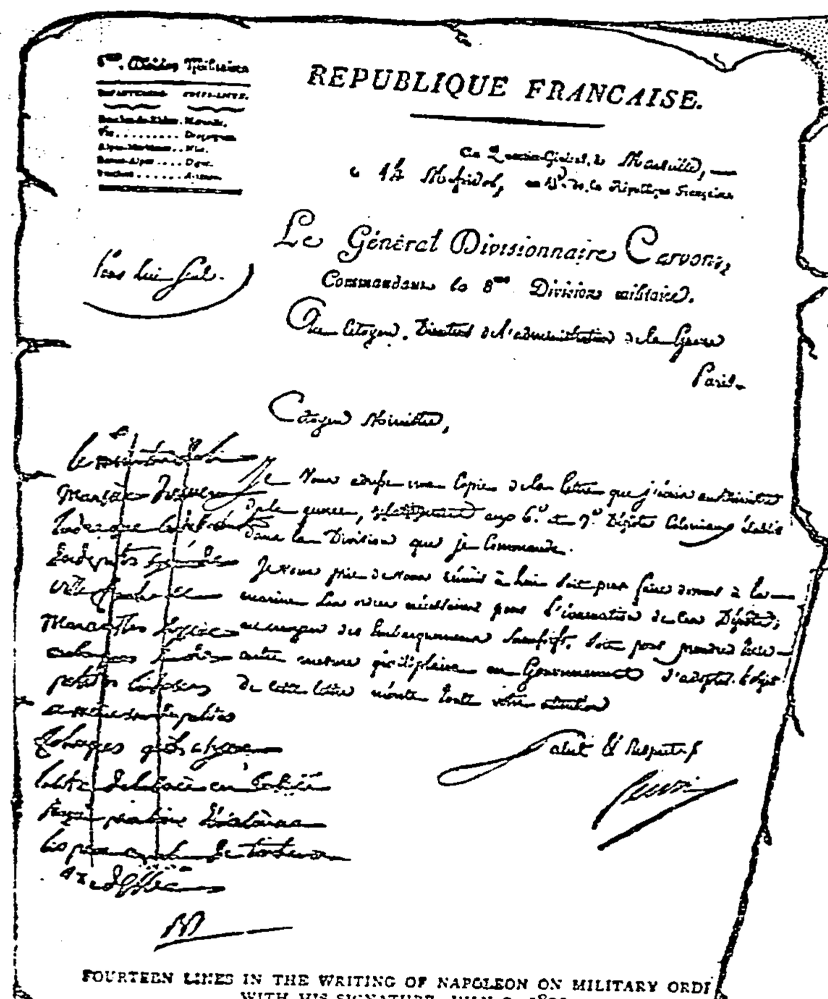
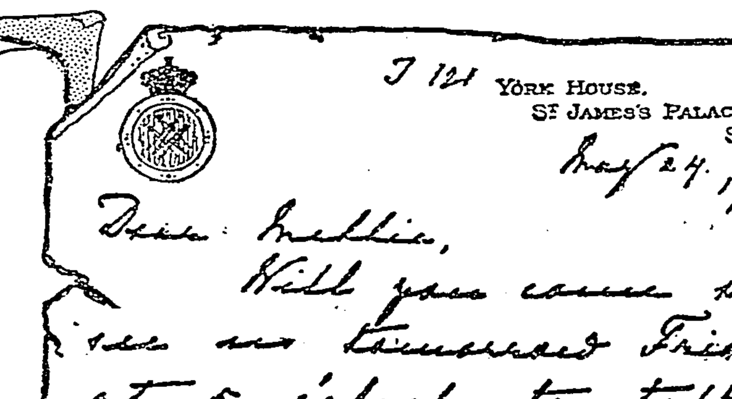
ODD THINGS THAT HAPPEN IN HUNTING FOR AUTOGRAPHS

Treasure That Is Sometimes Worth Thousands of Dollars and How It Is Obtained---Ingenious Tricks Played on Public Men---Finds in Ash-Barrels.


REPUBLIQUE FRANCAISE.

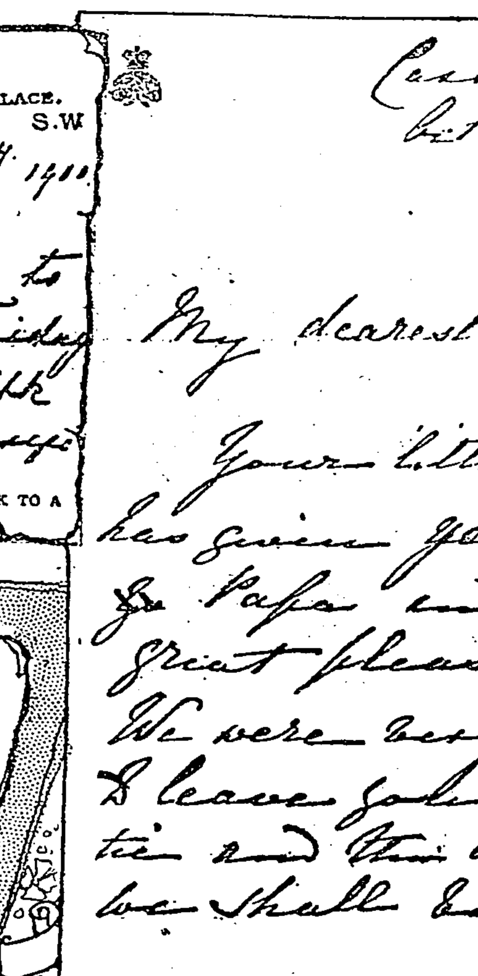
Le Général Divissionnaire Carvoni, Commandant la 8me Division militaire.

FOURTEEN LINES IN THE WRITING OF NAPOLEON ON MILITARY ORDI WITH HIS SIGNATURE, JULY 3, 1803.


York House.
St James's Palace.
S.W
May 24. 1900.

Dear Mellie,
Will you come to see me tomorrow Friday at 5. o'clock to talk over the ... arrange...

ONE PAGE OF A.L.S. OF QUEEN MARY WHILE DUCHESS OF YORK TO A FRIEND, MAY 24, 1900.

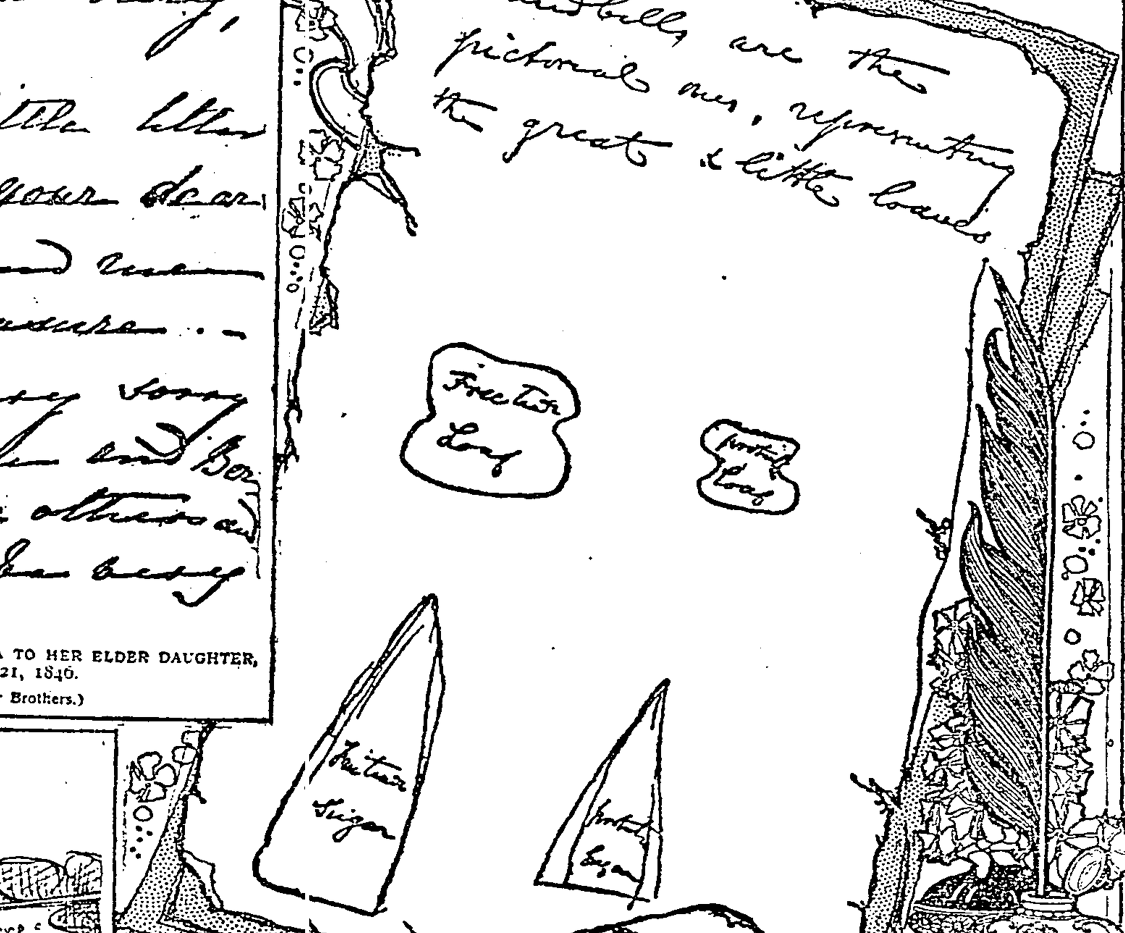

Oct: 21-1846

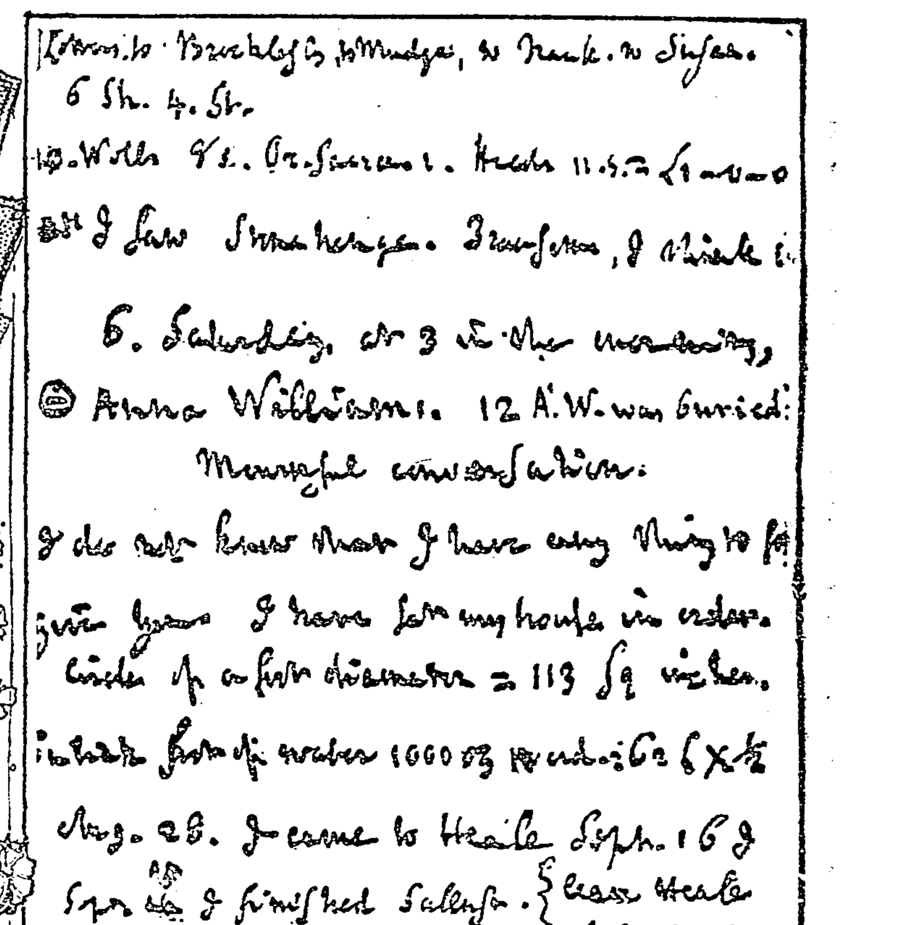
My dearest Vicky,
Your little letter has given your dear Papa and me great pleasure. We were very sorry to leave ... and ... and the others and we shall be very

ONE PAGE OF A.L.S. OF QUEEN VICTORIA TO HER ELDER DAUGHTER, AGED SIX, OCTOBER 21, 1846.

(By permission of Harper Brothers.)

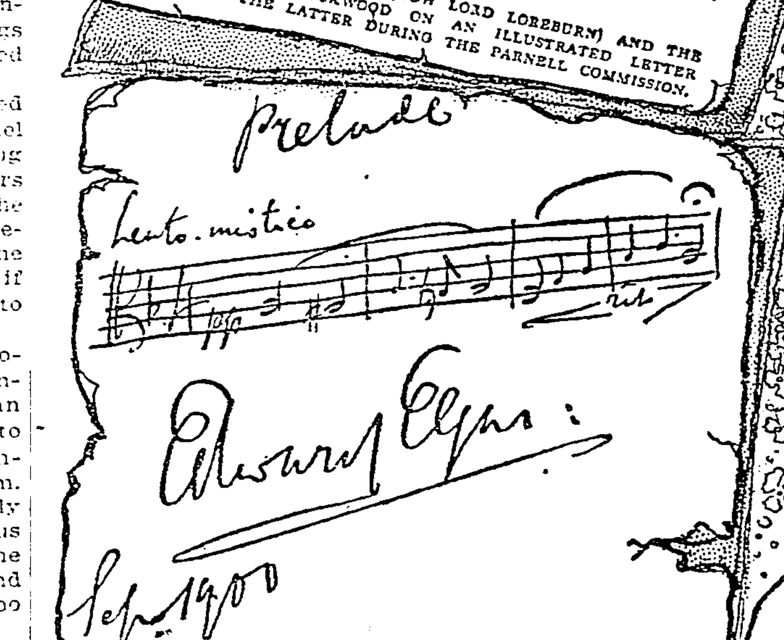
Part of an Illustrated Letter on Free Trade by Richard Gobden.



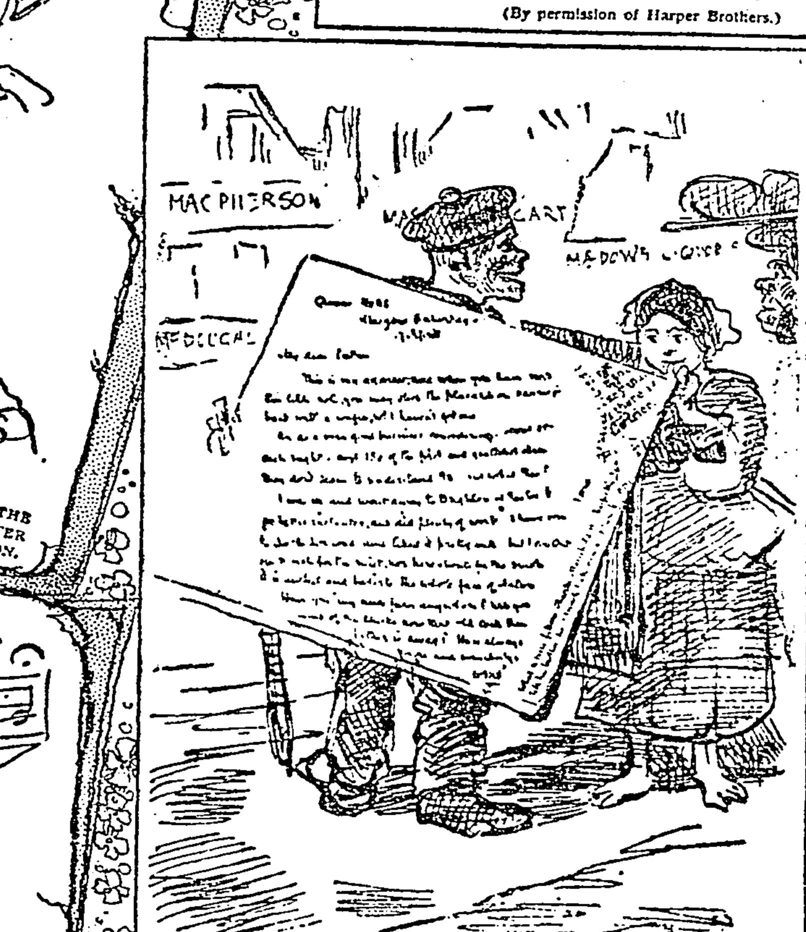

6 Sh. 4. St.
I saw Stonehenge.
6. Saturday at 3 in the morning,
Anna Williams. 12 A.W. was buried:
Mournful conversation.
Circle of a foot diameter = 113 sq inches.
Aug. 28. I came to Heale Sept. 16
Sept. ... I finished Sallust. {leave Heale

PAGE OF DR. JOHNSON'S DIARY RECORDING HIS IMPRESSIONS OF STONEHENGE, ETC., 1783.

PORTRAITS OF SIR R. REID (NOW LORD LOREBURN) AND THE LATE SIR FRANK LOCKWOOD ON AN ILLUSTRATED LETTER WRITTEN BY THE LATTER DURING THE PARNELL COMMISSION.



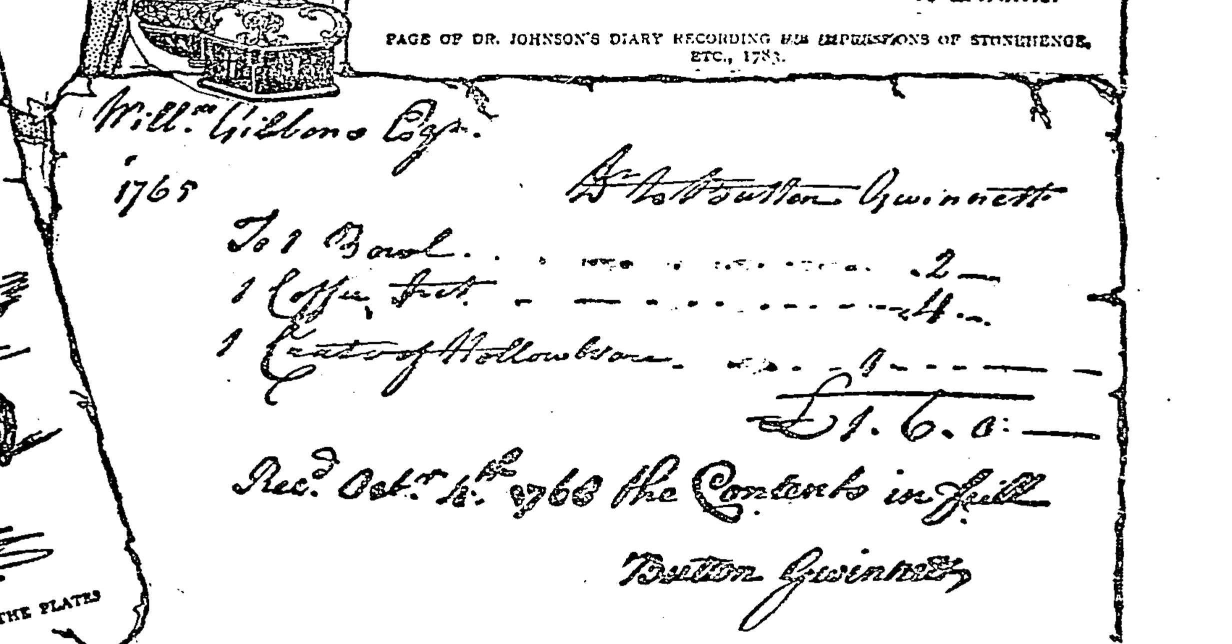
FROM THE PRELUDE OF "GERONTIUS," MS. BARS SIGNED BY SIR EDWARD ELGAR, SEPTEMBER, 1900.



ILLUSTRATED LETTER OF W. M. THACKERAY FROM GLASGOW

(In the collection of Mr. Frank Sabin)

ILLUSTRATED A.L.S. OF FRED BARNARD RELATING TO THE PLATES OF "DOMBEY AND SON," N.D.


Willm Gibbons Esqr.

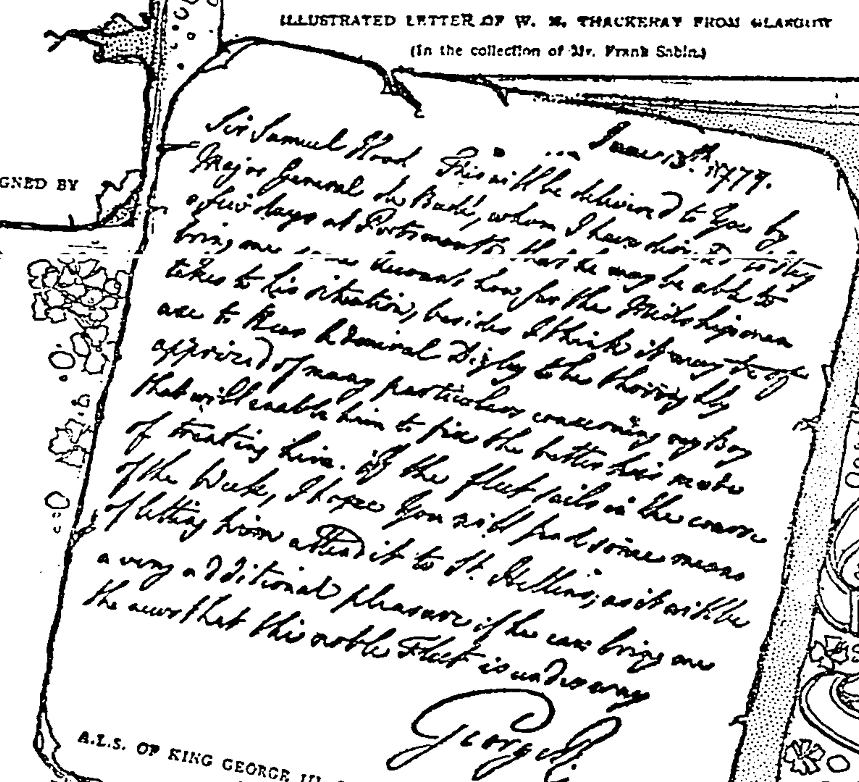
1765 Dr to Button Gwinnett

To 1 Bowl ... 2
1 Coffee Pot ... 4
1 Crate of Hollowware ... 1
£1. 6. 0

Recd Octr 16th 1765 the Contents in full

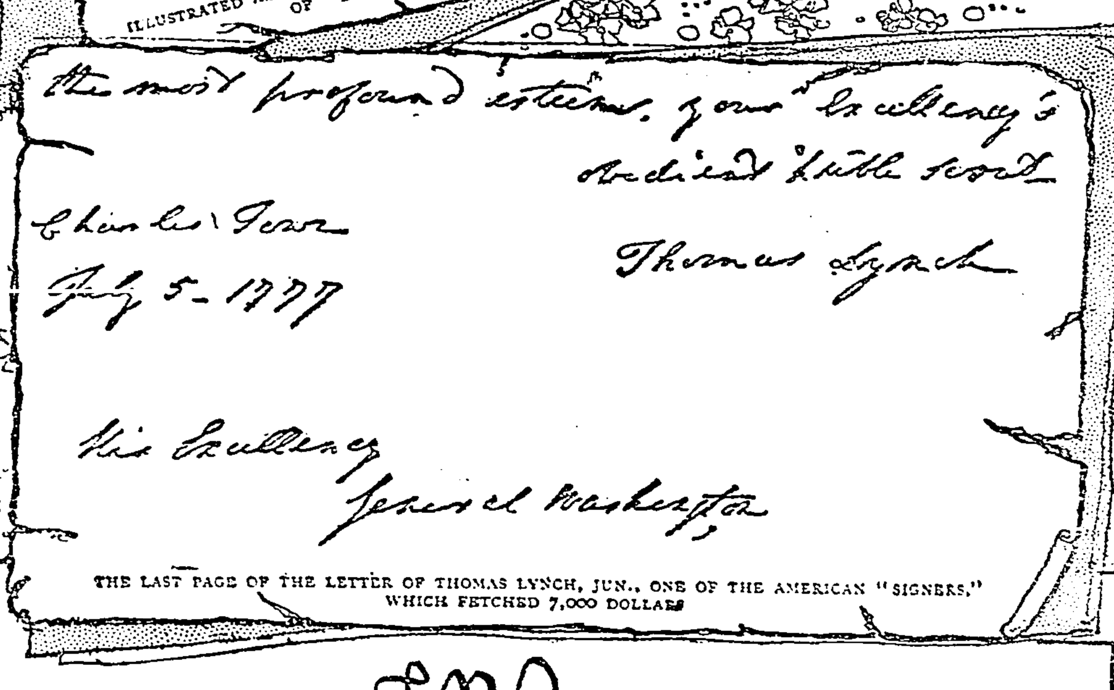
Button Gwinnett

THE SIGNATURE AND WRITING OF BUTTON GWINNETT, THE RAREST AUTOGRAPH OF THE "SIGNERS."


Sir Samuel Hood. June 13th 1779.
... This will be delivered to you by ...

George R.

A.L.S. OF KING GEORGE III. TO SIR SAMUEL HOOD (AFTERWARDS LORD HOOD), JUNE 13, 1779.

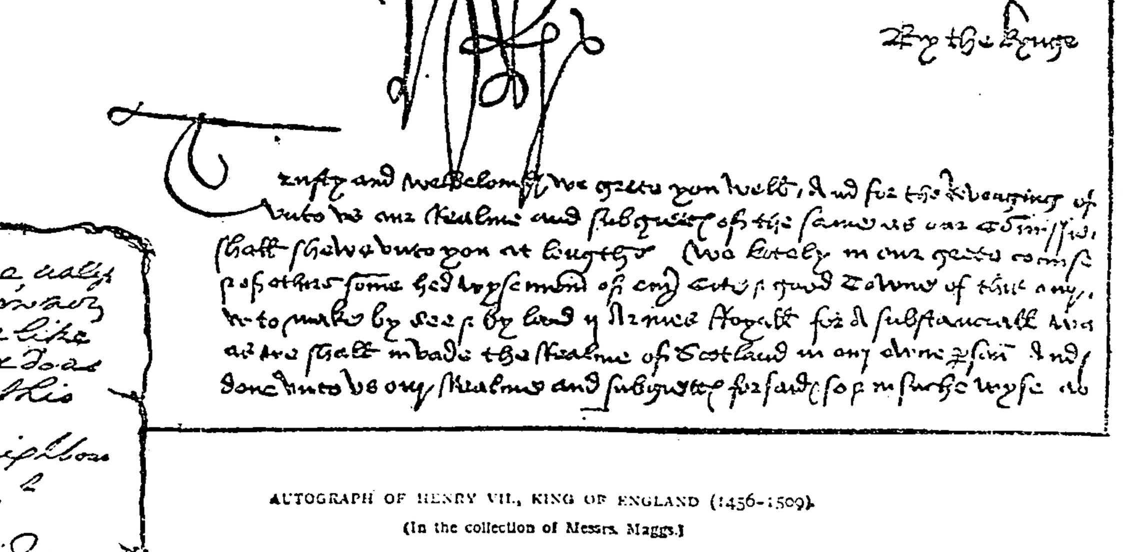

the most profound esteem, your Excellency's obedient humble servt

Charles Town
July 5 - 1777

Thomas Lynch

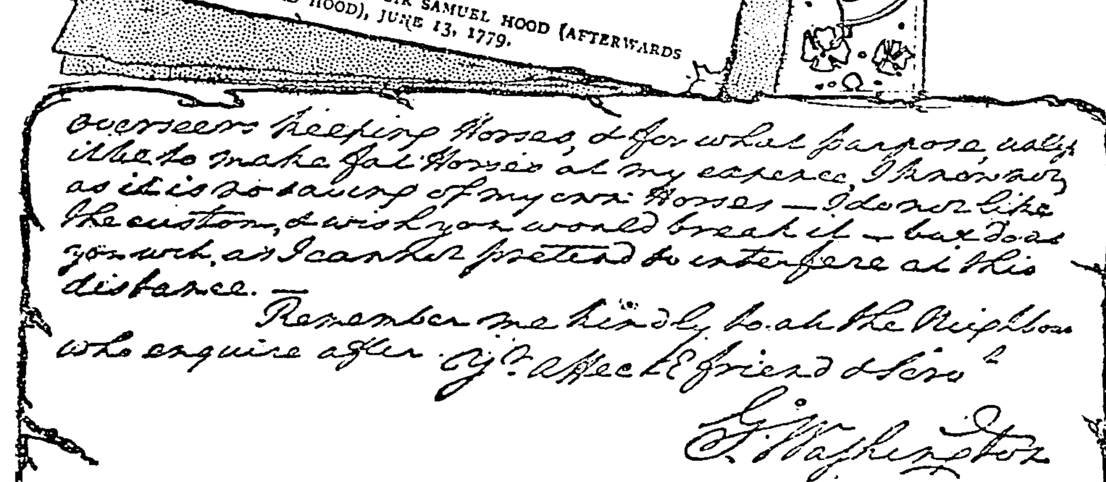
His Excellency
General Washington

THE LAST PAGE OF THE LETTER OF THOMAS LYNCH, JUN., ONE OF THE AMERICAN "SIGNERS," WHICH FETCHED 7,000 DOLLARS


By the Kinge

AUTOGRAPH OF HENRY VII., KING OF ENGLAND (1456-1509).

(In the collection of Messrs. Maggs.)


overseers keeping Horses, & for what purpose, unless it be to make fat Horses at my expence, I know not, as it is no saving of my own Horses. I do not like the custom, & wish you would break it but do as you will, as I cannot pretend to interfere at this distance.

Remember me kindly to all the Neighbors who enquire after Yr affecte friend & Servt

Go: Washington

THE LAST PAGE OF GEORGE WASHINGTON'S SPLENDID A.L.S., NOW PUBLISHED THROUGH THE KINDNESS OF MR. T. C. S. CUYLER.

THE story of autograph collecting in England and America is entertainingly told in a book entitled "Chats on Autographs," by A. M. Broadley, an Englishman, just published in America by the Frederick A. Stokes Company. People who do not know much about this fascinating pursuit have an idea that it is signatures which collectors try to get. Mr. Broadley begins his book by exploding that idea:

"Those who deliberately cut signatures from important letters are in reality the worst enemies both of the autograph collector and the historian. Vandalism of this kind (often committed in happy unconsciousness of the consequences) brings with it its own punishment, for detached signatures are almost worthless.

"Many years ago a dealer was offered sixteen genuine signatures of Samuel Pepys, their owner naively remarking that 'he had cut them from the letters to save trouble.' As a matter of fact he had, in the course of a few seconds, depreciated the value of his property to the extent of at least £150. The letters, if intact, would have fetched from £15 to £20 each!"

"The most successful type of 'Autograph Fiend,'" says Mr. Broadley in another dissertation on the art, "is the man who is able, on some clever pretense, to extract a letter of real interest and importance from his unconscious victim. Since I began to collect I have carefully watched the operation of these pious frauds, and am often astonished at the ease with which political, literary, and artistic celebrities fall into an all too transparent trap.

"Portrait painters are ready to send estimates to persons they never heard of; grave theologians are led by impostors into discussions on abstruse questions of faith and belief; astute statesmen like Mr. Chamberlain are induced to enlarge on burning problems of the hour; and venerable artists like Sir John Tenniel are apparently ready to furnish two pages of reminiscences for the mere asking. In the 'eighteen-fifties' a swindler named Ludovic Picard acquired a really valuable series of autographs by writing to men like Béranger, Heine, Montalembert, and Lacordaire letters in which he posed as one of 'the odious race of the unappreciated who meditated suicide and sought in his hour of sore distress for valuable counsel and advice.'

"Lacordaire sent him ten closely written pages of earnest appeal, and Charles Dickens, who happened to be at Boulogne, fell an easy victim to the wiles of 'Miserrimus,' who was finally unmasked by Jules Sandeau while carousing with a party of boon companions at a tavern."

Another ingenious individual wrote to Lord Rosebery that he was sorely troubled in conscience over that statesman's patronage of the race course. Rosebery replied in a letter in which he said:

"It is strange, as regards my own position toward the Sporting League, Liberal candidates are abused on the ground that Liberals are opposed to sport, and then, on the other hand, the Non-Conformist Conscience fires a broadside into him for what is thought to be too much allied to sport."

This letter was promptly sold for a crown. But Mr. Broadley's best story on this head is as follows:

"Mr. Ruskin's total lack of sympathy with the autograph-hunter was notorious. He was also known to entertain a strong antipathy to a certain conventicle. The following response to a demand for subscription elicited a very characteristic reply, which was promptly converted into ten pounds:

> I am scornfully amused at your appeal to me, of all people in the world, the precisely less likely to give you a farthing. My first word to all men and boys who care to hear me is, Don't get into debt. Starve and go to heaven but don't borrow. Try first begging—I don't mind, if it's really needful, stealing. But don't buy things you can't pay for. And of all manner of debtors, pious people building churches they can't pay for are the most detestable nonsense to me. Can't you preach and pray behind the hedges—or in a sand-pit—or a coal-hole first?
>
> And of all manner of churches thus idiotically built, iron churches are the damnablest to me. And of all sects of believers in ruling spirit—Hindoos, Turks, Feather Idolaters, and any Mumbo-jumbo, Log and Fire Worshippers, your modern English Evangelical sect is the most absurd, and entirely objectionable and unendurable to me. All which they might very easily have found out from my books—any other sort of sect would—before bothering me to write to them. Ever, nevertheless, and in all this saying, your faithful servant.
>
> JOHN RUSKIN.

He quotes from George W. E. Russell the following anecdote:

"Like many other little boys, Prince Alexander of Battenberg ran short of pocket-money and wrote an ingenious letter to his august grandmother, Queen Victoria, asking for some slight pecuniary assistance. He received in return a just rebuke, telling him that little boys should keep within their limits and that he must wait till his allowance next became due.

"Shortly afterwards the undefeated little Prince resumed the correspondence in something like the following form: 'My dear grandmama, I am sure you will be glad to know that I need not trouble you for any money just now, for I sold your last letter to another boy here for thirty shillings.'"

The prices paid for autographs forms one of the most interesting subjects treated of by Mr. Broadley. Some of the things he tells must seem incomprehensible to those who are not collectors. For instance, this about Gladstone's letters:

"There was a demand for them once, but at the present moment, by the irony of fate, an average Gladstone letter fetches less than one of his wife."

He mentions a sale at which an autograph of John Keats brought £500 ($2,500). A letter of Nelson to Lady Hamilton was sold in 1905 for £1,030. Charles Lamb autographs, on the other hand, range from £4 to £10 in price. One of Stanley's sold for a shilling.

One of his instances gives an idea of the change in the estimation in which musicians, artists, and actors have come to be held by the public in less than a century:

"On Dec. 17, 1907, four-and-twenty letters of Ludwig van Beethoven were sold at Sotheby's for £660, notwithstanding the fact that the autographs of musicians, artists and actors are not even mentioned by the chronicler of prices in 1827!"

In discussing American autographs Mr. Broadley says:

"To nine-tenths of my lay readers the mention of Button Gwinnette, who was killed in a duel in May, 1777, and Thomas Lynch, drowned at sea in the same fateful year, will probaly have no particular signification. Let me tell them that if they could discover a fine autograph letter, duly signed, of either of these signers of the Declaration of American Independence, they may consider themselves provided for for life, and far richer than the owners of red and blue 'Post Office Mauritius,' 'Hawaiian blues,' or other priceless rariora dear to the votaries of philately!"

The reason is that collecting complete sets of autographs of the signers of the Declaration of Independence is a cult in America, and that the letters of Gwinnett and Lynch are the rarest to get of all the fifty-six immortals. They seem to have written hardly any that were preserved. "Some collectors," says Mr. Broadley, "spend their lives in the perpetual quest of these unfindable autographs." Only twenty-two known signatures of Gwinnett's are extant. In this connection Mr. Broadley tells the following story:

"The earliest American collector, Israel K. Tefft, was called from Savannah to the estate of a gentleman resident near that city. Having to wait, he wandered on the lawn, under the cypress and the jasmine, and, perceiving a scrap of paper blowing about, he carelessly picked it up.

"To his joyous astonishment he found that it was a draft on the Treasury of Georgia, dated 1777, ordering certain payments, and signed by Button Gwinnett! Though Mr. Tefft was the first autograph collector in America, and had begun operations as early as 1815-20, in Savannah, he had, until that tour, never even seen the signature of Button Gwinnett—other than that appearing upon fac similes of the Declaration of Independence.

"After transacting his business, he exhibited his find to his client, and said that he would gladly take the paper in place of money for his services. The gentleman generously presented him with the paper and also paid him."

Another story that is enough to tear the heart of anybody with the true collecting fever:

"George Washington at his death left his correspondence neatly arranged and filed. His widow, however, burned the whole of the letters she had ever received from the first President of the United States! This is almost the greatest known destruction of valuable autograph matter.

"From his first love-letter, penned in Virginia, to the young Widow Custis, his correspondence during the fatal Braddock campaign, his homely domestic instructions to the chatelaine of Mount Vernon, to his war letters, in which he opened his heart and there recorded the true history of the American war, she had preserved all, which now went into the fire; and £100,000, on to-day's valuation, and priceless American historical data, went up in smoke!"

All the papers of Major André were in New York at the time of his trial, but when the Tories left this city in 1783 some one took the papers to Halifax, Nova Scotia. Seventy-five years later a friend of Dr. Thomas Addis Emmet, who is a great collector, called on a man in Halifax. Says Mr. Broadley:

"Receiving no response to his ring, he walked through the house, and as he entered the kitchen he found his friend kicking the last of a heap of musty, faded papers into the fire, on an open hearth. Leaping over several great oaken chests, the visitor saved seven or eight documents, several already scorched, from the flames.

"The gentleman of Halifax explained that he needed the chests, which his grandfather had deposited in their garret, and so burned the papers. Those saved were autograph documents of André—and the New Yorker gave them to Dr. Emmet, in whose collection they now are. André's writings in America are exceedingly scarce."

After the Federal defeat at Bull Run in 1861, when Washington was overcrowded with soldiers in need of temporary quarters, this incident happened:

"A lady, in passing through a corridor, observed an officer urging his men to roll away into an adjacent marsh great barrels, dusty and stained with age, out of which protruded ancient papers. She paused, and thinking of Dr. Emmet's collection, she begged leave to fill her pockets with documents.

"Those which she so saved were found to be priceless—being correspondence of 1776-1783, and among her finds was a long letter from Benjamin Franklin, dated at Passy, France, during the American Revolutionary War. Later inquiries disclosed the fact that, after the British victory at Bladensburg, Maryland, the secretaries of the Federal Government had hastily packed these archives in barrels and carried them to safety before the British forces had taken Washington City, in the War of 1812. Upon their return these precious papers had been left in the Capitol until ruthlessly tossed out in 1861."

Another heart-breaking story:

"It was only seventy years ago that a dealer in Hungerford Market, named Jay, purchased at £7 a ton a large accumulation of waste paper from the Somerset House authorities. By the merest accident it transpired that among the manuscripts thus unceremoniously treated were Exchequer Office Accounts of the reign of Henry VII., Secret Service Accounts signed by Eleanor Gwynne, and Wardrobe Accounts of Queen Elizabeth.

"Several bundles of parchments were sold by Jay to a Fleet Street confectioner, and turned into jelly before any suspicion arose as to their possible value or importance.

"It was seventeen years later than this, in 1857, that three hundred tons of papers, including the records of the Indian Navy, went from the old India House to the paper mill. Comparatively few of the Jay manuscripts were recovered, for three tons of paper which remained untouched were accidentally burned."

One of the most amusing stories in Mr. Broadley's book is this:

"The late Mr. Frederick Barker told me he was once asked as an autographic expert to advise a well-known nobleman, Lord H., who said he had a bundle of letters written by one of the Popes in his possession and desired to ascertain their value, but as they were merely signed 'A Pope,' he did not know which of the Holy Fathers was responsible for them!

"Mr. Barker of course identified the 'bard of Twickenham' as their author. They were bound up under his supervision, and fetched over £200, but still the ... was not quite satisfied!"

In 1906 Frank Sabin purchased at an autograph sale Nelson's memorandum to the fleet on the eve of Trafalgar, in which he foreshadowed the plan of attack which he afterward carried out. Mr. Sabin paid £3,600 for it.

"A newspaper controversy at once arose on the subject of the transaction. Public attention was forcibly directed to the supreme importance of the document, and an effort was made to secure it for the nation. Mr. Sabin most generously offering to sell it to the authorities at cost price. The movement to acquire it fell through owing to the impossibility of obtaining a grant-in-aid."

B. M. Woollan came to the rescue and offered to buy it for the nation, stipulating that it should remain in his possession during his lifetime and "be accessible to the public in the Town Hall at Tunbridge Wells." This was agreed to. Woollan is now dead and the document is in the National collection.

In 1905 there were sold in London three letters in the handwriting of Louis XVIII., (known in 1801, when they were written, as the Comte de Lille,) in which he tried to win Bonaparte, then First Consul, over to his cause. The letters were written to the Abbe de Montesquieu, who was the go-between. In the first of the series (dated Warsaw, March 22, 1801) Louis congratulates himself on the idea which has prompted him to take the initiative in the matter. He writes as follows:

"Buonaparte is to-day the greatest of our country's soldiers. He will be her saviour. As the Father of the French it is for me to make the first advance * * * I charge you to communicate to him the following arguments: The restoration of the monarchy is necessary; the existence of the republic has only proved its impossibility; the only republicans in France are abstract reasoners, faddists, &c."

In a last and final memorandum he says:

"When I appeal to Buonaparte, do I do so merely to march over the bodies of the dead? If glory has chosen him to restore the monarchy, let glory be the witness of my engagements."

At the same time he energetically denies the allegation that he has ever encouraged or approved any project for the assassination of the First Consul.

The Earl of Crawford has this year purchased for his collection a letter from Napoleon, only a part of which has ever appeared in print. It was written on May 1, 1803, when the treaty of Amiens was about to be torn up. Mr. Broadley gives the letter in full, with the following translation:

> St. Cloud, 4½.
>
> I am in receipt of your letter which was given me at Malmaison. I desire that the conference should not end in idle words. Be cold in your demeanor—haughty and if need be proud. If the note contains the word ultimatum, let him feel that this word means war, and that this manner of negotiating is that of a superior to an inferior; if the note does not contain this word see that he uses it saying that we must really know where we are, that we are weary of this state of tension and that they will never obtain from us what they obtained in the last years of the Bourbons, that we are no longer the people to receive a Commissioner at Dunkirk and that the ultimatum once delivered everything will be broken off. Frighten him as to the consequence of this act on his part; if he is unwavering take him to your drawing room and as he is on the point of leaving say to him, "But the Cape and the Isle of Gorée, are they evacuated?" Then towards the end of the interview tone down matters a little, and suggest his coming back before writing to his Court, so that you may be able to tell him the impression which the conference has made upon me, and that it could be softened by the assurance of the evacuation of these places.
>
> NAP.

The New York Times
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