

**AUTOBIOGRAPHY  
OF A POCKET-  
HANDKERCHIEF**

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Autobiography of a Pocket-Handkerchief by James Fenimore Cooper

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**JAMES FENIMORE COOPER**

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*This edition consists of five hundred copies;  
of which this book is No. 37*

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Handkerchief**

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Autobiography  
Of a  
Pocket-Handkerchief//

By  
James Fenimore Cooper

Edited with Notes and an Introduction

By  
Walter Lee Brown



mdccxcvii

## INTRODUCTION.

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This story, by the author of "The Spy," "The Pilot," and the Leatherstocking Series, has not, to our knowledge, been republished since its first appearance more than half a century ago. As stated by T. R. Lounsbury, in his *Life of Cooper*, it seems to be the fact, that "for some reason not easy to explain, this has never been included in the regular editions of his novels."

In his brief notice of the work Professor Lounsbury does not flatter it, commenting as follows: "In it he made in some measure another effort to reproduce the social life of New York City. The previous failure was repeated. An air of ridiculous unreality is given to this part of the story in which the impossible talk of impossible people is paraded as a genuine representation of what takes place in civilized society." Nevertheless, and in spite of this sharp-edged opinion, the story has a value and an interest of its own, as presenting one phase of Cooper's genius and as illustrating his satirical ideas of certain aspects of American society of that period, which had so recently been punctured by the caustic, semi-truthful pens of Dickens and Mrs. Trollope.



No one character in this little novel can hope to live with Harvey Birch or immortal Natty Bumppo, yet the tale deserves a better fate than oblivion. It is here given; let the reader form his own judgment.

In 1843 the story first appeared, and in three forms. In point of time, the first was as published in GRAHAM'S MAGAZINE, volume XXII, detailed as below:

- No. 1. January, 1843. Pages 1-18.
- No. 2. February, 1843. Pages 89-102.
- No. 3. March, 1843. Pages 158-167.
- No. 4. April, 1843. Pages 205-213.

The first installment was entitled "Autobiography of a Pocket-Handkerchief," announced as "By the author of "The Red Rover," "The Pioneers," "Le Feu-Follet," etc.," but the subsequent numbers were headed as "By J. F. Cooper, author of "The Red Rover," "Le Feu-Follet," etc." There was no division into chapters or parts.

The second form but the first appearance as a separate publication, making it then the true *first American edition*, was among the extra sheets issued by the publishers of "BROTHER JONATHAN." This was a double-column, 32-page quarto pamphlet (size about  $8\frac{1}{2} \times 11\frac{1}{8}$  inches), uncut, with no covers, and having an ornamental half-page title inscribed "Brother Jonathan, Extra sheet. Number XXII. Wilson & Company, Publishers. New

York, March 22, 1843." The title now read "Le Mouchoir, | An Autobiographical Romance. | By J. Fenimore Cooper, Esq. | Author of "The Spy," "The Pilot," "Home as Found," | "Wing-and-Wing," "The Two Admirals," &c." It was divided into eighteen chapters.

The third form was the *first English edition* (and the *first and only book*), being in post 8vo, 294 pages ( $4\frac{1}{2} \times 7\frac{1}{4}$  inches approximately), boards, uncut, published by Richard Bentley, and printed by R. Clay. The title was "The French | Governess; | or, the | Embroidered Handkerchief. | A Romance. | By J. Fenimore Cooper, | Author of "The Pilot," "The Red Rover," "The Jack o' Lantern," &c. | London: | Richard Bentley, New Burlington Street. | 1843." The half-title varied the true title with "Le Mouchoir; | An Auto-Biographical Romance," while the running titles still further rang the changes by alternating "The French Governess," "or, Le Mouchoir." So that, altogether, this short novel has had more titles than many more pretentious ones. The book was divided into eighteen chapters, similarly to the *Brother Jonathan* issue.

It has been our good fortune to obtain the original manuscript of this novel, showing all the author's corrections and interlineations, just as he prepared it for *Graham's Magazine*. In reprinting the story, we have used the text of the *Graham* issue, noting all variants in the *Brother Jonathan*

and *Bentley* editions, and giving the corrections, alterations and notes of the *Manuscript*. By so doing, we shall get behind the scenes, into the workshop, as it were, of a famous author's mind; an invariably fascinating undertaking, always desirable, but not always easy of achievement.

WALTER LEE BROWN.