"Mr. Hicks of Philadelphia."

BY THEODORE HORNBERGER.

The American Magazine and Monthly Chronicle for the British Colonies commenced publication at Philadelphia in October, 1757, and continued for thirteen monthly numbers. It was edited by a "Society of Gentlemen" and printed and sold by William Bradford at the "Corner House in Front and Market Streets." The leader of the society of gentlemen was the Rev. William Smith, who had come to the city two or three years previously as the first Provost of the College and Academy. He was a young Scotsman with an Edinburgh degree who had first migrated to New York, where by way of finding himself a job he published proposals for a college. His educational ideals corresponded closely enough to those of Benjamin Franklin so that the latter managed to bring him to Philadelphia as the head of the newly established college when Dr. Samuel Johnson, another New York savant, definitely refused Franklin's hints.

Dr. Smith, as he was afterwards known, was not the retiring type of educator, aloof from politics and public interests. Throughout his long life he inclined toward the storm centers of Philadelphia affairs, and from the first was recognized as a man of opinions, to put it most politely. The American Magazine is one of his major indiscretions. Politically it was designed to

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1 A letter from Joseph Shippen to his father at Lancaster, in Thomas Balch, Letters and Papers relating chiefly to the provincial history of Pennsylvania, etc., Philadelphia, 1855, page 105, dated "January 2nd, 1758," reads:

"... I am sorry for the unfortunate accident in the academy, between Mr. Smith and Mr. Allen's son. I hope the consequence of the quarrel will teach that gentleman to practice more philosophy in his discipline for the future."
represent the anti-Franklin faction; witness its publication by Bradford, the rival printer of the Autobiography, and the definite pronouncement of policy in its first number. And in the more cultural field the magazine united for a time the younger literati with the college set in a taste that was decidedly classical, so much so that Franklin was later stirred to write a protest on the disregard of the college authorities for the purposes of the original founders.

In the February issue there appeared (Page 258) a poem *Upon seeing the portrait of Miss xx—xx by Mr. West*:

Since Guido's skilful hand, with mimic art
Cou'd turn and animate so sweet a face,
Can nature still superior charm impart,
Or warmest fancy add a single grace?

Th' enlivened tints in due proportion rise;
The polished cheeks with deep vermilion glow;
'The shining moisture swells into her eyes,' And from such lips nectareous sweets must flow.

The easy attitude, the graceful dress,
The soft expression of the perfect whole,
Both Guido's judgment and his skill confess,
Informing canvas with a living soul.

How fixt, how steady, yet how bright a ray
Of modest Lustre beams in every smile!
Such smiles as must resistless charms convey,
Enliven'd by a heart devoid of guile!

Yet sure his flattering pencil's insincere,
His Fancy takes the place of bashful truth,
And warm Imagination pictures here
The pride of beauty and the bloom of youth.

Thus had I said, and thus deluded thought,
Had lovely Stella still remain'd unseen,
Where grace and beauty to perfection brought
Make ev'ry imitative art look mean.

LOVELACE

*Philadelphia, February 15th, 1758.*

The editor, presumably Smith himself, prefaced this poem by announcing proudly that "the lady who sat, the painter who guided the pencil, and the poet who
so well described the whole are all natives of this place and very young.' Another note, on the painter, complimented West in terms that Rufus Wilmot Griswold calls the earliest "commendation of the genius" of that sole American-born President of the Royal Academy. Neither Miss xx—xx nor the poet received such immortality, an unfortunate omission because of later attempts at identification.

The poem itself is of no great consequence, yet there is no wealth of good verse in the early colonial period and it was chosen by Griswold for his anthology, which was first published in 1842 and achieved seventeen editions in fifteen years. It was given added dignity by quotation in Moses Coit Tyler's History of American Literature During the Colonial Time and thus may claim as much respect as any of the eighteenth century complimentary verses, written in numbers in the colonies.

Griswold did not state the source of his information, but he ascribed the poem without hesitation to "... Colonel Joseph Shippen, who in 1759 wrote 'The Glooms of Ligonier,' an amatory song much in vogue for a quarter of a century...." Both Griswold's judgment and his statement of authorship were accepted by Tyler, and some time later Albert Henry Smyth, editor of the definitive edition of Franklin's works and author of a volume on the Philadelphia magazines, again ascribed the poem to Shippen.

Were it not for two more recent studies the matter might rest here, with the authority of Griswold, Tyler, Tyler, and Smyth. Griswold did not state the source of his information, but he ascribed the poem without hesitation to "... Colonel Joseph Shippen, who in 1759 wrote 'The Glooms of Ligonier,' an amatory song much in vogue for a quarter of a century...." Both Griswold's judgment and his statement of authorship were accepted by Tyler, and some time later Albert Henry Smyth, editor of the definitive edition of Franklin's works and author of a volume on the Philadelphia magazines, again ascribed the poem to Shippen. Smyth discusses The American Magazine and after quoting Griswold and Tyler to the effect that Shippen wrote the lines, adds that Shippen contributed another poem in March, over the signature "Annandius." As a matter of fact there are three more poems in the magazine signed with that pseudonym, one immediately following such a signature "By the Same" and one signed "A." See pages 238, 280.
and Smyth, respectable names all. In 1898, however, Anne Hollingsworth Wharton, author of several books on colonial life, asserted confidently that "... the writer of the verses, who signs himself 'Lovelace,' is undoubtedly Francis Hopkinson." The basis of her "undoubtedly" is enlarged by George Everett Hastings in his recent (1926) *The Life and Works of Francis Hopkinson*, where he accepts as "very plausible" the authorship of Hopkinson.

The volume of *The American Magazine* in the library of the British Museum has been annotated by some person well acquainted with the "Society of Gentlemen" and able to identify the anonymous contributors. The evidence of this annotator was used by Smyth to establish the authorship of a long poem *On the Invention of Letters and the Art of Printing*, an example of Pope’s influence in the colonies. Whoever he may have been the annotator is quite familiar with the Philadelphia poets. Four of the six pieces in the magazine that are certainly Hopkinson’s are so at-

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Chicago, 1926, page 102.

Smyth, op. cit., 36-37: "In the summer of 1891, while reading in the British Museum, I found a copy of the *American Magazine* annotated throughout in a contemporary hand, and apparently the gift of a Philadelphian to an Englishman who had visited the colonies. This would seem to be evident from the character of the notes, which read sometimes like the following: 'This poem was written by Francis Hopkinson, whom you will remember in Philadelphia!' Unfortunately many of the historical notes have been cut away in the binding of the book. In this volume the author of the poem in question (Invention of Letters) is named and clearly defined. To James Sterling, the author of 'The Parricides' and 'The Rival Generals' must be given whatever credit this poem, written in Maryland, can confer upon its author." This statement by Smyth has produced some little difficulty. Francis Howard Williams, in a paper published in the Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography in 1893 (XVII, 31), misread this as attributing the poem on the invention of letters to Francis Hopkinson. George Everett Hastings, while correcting this error (op. cit., 104–5), allows either himself or his printer to substitute "Shirley" for "Sterling" and begin an even more confusing error, because Shirley is a relatively familiar name a century earlier in English literature.
tributed in the unknown’s handwriting.\textsuperscript{10} The series of essays signed “Theodore, or the Hermit” is correctly ascribed to the Rev. William Smith, in whose collected works it is reprinted.\textsuperscript{11} One poem is actually revised and an added couplet interpolated.\textsuperscript{12} In the July issue the entire section of “Poetical Essays” is filled by “Virginianus Hanoverensis,” identified in the margin as “Samuel Davies, a Dispensing Minister.” This identification is accepted by Smyth. The annotator is puzzled by one poem,\textsuperscript{13} another is at first ascribed to someone and then the name is blotted out.\textsuperscript{14} With such a good record it is surprising when he writes after the poem \textit{Upon seeing the portrait of Miss xx—xx by Mr. West} the words “by Mr. Hicks,” and to the poem in the March number signed “Annandius” and attributed by Smyth to Shippen adds “Mr. Hicks of Philadelphia.”

There are, then, three possible authors for the lines in question: Colonel Joseph Shippen, Francis Hopkinson, and the unknown Mr. Hicks. The editorial note requires that the poet be young, acquainted with West’s work, a native of Philadelphia, and living there on February 15th, 1758.

\textit{The Case for Joseph Shippen:} Colonel Shippen’s connection with the poem begins with Rufus Griswold, for there seems to be no direct evidence nor a trace of the amatory song, \textit{The Glooms of Ligonier}, before his anthology. It is possible that Griswold had sources not now available, but more probably he made the obvious but uncertain inference from the fact that Ben-

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\item \textsuperscript{10} \textit{Ode on Music}, 44; \textit{Ode on the Morning}, 187; \textit{Ode on taking Cape-Breton}, 552; and \textit{Verses inscribed to Mr. Wollaston}, 607. \textit{L’Allegro} and \textit{Il Penseroso}, printed in Hopkinson’s collected works (Philadelphia, 1792), are definitely said to be by the author of the \textit{Ode on Music}.
\item \textsuperscript{11} \textit{The Works of William Smith, D.D.}, Philadelphia, 1803.
\item \textsuperscript{12} \textit{A Pastoral}, 391. This poem may possibly have been the work of the annotator. Its author has never been identified.
\item \textsuperscript{13} \textit{Epitaph on the late Lord Howe}, 605.
\item \textsuperscript{14} \textit{Winter, a Poem}, 238.
\end{itemize}
jamin West painted the portrait of Jenny Galloway, born in 1745, who married Joseph Shippen in 1768.\(^{15}\) This portrait was probably done about the time the poem was written, when Miss Galloway was thirteen, undeniably "very young," Benjamin West just under twenty,\(^{16}\) and Shippen twenty-six. The colonel was scarcely as youthful as the others, and, moreover, letters in the Shippen Memoirs indicate that he probably did not return to Philadelphia from military duties until the middle of the year 1758.\(^{17}\)

On the other hand his letters show that Joseph, as well as his brother Edward, later Chief Justice, was interested in literary matters to a rather high degree of cultivation in his taste. He not only corresponds about books and reading, but is undeniably the author of some *Lines written in an Assembly Room*,\(^{18}\) and was for years an intimate friend of Benjamin West. West's first trip to Italy, in 1760, was in company with Joseph Shippen and John Allen, son of the Chief Justice.\(^{19}\) The two last-named were of great financial assistance to the painter, and one of West's most interesting letters was written to Shippen at Philadelphia in 1763.\(^{20}\)

*The Case for Francis Hopkinson:* Anne Hollingsworth Wharton and George Everett Hastings have urged that the poem was written by Francis Hopkinson, a far greater personage in colonial verse than either Shippen or the humble Mr. Hicks. Hopkinson and Benjamin West, they say, were friends before the latter left Philadelphia.\(^{21}\) Mr. West painted at least

\(^{16}\) West was born in 1738. See Henry E. Jackson, *Benjamin West, His Life and Work, Philadelphia*, 1900, 20.
\(^{17}\) Thomas Balch, op. cit., 105-ff.
\(^{20}\) Balch, op. cit., lxx, note.
one portrait for the Hopkinson family and possibly did some miniatures as well.\textsuperscript{22} Francis Hopkinson was more clearly than Shippen of an age to satisfy the "very young" requirement of the editor,\textsuperscript{23} and he later in the same magazine complimented West in verse.\textsuperscript{24}

Furthermore, there still circulates the romantic story that Hopkinson assisted in sending Betty Shewell, West's fiancee, to England, against the consent of her brother.\textsuperscript{25} It is used by Wharton and Hastings to show the intimacy of Hopkinson and West, and is contradictory enough to need some explanation.

The story is that West became engaged to marry Miss Shewell before his departure for Italy. Her family opposed the marriage and when West sent for Betty to join him among his splendours in London her eldest brother Stephen locked her in her room, planning to keep her confined until the ship had sailed. From this situation she was rescued by means of a rope ladder manipulated by a distinguished group of conspirators, all friends of West. Hopkinson, Benjamin Franklin, William White, and the Rev. William Smith, have all been named as members of the group. They brought her to the dock, where West's father met her and accompanied her to England.

On the other hand there are manuscript notes of Matthew Pratt, a painter whose work is represented

\textsuperscript{22} Hastings, op. cit., 103.
\textsuperscript{23} An entry in the records of Christ Church, Philadelphia, edited by Charles R. Hildeburn for the \textit{Pa. Mag. Hist. and Biog.} XVI., 370, gives his baptism as "1737 Nov. 12" and his age then as "7 wks."
\textsuperscript{24} \textit{The American Magazine}, 607, \textit{Verses inscribed to Mr. Wollaston}. Signed "F. H." and dated "Philadelphia, September 18th, 1758." John Wollaston was an English portrait painter who must have visited Philadelphia in 1758. Four of his portraits are now on exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Hopkinson's compliments to West are incidental to those for Wollaston.
\textsuperscript{25} This story appears in an article on \textit{Old Philadelphia} in \textit{Harpers} for April, 1876, by Rebecca Harding Davis. It was repeated in Wharton, \textit{Heirlooms in Miniature}, 48, by Jackson in his work on Benjamin West, and takes new life from Hasting's book on Hopkinson, 102–3, 138–9.
in the Metropolitan by *The American School*, a group of the American painters who surrounded West in London. Pratt’s notes on the matter read as follows:26

“1764.—June the 24th I took my departure from Phila. in company with Miss Betsy Shewell and Mr. John West, father to the famous Benj’n West, bound to London, where we arrived in a passage of 28 days.

In a few weeks after our arrival I had the pleasure of officiating as a father in the marriage ceremony at St. Martin’s Church, in the Strand, in joining Miss Shewell to Mr. Benja’m West as a wife. They having been engaged to each other in Phila. 3 years before our leaving it; *To the entire satisfaction of all their friends and relatives.*”

The Case of Mr. Hicks: The name Hicks is unknown to the fragmentary literature of the colonial period. It is not common in Philadelphia until after the French and Indian war, nearly ten years after the date of this poem. Nicholas Hicks came to the colony of Pennsylvania about the year 1700 and in 1702 was granted by the Commissioners one hundred acres of land in Springfield Manor, a plot of the proprietors.27 A warrant for this land was signed at the next session.28

A lapse of eighteen years without mention of a Hicks is ended in 1720 with a request by Nicholas Hicks for an additional hundred acres for his son, whose name is not given.29 In 1736 Riner Tyson asks land that is bounded on the east by that of Thomas Hicks.30

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27 *Pennsylvania Archives*, Second Series, XIX, 301: “Nicholas Hicks, born and bred a Gentleman in England, but through Misfortune come to Poverty, made application to the Prop’ry before his Departure for Relief, which he was willing to grant by taking him into his Service, but upon his Departure is now willing to seat himself on Some Small Tract of Land, and therefore requests that a grant of one hundred acres in Springfield Manor, which, in consideration of the premises, *tis ordered that one hundred acres, in a Convenient place joyning or near to Sprogel’s tract, be granted to the said Nicholas Hicks under the Yearly Rent of 40s p’r annum.”
Thomas is possibly the son for whom the additional land was secured, and father of "Sarah, daughter of Thomas and Catherine," whose baptism at Christ Church took place September 15, 1725. Eloner (not Catherine?), wife of Thomas Hicks, was buried in Christ Church churchyard on Christmas Day, 1741.

The Hicks family appears to have been none too constant in attendance at Christ Church, for the entries are isolated and in one case a baptism is delayed for two years after birth. Probably there are unrecorded Hicks children. On December 15, 1759, Elizea Margarita, daughter of William and Francina Hicks, was baptized. Elizea Margarita was born on the thirteenth of November. It is mere conjecture to propose William as the "Mr. Hicks of Philadelphia" but he was probably about the right age for such a unique literary effort by a Hicks. His wife's name, Francina, and their choice for their daughter, Elizea Margarita, allow the fancy that William was not wholly of the sturdy commonplaceness of the average Hicks.

Such a puzzle as this leaves room for some interesting reflections. The figure of Benjamin Franklin has dominated colonial Philadelphia to the exclusion of many minor literary figures, in their way as important to the whole as the cosmopolitan printer. The addition of the name Hicks to the cultivated society of Hopkinson, Godfrey, Evans, Smith, Elizabeth Graeme Ferguson, Benjamin West, and the others, is not important, even were it clearly advisable. But the possibility of such an addition, and the possibility of such a puzzle as has been presented, indicate a literary and artistic society in Philadelphia of the mid-eighteenth century of somewhat higher level than has generally been supposed.

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**1** Records of Christ Church, Pennsylvania Magazine, XVI, 368.

**2** Ibid., IV., 116.

**3** Ibid., XVI, 368.