakespeare than that of Pope, who shall say that, painted fable though it be, Hogarth could not easily have found its living literal parallel?

In the year of grace 1740, the very year in which Hogarth published his print, transcribed upon the copper by his own hand, of the picture just described, Samuel Boyse, then recently settled in London, having fled thither from the too pressing claims of his Edinburgh creditors, published a poem entitled "The Deity," a poem on which two critics, as opposite in their writings and their lives as could well be, namely, James Hervey, author of "Meditations among the Tombs," and Henry Fielding, author of "Tom Jones," set the seal of their warmest approbation; while Pope, it is said, a marvellous admission for him, declared that there were lines in it which he should not be ashamed to have written It might have been augured that a writer so gifted as this young man must have been would have experienced very little difficulty in making good his stand upon the literary platform; yet what was his career from first to last but a comment, as apt as it was terribly true, upon the painter's pictured satire? According to his biographers Samuel Boyse, the son of the Rev. Joseph Boyse, a dissenting minister, settled in Ireland, eminent for talent, benevolence, and piety, was born in 1708, sent to school in Dublin, and from thence, at 18 years of age, transferred to the University of Glasgow. His father possibly intended him for his own vocation. But, whatever the paternal plans, they were frustrated by the improvidence of the young collegian, who, ere he had reached his twentieth year, fell incontinently in love with and married a young Scotswoman, the daughter of a Glasgow shopkeeper. This marriage of course took place without the cognisance of the parents of either bridegroom or bride, and the father of the latter evinced his sense of the step she had taken without his advice by refusing—perhaps he was unable to afford—to her any assistance; and as the youthful husband, who had already become extravagant in his habits, now, from the natural increase of his expenses, stood absolutely in need of help, his longer stay at the Scottish University became impracticable; and he therefore returned to Dublin, accompanied not only by his wife, but also by a sister of hers, between herself and whom so strong an attachment subsisted that they refused to be parted.

So the young couple and the wife's sister were quartered upon a poor dissenting minister, who, scanty as was his income, gave a home to them; hoping, of course, that his son would do his utmost to get into some line of life whereby he might at least contribute to lighten the heavy burden he had thus laid upon a too-indulgent father. But, instead of so endeavouring, he wofully wasted his time in idleness and dissipation, and it has been asserted that his wife drifted into an infamous course also; and, although some warrant may exist for charging each of them with misconduct of no light character, yet it is but bare justice, both to the memory of a man against whom so many charges of bad behaviour can be sustained, and of a woman whose conduct later in life was such as to afford no ground, even under the severest privations, and neglected as she was by her husband, that she had in those early married days of hers not forfeited the confidences which her husband's most exemplary father reposed in her during the year or two that he survived their marriage. "She was for years the willing partaker of all her husband's poverty and wretchedness, although he is represented to have been so devoid of humanity as often to spend his last half-guinea on a tavern dinner, which he devoured in solitary gluttony, while his wife and children were starving at home."

Boyse lost his good father in 1728. He inherited nothing. Indeed, his father died in very involved circumstances, whereof his thriftless heir was no doubt the cause.

In 1730 he removed to Edinburgh, where his poetic talents procured for him the friendship of Lords Stair, Tweeddale, and Stormont (the last the elder brother of the subsequently so famous Lord Mansfield), and also of Lady Eglinton; and there can be little doubt that he not only profited temporarily by their patronage, but that, had he exhibited anything like regularity of conduct and steadiness of purpose, a permanent source of income would have been the result of the interest taken in him by these several noble and influential personages. As a sample of the hide-and-seek sort of life which, at this very time, he was leading, it may be mentioned that an elegy which he wrote on the occasion of Lady Stormont's death, entitled "The Tears of the Muses," was so gratifying to Lord Stormont, in his then freshly-bereaved state, that he ordered his solicitor at Edinburgh to make a handsome present to the author. But it would seem that the elegy was to be found more easily than its author or his residence, and the only way in which the solicitor was enabled to discover Boyse, and bestow upon him the wifeless peer's bounty, was by inviting him to his office through the medium of an advertisement in an Edinburgh newspaper. Boyse, it was evident, was ill at ease, save in the society of the tap-room and the slums; and he, who could write with elegance and scholarly precision, too readily fell into a degraded way of living, "from which," as has been truly said, "genius ought to be protected by a proud consciousness of its own inherent worth." Now was the golden opportunity, for which so many aspirants have sighed, within his grasp, had he chosen to seize upon it. The Duchess of Gordon, on the representations of some of his noble patrons already named, was induced to exert her interest in his favour; her tastes were literary, she was pleased with his talents, and she determined to provide for him. She procured the promise of a place for him, and he was accordingly provided by her with a letter to a Scottish Commissioner of Customs, which he was charged to deliver on the following day. But our wayward child of genius lived some distance from Edinburgh, the day was a rainy one, so he postponed the delivery of a letter so fraught with good fortune to himself; and, having allowed one day thus to pass over, he allowed another, and another, and yet another to pass over in like manner: in fine, the commissioner having waited as long as he decently could, and possibly having some other aristocratic friend whom he was as willing to serve as her Grace of Gordon, and whose protegé, doubtless, was made of more energetic stuff than dilatory Samuel Boyse, the post was filled up, and the poet slunk back into those obscure shades wherein it would seem he preferred to dwell.

Throwing thus his chances away, and finding, as before hinted, Edinburgh too hot to hold him, his Scottish well-wishers, still more kind to him than he himself was, furnished him with letters of introduction to Lord Chancellor King, Solicitor-General Murray, and to their great poetical arbiter Alexander Pope.

He is stated to have once called on Pope, but, the Twickenham recluse being absent from home, he never repeated his visit : no advantage therefore did he derive from his letter of introduction to him. And to no greater account could he turn his interview with the future Lord Chief Justice of England, to whom he did obtain admission; but Solicitor-General Murray was a sufficiently keen reader of men's faces to feel assured, by a glance at Boyse's physiognomy, that any patronage bestowed upon such a scapegrace of the Muses would reflect no great credit upon the sagacity of the patron.

In the great living sepulchre of London, then, behold him settled as a hack-writer, relying on his pen as his sole means of subsistence. His poem of "The Deity," in all probability, became the absolute property of its publisher as soon as it was ready for the press; and, no doubt, at no higher a price than an author in immediate need of a few pounds, or a few shillings, would be likely to obtain; and so, although two editions were sold in his lifetime, it can hardly have yielded much solid gain to him after it was once published. But it is a poem containing many harmonious lines, and some beautiful imagery; and it was addressed to a class of readers, who, more than any others perhaps, are disposed to take cordially by the hand any successful cultivator of that kind of poetry in which they chiefly or solely take delight. Whether any pecuniary help ever reached him from the leaders of any of the various religious sects, to whom this poem would have been peculiarly acceptable, is not known. Certain, however, may we feel that, had any such help been accorded to him, Boyse's conduct would soon have alienated from him the devout and decorous people who might have been willing to befriend him.

Of one fact at least may we feel satisfied, namely, that from this period to the end of his days, his condition was one of the most abject that a sensitive mind can picture to itself. Curious evidence exists of this. " It seems," says one of his biographers, " that before the poem of ' The Deity ' was regularly published, he sent copies of it to persons of note, in the hope of obtaining donations. Sir Hans Sloane was one of those to whom he applied; and in the British Museum there is a letter extant in which he returns a shilling to Sir Hans, it not being a good one, a melancholy proof how he was reduced." Melancholy indeed! Ten years before he died his habit of living was such as to be hardly creditable, did we not know to what straights humanity can bring itself, and yet be content to live. " He had not," says another of his biographers, " a shirt, a coat, or any kind of apparel to put on. The sheets in which he lay were carried to the pawnbroker's, and he was obliged to be confined to bed, with no other covering than a blanket. He had little support but what he got by writing letters to his friends in the most abject style. In this way he passed six weeks, writing, in addition to the begging-letters above alluded to, occasional verses for the magazines, and whoever had seen him in his study, must have thought the object singular enough. He sat up in bed with the blanket wrapt about him, through which he had cut a hole large enough to admit his arm, and placing the paper upon his knee, scribbled in the best manner he could the verses he was obliged to make;

whatever he got by those, or any of his begging letters, was but just sufficient for the preservation of life." From this six weeks' self-imposed imprisonment, he was it seems relieved by a "compassionate gentleman," who, hearing of his destitute condition, redeemed his clothes from pawn, and enabled him to appear abroad again. This "compassionate gentleman" is said to have been none other than Dr. Johnson, who assuredly did him that kindness on one occasion. "The sum," said he to Boswell, "was collected in sixpences, at a time when sixpence to me was a serious object."

But these experiences, bitter though they were, did not serve to induce more provident habits in Boyse. Want and its concomitants were so familiar to him, that, whatever his privations, he had recourse to shifts, which enabled him in some sort to put up with them. It was no uncommon thing for his one shirt to be as frequently at the pawn-shop as on his back. In his shirtless intervals, by the help of a pair of scissors and a slip or two of white paper, he would improvise a pair of wristbands and a collar; and the absence of nether garments was so little felt, that he was as often to be seen in the streets without them as with them. And once, having occasion to pay a hurried visit to a printer, he was seen rushing through the streets with no other covering than his coat, to the manifest dismay of some women who saw him in that ludicrous plight.

His stratagems for raising money seem to have kept pace with his necessities. He had long tired out and driven away the friends he once had among the Dissenters, whose regard for his father's memory, both as a good man and an eminent preacher among them, had time after time induced them to contribute towards the relief of his prodigal son; he would direct his wife to write to benevolent people, informing them that he was just expiring, and by this artifice he worked upon their compassion, and then surprised them by appearing the next day in public in his usual health. The trick of obtaining subscriptions to intended publications was of course resorted to, at the expense of those patrons of literature who were generous enough or credulous enough to put faith in his proposals.

In 1745 he lost his wife, who thus for well-nigh twenty years had borne with his neglect and waywardness of conduct, sharing and alleviating his distresses as only a devoted partner can. This event happened at Reading. He was of course in no condition to afford mourning habiliments, but he decked his pet lap-dog, which he always carried about with him in his arms, with a black ribbon upon the occasion. Nor let it be inferred from this that he was careless about the memory of his wife; that he was attached to her as much as any husband, so weakly given to self-indulgence as he was, could be is beyond doubt.

His employment during his residence at Reading was the compilation, in two volumes, of an " Historical Review of the Transactions of Europe from 1739 to 1745," for which work, and it has been described as a very creditable performance, he was paid at the munificent rate of half-a-guinea per week.

On his return to London his conduct became more regular, and hopes were entertained that a reformation would be wrought upon him. In 1748 he married a second wife, a native of Dublin, and a cutler's widow, of whom one of his biographers speaks somewhat sneeringly as "a woman in low circumstances, but well enough adapted to his taste;" "but who," as another of them more judiciously notes, "proved to be a tender-hearted and faithful companion."

Then he began to abstain from the drinking of fermented liquors, and became more decent in his appearance. The booksellers knew his capabilities, and he no doubt would have obtained constant employment, but his last hour was not far off. He was barbarously assaulted and robbed by some soldiers; and an attack of consumption, aggravated, if not caused, by this brutal treatment, under which he lingered for several months, at length ended in his death, in May 1749. He is believed to have died, with his pen in his hand, in obscure lodgings near Shoe Lane, and to have been buried at the expense of the parish.