

**JOSEPH DENNIE: EDITOR
OF "THE PORT
FOLIO" AND AUTHOR
OF "THE LAY PREACHER"**

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Joseph Dennie: Editor of "The Port Folio" and Author of "The Lay Preacher" by William Warland Clapp

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WILLIAM WARLAND CLAPP

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By Edward Everett

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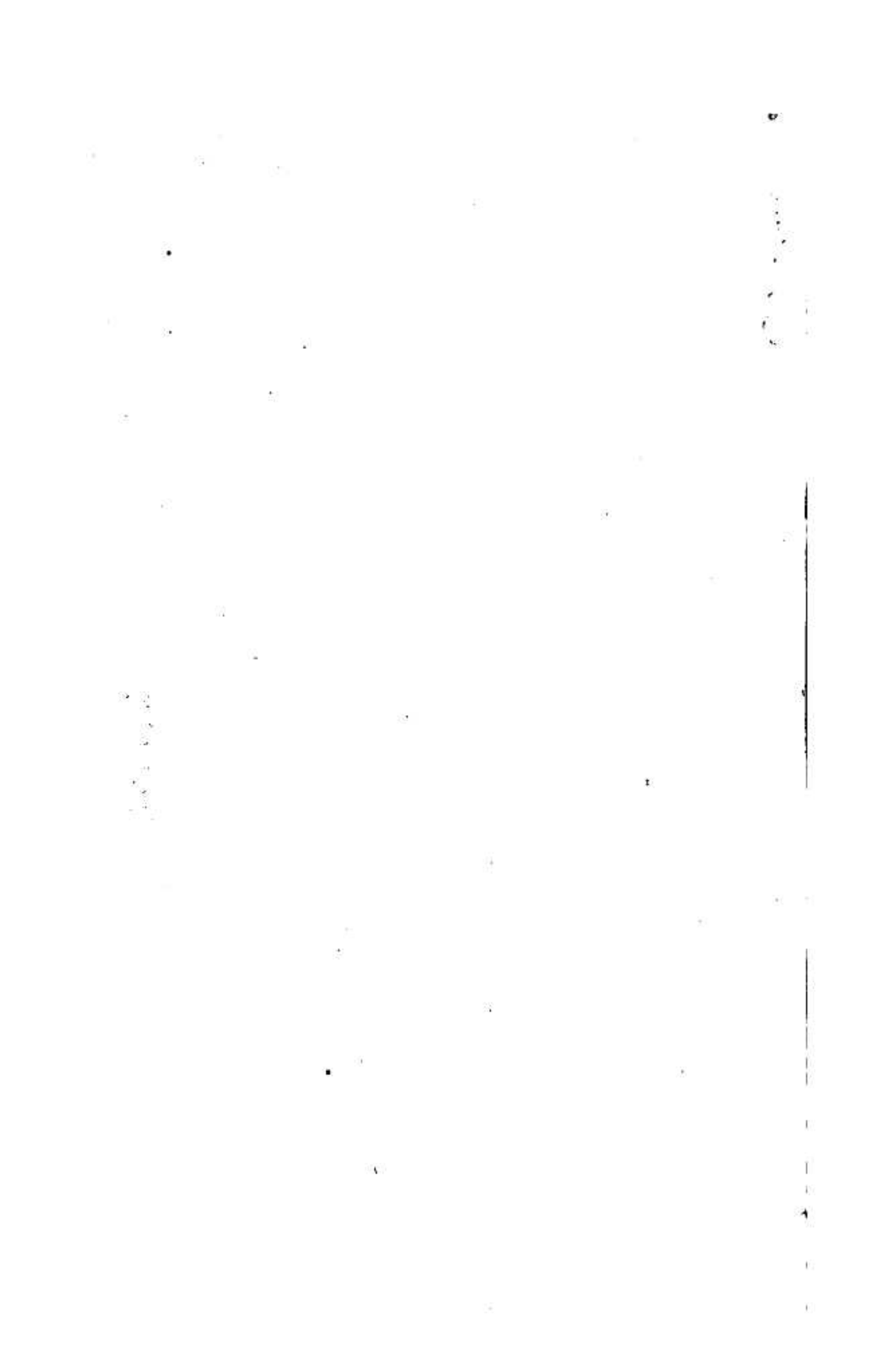
THE following sketch of JOSEPH DENNIE is presented in this form, with a view to preserve a more permanent memorial of him than has yet appeared. Within a few months, his name has twice been recalled by the presentation of historical matter connected with his life.

The portrait accompanying these few pages has been copied by the heliotype process from an original picture in the possession of the family.

W. W. C.

BOSTON, April, 1880.







JOSEPH DENNIE.

A BIOGRAPHICAL sketch of JOSEPH DENNIE will possess an interest to a very limited number of readers. Dennie was the most prominent of the pioneer literateurs, not only of New England, but of the United States. He lived during a period when the sterner realities of life engrossed the attention of the citizens of the young Republic. The possessors of mental acquirements found occupation which promised a more rapid grasp upon fame and fortune than could be attained by literary pursuits. If they laid aside professional cares, or relinquished the duties of the counting-room, it was only as a temporary relaxation. The development of a new country demanded the exercise of faculties which give form and permanency to society. To select literature as a profession when there was little encouragement from the general public, and only a few congenial spirits to extend a helping hand, indicates at least an innate love of letters, which is the more commendable when the barriers to literary success, which then existed, are taken into account.

It is claimed that Dennie left nothing deserving of reputation,—a judgment somewhat harsh, when it is considered what he accomplished under adverse circumstances. Mr. S. Austin Allibone is more just in his comments upon the literary achievements of Dennie; for he says: "Patriarchs of the 'lean and slippered pantaloons'—who perhaps composed a part of the 'mob of gentlemen who wrote with ease' about the beginning of this century—still extol the melodious cadence

and liquid flow of the essays of the American Addison. We ourselves are so old-fashioned as to consider Dennie a charming writer."

JOSEPH DENNIE was born in Boston, August 30, 1768. His father was a merchant, who later in life retired to Lexington, Mass., where he died Sept. 28, 1811. His son received the usual instruction given to boys. At an early age he entered a store, but mercantile pursuits were little adapted to his literary turn of mind, which developed itself quite early in life. He prepared himself for college in Needham, under the tuition of Rev. Samuel West, and, after two years of diligent application, he was examined for the Sophomore Class at Harvard College, and was admitted in 1787. With Dennie's college life commenced the trials peculiar to a man of his sensitive nature, the unsuccessful result of which had a great influence upon his future career. He was a man of strong prejudices, and formed rash conclusions. Among his classmates he was regarded as possessing a strong intellect and a brilliant genius. His ready wit and his easy address, united to an attractive person, made him the chosen companion of a large number of his classmates, while his readiness at repartee and his brilliant social attractions made him an acquisition on all festive occasions. Dennie, upon entering college, conceived a dislike to many of the tutors, whose censure he received for his open denunciation of what he regarded as the imperfections of the *régime*. He was equally outspoken against those classmates who sought preferment by a cringing demeanor and a total renunciation of independent sentiments. He was keenly touched by the alleged neglect of his merits on the part of the government in the distribution of parts at several exhibitions; and he asserted "that every rational student was ready to suppose that there was a general combination among the government in favor of stupidity,"—the rash assertion, possibly, of a disappointed competitor for academic honors.

In the spring of 1789 he returned home to pass the vaca-