

**THE LIFE OF MR.
THOMAS GENT,
PRINTER, OF YORK**

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The Life of Mr. Thomas Gent, Printer, of York by Thomas Gent

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THOMAS GENT

**THE LIFE OF MR.
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PRINTER, OF YORK**

THE LIFE

OF

MR. THOMAS GENT,

PRINTER, OF YORK;

NEW YORK
WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.



London:

PRINTED FOR THOMAS THORPE,

36, BEDFORD STREET, COVENT GARDEN.

1832.

NEW YORK
PUBLIC
LIBRARY

C. DEARD, PRINTER, BARTHOLOMEW CLOSE.

PREFACE.

THE name of GENT is well known to the collectors of English topography,—and of typographical curiosities, as that of a printer who sometimes employed his press upon productions of his own; and who, in his character of author, produced numerous volumes, which are far from being destitute of merit. To the collectors of portraits, he is known by a fine mezzotinto print, after a painting by NATHAN DRAKE.

Even the ~~eyes~~ inquirers into the history of the county in which he resided, and on which his topographical labours were directed, could collect little concerning his life, except what might be learned from his publications; when, ~~at~~ a manuscript appears in the hands of Mr. THORPE, the bookseller, in Bedford street, Covent garden, in the handwriting of the author, and entitled by him, "Of the Life of THOMAS GENT, Printer." It was written in 1746, when he was in his fifty-third year. This manuscript was discovered by Mr. Thorpe, in a collection from Ireland, the country of which GENT was a native, and where he had relations, into whose

hands the work may be supposed to have fallen on the death of its author.

Besides being a very minute account of a man about whom some curiosity may reasonably be supposed to exist, the narrative contains a few notices of other persons more the object of public interest than our author, and also of the manners and transactions of his time. Those who feel no curiosity about GENT, may peruse it as the short and simple annals of a life in which we perceive good conduct finding its appropriate reward; and at the same time, an instance of the inconstancy of the world, in the falling fortunes of one in whom these qualities were still to be found. Those who are familiar with his published writings, and have formed from them an idea of the peculiar constitution of his mind, will perceive that this narrative is throughout quite characteristic.

Three of the large and closely written folio leaves are lost,—the first, the third, and the ninth. The first leaf must, doubtless, have contained an account of his parents, who were residents of Dublin; of his education in that city; and of his being placed with a printer there, to learn the business. We find him, when the narrative opens upon us, forming, on a sudden, the resolution of abandoning his master, his family, and his country; and he sets sail for Liverpool without money, and without a rational prospect of gaining any.

THE LIFE OF
MR. THOMAS GENT.

— THE worst was in leaving my dear parents, but that I hoped would in time be atoned for; in short, I told Arnold that I would accompany him: he promised to meet me on Aston's Quay, wherein he failed. However, as Captain Wharton was going to sail, I took some small provision, got a shilling of my dear mother, gave a farewell kiss to her and my loving father, (without any word or token of what I had in agitation,) and bought two or three penny loaves out of my stock, which, I think, was about seventeen pence, only that my habit was tolerable, having taken my best suit. And so, on the 9th of August, 1710, as we entered the mouth of

the bay, a great storm ensued, which obliged the sailors to cast anchor.

I had crept into the hold, where I lay very sick, by which means I was secure from the searches of my indulgent father, one Mr. Charles Harris, a tidewaiter, and my master aforesaid. On the third day from my being on board, the wind and weather permitting, we set forward, and the day following came opposite to the shore, on the eminence of which is a place called Park Gate; here, knowing my poor stock would not half amount to the payment of my passage, I offered my waistcoat as a recompense to the master, who, I was previously told, would order me to be severely striped for presuming to enter the ship without money. But, indeed, contrary to what was thought, he let two or three others pass free: when I came to make my offering, "Pretty lad," said he, "and is it so poor with you? Why, if I should strip you of your raiment, you might happen to be starved to death, which I know not but might be left at my door; but, child, had my sailors told me you were hid in the ship, upon my word you should have been delivered to your friends when they searched for you. What will your

tender parents say, when they come to hear that you are in a strange land, without support? for my own part, I grieve for your condition. Here, young man, take this sixpence with you, endeavour to get employment, and take to good ways; for I have children of my own and that makes me pity you the more, seeing you are but young, and as yet so helpless a creature, for want of friends to assist you, and advise you for the best. Such kind expressions coming, as I thought at first, from a rough sailor, drew flowing tears from the full sluices of mine eyes; and while I thanked him the more, with promise if ever I met him knowingly, and was of ability, I should more than recompense him for his timely generosity, it melted him also, that he could speak but little more than bidding God bless me, who was able chiefly to support me, as he had wonderfully many other faithful travelling adventurers. He ordered one of the sailors to help me into the boat, as being myself very weak, through the violent tossing of the waves; so then, when I landed, the world seemed to turn round, through the giddiness that possessed my poor brains, and really had almost deprived me of any thought. I had like to have fallen backwards into the water, but