

SOME NOTES ON ISAIAH THOMAS AND HIS WORCESTER IMPRINTS.

BY CHARLES L. NICHOLS.

ISAIAH THOMAS, Printer, Worcester, Massachusetts. In this simple manner the author of the *History of Printing*, published in 1810, announced himself; and it seems not inappropriate in presenting to this Society a copy of the *Bibliography of the Town of Worcester*, which contains a list of his Imprints, that a few moments should be devoted to Isaiah Thomas as a printer in Worcester.

Brissot de Warville wrote of Worcester in 1788: "This town is elegant and well-peopled; the printer Isaiah Thomas has rendered it famous throughout the continent of America. He has printed a large part of the works which appear; and it is acknowledged that his editions are correct and well edited. Thomas is the Didot of the United States."

Such is the estimate, by a contemporary, of the founder of this Society; and it is my desire to gather together from contemporary sources, as far as possible, the recorded knowledge of the surroundings in which, and the materials with which, he accomplished the results that drew forth the commendation noted above.

Samuel F. Haven, our former, revered librarian, once said, "a newspaper is the autobiography of the community in which it is published." We instinctively turn to the *Massachusetts Spy*, a careful examination of which reveals so much of interest and value in the life of Isaiah Thomas during his early years in Worcester, and illustrates so well his work as a printer, that it is difficult

to select the more important incidents without doing injustice to him or taxing your patience beyond the proper limit.

I. Of his Press.

We learn from the "Memoir of Isaiah Thomas by his Grandson Benjamin Franklin Thomas" that, after three months' partnership with Zechariah Fowle in the publication of the *Massachusetts Spy* in Boston, Thomas, in the fall of 1770, bought out the interest of his partner, together with the types and press on which he had worked as an apprentice. This press,—the famous Blaew press of about 1680,—bequeathed to this Society by Thomas, is now in our possession; and while he undoubtedly had others as his business in Boston increased, it must have been this press which was taken, in 1775, by Col. Timothy Bigelow and Dr. Joseph Warren, across the river to Charlestown, to be conveyed later to Worcester for the use of the Provincial Congress and the furtherance of the cause of Liberty. It has been stated that this press was in the hands of the British for a year and obtained from them after the evacuation of Boston. The uncertainty regarding the future of Boston and his love for the press of his childhood would have naturally inclined Thomas to save that press rather than any other. When he returned to Boston in the following year to secure, after the evacuation of the British, what he could from the wreck of his affairs, and removed to Salem to establish a printing-office, we learn that these materials were sold for debt, and he was obliged to join his family at Londonderry, New Hampshire. These reasons seem to me sufficient evidence that this press was the first one used in Worcester and was the one repaired by Benjamin Franklin during his visit to Worcester in 1776. From this date, through his early struggles to establish a lucrative business, this press was in constant use, even when, in later years his business was so extensive that he had under his control sixteen

presses constantly employed, seven of them in Worcester. In his *History of Worcester County*, in 1793, Peter Whitney writes, "His manufactures employ and support a large number of people; and it may justly be said that the business of no one person has added more to the consequence and advantage of the town and county of Worcester than his."

II. Types.

The type for this press was saved from his stock at the time the press was removed from Boston in 1775, and was used by Stearns and Bigelow and, later, by Anthony Haswell, to whom his business was leased for two years. Upon his return to Worcester, in 1778, he says that he found them worn down and very imperfect, and in an editorial, July 2, 1778, he writes, "Isaiah Thomas, Printer, the original proprietor and publisher of this paper, resumes the printing business. * * * He has a prospect of speedily procuring a good set of types but the purchase will amount to a very considerable sum; in the mean time, he hopes the readers will excuse its appearance if it does not look as well as when formerly published by him." We learn through his *History of Printing* that this new type was purchased from a lot secured by the capture of a British vessel from London. It is impossible to determine, however, from the appearance of the paper just when the new type was first used, probably because the quality of the paper was so poor. In a note written on the title-page of a sermon by Joseph Buckminster, printed by Thomas in 1779, he says, "Printed in the Time of the Revolutionary War. In this part of the country no good paper or types to be had."

The *Spy* dated April 10th, 1781, states that he intends shortly to use new, legible and elegant type, which he has lately procured with great expense for that purpose. When the war was over there were frequent importations of type,

and many references to the fact in the *Spy*. In the issue for December 30th, 1784, is the advertisement: "Isaiah Thomas has just received from England a beautiful set of Musical Types, by which he is enabled to print any kind of Church and other Music, and can afford to do it cheaper than such work has been heretofore done in this country from copper and pewter plates. Also a large assortment of all Kinds of Printing Types." In 1786 he printed "*Laus Deo!* The Worcester Collection of Sacred Harmony," of which Christopher C. Baldwin wrote, "I believe this is the first specimen of music printed from Types in this country. Before, it has been engraved."

In 1785 his stock had been so much increased that Thomas published "A Specimen of Isaiah Thomas's Printing Types. Being as large and complete an Assortment as is to be met with in any one Printing-office in America. Chiefly manufactured by that great Artist William Caslon Esq. of London," etc.

The text is printed on right-hand pages only and, curiously enough, the pagination is incorrect (a fact noted on the last page by Thomas) in this book of fifty pages, published to exhibit the skill and resources of the printer. To the copy in the possession of this Society Thomas added this note: "£2000. sterling and upwards, were added to this Specimen, in types, from Fry's, Caslon's, and Wilson's Foundries between 1785 and 1784.¹ A great addition, and a far greater Variety of Types were added to the following after 1785. When complete the Printing materials were estimated at Nine Thousand Dollars."

These notes are given to show the small beginning of his press in 1775 and the remarkable extension of his printing business in 1785, a period of ten years, eight of which were occupied with a demoralizing war. In the report of our Librarian in 1884, he states that this book had recently answered difficult questions as to the history

¹1786 was probably intended.

of one of the oldest and best type foundries in England. Thus showing the completeness of Thomas's collection of types, as well as the importance of preserving in our libraries even this class of literary material.

III. Office.

Lincoln's History of Worcester states that the press taken from Boston by Col. Bigelow was transported to Worcester, set up and worked, at the beginning, in a basement room of the Colonel's house, which stood on Main Street opposite the Court House. The colophon of the first number of the *Spy*, May 3rd, 1775, states that it is printed by Isaiah Thomas, Near the Court House, and that expression remained unchanged for many years. When he first occupied the building, so long known as the Isaiah Thomas Printing office near the Court House, it has not been possible for me to discover. In the issue of the *Spy* for June 21st, 1776, however, we find "The Publishers of this Paper hereby inform the Public that Mr. Isaiah Thomas having relinquished the Printing Business in Worcester, they shall continue the same *at the Printing-office lately improved by said Thomas,*" etc. It was signed by Daniel Stearns and William Bigelow. This proves that the building so long a landmark on Court Hill (now occupied as a dwelling on Grove Street opposite the entrance to Rural Cemetery) was in existence in 1776, and the print copied in the Reminiscences of Caleb Wall shows that in 1802 that office stood quite near the Brick Court House. For some years Mr. Thomas had a storehouse close to (ten feet from the rear wall) and in the rear of the Court House, built in 1751. In 1799 this storehouse was struck by lightning, and in the *Spy* for July 3rd and 10th appeared a detailed account of the accident and a minute description of the building, its location and contents. Among other things stored in this building at this time were the cases of the 12mo. edition of Thomas's Bible, which fortunately escaped injury and were later transported to Boston. In the small

building, known as the Printing-office, was done all the printing of Isaiah Thomas and his apprentices. In one corner of it was located the Post-Office of the Town of Worcester from 1775 to 1801. There also was located, for many years at least, his book-store and the bindery connected with his printing business.

In Carl's Tour in Main Street, Worcester, it is stated that in his most prosperous days Mr. Thomas employed one hundred and fifty men in his various departments of printing, binding, paper-making and delivering by post-riders.

Some references may be interpreted to imply that later than 1790 the Thomas book-store was a separate building adjoining his Printing-office, but it has not been possible to determine this. It is known that his son had a book-store in 1795 opposite the Prison in Lincoln Square at the sign of Johnson's Head, but this seems to have been separate from that of the elder Thomas.

IV. Paper.

In the journal of the Committee of Safety of the Province, is the following, dated April 29th, 1775: "Letters from Col. Hancock now at Worcester were read, whereupon voted that four reams of paper be immediately ordered to Worcester for the use of Mr. Thomas, Printer, he to be accountable." On the 12th of May the Committee of Safety voted a still larger amount for the same purpose. This was the first supply of paper for the *Massachusetts Spy* in Worcester and for the printing ordered by the Provincial Congress. It came from Milton, the four paper-mills of which furnished the paper for the Province at that time. That this source was later made use of by Thomas is shown by the apology printed in the *Spy*, September 20th, 1775, which says: "This paper was changed from the Wednesday to Friday issue and a single sheet in consequence of disappointment by an accident, of paper from Milton which did not arrive in season." On the 30th of

May of this year the Worcester County Convention passed the following: "Resolved that the erection of a paper-mill in this County would be of great public advantage, and if any person or persons will undertake the erection of such a mill and the manufacture of paper; that it will be recommended to the people of the County to encourage the undertaking by generous contributions and subscriptions." Without doubt this resolution was inspired by Thomas, and on the 5th of July of the same year the printer advertised that he knew of a person ready to begin this work.

Little encouragement was given however, for on February 7th, 1776, the *Spy* states: "We are sorry we cannot oblige our customers with more than half a sheet this week owing to the want of paper. The present scarcity throughout this county will certainly continue unless a paper-mill is established in this neighborhood." After some months of difficult and unsatisfactory labor, Mr. Abijah Burbank, of Sutton, produced in June, 1776, a sample of ordinary paper from the mill he established in that town. The following notice appeared in the *Spy*, June 11th, 1778. "Abijah Burbank, hereby informs the Public that he has lately procured a workman who is a compleat master of the art of paper making and hopes for the future (provided the good people of this County will be careful to save their rags) to be able to supply them with as good paper as any paper-maker in the State and at least as cheap." This mill was located on the site of the Lapham Mill in Millbury, then a part of Sutton, and at its greatest capacity turned out 1500 pounds of paper per week. The scarcity of rags and the misfortunes attendant upon a new enterprise rendered the supply irregular and the quality uneven, and we find an occasional threat to seek another source unless improvement followed.

The inadequacy of the supply from the Sutton mill as Thomas's business increased, or his desire to control the

price and quality caused Mr. Thomas to look about for himself, and it was doubtless this project which induced him to purchase in 1785 a lot of land in Quinsigamond Village near the scrap yard of the present steel works. The unsettled state of the country and the impoverished condition of the people evidently delayed the plan and he finally sold the property in 1787. On January 31st, 1793, he again purchased this land and erected upon it a paper-mill (the second in this County), a print of which is preserved in the collection of the Worcester Society of Antiquity.

The mill turned out about 1400 pounds of paper per week, and employed ten men and eleven girls. Among the workmen here was Mr. Zenas Crane, who went from this mill in 1799, to establish those paper-mills in the western part of the State which have become so famous by his enterprise. In 1798, Mr. Thomas sold his mill to Caleb and Elijah Burbank, who carried it on in connection with those at Sutton established by their father, until 1834 when it was sold to the Quinsigamond Paper Company.

V. Binding.

One more department was added to his business when in 1782 the *Spy* of April 11th added to its colophon the words, Book Bindery; and from time to time we find advertised in the paper the need of a competent book-binder. How long he was able to carry on this part of his business alone is not known, but Peter Whitney in his History calls it very extensive. That the work turned out by him was excellent, and equal to any in America at that time, is proven by many bound volumes in the possession of this Society. Perhaps the finest examples of Thomas's work as a binder are the copy of the Folio Bible of 1793, presented to the Society by him; and another specimen of the same Bible, formerly owned by William Andrews one of the Boston partners of Isaiah Thomas, and now in the possession of Senator George F. Hoar.

VI. The Worcester Imprints of Isaiah Thomas.

The titles of the Worcester Imprints of Isaiah Thomas contained in the Bibliography of the Town of Worcester were obtained chiefly from the rich collection bequeathed to this Society by Mr. Thomas, from the library of the Worcester Society of Antiquity, the Free Public Library of Worcester, the State Library of Massachusetts and the Congregational Library of Boston. The catalogues of Brinley, Sabin and numberless sale collections have been scanned for verification or for new titles.

From 1775 to the year 1802, at which date Isaiah Thomas resigned the printing business to his son, two hundred and fifty separate titles were recorded, to which number seventy-five more titles of various editions may be properly added, making a total of three hundred and twenty-five books, pamphlets, newspapers, broadsides, *etc.*, which were printed by or for Isaiah Thomas. In 1778, after his resumption of the printing business, we find a sermon with the imprint "I. Thomas & Co." The latter referring without doubt to Anthony Haswell, who remained in his employ for a short time. With this exception the imprint of all books until 1792 was Isaiah Thomas; and from that date the name varied frequently. Isaiah Thomas and Leonard Worcester have twelve titles; Leonard Worcester, for Isaiah Thomas, has eight; Isaiah Thomas, Jun., for Isaiah Thomas, supplies twenty-four titles; Thomas, Son & Thomas (Alexander), nineteen; Isaiah Thomas, Jun., for I. Thomas & Son, two; for Isaiah Thomas by Jas. R. Hutchins, one; while five titles state 'Printed for Isaiah Thomas' without giving the name of the printer. From 1775 to 1780 the words Massachusetts-Bay are invariably employed, the term Massachusetts being used subsequent to that year, the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts being ratified in 1780.

Without attempting to give any exhaustive description of these works, it is my desire to call your attention to

some of the more important books or classes of books which made the press of Worcester famous at that period.

Upon the copy of the *Spy*, May 3, 1775, in the possession of this Society, is written by Thomas, "This is the first Thing ever printed in Worcester," and it is natural that this newspaper should first engage our attention. A careful study of the notices, advertisements to the public, and appeals by the printer, reveals much of interest and value in the struggle for recognition which Mr. Thomas made in the early years of his life in Worcester. The two great difficulties against which he strove were lack of paper and want of patronage. Of the former we have already spoken, and the constant advertisement, "Cash paid for rags at this Printing Office," is sometimes replaced by the more telling appeal to "the fair daughters of Liberty" to save their rags for the printer and thus prevent the press from standing still for want thereof. During the first year two incidents occurred to mar the harmony between Mr. Thomas and his public. The Rev. Ebenezer Chaplin, of Sutton, having been refused the columns of the *Spy* for some of his effusions, preached a sermon affirming that the motto "Do thou great liberty," *etc.*, was rank idolatry, and that the editor was an Atheist as well as a Tory.

This called forth a flaming editorial from Mr. Thomas and a reply from the Church at Sutton, which took up the quarrel of its pastor. Injurious as such an attack must have been, it had no such evil consequences as the second incident. In the *Spy* of March 1st, 1776, we find the following editorial: "The Printer is sorry to say, especially at this Crisis of affairs, that the cruel hand of Oppression, in conjunction with unmerited malice, prevented him from publishing a paper last week." Again on the 12th of April, we learn that the printer was unable even then to settle his affairs. "It was his misfortune," he wrote, "to fall into the hands of a mortal whose Pharaoh-like heart was bent on cruelty and oppression." This attachment of

his property scattered his customers and was the probable cause of the two years lease of the *Spy* which followed. From his return in 1778 are to be found frequent appeals for support. In the issue for December 21st, 1780, he wrote that the *Spy* in 1774 had a list of 3500 subscribers in Boston; that in Worcester in 1775 the number was 1500, and the same in 1776. In 1778 and 1779 he had 1200; in 1780, during the first three months, he had but 150 subscribers, during the next quarter 500, and since that time 271 only. In conclusion he states, "it is always allowed that 600 customers with a considerable number of advertizements will barely support the publication of a newspaper," and agrees to continue if 750 subscribers are guaranteed.

Soon after this date (1781) the *Spy* was enlarged, the type improved, better paper secured and arrangements were made to obtain subscribers in Boston; and from this time we hear no more suggestions of lack of patronage. A very interesting editorial appeared October 16th, 1783, upon the value of the newspaper, in which he says, "the press is the Palladium of Liberty," and calls attention to his paper as a model of excellence, as it undoubtedly was at that period.

From this date we find long lists of importations from England, including books and materials of his own trade; and for two years the tide of prosperity was at its highest point. Then came the reaction, and an editorial on July 28th, 1785, says, "The present scarcity of money will in all probability be the only means to bring us to our senses. We have made large importations from Great Britain and elsewhere and have little besides cash to make payment. All the circulating currency in United America is now thought insufficient to pay what we owe for foreign luxuries. * * * This will of course set us at work and it is to be hoped make us industrious. * * * Nature has furnished us with soil and climate which will

produce all the comforts of life, nay more; if we but cultivate our lands instead of acting the prodigal and the spendthrift they will afford us all the rich luxuriance we can desire." The issue of October 27th, contains another strong appeal for the cultivation of our lands, and a series of articles was begun upon agricultural subjects. He says, "THAT people whose imports exceed their exports cannot grow rich. They must look for poverty and ruin which will inevitably be the result." As if to prove his own change of heart, he ceased to advertise long lists of books imported and began more freely to reprint the works formerly obtained from London.

Thus we might follow these confidences of Mr. Thomas with his Public from year to year, but enough has been given to illustrate his open dealing in his own affairs and his deep interest in the new Republic.

On the 24th of May, 1775, appears an address in the *Spy* by Joseph Warren, President of the Provincial Congress, to the people of Great Britain, upon the unwarranted assault of the British Troops, and calling for justice. This is followed, July 5, by the advertisement of the publication of "A Narrative of the Excursions and Ravages of the King's Troops under the Command of General Gage, on the Nineteenth of April, 1775. Together with the Depositions Taken by order of Congress To support the Truth of it." This book of twenty-three pages was printed in order to prove that the first blood was shed by the overt act of the British troops, and copies were sent to King George and his ministers to show that fact, and to the Governors of the different Provinces to prove the need of united action. This, the first book printed in Worcester, holds, therefore, an important position in the annals of our country!

Two Almanacs, published in Worcester in 1775, have the imprint of Thomas,—one compiled by Nathaniel Low of Boston; the other by Samuel Stearns of Paxton, the

latter containing a description of the battle of Lexington by the Rev. Mr. Gordon of Roxbury. The first of the series of Thomas Almanacs proper was printed in 1778, and they continued from that date without intermission until 1820. In addition to the usual calculations, these almanacs contained information of greater value and more solid character than the others. In the issue for 1784 is given the full text of the Articles of Peace, in that for 1786 the Declaration of Rights, and each year had its particular attraction to excite an abiding interest in his almanac.

The Thomas Almanacs were published in October of the previous year, and reference to the *Spy* shows that frequently a second and even a third edition was published before December, when the other almanacs were issued, thus proving the business acumen of Mr. Thomas as their contents did his superior literary taste.

In his History of Printing, Isaiah Thomas wrote, "The books printed during a century in New England were nearly all on religion, politics, or for the use of schools"; and these three classes were fully illustrated in his own imprints in Worcester. The sermons printed by him are an almost complete ecclesiastical history of Worcester County: while Hart's Hymns, 1782; Ballou's Hymns, 1785; Watts's Psalms, 1786; Brady & Tate's Psalms, 1788; with the Worcester Collection of Sacred Harmony, 1786; and French's Psalmodists' Companion, 1793,—show the books used in worship by the churches of that period.

The Constitution or Frame of Government for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (ratified in 1780) was printed in 1787. The Perpetual Laws of Massachusetts from 1780 to 1788 were gathered together and printed by Thomas in 1788, and a second volume, carrying the collection to 1798, appeared in 1799. Jonathan Jackson's "Thoughts Upon the Political Situation," *etc.*, came out in 1788, as did Minot's History of the Insurrection in

Massachusetts in 1786. In 1790 a fine edition of Blackstone's Commentaries was printed in four volumes.

These will give an idea of the more weighty political and legal treatises which issued from his press. When we turn to the purely literary side, we find among the finest specimens of his work are the Masonic orations. An enthusiastic Mason, he compiled the "Constitutions of the Ancient and Honorable Fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons" in 1792, and, six years later, printed a second edition, edited by Thaddeus M. Harris. In 1793 appeared Peter Whitney's History of Worcester County.

Millot's Elements of General History, in five volumes, in 1789; Josephus's Works, in six volumes, in 1794; St. Pierre's Studies of Nature, in three volumes, in 1797; and Charlotte Smith's Elegiac Sonnets in 1795,—are some of the reprints noted in this list.

The last is one of the finest productions of his press, the paper being made at his own mill, the illustrations being engraved in Worcester and the printing done on the old press of his youth. The preface to this book evidences his love for his art and reminds one of the introductions written by Baskerville to whom Thomas has been likened.

Samuel Sewall's *Carmina Sacra*, printed in 1789, containing Latin versions of the Psalms and a Greek ode, is another choice specimen of his presswork.

In 1780, to eke out his small income from printing, Isaiah Thomas entered into partnership with Joseph Trumbull in the drug store started in 1772 by Dr. William Paine, and continued his interest in that business for several years. Whether this gave him the impetus, or his natural tendency to search for and secure the best in every branch of knowledge, is not known, but from his press came reprints of some of the finest medical works of the day. Cullen's First Lines of Physic, in 1790; Bell's Surgery, in three volumes, in 1791; Hamilton's Female Family Physician, in 1793; White's Pregnancy and

Smellie's Plates, in the same year,—illustrate his judgment and skill, as well as show the high character of the medical profession in Massachusetts at this period.

His own meagre training at school and his restless search for knowledge in consequence, prepare us for the deep interest he displayed in all educational matters, as well as in the publication of school books. Twenty titles are recorded of such productions, mainly reprints, but several the product of our own talent. Among the first stands Perry's Spelling Book. In the *Spy* of March 3d, 1785, appeared an editorial, signed by an old schoolmaster, giving strong reasons for the superiority of this over all other spelling books, and stating that the expense of importation alone prevented its use in Andover and Leicester Academies. The same month was advertised the First Worcester Edition of Perry's Spelling Book, and from this time, a new edition appeared almost yearly until 1804, when it was reconstructed and improved. I have been unable to find any clue to the size of the editions of the Thomas imprints, except in the case of this book. In the Improved Edition of 1804 the preface states, "Fourteen editions of this useful book have issued from our Press in Worcester (constituting at least 300,000 copies)"; and in 1805 the preface states that 20,000 copies of that book had been sold the previous year.

In the fall of 1785 Thomas published a Spelling Book designed by himself, which he states, in the *Spy* of November 24th, was intended to be used by teachers not having had a classical education, and which would serve as a good introduction to Perry's. His manuscript note in the copy belonging to this Society states that it was rather hastily compiled and set aside with the publication of Perry's work. In 1788 Perry's Royal Standard English Dictionary appeared (the first in America), and its dedication was "To the American Academy of Arts and Sciences." Curiously enough, there is in the possession

of this Society the galley proof of a letter to Isaiah Thomas, dated 1787, from Benjamin Franklin, accepting the honor of the dedication of this dictionary to himself.

Ash's Grammatical Institutes, or an Easy Introduction to Dr. Lowth's English Grammar appeared in 1785, and was used with the Grammar in Perry's Spelling Book until Webster's work and Lindley Murray's popular Grammar came into use. It was the custom then, however, to use the Latin grammar, and, in 1786, the popular Introduction to the making of Latin, by John Clarke, was reprinted.

In the year 1794 Caleb Alexander, a minister at Mendon, published "A Grammatical Institute of the Latin Language," a book founded on Clarke's work, but much improved.

In 1795 he published "A New Introduction to the Latin Language," *etc.*, which he claims is the first work of its kind in America. "A Grammatical System of the Grecian Language" appeared in 1796, which, the *Spy* says, is the first Greek Grammar in America.

Caleb Alexander published, also, the first American translation of Virgil, in 1795, and "A Young Ladies and Gentlemen's Spelling Book in 1799," and was the critical editor of the Greek Testament of 1800.

These three, although Worcester imprints, did not appear from the press of Isaiah Thomas, but are given to show the versatility and classical education of this preacher of Mendon.

Nicholas Pike's Arithmetic was published in 1787, in Newburyport, by Thomas, and at once replaced the half-dozen inferior ones then in use. In 1795 a second edition was published in Worcester, and in 1797 an improved edition was published under the supervision of Ebenezer Adams, Principal of Leicester Academy, and its popularity continued far into the new century.

These examples will show the care with which Thomas selected the best books in these branches, and the active

outlook he kept for the improvements demanded by the necessities of his public.

Of the various editions of the Bible printed by Isaiah Thomas so much has been said that nothing of interest can be added. The Hieroglyphic Bible, printed in 1788, filled "with Emblematical figures for the Amusement of Youth," is one of the rarest bibles printed by Thomas in Worcester, and shows a remarkable relaxation in the age which printed for its children "A Token for Children by James Janeway (1795)," "The History of Holy Jesus (1786) and Watts's Divine and Moral Songs for Children (1778). The same year which saw a broadside, "The Confession and Dying Words of Samuel Frost, who is to be Executed This Day, October 31, 1793, for the Horrid Crime of Murder," the colophon of which reads: Printed and Sold at Mr. Thomas Printing office in Worcester. Price 6d. Also A Poem on the Occasion, Price 3d, records "A Faithful Narrative of the Wonderful Dealings of God towards Polly Davis of New Grantham in the State of Newhampshire Taken from her own Mouth" *etc.* This latter represents a class of literature for the conversion of youth to that gloomy form of religion which is, happily, being replaced by a more vital and practical Christianity in our own generation.

But we must stop here to consider that class of books which has made Isaiah Thomas more noted than any, perhaps all others, which he printed. I refer to the Juveniles reprinted from the Carnan and Newbery Chap-books. Those exquisite gems of fancy, bound in flowered Dutch gilt paper have a life of their own, apart from all others, and it seems to me not inappropriate that the art of making these gilt covers even, should have been lost. They are matchless! I have little patience with the modern Folk Lore Study which so materializes these tales as to render them attractive to childhood because they recall a prenatal stage in the unthinking mind of youth. No! I prefer to

thank Heaven with Southey and Charles Lamb that we could be fed with such manna rather than the depressing though well-intended writings of James Janeway and Mrs. Barbauld.

While the authorship of many of these little books can be ascribed directly to John Newbery, as that extract from Dr. Primrose's Diary shows, in which he states that he found Newbery working up the story of Tommy Trip, and others bear the earmarks of Newbery's advertising genius, like the allusion to Dr. James's Fever Powders in *Goody Two Shoes*; a more careful study of these toy-books deepens the impression that Oliver Goldsmith lent to many the freshness of his matchless wit as well as the beautiful simplicity of his literary style.

In the *Boston Chronicle* for August, 1767, I find advertised by John Mein, Giles Gingerbread and Tommy Trip, with other gilt covered little books for children, so early did the Boston booksellers recognize the value of these books; and from this time frequent importations are recorded. Among the earliest importations of Thomas after the peace of 1783, we find a variety of small gilt books for children, and in 1784 he prints a long list of these juveniles just received from London. What caused him to reprint these books is not known. It may be the recollection of Tom Thumb's Folio, which he set up in 1762, when an apprentice for Andrew Barelly. It is more than probable, however, that the conviction which was forced upon him at this period that the imports of the country had become a serious menace to her prosperity, set into activity his fertile mind with the well known result.

On the 27th of June, 1786, the following advertisement appeared in the *Worcester Magazine*: "A large Assortment of all the various sizes of Children's books, Known by the name of Newbery's Little Books for Children, are now republishing by I. Thomas in Worcester, Massachu-

setts. They are done exactly in the English Method, and it is supposed the paper, printing, cuts and binding are every way equal to those imported from England. As the subscriber has been at great expense to carry on this particular branch of Printing extensively, he hopes to meet with encouragement from the Booksellers in the United States."

In 1784, the Royal Primer appeared; in 1785, two other juveniles were printed, one being Mother Goose, the history of which has been so fully treated by William H. Whitmore. From the date of the above notice they increased rapidly in numbers,—in 1786, eleven; in 1787, twenty-two; in 1788, eight; in 1789, four; in 1794, seven; in 1795, two; and in 1796, four. Sixty-one titles can be referred to Thomas without question and about twenty more have the weight of probability. How large the editions of these juveniles were it is impossible to determine, for no reference has been found in the columns of the *Spy*, and single copies of many are the sole proofs of their existence. It is not surprising, however, that they are so rare, for childhood, like nature is prodigal of its resources.

These notes have been placed before you with no attempt at completeness, but with the avowed purpose of culling from the productions of the press of our first printer, Isaiah Thomas, such titles as may arouse your interest in a branch of book-lore too little studied at the present time—local bibliography.

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