

A SEARCH FOR A PAMPHLET

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A Search for a Pamphlet by Andrew McFarland Davis & Governor Hutchinson

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ANDREW MCFARLAND DAVIS & GOVERNOR HUTCHINSON

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A SEARCH

FOR

A PAMPHLET BY GOVERNOR HUTCHINSON

BY

ANDREW MCFARLAND DAVIS.

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1899.

A SEARCH FOR A PAMPHLET BY GOVERNOR HUTCHINSON.

DURING a recent study which I have made of the currency of the Province of the Massachusetts Bay, covering the years 1690 to 1750, I have examined not only all the publications to be found in our public libraries treating directly of this topic, but also many with suggestive titles which yielded nothing to the search. Nearly all the pamphlets of this period were anonymously published, the writers taking refuge behind pseudonyms such as "A lover of his Country," "A Merchant in Boston," "Amicus patriæ," "Philopolites," etc., under cover of which those who wished to do so could indulge in the vigorous denunciations of their opponents which custom seemed to countenance in the polemical writings of that day. In many cases the authors who took a hand in these contests betrayed themselves by their style as fully as if they had signed their names to the publications. Dr. Douglass, for instance, a prolific writer who took a deep interest in the currency question, in all probability never issued a pamphlet anonymously which could not be readily identified by one who had read with care any of his acknowledged works. Nor does the fact that a controversial pamphlet, written by one of his opponents, has repeatedly been attributed to him,¹ in any way compel the qualification of this statement. One of Dr. Douglass's contributions to this controversy has been considered of such value that it has passed through no less than five editions, the last reprint having been made by the American Economic Association in 1897. Yet so completely was the merit of this pamphlet obscured by the aggressive

¹ Some Observations on the Scheme projected for Emitting £60,000 in bills of a new Tenour, etc. Boston, 1738.

and offensive style of the writer, that Palfrey loses all patience with him, and in different places in his History denounces him as "a master of ribaldry," "a conceited censor," "a snarling physician," and "a contemporary Scottish grumbler," while Eliot in his Biographical Dictionary defines the "Summary," as "a collection of things which came into his head, whether they related to his family, his private squabbles, or the affairs of the publick." In spite of these derisive epithets and contemptuous opinions, economists to-day assign a high place to Douglass's "Discourse concerning the Currencies," and rank him, among the hard-money men of the time, second only to Hutchinson, who was fortunately so situated that he could act as well as write and talk.

The authorship of three anonymous pamphlets which treat of the currency question in Massachusetts, was determined by the late J. Hammond Trumbull and made public in his "First Essays at Banking in New England."¹ One of these was assigned to the Rev. John Woodbridge of Newbury, the means of identification being allusions to the personal history of the author.² Familiarity with Cotton Mather's works led Mr. Trumbull to attribute the authorship of the second of these pamphlets to Mather.³ The critic saw at once the analogy between its contents and certain passages in the "Magnalia." His conclusion that Mather was the author will doubtless be generally accepted, but if one should hesitate in this regard, the definition of "the Nature of Money" quoted from the pamphlet, — "That (as such) it is but a *Counter* or *Measure* of mens Proprieties, and Instituted *mean* of permutation," etc. — will probably vanquish opposition. The use of capitals and italics in the publications of the last century was governed by widely different rules from those which prevail among printers to-day, and it is doubtless the case that a person could deduce from the numerous publications of Cotton Mather the methods which he employed in this behalf. At any rate, it is obvious that if there had been an

¹ First published as the Council Report of the American Antiquarian Society, in the Proceedings of that Society, October, 1884.

² Several relating to the Fund, Printed for divers Reasons, as may appear. [1682.] The Watkinson Library at Hartford possesses the only copy of this pamphlet of which we have knowledge.

³ Some Considerations on the Bills of Credit now passing in New England, etc. [1691.]

absence in this pamphlet of the customary proportions of these peculiarities, it would have led Mr. Trumbull to doubt whether after all it could be attributed to Mather, for, after quoting from the "Magnalia," he adds: "How Mather must have enjoyed the construction of that sentence, in which the alliteration is emphasized by capitals and italics." The manner in which use was made of these methods for the purpose of rendering more conspicuous not only meaning but peculiarities of style, may fairly be considered one of the tests applied to this pamphlet by Mr. Trumbull.

The author of a third pamphlet was disclosed in "First Essays at Banking," etc. as the Rev. John Wise of Chebacco.¹ This was effected through references to the author in connection with the pamphlet, made by contemporary writers. These were in the form of puns upon his name and allusions to incidents in his career which were easily corroborated.²

Some of the contributions to the pamphlet literature of the period which treat of the currency were written by persons who were not only ignorant of the first principles of the laws of economics but were also unskilled in letters. It were vain to seek for the authorship of many of these, but the success which has rewarded the intelligent and discriminating study of Mr. Trumbull may perhaps hold forth encouragement to others less qualified for the task to apply his methods in work of a similar nature where there are indications that results can be obtained. It matters not whether the search be for an author who has concealed his personality, or for a pamphlet said to have been published by some well-known writer. The tests to be applied in either case will be the same. It is the latter task which I have set myself, the basis of my work being the statement made by P. O. Hutchinson, in the "Diary and Letters of Thomas Hutchinson," that in 1736 the Governor published a small pamphlet upon the subject of paper money.

There being no pamphlet of the year 1736 which has been attributed to Hutchinson, we are obliged in the prosecution of this investigation to ask ourselves, first, Is there a pam-

¹ A Word of Comfort to a Melancholy Country, etc. By Amicus Patriæ. Boston, 1721.

² Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, Oct., 1884, pp. 293, 303, note F.

phlet of some other date attributed to him which might perhaps have served as a basis for the above statement, the date given in the "Diary and Letters" being either a typographical or a chirographical error? I think it may fairly be said that there is no pamphlet in existence which fulfils the foregoing conditions, but unfortunately there is an entry in Sabin which if it has any right to be there would indicate the existence of a pamphlet which might be the one referred to, and which, even if wrongfully there, compels the recognition of an investigator. This entry is as follows: "[Hutchinson] Dissertation on the Currencies of the British Plantations in North America and Observations on the Paper Currency, Boston, 1741. 8vo, pp. 62 + Postscript [Ibid]." The "Hutchinson" being in brackets indicates that the work is anonymously published. The "Ibid" apparently means that the pamphlet is to be found in the Boston, Harvard College, and Athenæum libraries. The failure to find any such pamphlet in any of our libraries shows that there was some error in Sabin's entry, but does not relieve us from attempting to account for it. I am indebted to Mr. Wilberforce Eames of the New York Public Library for the suggestion that Sabin probably got his entry from Haven's list in the "Transactions of the American Antiquarian Society."¹ The pamphlet bearing the title "The Dissertations," etc., is described by Mr. Haven, under date of 1740, as an octavo of sixty-two pages published at Boston, and underneath its entry in his list follows a note in the following words: "Supposed to have been written by Thomas Hutchinson." The next entry is "Dissertation. Postscript to the same. Boston." This furnishes the clue to Sabin's peculiar descriptive entry, "8vo, pp. 62 + Postscript," and seems also to confirm in a satisfactory way Mr. Eames's suggestion, although the year of the publication is not the same.

Mr. Winsor in a note to the editorial notes appended to the second chapter of the fifth volume of the "Narrative and Critical History of America" repeats the assertion that a pamphlet bearing this title was published in 1740 and has been attributed to Hutchinson. He gives no authority for the statement.²

¹ Transactions of the American Antiquarian Society, vol. vi. p. 451.

² Narrative and Critical History of America, vol. v. p. 172, note 1.

Any person familiar with the currency pamphlets of this date must be struck by the resemblance between this title and that of Douglass's Discourse. The first paragraph of Douglass's title reads "A Discourse concerning the Currencies of the British Plantations in America, especially with regard to their paper money." It is obvious that a person who had recently seen the Discourse, in making a note of its title without the pamphlet at hand for consultation, might produce the variations which are to be found in the title in Haven's list. The correspondence in certain of the descriptive details in the entry adds to the probability that this entry must have originated in some such way as this. The Discourse was originally published in 1739 in London in an undated pamphlet fifty-four pages in length. Mr. Eames tells me that this edition of the pamphlet has been catalogued at different times under the years 1739, 1740, and 1741. It was republished in Boston in 1740, the pamphlet ending with a finis on the forty-seventh page. While it was going through the press an opponent of Douglass's published a pamphlet entitled "An Inquiry into the nature and uses of Money," etc., in which he attacked Douglass's theories. Douglass at once issued a postscript to the Discourse, which was devoted to an attempt to reply to the author of "An Inquiry," etc. The Postscript, although printed separately, was paged as if it formed part of the Discourse, the pagination running from 49 to 62. The Discourse and the Postscript are to be found in our libraries separately and also together. In the latter case they make an octavo pamphlet with continuous pagination of sixty-two pages. In 1751 the Discourse and the Postscript were published in London in a pamphlet of sixty-two pages, the titlepage of which has the words "with a Postscript thereto" added to the title of the Discourse. If the original entry of the "Dissertation" was intended for the "Discourse," it seems probable, from the fact of separate entries being made for the pamphlet and the postscript that whoever was responsible for it must have been working from the Boston rather than from the London edition, although each of them is an octavo and each of them has sixty-two pages including the postscript. Whether this conclusion be accepted or not, there can be but little doubt that the association of Hutchinson's name with it was entirely unwarranted.

In default of any more satisfactory conclusion to the first branch of our investigation, we must pass on to the second question which would naturally suggest itself for answer in connection with an attempt to discover the pamphlet alleged to have been published by Hutchinson in 1736. This question may be formulated as follows: Is there any special characteristic in Hutchinson's style of writing which would enable us to recognize it if met with apart from his acknowledged authorship? Fortunately for our purposes, Hutchinson has forced every student of this period of our history to become familiar with his style, the perusal of his *History* being to all such a matter of absolute necessity. One who has read the pamphlets to which I have alluded by title might speak of the scurrility of Douglass, the pedantry of Mather, and the eccentricities of Woodbridge and Wise; but the reader of Hutchinson's *History of Massachusetts* would find it difficult to epitomize in a similar epigrammatic way the style of a work which is free from exaggeration and devoid of striking characteristics. The simplicity and as a rule the clearness of the narrative, the moderation of the arguments, the evident intention of fairness in all statements, and the courtesy with which the author treats his opponents furnish, however, an individuality to Hutchinson's productions quite as marked as those of the writers who have just been mentioned. Like many of his contemporaries, he did not waste time in polishing off his awkward sentences or in correcting minor delinquencies in the way of grammar,¹ but on the whole he placed himself in advance of most of his rivals by anticipating in his style of writing methods much more nearly in accord with the tastes of posterity than those which were in general use when he wrote. If, then, upon examination of a pamphlet we find that it is violent or turgid; if it lacks simplicity; if it deals unfairly or discourteously with adversaries, or if it advocates paper money, we may know by its ear-marks that it is not Hutchinson's. On the other hand, if it appeals to us by the presentation of its case somewhat in the fashion of the writers of to-day, and if that case be in opposition to paper money, then it is possible that Hutchinson may have written it.

¹ "I have an aversion to transcribing, and except the three or four first sheets, and now and then a page in which I had made some mistake, the rest of the work is rough, as I first wrote it."—*Life of Thomas Hutchinson*, by James K. Hosmer, Boston and New York, 1896, p. 86.