
On the other Hand, we have known Books, that in the Manuscript have been Damn’d, as well as others which seem’d to be so, since, after their Appearance in the World, they have often lain by neglected, or even as buried for many Years, and yet at length have revived by some Accident, and being thus brighten’d up, as it were, to the Publick, have had an extraordinary Run, to the Undertaker's Advantage. Witness the *Paradise Lost* of the famous Milton, and the *Opticks* of Sir I----- N-----, which last, ’tis said, had no Character or Credit here, till taken notice of in France, etc. The *Historical Connection of the Old and New Testament*, by Shuckford, is also reported to have been seldom enquired after for about a Twelve-month’s time; however, it made a Shift, tho’ not without some Difficulty, to creep up to a second Edition, and afterwards even to a Third: And, which is a very remarkable Instance, the Manuscript of Dr Prideaux’s *Connection*, wrote before this, is well known to have been bandy’d about from Hand to Hand, among several, at least five or six of the most eminent Booksellers, during the Space of at least two Years, to no Purpose, none of them undertaking to print that excellent Work. One or two of these Gentlemen I have in my Eye, who greatly pretend to be particularly nice, extremely exact, and duly careful as to their Examination of Manuscripts, as I doubt not their other Brethren were, who also had the Doctor’s Copy in custody, and questionless strictly canvass’d by their orthodox and judicious Examiners. Yet alas! What did all this Care and Caution amount to, or what Stress can be laid on any such Examinations? Thus, I say, it lay in Obscurity, not so much as one Bookseller entertaining any Thoughts of printing it, until Archdeacon Echard, the Author’s particular Friend, took it in Hand, strongly recommending it to Mr Tonson (who had not yet seen it) as a most extraordinary Performance, and far superior to any thing he had ever seen on the Subject. Mr Tonson, upon this, made it his Business to become acquainted with the Author, and purchased his Manuscript; and I need not inform you, or the World, that the Publication of it proved very successful; moreover, it was a good Introduction for Shuckford’s *Connection* already mentioned, which in all likelihood would never have appear’d, had not the other been first printed.

I could, on this Occasion, quote a somewhat parallel Case of my own in reference to a Book (afterwards, I think, well enough receiv’d) that by the like Force of Recommendation was also printed, since otherwise, in all Probability, it would never have been undertaken, at least by any of your Society; I having shew’d it to no Effect, even to the very Bookseller who afterwards most readily undertook it, and shew’d his great Approbation thereof, by the Largeness of the Impression. *Robinson Crusoe*’s Manuscript also run thro’ the whole Trade, nor would any one print it, tho’ the Writer D Defoe was in good Repute with them, as an Author; until one of their Body (at last) of a forward and bustling Genius, sufficiently known, who had not, or, at least, is not thought to have had the best Choice of Copies, engag’d in the Publication; and it turned to such Account, that he gained no less than a thousand Guineas thereby, and ’tis believed, as much more has been acquired by it since that Time.

Is this then, Gentlemen, your so extraordinary, excellent, and well chosen Method, for the Examination of Manuscripts? Is this the so highly approved and applauded Way of Proceeding, on which you place an intire Dependence? Verily,
verily, Gentlemen, if this, or the like, be all that you have to trust to, in an Affair of such Importance, I cannot help saying, that, for my Part, I should even just as readily lay the same Stress, upon the tossing up of Cross and Pile, or throwing of the Dye, for the printing or not printing any such Performance.

'Tis true, indeed, there is, even at best, very great Uncertainty, in judging of the good or bad Success of Manuscripts; especially, if they do not manifestly run on in a mad or nonsensical Strain, of both which you ought in a great Measure to be proper Judges yourselves. And yet even when this Judgment is pass’d upon them, who can tell how the Whim of Mankind will take its Course, or whether they may not be pleas’d with a Hurlothrombo? So that, in reality, there seems to be a good deal of Lottery in the Affair under Consideration.