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JOHN MACRONE: VICTORIAN PUBLISHER

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## FORWARD

I do not delude myself that even colleagues in English literature will be excited by the detailed chronicle of the fall of a minor Victorian publisher. But I shall be grateful for any general reaction to the larger project of which the following essay is part.

It is widely agreed that we know too little about the publishers who were partners (if sometimes sleeping partners) in the production of nineteenth century literature. We need, as one Dickensian critic recently put it, a "magisterial" book on the subject. There isn't any such work in prospect. Nor is there any comprehensive history of British publishing (even more urgently needed) under way. Either of these tasks would exceed the power of any single critic, in my opinion. But it is possible to make some contribution -- even at this preliminary stage -- to what will eventually be (as I expect) a collaborative venture. What I intend is to publish a series of articles which will profile the fiction-publishing activities of leading Victorian houses. What follows, on John Macrone, is the first in the series. I am writing another at the moment on Henry Colburn (the principal purveyor of "silver fork" romance to early and mid-Victorian circulating libraries). After that, I have sketched out a study of Chapman and Hall's fiction-publishing policy 1836-64 (when the feeble Fred Chapman took over); a piece on Bradbury and Evans and the production of serialized fiction; a short house history of Tinsley Eros. (who largely succeeded Colburn as suppliers of three deckers to

the libraries in the 1860s and 70s), and so on.

It is fairly easy to devise and plan these essays, and to anticipate their final connected design. There remains the immediate problem of placing them. Editors, generally, do not like purely expository contributions; especially if they are liberally accompanied by lists, tables and business history. The one journal which would suit, Publishing History, seems moribund. The Library and PBSA are obvious first choice journals. Thereafter, one will have to publish where one can, presumably. (The Macrone piece will appear in Dickens Studies Annual, sometime over the next three years.)

#### JOHN MACRONE: VICTORIAN PUBLISHER

John Macrone's career as an independent publisher is brief enough to be encapsulated in an article. Effectively, it covers a mere three years business, before influenza carried him off at the age of 28. But Macrone feeds into the mainstream of Victorian fiction publishing at historically significant points. He was Dickens's first publisher: he launched W.H.Ainsworth into bestselling fame: he teamed both Ainsworth and Dickens with Cruikshank, thus setting up the most fruitful liaisons of novelist and illustrator in the century. (This collaboration was picked up by a rival, and made the foundation of Bentley's Miscellany). He published Disraeli. These are the achievements. As one of his near misses, Macrone considered the young Thackeray as an illustrator (for Ainsworth's Crichton) and actually commissioned Thackeray's first book -- the volumes that were eventually to emerge as The Paris Sketch Book. This work was published in July 1840, by Macrone's successor Hugh Cunningham. But Cunningham -- who seems to have been an extremely unassertive operator -- used his predecessor's name on this, and other publications. The posthumous reappearance of Macrone (who died in September 1837) has spread confusion through subsequent Thackerayan scholarship.<sup>1</sup> Macrone's career is shrouded in vagueness and misinformation (much of it emanating from S.M.Ellis's tendentious biography of Ainsworth).<sup>2</sup> But, had he lived

longer, and had better luck, he might have risen meteorically with Dickens (as Chapman and Hall did) or with Ainsworth (as Bentley did) and have been lauded as a great pioneer. At the very least, he deserves commemoration as a figure who made a flying start into the era of Victorian novel publishing. My aim here, is to sketch a house history of Macrone's activities, and to chart the breakdown with Ainsworth -- over the publication of Crichton -- that directly preceded the publisher's bankruptcy and death. The connected rupture with Dickens is the one sector of Macrone's life that has been closely scrutinised elsewhere, and will be more cursorily treated.<sup>3</sup>

The skeletal facts of Macrone's life can be pieced together from asides in letters and memoirs and a fairly substantial recollection by G.A.Sala.<sup>4</sup> He was born in 1809, a Scot, an Irishman, an Italian ('Macirone') or -- most probably -- a Manxman. In a friendly reminiscence of 1848, Dickens remembers the way that 'poor Macrone' would miswrite 'book' as 'buke', 'boke' or 'booke.' (Pilgrim, V. 414). It could recall either the publisher's accent, or (more likely I think) imperfect literacy. Whatever his standard of book learning, it would seem that Macrone was personally amiable, and that this was his main asset in business. Sala recalls him as a 'handsome and intelligent young man,' who won the heart of his aunt Sophia, borrowed L500 from her (which apparently went to purchase Dickens's Sketches by Boz), and then caddishly married another woman. Aunt Sophia, according to Sala, never saw her L500 again.<sup>5</sup> It is not known how Macrone came

into contact with Ainsworth, but it was probably via the publisher's next-door neighbour, fellow Manxman and friend at 4 St. James's Street, the fashionable tailor Crellin. A letter of 2 June 1836 asks Macrone if 'Crellin has sent my clothes to you?' Another later communication thanks Macrone for the despatch of a waistcoat and shirt. Ainsworth was at this period a dandy and a literary lion. An elegant man about town publisher with something of the valet in him would have been more to his taste than the tradesmanlike Richard Bentley, who had brought out his first novel Rookwood in 1834. The early letters from Ainsworth to Macrone are affectionate if somewhat patronising. (In the above letter of June 1836, for instance, he observes that he will do his best to make Macrone a 'gentleman-like' publisher). Though of an age with Macrone, Ainsworth was the more experienced literary man, and he gave his new publisher the full benefit of his professional expertise. It was Ainsworth who recommended publishing Disraeli's Runnymede letters ('assuredly the book will do'). It was Ainsworth who put Thackeray and Daniel Maclise Macrone's way. Ainsworth suggested that the publisher should offer for Browning's Sordello (in fact, four years from completion in 1836). It was Ainsworth, reportedly, who had the bright idea that Macrone might republish Dickens's newspaper and magazine sketches in volume form.

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Macrone married in January 1835, and was evidently uxorious when he first met Dickens. (There were three Macrone children at the time of his death in September 1837). Dickens was another Benedick, intending to marry his Catherine as soon as he could afford it. When the date

was advanced to April, 1836, Macrone was first thought of as best man. But Mrs Macrone objected on the ground that a bachelor would be more proper. In summer 1836, the wives were evidently on warm and visiting relations. Dickens, as a personal favour, prevailed on Macrone to take young Fred Dickens into his counting house. After Macrone's death, when his wife and infants were left destitute, 'without a farthing,' Dickens energetically sought to raise funds for them and made personal donations to Mrs Macrone (see Pilgrim, I.644). It is hard to think he would have so exerted himself for the brigand of Burlington Street, so soon after his differences with that publisher; or for Frederick Evans in 1858. Dickens evidently liked Macrone, and some affection survived their violent disagreements in late 1836, early 1837.

Macrone came to London in the early 1830s, and with some small capital behind him, entered into partnership with James Cochrane, of 11 Waterloo Place, around 1833. Cochrane and Macrone were for a short time proprietors of the Monthly Magazine, which carried Dickens's earliest sketching efforts. The coincidence perhaps eased Ainsworth's role as broker between the two men, and led to the bright idea that this early alliance might be consolidated into the Sketches by Boz. Cochrane had been an assistant of Colburn's, and passed on to his junior partner a sense of the value of aggressive advertising, and of the primacy of the three volume novel in any general list. More important, in the light of Macrone's later innovations, Cochrane specialised in illustrated books and had brought out in 1831-3 the



Novelist's Library, edited by Thomas Roscoe, featuring works by Fielding and Goldsmith, illustrated by George Cruikshank. It must have struck the young Macrone that Cruikshank's skill might usefully be applied to enhance the reprints of a living novelist, like Ainsworth; or a painter of the contemporary London scene, like Dickens.

Macrone broke with Cochrane in late 1834. To judge from a comment by Dickens, in a letter of October 1835 (Pilgrim, I. 83), the separation would seem to have been without any great hard feelings. The fact that, allegedly, Macrone needed to borrow £500 from Sala's aunt Sophia to purchase Dickens's services, suggests that he went into independent business dangerously unfunded. Nevertheless, in January 1835, he was set up as 'a young and spirited publisher' (Ainsworth's description) at 3 St James's Street. In publishing style, Macrone modelled himself on Bentley and Colburn; like them he specialised in novels, the bulk of which were three-decker, quick turnover, library fodder. And following the example of these kings of the circulating library trade, he relied on lavish advertisement and loud publicity to bring in business. He was not, as was to be his downfall, a patient or long term publisher.

Macrone's debut was loudly proclaimed in advertisements of mid January 1835. He offered a 'Standard National' edition of Milton, to be issued in six volumes, edited by Sir Egerton Brydges and embellished with 'imaginative vignettes' by J.M.W. Turner. The first volume was announced as available in April. As was to be Macrone's

publishing hall mark, subscribers were kept waiting until May for delivery. As it was hastily scraped together, Macrone's list in 1836-7, was around twenty titles, mixing a preponderance of fiction with various non-fiction and pictorial books. He also became publisher (at what I suspect was heavy expense) the Westminster Review. A politically radical flavour to his house would have appealed both to the young Dickens and Ainsworth. Although it had a Tory author, Disraeli's Letters of Runnymede (which Macrone published in 1836) were an attack on the government, and in keeping with the generally adversary political stance of Macrone's political titles. The biggest names in Macrone's list after Dickens and Ainsworth were W.H.Maxwell -- the veteran of Waterloo -- and the similarly passee Leitch Ritchie. In flavour, Macrone's novels tended to the historical and regional as opposed to the fashionable wares of Colburn and Bentley: representative Macrone titles are: Zulneida, A Legend of Sicily, by Dr A. Mower, Lord Roldan, An Historical Romance, by Allan Cunningham, The Priors of Prague, by Capt. W.J.Neale,(a historical novel about the son of Lady Wortley Montague), Edrich the Saxon, A Tale of the Eleventh Century, by Arthur Stanley Bride. An interesting curiosity published by Macrone was Mrs Maberley, or The World as it will be, a tale of the future, set in 2836. But in general, there is little either interesting or curious in his offerings. An early letter of Ainsworth's to Macrone, on 2 June 1836, indicates that although the young publisher could get an impressive number of titles out, he could not contrive to get the libraries to subscribe (i.e. pledge

publication-day purchase) for them. (Ellis I. 294).

Feeble as much of its content was, and unsuccessful as it seems to have been in sales appeal, Macrone's list in 1836 was lengthy enough to put him in the first division of three volume producers, a considerable achievement in the publisher's first year of trading. And, as Ainsworth immodestly put it in a letter to the publisher, Macrone had one great card in his hand — namely Ainsworth. In fact, Macrone had a couple more trumps: Dickens and the American gossip columnist who so annoyed Forster, N.P. Willis. Macrone gave Willis a hefty £250 for his Pencillings by the Way. (It came out, in three volumes, in November 1835).<sup>6</sup> But in early 1835, Macrone would probably have been inclined to agree that the author of Rookwood was his most valuable property.

Macrone came by Ainsworth at second hand. Bentley published the three volume edition of Rookwood in April 1834. This first novel was immensely popular. Risking his limited capital, Macrone evidently purchased the copyright for reissue. The vendor was almost certainly Ainsworth whose original agreement with Bentley provided for the copyright to revert to the author. (This poaching of a star attraction cannot have endeared Macrone to Bentley, who spitefully made much of his repossession of Rookwood and Ainsworth in advertisements of 1837). Macrone brought out a third three volume edition of Rookwood in 1835. Although it was 'revised and corrected throughout' this rechauffe did not set the library reading world on fire. More imaginatively, Macrone

commissioned a one volume fourth edition. This reprint was to depart significantly from the 'Standard Novel' format, developed by Colburn and Bentley. (I.e., one volume, six- shillings, unillustrated). Macrone's initiative -- borrowing from Roscoe's 'Novelist's Library' -- was to have twelve illustrations by Cruikshank, attractive green binding, and a frontispiece 'Fraserian'- style portrait of the debonair author by Maclise. The text was spruced up with an introduction and a few extra ballads by Ainsworth and the whole handsome package was marketed at 15 shillings. The partnering of a major illustrator with a living novelist was momentous. Capitalising on the experiment, Macrone went on to combine Dickens and Cruikshank in Sketches by Boz, enhancing and enriching Dickens's reprinted journalism as effectively as he enhanced Ainsworth's fiction.

With whomever he worked, Cruikshank was a difficult collaborator, and constantly needed the 'spur.' But evidently Ainsworth's feelings towards his publisher remained warm, and were not affected by his illustrator's vagaries -- as they were subsequently to be by the failings of Macrone's printer, Tom Hansard.<sup>7</sup> The illustrated fourth edition of Rookwood came out in May 1836 (having been announced for January). It was a hit with the public, and gave Ainsworth's career a useful boost. He had been oddly slow (for a writer of his famed speed) in bringing out a follow-up to his first novel. His biographer is decently silent on the subject, but the plausible reason for this hiatus was the break-up of his marriage in 1835-6. A second lease of

life for Rookwood was ideal, in that it kept his reputation high during these distracted months. Ainsworth was clearly grateful. His early letters to Macrone are extremely friendly, full of sage advice and literary gossip (see, for instance, that of 29 June 1836, quoted by Ellis, I. 290). Business followed. An agreement was made for Crichton, and Ainsworth was given (or promised) £350, certainly the highest single payment Macrone had hitherto ventured. The work was to be first published as a three decker with a follow up illustrated (like the reprint Rookwood) by Thackeray or John Franklin. Later in June 1836, Macrone and Ainsworth made a further contract for a highwayman tale, Claude Du Val, transparently capitalising on the popularity of the Turpin plot in the earlier novel. Macrone was clearly riding high in summer 1836. July saw the publication of Disraeli's Letters of Runnymede (one volume, 10s 6d). In August, Macrone apparently went to Paris, to negotiate with Hugo. (This may well have been at the suggestion of Ainsworth, who adulated the Frenchman). He also had an agreement with Thomas Moore in prospect, a connection which would have added lustre to his house, had it come off. And, at the most ambitious phase of their relationship, in November 1836, Ainsworth and Macrone planned to bring out a 1s monthly serial in the Dickensian mode, The Lions of London, illustrated by Leech and Cruikshank. Had this work ever reached publication, it might well have upstaged Bentley's Miscellany (which began to come out in January 1837, featuring Dickens and Cruikshank).

All these bright prospects evaporated, with the exception of Crichton, two volumes of which were complete before Macrone was revealed to be a hopelessly sinking ship. Exactly what it was that sank him is not clear, but can be plausibly deduced. Heaviest of his worries was a £5,000 debt (attributable, I shall surmise, to his involvement with the Westminster). And he had started up business too precipitately; the fact that he failed to win subscriptions from the London and provincial circulating libraries implies that he had not been established long enough to build up good will or a reputation for reliability. For the same reason, his authors are, on the whole, a scratch crew of secondraters. As Ainsworth warned him: 'Three or four safe books, published at safe periods, would contribute more to your well-doing and general respectability than a host of mediocre works.' (Ellis, I. 295). But Macrone was in too much of a hurry to heed safety. And in late 1836, his disagreement with Dickens left a gaping hole in his operations. Although he came out well enough financially from the quarrel, his credit ('respectability,' as Ainsworth would say) was fatally injured.

The Dickens-Macrone relationship is vexed. In mid or late 1835, Ainsworth introduced Dickens to Macrone. The result was Sketches by Boz which Butt and Tillotson identify as Dickens's first great success with the reading public.<sup>9</sup> What Macrone added to the original newspaper and magazine articles was Cruikshank. The publisher evidently had a paternal interest in and some influence on the work. He accompanied

Dickens to Newgate (for an additional sketch), and made the introduction between author and illustrator. In February 1836, there appeared two volumes of the first series of Sketches, 'richly illustrated' with sixteen full page etchings by Cruikshank. The second series, in one volume, with twelve Cruikshank etchings, came out at Christmas 1836. By February 1837, Macrone was on a third edition of the first series.

The runaway success of *Boz* was not foreseen, to judge by the scale of payments given. Dickens had £100 for each of the two editions of the first, and £150 for the second series -- reward which he rightly felt to be meagre, given the eventual popularity of his work. Further disagreement, ultimately furious, arose with the proposed three volume novel, 'Gabriel Vardon' (the embryo Barnaby Rudge). Initially, terms were set at £200 for a first edition of 1,000 copies, thereafter half profits. This agreement was made by letter on 9 May 1836, the novel to be delivered in November. (Macrone was not the only young man given to premature expectations, at this time). The sum agreed on indicates Dickens's current inferiority to Ainsworth, who had £350 for Crichton in the same season. Macrone never saw his novel. Dickens allowed himself to be sucked into a morass of agreements with other publishers, following the unprecedented sales success of Pickwick. As Patten records, by November 1836, the young novelist faced 'seven or eight commitments'. Accordingly, on 17 August 1836, he simplified his obligations by transferring the Vardon project to Bentley (who had

offered L500 for it). Macrone was angry at what he not unreasonably felt to be breach of contract. As was his usual -- and eventually disastrous practice -- he continued to advertise the unwritten and now entirely alienated work as 'in the course of publication.' Ainsworth, in a series of carefully worded and secretive letters ('I trust to your honour as a gentleman not to quote me,' see Ellis, I. 306) sided with Macrone on the question of his legal rights. His position in all this was embarrassing, since he was still friendly with Dickens and had introduced the now warring publisher and novelist. By early 1837, Macrone and Dickens were not on speaking terms, and were communicating through intermediaries (Forster on Dickens's side, T.C.Hansard on Macrone's ). Law suits were threatened. But a compromise was eventually reached. Macrone cancelled the Vardon contract, and Dickens surrendered his ever more valuable "Boz" copyrights for L100 in January 1837. Macrone sold them together with his stock in hand to Chapman and Hall for L2,250, in June the same year. It was the biggest single coup of his publishing career. But it was certainly a move forced on him by financial distress. Properly nursed, the Sketches could have been a nest egg for years to come.

Macrone's break with Ainsworth is less clear cut, and rendered foggier by the one extensive account of it we have. The version given by S.M.Ellis in W.H.Ainsworth and his Friends may be quoted, if only to be the more fully discredited. According to Ellis, while the novelist was putting the final touches to Crichton, and while The



Lions of London was going forward, and Claud Du Val still in prospect:

A stroke of Fate, an unthought-of catastrophe, shattered the whole scheme into dust. On the very eve of the publication of Crichton poor Macrone died suddenly, and, of course, all arrangements for issuing the book were cancelled — by the hand of Death ... after Macrone's death, the manuscript was taken over by Bentley, who issued the work in three volumes, in February 1837. (Ellis, I, 313,318).

As for Du Val and The Lions of London, 'Macrone's death put an end to all schemes.'

It is true that Bentley brought out Crichton in late February 1837. But it was Macrone's printed editon (T.C. Hansard, printer) not the manuscript that he took over. And since Macrone did not die until September 1837, the 'hand of death' had nothing to do with the change of publisher. Ellis's picture of Ainsworth standing stoutly by Macrone until death did them part is false. The novelist evidently deserted the falling for the rising publisher. In order to follow the complicated course of their rift, it is necessary to reconstruct the career of Crichton from composition to partial publication (under Macrone's imprint) to review, and to eventual publication (complete, under Bentley's imprint). This novel, in itself the least interesting of Ainsworth's early fictions, stands as the gravestone to Macrone's publishing career.

The chronology of Crichton's emergence is tangled. Ainsworth mentions the work in a letter of 18 June 1835, and projects that it 'will not be published until next season, about the first of October.' (Ellis I.288). As always, Macrone's advertisements jump the gun. As early as April 1835, he announces that Crichton is 'preparing for immediate publication' ('immediate' has the true Macrone touch).<sup>10</sup> In May 1835, he more cautiously promises 'early publication.' Thereafter, his advertisements are quiet on the subject of Crichton until February 1836, when the public are informed that the novel will appear 'early in the season.' In April 1836, Macrone declares firmly that Crichton will 'positively be delivered in early May.' But May came and went without Ainsworth's great work. In summer 1836, rather forlornly, it is 'now, or nearly ready.' In October, it is to be published 'in the course of the month.' In November, it is 'available for purchase' and publication day given as the 28th. On December 10, it is 'just published.' It was not. There was, in fact, no printed copy of Crichton to be had, by reviewer, trade or public, at any season of, 1835, 1836, nor even for the first two months of 1837.

What held up the work? Ellis assumes some problem with the illustrator Maclise. But Maclise was only required to do three front-of-volume etchings, and these could not have taken months to turn out. (The contract with the illustrator was signed on 12 July 1836, for delivery by 20 September. See Ellis, I.299). Evidently other illustrators (Franklin and Thackeray) were being considered for the

one-volume reprint. But that was some way ahead. Ainsworth's letters make it clear that the hold-up was one of manuscript delivery, and that the crisis centred on the third volume. It would seem that Ainsworth put in a substantial burst of work in spring 1836. On 8 March, he writes, 'my head spins round with working at Crichton.' In the same month he assures Macrone that he will turn out 'ten written pages ... per diem, till the work is complete.' On 23 April 1836, he tells Macrone, 'if I live twenty days longer the whole MS. (preface excepted) shall be in Hansard's hands.' (Ellis I.293 ). Evidently the material for the first two volumes reached his hands, and was duly printed by Hansard. This is apparent from a letter dated by Ainsworth (who was often remiss in this detail) 2 June 1836: 'I have just made up a parcel to the Father [i.e. 'Father Prout,' Francis Mahony, an influential contributor to Fraser's Magazine] enclosing him two volumes of Crichton and requesting him to prepare a startling review of it for the July number of Fraser.'<sup>11</sup> (HM 41731; Ellis, I. 295).

Things would seem to have been reasonably on course at this midsummer stage for publication in July or August. But nothing was forthcoming. Work on the vital third volume was evidently suspended by Ainsworth, despite his firm undertakings in March and April. Thus months later, in reply to a request by Macrone about The Andalusian Annual (a Christmas production, the letter presumably was written around November) the novelist records: 'I have still 200 good pages to write -- and for things of a 1000 times more consequence than the d---d Andalusian Annual don't interrupt me.' (HM AI, 73; Ellis, I, 302). A

subsequent reference (presumably from the same late November period) specifies hitches with Macrone's printer, the 'dreadful' Tom Hansard:

Now would you believe it — in sheet the 2nd in Vol 3 which I have received today Hansard — has omitted at p.47 full two pages of printed matter — and nearly two of copy. And these are sheets to go out amongst reviewers.-- Now here is a positive fact. What do you say to it? — I have returned the copy marked for him. But ought a man to have patience to stand all this. How the devil Hansard gets through his business I can't imagine. (HM AI, 74; Ellis I, 302).

Evidently, the plan was to send off two made up volumes, and sheets of the third to the reviewers. But Hansard's botched job had prevented this. So publisher and author (with Ainsworth very much in the lead) resolved on the hazardous course of sending off two volumes only, prevailing on the friendly reviewer to blur over the fact that the conclusion of the novel was still forthcoming. In late November(?) again, Ainsworth writes:

My dear Macrone, I shall write to Jerdan [i.e. William Jerdan, editor of the Literary Gazette] to-morrow with my two vols of Crichton... I have written to make it a personal favour to myself to let us have the first page of the Gazette. He may take it amiss if the Athenaeum has a review at the same time. At all events hear what he says before you send the copy to the

Athenaeum. In case of the worst just to save our bacon you can send them their copy early on Tuesday or Wednesday — just in time to be too late. (HM AI, 75; Ellis, I. 303).

After advising Macrone to show Crichton to Fred Yates, with a view to dramatisation ('A good spectacle at the Adelphi would be worth all the puffs'), Ainsworth adds the postscript to his letter: 'send the two first vols of Crichton in my name to Laman Blanchard ... He will review it in the Ct. [i.e.Court] Journal.' Another urgent note, dated 'Tuesday' runs:

My dear Macrone, I take it you have written to the Father [i.e. Prout] — and to Thackeray [as Times or Fraser's reviewer] I have written to Tom Hansard to get the four sets of the first vols ready by Friday afternoon. (HM AI, 77; Ellis I. 300).

He adds, consolingly, 'I am getting on gloriously and shall work night and day.'

The ruse was simple. Macrone and Ainsworth sent out four sets of the first two volumes of the three volume Crichton for premature review to: Fraser's, the Court Journal, the Literary Gazette, and the Athenaeum. Ainsworth trusted that these friendly organs would puff the novel — without drawing attention to its currently incomplete state. Good reviews would drum up revenue on subscription day (28 November) from the libraries. And it would seem more than likely that Macrone urgently needed both cash to stave off imminent bankruptcy and an

actual book to show the trade.

The ruse was not entirely unsuccessful. Fraser's noticed the book rather hazily in a Christmas round up of novels. And, disingenuously, the reviewer pleaded space as the reason for not dealing with the narrative's climax: 'We have no room for further extracts, nor can we unravel the events with which the third volume is crowded, being already run to greater length than we were aware of.' The Literary Gazette of November 26 loyally puffed the work, without drawing attention to the missing third volume. (They had the good grace to re-review the novel, complete, when it came out under Bentley's imprint in February). The Athenaeum, however, disdained to notice the imperfect set.

Why did Ainsworth put Macrone in this agonising and humiliating position? It was not, for certain, any lack of facility with the pen. The writer who could churn out (as he boasted publicly) 100 printed pages of Rookwood in twenty four hours could not have needed six months for the last third of Crichton. There was clearly some deliberate hold-up on Ainsworth's part, over the period March-November 1836. It has to be conjectural, but the strongest likelihood is that Macrone did not come through with the L350, or some portion of it, due to the novelist. Once he was paid, Ainsworth set to, with his normal fluency, to finish the novel in November. (Ainsworth, incidentally, firmly believed Christmas to be the best season for new novels). Hansard's wretched printing prevented the making up of third volume

proofs to accompany the two volumes (ready since June). Ainsworth had cut it too fine. So, an incomplete work was sent out to the reviewers.

In late November Ainsworth, like Dickens before him, began to chafe at Macrone's incurably premature advertising habits. In an advertisement in The Literary Gazette 24 December 1836, Macrone announced that 4,000 copies of the Lions of London, edited by Ainsworth and illustrated by Cruikshank, were in hand, and would appear on the last day of the old year. Advertisements (a main source of income) should be lodged immediately, Macrone informs the trade. Such flagrant misrepresentation — using his name — clearly upset Ainsworth. In an undated letter of late 1836 (Crichton is still 'pending') he commanded Macrone to withdraw the advertisements, 'till the proper season which will not be for some months to come.' (Ellis, I. 316).

But Macrone did not have months. A letter of November (?) 1836 from Ainsworth alludes to the financial crisis that was destroying the publisher:

One thing I beseech you to do — keep up your spirits. 'Boz' will do, and I shall do — and though we shall not make up your £5,000 by next Xmas [i.e. 1836], WE will put a few cool hundreds into your pocket to help to carry on the war, and to establish your credit. (Ellis, I.300).

One can deduce how Macrone incurred his £5,000 debt. Up to July 1835,

the Westminster was printed and published by Hansard in conjunction with Simpkin and Marshall. From July 1835 to January 1836, it was published under the partnership name of Macrone and Hansard. From April 1836 to January 1837, it was solely published by Macrone. In April 1837, it passed from his possession to Henry Hooper. It would seem that in early 1836, Macrone became heavily involved with the chronically ailing radical quarterly, at a period of intense financial risk. (It merged with its rival to become the London and Westminster Review in April 1836, and the price went up to a massive 6s). Macrone was not of course the proprietor. But as publisher, there would be considerable risk involved in the launch of the remodelled journal. I surmise that the financial strain led directly to his downfall, eighteen months later, swallowing up all the profit he had made from Dickens and Ainsworth. It is possible, too, that he purchased his printer's interest in the magazine. Hansard is an even hazier figure in the world of early Dickensian publishing than Macrone himself. But since he acted as Macrone's plenipotentiary in the negotiations with Forster, it is likely that he had an interest in whatever money the publisher might get. After Macrone's death, when Hansard sent him a demand for costs of printing the original Sketches (which the author found highly impertinent), Dickens supposed Hansard to have been "a pretty considerable sharer ... in the profits of my works." (Pilgrim, I.550).

The new year of 1837 found Macrone desperate for cash. He sold his



one great card, Ainsworth's Crichton, to Bentley. The ever serviceable Forster acted as Ainsworth's intermediary. Bentley's List records no details other than that Macrone received L1,000 and Ainsworth L150.<sup>12</sup> With his L1,150, Bentley purchased the copyright, the printed stock of the novel, and had the option on Ainsworth's next work (the sensationally successful Jack Sheppard -- another tantalising near miss for Macrone). Bentley's Crichton duly appeared in February, to good reviews, though without the Maclise illustrations. (Ainsworth left an awkward reference to them in the text, which suggests that he did not revise the work before its transfer to Bentley. Physically, the book is an abortion).<sup>13</sup> The Athenaeum review of 4 March 1837 was particularly self righteous, alluding to their former refusal to review the work: 'we have always been of the opinion that the perusal of the closing volume of a romance is absolutely necessary to enable us to form a judgement on its merits as a work of art.' More likely, they were still incensed at getting their original November copy later than the Gazette.

Short as it is, Macrone's publishing career has a wretched final phase. In February 1837, as a pathetic counterblast to Bentley's majestic appropriation of his list's jewel, he brought out an advertisement proclaiming his works 'in preparation.' They included a third edition of Fraser-Tytler's Life of the Admirable Crichton, (first published in 1819), Tableaux from Crichton -- twelve illustrations by John Franklin (these were commissioned by Macrone when he still

the Crichton copyright, but unwanted by Bentley for his "Standard Novel" reprint), and Colonel Maceroni's Memoirs, "edited by W.R.Ainsworth." All this play with Ainsworth's name and latest novel is overshadowed by Bentley's thundering advertisement for the new novel itself, prominent in the same week. It must have been gall for the unlucky loser to discover that the whole edition of 1,250 copies (printed by his printer) had sold out on the first day.

Had he but known it, Macrone had another future winner in this fanciful list of new titles. At the bottom, he mentions a forthcoming title from Thackeray, Rambles and Sketches in Old and New Paris. This, of course, is The Paris Sketch Book, as it was to be re-titled, when it eventually emerged (under Macrone's posthumous imprint) in July 1840. Thackeray apparently became known to Macrone through Ainsworth, as a man of letters and illustrator, resident in Paris who might be helpful with Crichton. (Ainsworth's novel is set in historical Paris). In a letter of January 1837, Thackeray enquired of Macrone as to how Maclise's "frontispieceseses"[sic], are getting on. He goes on to offer Macrone the "1st Edition of a book in 2 wolums. with 20 drawings entitled Rambles & Sketches in old and new Paris." The price stipulated is L50, "20 now."<sup>14</sup>(Ray, I.327) Another letter, of July 1837, finds Thackeray helping Macrone with Maceroni's Memoirs. (Ray, I.344). Ainsworth evidently backed out of editing them, despite Macrone's February advertisement of the fact. When Macrone died (apparently after some sickness in summer 1837), his business was taken over by Hugh Cunningham, who for a while kept up the St James

address, before moving, in 1838, to 1 St Martin's Place. Cunningham was evidently Macrone's partner, or his assistant. (His name witnesses the June 1837 agreement of sale of the 'Boz' copyrights to Chapman and Hall). Whether it was reticence, or a graceful gesture, Cunningham used Macrone's name as publisher of The Paris Sketch Book, and allowed Thackeray's second book, The Second Funeral of Napoleon (December 1840) to be similarly attributed in reviews and advertisements. The resuscitation of the dead publisher has caused some perplexity among Thackeray's biographers and bibliographers.

Ainsworth, as had Dickens before him, apparently cut himself loose from Macrone. After Macrone's death, in January 1838, Ainsworth mentions to Dickens that he still has £50 advance for The Lions of London. But one doubts that he ever meant to honour the agreement, and would eventually have slid out of it, had the publisher survived to press him on the matter. Since he was negotiating with Bentley for a new edition of Rookwood in the 'Standard Novels' in June 1837, Ainsworth evidently repossessed that copyright from Macrone as well. What he paid (if anything) is unknown. But the sundering of this original bond clearly marked the end of their professional relationship. Of course, Ainsworth, like Dickens, had his career to make. Macrone had had his chance, and by bad luck, short funds and incautious business practice had bungled everything. He could hardly complain at how his brightest authors had treated him. He made over £2,000 lump sum profit from his Dickens copyright, and £800 from his

Ainsworth property. This was considerably more than the authors had seen. They could hardly be expected to cover massive debts he incurred elsewhere in his rush to become an overnight publishing colossus.

In September, Macrone died. Influenza is given as the cause, though we may suspect that bankruptcy aggravated the illness. His family were left penniless. Dickens, Ainsworth and Cruikshank provided £450 for them with the charitable anthology, The Pic Nic Papers. In a generous, though surely untruthful eulogy, Dickens observes that the young publisher had died, 'when his prospects were brightest and the difficulties of his enterprise were nearly overcome.' Probably, Dickens meant that Bentley's and Chapman and Hall's and Henry Hooper's purchases had allowed Macrone to clear some of his debt. But he had sold his seed corn, and it is hard to conceive of a bright future for the house, had its head survived. Others were luckier. Chapman and Hall (who had come close to bankruptcy with Pickwick) went on to make a fortune with Dickens. Bentley reaped a rich reward from his Miscellany, which founded itself on the partnerships of Dickens (Oliver Twist) and Ainsworth (Jack Sheppard) with Cruikshank that Macrone had pioneered. The Lions of London was transmuted eventually into Ainsworth's greatest success in fiction, The Tower of London. And after doing this last novel with Bentley, Ainsworth returned to Cunningham (at last trading under his own name) to bring out the most successful of his collaborations with Cruikshank, The Miser's

Daughter. All these, and Thackeray too, could have been Macrone's had things gone more his way. As it is, he remains a great might-have-been of early Victorian publishing.

## NOTES

1. See, for instance, the accounts given by Malcolm Elwin, in Thackeray: A Personality (London, 1932), p. 100 and in Lewis Melville, William Makepeace Thackeray: A Biography (London, 1910), I, 142. These assume that Macrone was still alive and dealing with Thackeray in 1840.
2. S.M.Ellis, William Harrison Ainsworth and his Friends (London, 1911).
3. Notably in the 'Pilgrim' edition of The Letters of Charles Dickens (Oxford, 1965), Vol 1, eds M. House and G. Storey (see particularly the note on Macrone, p. 81) and in Robert L. Patten, Charles Dickens and his Publishers (Oxford, 1978). Chapter 2 of Patten's book is devoted to Macrone. There is a considerably chattier

account of Macrone in F.J.Harvey Darton, Dickens: Positively the First Appearance(London, 1933).

4. G.A.Sala, The Life and Adventures of G.A.Sala(London, 1895), I, pp. 172-3.

5. There is some problem in fitting together the chronology of Macrone's love and financial life, however. Sala implies that Macrone borrowed the money to set up in business, and used a portion of it to purchase Dickens's Sketches. But Macrone left Cochrane in late 1834, and married Eliza Bordwine in January 1835. It is hard to see how, in the interval, he could have been courting Sala's relative. It certainly could not have taken place, as Sala remembers, in 1836.

6. Harvey Darton gives the payment Macrone made to Willis. Ainsworth (see Ellis, I. 293) warned Macrone (whom he thought infatuated with the American) against buying the copyright. He may have been influenced by Forster. For the latter's loathing of Willis, see the opening of chapter 5, Book I, of the Life of Charles Dickens.

7. I.e. T.C.Bansard the younger (1813-91) a member of the famous printing family. He may have had some hold over Macrone.

8. It is worth noting how many good, young illustrators came Macrone's

way: Daniel Maclise, John Leech, John Franklin.

9. J. Butt and K. Tillotson, Dickens at Work (London, 1957). See chapter 2.

10. References to advertisements are taken from issues of the Athenaeum and the Literary Gazette.

11. Where two references ("HM" and "Ellis") are given, I have checked Ellis's transcriptions against the original letters in the Huntington Library, and made corrections.

12. According to William Jerdan in his Autobiography of William Jerdan (London 1853), IV, 392, after the review of Crichton in the Literary Gazette, "Mr Bentley waited upon the writer the next day and offered him £500 for a new novel." This suggests that Bentley pounced in early December.

13. For the reference to Maclise, see vol 1, p 278. Bentley's three volume edition appeared in February with imperfectly matched title pages laid in, and the preface by Ainsworth (which was the last thing he wrote) included at the head of both the first and the third volume.

14. Reference is to volume 1 of The Letters and Private Papers of William Makepeace Thackeray (London, 1946), ed. G.N. Ray.