

## THOMAS K. FESSENDEN AND THOMAS GREEN FESSENDEN



REV. THOMAS K. FESSENDEN  
THOMAS GREEN FESSENDEN

**“NARRATIVE HISTORY” AMOUNTS TO FABULATION,  
THE REAL STUFF BEING MERE CHRONOLOGY**



**THOMAS K. FESSENDEN**

**THOMAS GREEN FESSENDEN**

**1739**

July 27, Friday, (Old Style): [Thomas K. Fessenden](#) was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, a son of the [Reverend William Fessenden](#) of Cambridge.

**NOBODY COULD GUESS WHAT WOULD HAPPEN NEXT**



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WHAT?

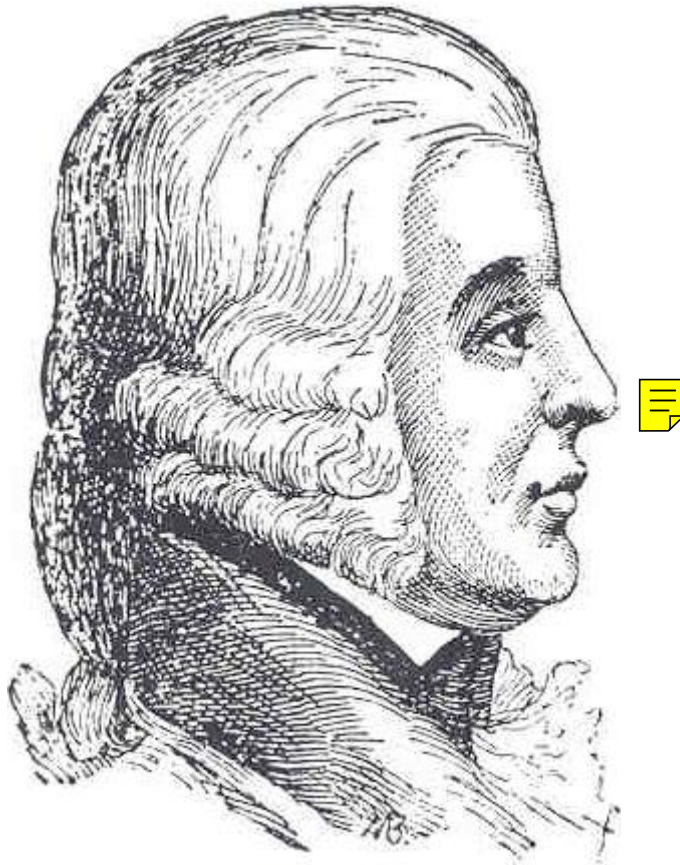
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**THOMAS GREEN FESSENDEN**

**THOMAS K. FESSENDEN**

**1758**

[Thomas K. Fessenden](#) graduated from [Harvard College](#). He would become a pastor in Walpole, New Hampshire.



**LIFE IS LIVED FORWARD BUT UNDERSTOOD BACKWARD?  
— NO, THAT’S GIVING TOO MUCH TO THE HISTORIAN’S STORIES.  
LIFE ISN’T TO BE UNDERSTOOD EITHER FORWARD OR BACKWARD.**



**THOMAS K. FESSENDEN**

**THOMAS GREEN FESSENDEN**

**1767**

[Thomas K. Fessenden](#) became a pastor in [Walpole](#), New Hampshire. He would continue in this pursuit until his death in 1813.

**THE FUTURE IS MOST READILY PREDICTED IN RETROSPECT**





**THOMAS GREEN FESSENDEN**

**THOMAS K. FESSENDEN**

**1771**

April 22, Monday: [Thomas Green Fessenden](#) was born in [Walpole](#), New Hampshire as the 1st child of the Reverend [Thomas K. Fessenden](#) and [Elizabeth Kendall Fessenden](#). He would spend his early years on the family farm.

The actress María Ignacia Ibáñez died of [typhoid fever](#) at the age of 26 in the arms of her lover, [José de Cadalso y Vázquez](#).

**THE FUTURE CAN BE EASILY PREDICTED IN RETROSPECT**





**THOMAS K. FESSENDEN**

**THOMAS GREEN FESSENDEN**

**1787**

At the age of 16, [Thomas Green Fessenden](#) became a schoolteacher in New Salem, Massachusetts.

**Do I HAVE YOUR ATTENTION? GOOD.**



**THOMAS GREEN FESSENDEN**

**THOMAS K. FESSENDEN**

**1792**

At the age of 21, [Thomas Green Fessenden](#) matriculated at [Dartmouth College](#).

**CHANGE IS ETERNITY, STASIS A FIGMENT**



**THOMAS K. FESSENDEN**

**THOMAS GREEN FESSENDEN**

**1796**

At the age of 25, [Thomas Green Fessenden](#) graduated from [Dartmouth College](#) as valedictorian of his small class. He had written there a ballad, "Jonathan's Courtship," which was reprinted in England. This budding poet would study for the law in the office of Nathaniel Chipman in Rutland, Vermont while authoring humorous poems and other materials for the [Farmer's Weekly Museum](#) of Walpole, New Hampshire.



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**THOMAS K. FESSENDEN**

**1799**

[Thomas Green Fessenden](#) hung out his shingle as a lawyer.





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**THOMAS GREEN FESSENDEN**

**1801**



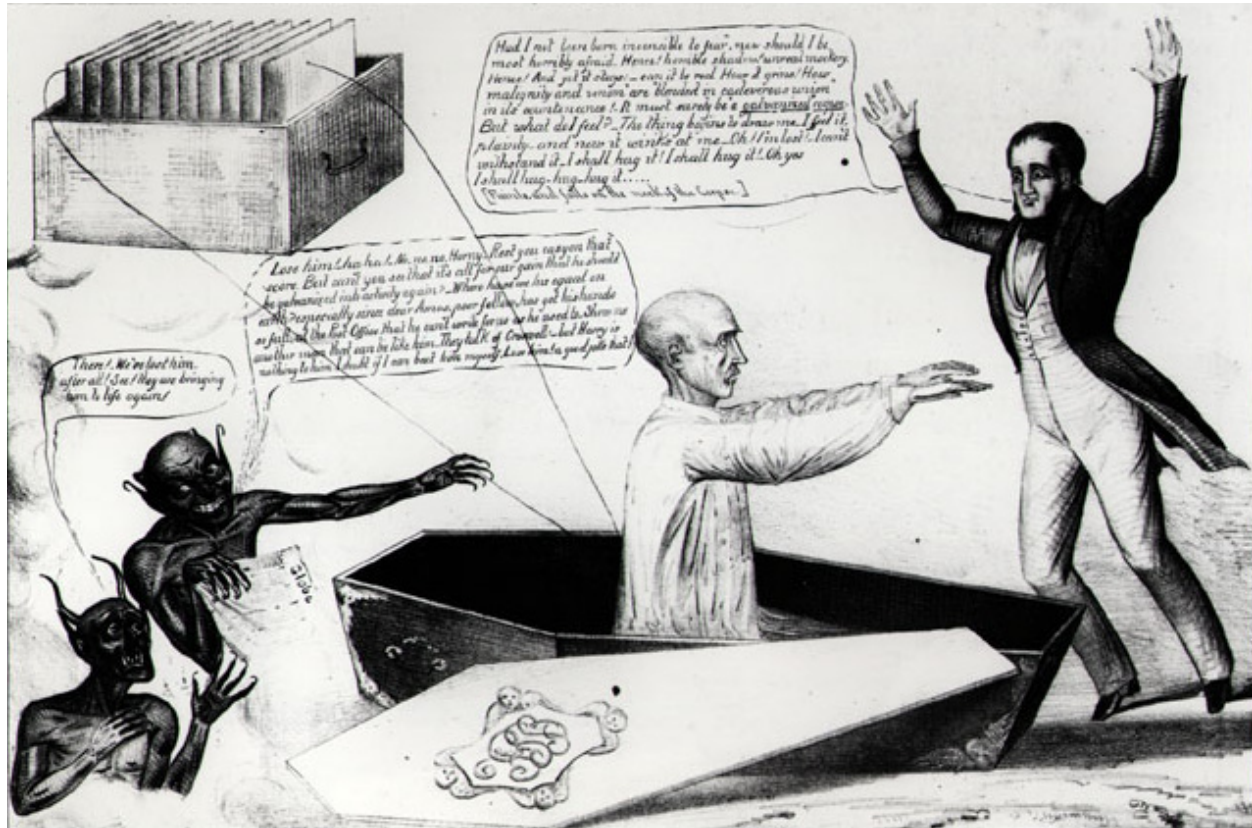
[Thomas Green Fessenden](#) went to England as agent for a new hydraulic machine, which unfortunately would fail and cause financial losses. While in [London](#), also, he would participate in a scheme to build a patent mill on the river Thames — and in the collapse of this scheme would lose the remainder of his funds.

THOMAS GREEN FESSENDEN

THOMAS K. FESSENDEN

1803

Thomas Green Fessenden's TERRIBLE TRACTORATION! was published anonymously in London. (An appliance used by Elisha Perkins for the treatment of bodily illness through the application of electricity, "Galvanism," was being termed a "metallic tractor." This useless treatment with a zero cure rate was of course opposed by the recalcitrant British medical profession, and Fessenden was attacked this medical profession by means of satire.)



It is a work of strange, grotesque ideas, aptly expressed. - Nathaniel Hawthorne

TERRIBLE TRACTORATION

WHAT I'M WRITING IS TRUE BUT NEVER MIND



**THOMAS K. FESSENDEN**

**THOMAS GREEN FESSENDEN**

**YOU CAN ALWAYS LIE TO YOURSELF**



**THOMAS GREEN FESSENDEN**

**THOMAS K. FESSENDEN**

**1804**



The Reverend [Thomas K. Fessenden](#)'s THE SCIENCE OF SANCTITY, and [Thomas Green Fessenden](#)'s ORIGINAL POEMS, which was a collection of the son's most popular newspaper contributions to date, mostly amounting to anti-Jacobin and literary satires. [Thomas Green Fessenden](#) returned from England and settled in Boston. From there he would venture to New-York where he would for a period edit the Weekly Inspector.



**THOMAS K. FESSENDEN**

**THOMAS GREEN FESSENDEN**

**1805**



[Thomas Green Fessenden](#)'s DEMOCRACY UNVEILED stupidly equated American democrats with the Illuminists and Jacobins of Europe, attacking for all the wrong reasons President [Thomas Jefferson](#) among other national politicians of the era (it is almost as if this author had memorized a formula for attracting undue attention through outrageous and preposterous allegations).



**THOMAS GREEN FESSENDEN**

**THOMAS K. FESSENDEN**

**1806**



The Reverend [Thomas K. Fessenden](#)'s THE BOSTON SELF-STYLED GENTLEMEN REVIEWERS REVIEWED, and enlargement and republication of [Thomas Green Fessenden](#)'s anonymous 1803 poem TERRIBLE TRACTORATION! in New-York, under the new title THE MINUTE PHILOSOPHER.

**THE MINUTE PHILOSOPHER**



**THOMAS K. FESSENDEN**

**THOMAS GREEN FESSENDEN**

**1809**



[Thomas Green Fessenden](#)'s PILLS, POETICAL, POLITICAL, AND PHILOSOPHICAL; PRESCRIBED FOR THE PURPOSE OF PURGING THE PUBLIC OF PIDDLING PHILOSOPHERS, PENNY POETASTERS, OF PALTRY POLITICIANS AND PETTY PARTISANS. BY PETER PEPPERBOX, POET AND PHYSICIAN (Philadelphia).





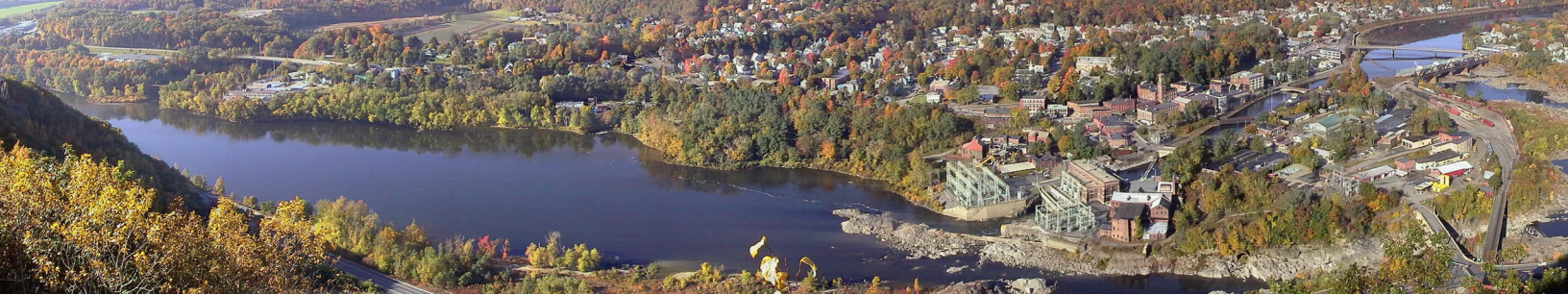
**THOMAS GREEN FESSENDEN**

**THOMAS K. FESSENDEN**

**1812**



[Thomas Green Fessenden](#) returned to the practice of law, in Bellows Falls, Vermont.





THOMAS K. FESSENDEN

THOMAS GREEN FESSENDEN

1813



May 9, Sunday: The Reverend [Thomas K. Fessenden](#) died at the age of 74 in Walpole after being minister there for 46 years.

Friend [Stephen Wanton Gould](#) wrote in his journal:

*1st day 9th of 5thM / I staid at home this forenoon to take care of our little boy while my H went to Meeting & soon after she had taken her seat she says our friends came in who had just got down from [Greenwich](#) – C Rodman, H Dennis, A Sherman and L Almy all offered testimonys. – In the Afternoon Sister Ruth took care of John & my H & I went to Meeting together – C Rodman appear'd in supplication & D Buffum in a favor'd testimony & a very good Meeting it was to me After which I went to the Alms House where I saw several men very sick who had been taken Prisoners by the English & returne'd to this country in a Cartael arrived a few days ago, poor things my heart was deeply touched for them. They are far from their friends & in a very suffering condition. one of them has a wife & four children in [Portsmouth](#) N Hampshire. –*

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

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**THOMAS GREEN FESSENDEN**

**THOMAS K. FESSENDEN**

**1815**



[Thomas Green Fessenden](#) became the editor of the Brattleboro, Vermont Reporter. Also, in this year, his AMERICAN CLERK'S COMPANION.





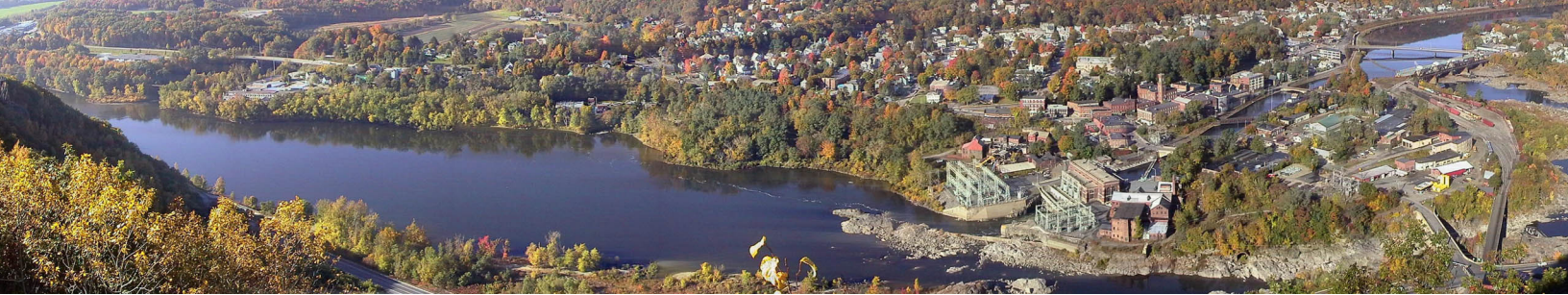
**THOMAS K. FESSENDEN**

**THOMAS GREEN FESSENDEN**

**1816**



[Thomas Green Fessenden](#) became the editor of the Bellows Falls, Vermont Intelligencer.







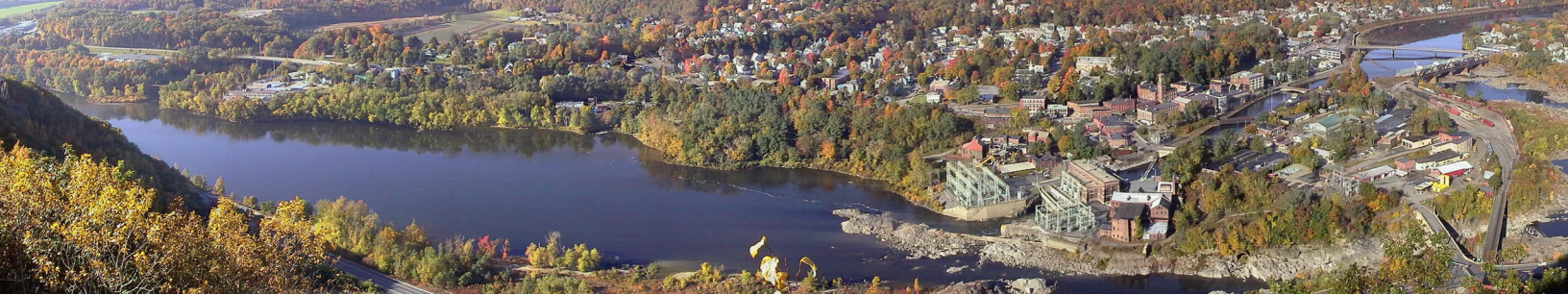
**THOMAS GREEN FESSENDEN**

**THOMAS K. FESSENDEN**

**1817**



[Thomas Green Fessenden](#) became the editor of the Bellows Falls, Vermont Avertiser.



The Hayes family of Dummerston and Brattleboro, Vermont moved to the [Ohio](#) frontier.



**THOMAS K. FESSENDEN**

**THOMAS GREEN FESSENDEN**

**1818**



[Thomas Green Fessenden](#)'s THE LADIES' MONITOR.



**THOMAS GREEN FESSENDEN**

**THOMAS K. FESSENDEN**

**1822**




[Thomas Green Fessenden](#)'s LAWS OF PATENTS FOR NEW INVENTIONS. In [Boston](#), he became the editor of The New England Farmer (he would edit, also, The Horticultural Register and The Silk Manual).



**THOMAS K. FESSENDEN**

**THOMAS GREEN FESSENDEN**

**1828**

 [Thomas Green Fessenden](#)'s THE NEW AMERICAN GARDENER.





**THOMAS GREEN FESSENDEN**

**THOMAS K. FESSENDEN**

**1834**




[Thomas Green Fessenden](#)'s COMPLETE FARMER AND RURAL ECONOMIST.

THOMAS K. FESSENDEN

THOMAS GREEN FESSENDEN

1836

 [Thomas Green Fessenden](#) was elected as a judge in the Massachusetts General Court.





**THOMAS GREEN FESSENDEN**

**THOMAS K. FESSENDEN**



After November 17, Thursday: [David Henry Thoreau](#) supplemented his borrowings from the [Harvard Library](#) by checking out, from the library of the "[Institute of 1770.](#)" Volume 92 of the [North American Review](#) — the volume which contains Harvard Professor Charles Beck (1798-1866)'s "[Heine](#)'s Letters on German Literature," a review of LETTERS AUXILIARY, a review "Travellers in America" of the just-published first part of Alexis de Tocqueville's ON THE DEMOCRACY OF AMERICA, and critical notices of [Samuel Taylor Coleridge](#)'s LETTERS, CONVERSATIONS AND RECOLLECTIONS, the [Reverend Convers Francis](#)'s LIFE OF [JOHN ELIOT](#), THE APOSTLE TO THE INDIANS (in the 5th of the ten volumes of the 1st Series of the Reverend [Jared Sparks](#)'s THE LIBRARY OF AMERICAN BIOGRAPHY),

### LIBRARY OF AM. BIOG. V

and [Thomas K. Fessenden](#)'s TERRIBLE TRACTORATION!! A POETICAL PETITION AGAINST GALVANISING TRUMPERY, AND THE PERKINISTIC INSTITUTION. IN FOUR CANTOS (BY CHRISTOPHER CAUSTIC) (London: Printed for T. Hurst, 1803).





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**THOMAS GREEN FESSENDEN**



December 8, Thursday: [David Henry Thoreau](#) supplemented his borrowings from the [Harvard Library](#) by checking out, from the library of the "[Institute of 1770](#)", William Beckford's ITALY: WITH SKETCHES OF SPAIN AND PORTUGAL (London and Philadelphia: R. Bentley, 1834),



**WM. BECKFORD, ITALY**

**SPAIN AND PORTUGAL**



**THOMAS GREEN FESSENDEN**

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[George Combe](#)'s LECTURES ON MORAL PHILOSOPHY: DELIVERED BEFORE THE "EDINBURGH PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY," AND REPORTED FOR THE "EDINBURGH CHRONICLE." (Boston: Marsh, Capen & Lyon; New-York: Daniel Appleton & Co.),



**MORAL PHILOSOPHY**



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TERRIBLE TRACTORATION, AND OTHER POEMS. BY CHRISTOPHER CAUSTIC, M.D. FELLOW OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS, ABERDEEN, AND HONORARY MEMBER OF NO LESS THAN NINETEEN VERY LEARNED SOCIETIES [pseud.]. 3d American ed. (Boston: Russell, Shattuck & co., 1836, a book of poetry and commentary of a sort which can be best described by suggesting that it might have been better had the author of it, the journalist [Thomas Green Fessenden](#), persisted in his prior career as an attorney at law),

## **TERRIBLE TRACTORATION**



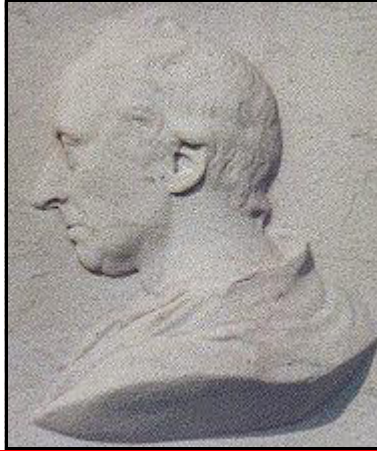
and the 3d of the five volumes of [Professor Adam Ferguson](#)'s THE HISTORY OF THE PROGRESS AND



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**THOMAS K. FESSENDEN**

TERMINATION OF THE ROMAN REPUBLIC (1773, new edition, Edinburgh, 1813).



### **THE ROMAN REPUBLIC, III**

This volume covers the period from Gaius [Julius Caesar](#)'s departure for Gaul to his defeat of Pompey at Pharsalus in Thessaly.

Our guy would comment later of the catacombs full of preserved death, of our museums full of stuffed animals, and of such history textbooks stuffed full with irrelevant facts, that:



"I hate museums, there is nothing so weighs upon the spirits. They are catacombs of nature. They are preserved death. One green bud of Spring one willow catkin, one faint trill from some migrating sparrow, might set the world on its legs again.

I know not whether I muse most at the bodies stuffed with cotton and sawdust – or those stuffed with bowels and fleshy fibre.

The life that is in a single green weed is of more worth than all this death. They are very much like the written history of the world – and I read Rollin and Ferguson with the same feeling."

–JOURNAL; September 24, 1843





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1837

→ November 11, Saturday: [Henry Thoreau](#) indicated a familiarity with the contents of at least pages 2-3 and 6-9 of [Lemuel Shattuck's A HISTORY OF THE TOWN OF CONCORD;...](#), which had appeared in October 1835.

At some point between this day and the 14th, [Henry](#) wrote his older brother [John Thoreau, Jr.](#), who was teaching in [Taunton](#).

*Brother, it is many suns that I have not seen  
the print of thy moccasins by our council fire,  
the Great Spirit has blown more leaves from the trees  
and many clouds from the land of snows have visited  
our lodge – the earth has become hard like a frozen  
buffalo skin, so that the trampling of many herds  
is like the Great Spirit's thunder – the grass on  
the great fields is like the old man of eight [sic?]  
winters – and the small song-sparrow prepares for  
his flight to the land whence summer comes.*

In Salem, the [Hawthornes](#) paid a visit to the Peabody sisters.

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE  
ELIZABETH PALMER PEABODY  
SOPHIA AMELIA PEABODY  
MARY TYLER PEABODY

[Thomas Green Fessenden](#) died in Boston.

[Mormon](#) missionaries had been sent from America to England and had begun preaching the apocalyptic end of the world as we know it, in Preston in Lancashire. This day saw the carpenter Miles Romney and his wife Elizabeth Gaskell Romney, previously adherents of the Church of England, being baptized there in the Ribble River (in 1841 this Romney family would emigrate to Nauvoo, Illinois and Miles would become an architect for a Mormon Church in Utah; Miles Park Romney, one of their sons, would when US anti-polygamy laws began to be seriously enforced flee from Utah to Mexico in 1885 with his 4 wives and 30 children).



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**Miles Romney**  
 b. England, 13 July 1806  
 d. Utah, US, 3 May 1877

**Elizabeth Gaskell**  
 b. England, 8 January 1806  
 d. Utah, US, 11 October 1884



Miles and Elizabeth Romney

**Miles Park Romney**  
 b. Illinois, US, 18 August 1843  
 d. Chihuahua, Mexico, 26 February 1904

**Hannah Hood Hill**  
 b. Canada, 9 July 1842  
 d. Mexico, 29 December 1928

**Gaskell Romney**  
 b. Utah, US, 22 September 1871  
 d. Utah, US, 7 March 1955

**Anna Amelia Pratt**  
 b. Utah, US, 6 May 1876  
 d. Utah, US, 4 February 1926

**George Wilcken Romney**  
 b. Chihuahua, Mexico, 8 July 1907  
 d. Michigan, US, 26 July 1995

**Lenore LaFount**  
 b. Utah, US, 9 November 1908  
 d. Michigan, US, 7 July 1998



**Willard Mitt Romney**  
 b. Michigan, US, 12 March 1947

**Ann Lois Davies**  
 b. Michigan, US, 16 April 1949



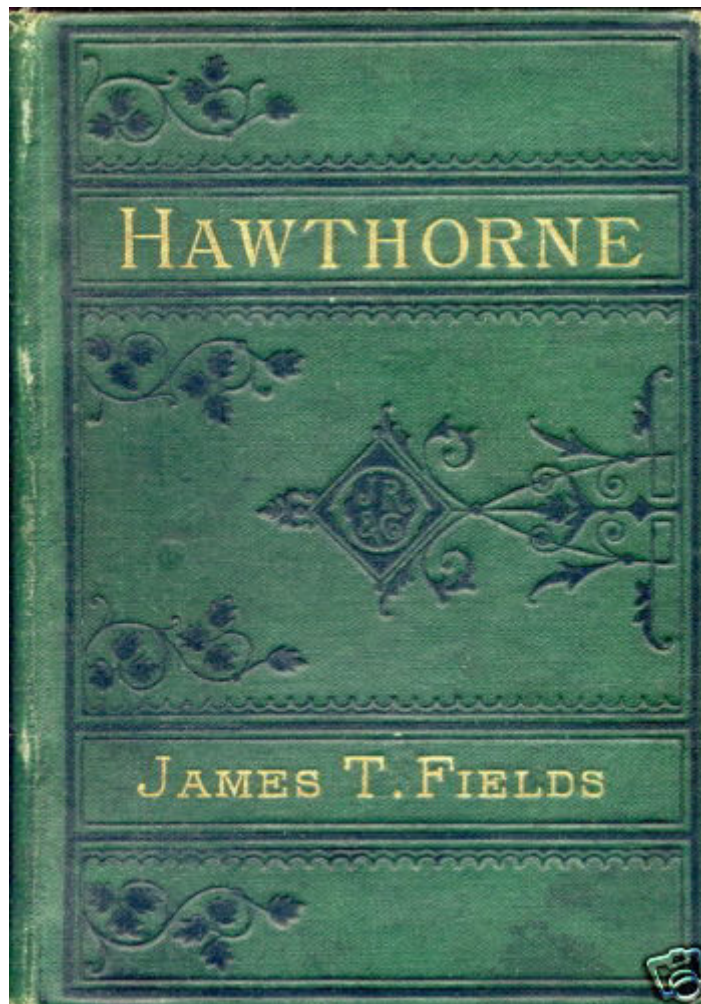
THOMAS K. FESSENDEN

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1876

George Parsons Lathrop's A STUDY OF [HAWTHORNE](#).

[James Thomas Fields](#)'s [HAWTHORNE](#).



Under pressure of an attack by her brother [Julian Hawthorne](#), who was accusing her of having shared “peculiarly private and delicate” family papers with “an outsider” (to wit her alcoholic biographer husband George Parsons Lathrop), [Rose Hawthorne](#) went, at least for the time being, “raving mad.”

Publication of DOLLIVER ROMANCE, in 3 parts.

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## THOMAS GREEN FESSENDEN

## THOMAS K. FESSENDEN

An article on [Thomas Green Fessenden](#) was included in FANSHAWE, AND OTHER PIECES (Boston).



THOMAS GREEN FESSENDEN was the eldest of nine children of the Rev. Thomas Fessenden. He was born on the 22d of April, 1771, at Walpole, in New Hampshire, where his father, a man of learning and talent, was long settled in the ministry. On the maternal side, likewise, he was of clerical extraction; his mother, whose piety and amiable qualities are remembered by her descendants, being the daughter of the Rev. Samuel Kendal, of New Salem. The early education of Thomas Green was chiefly at the common school of his native place, under the tuition of students from the college at Hanover; and such was his progress, that he became himself the instructor of a school in New Salem at the age of sixteen. He spent most of his youthful days, however, in bodily labor upon the farm, thus contributing to the support of a numerous family; and the practical knowledge of agriculture which he then obtained was long afterwards applied to the service of the public. Opportunities for cultivating his mind were afforded him, not only in his father's library, but by the more miscellaneous contents of a large bookstore. He had passed the age of twenty-one when his inclination for mental pursuits determined him to become a student at Dartmouth College. His father being able to give but little assistance, his chief



**THOMAS K. FESSENDEN**

**THOMAS GREEN FESSENDEN**

resources at college consisted in his wages as teacher of a village school during the vacations. At times, also, he gave instruction to an evening class in psalmody.

From his childhood upward, Mr. Fessenden had shown symptoms of that humorous turn which afterwards so strongly marked his writings; but his first effort in verse, as he himself told me, was made during his residence at college. The themes, or exercises, of his fellow-students in English composition, whether prose or rhyme, were well characterized by the lack of native thought and feeling, the cold pedantry, the mimicry of classic models, common to all such productions. Mr. Fessenden had the good taste to disapprove of these vapid and spiritless performances, and resolved to strike out a new course for himself. On one occasion, when his classmates had gone through with their customary round of verbiage and threadbare sentiment, he electrified them and their instructor, President Wheelock, by reading "Jonathan's Courtship." There has never, to this day, been produced by any of our countrymen a more original and truly Yankee effusion. He had caught the rare art of sketching familiar manners, and of throwing into verse the very spirit of society as it existed around him; and he had imbued each line with a peculiar yet perfectly natural and homely humor. This excellent ballad compels me to regret, that, instead of becoming a satirist in politics and science, and wasting his strength on temporary and evanescent topics, he had not continued to be a rural poet. A volume of such sketches as "Jonathan's Courtship," describing various aspects of life among the yeomanry of New England, could not have failed to gain a permanent place in American literature. The effort in question met with unexampled success: it ran through the newspapers of the day, reappeared on the other side of the Atlantic, and was warmly applauded by the English critics, nor has it yet lost its popularity. New editions may be found every year at the ballad-stalls; and I saw last summer, on the veteran author's table, a broadside copy of his maiden poem, which he had himself bought in the street.

Mr. Fessenden passed through college with a fair reputation for scholarship, and took his degree in 1796. It had been his father's wish that he should imitate the example of some of his ancestors on both sides, by devoting himself to the ministry. He, however, preferred the law, and commenced the study of that profession at Rutland, in Vermont, with Nathaniel Chipman, then the most eminent practitioner in the State. After his admission to the bar, Mr. Chipman received him into partnership. But Mr. Fessenden was ill qualified to succeed in the profession of law, by his simplicity of character, and his utter inability to acquire an ordinary share of shrewdness and worldly wisdom. Moreover, the success of "Jonathan's Courtship," and other poetical effusions, had turned his thoughts from law to literature, and had procured him the acquaintance of several literary luminaries of those days; none of whose names, probably, have survived to our own generation, save that of Joseph Dennie, once esteemed the finest writer in America. His



**THOMAS GREEN FESSENDEN**

**THOMAS K. FESSENDEN**

intercourse with these people tempted Mr. Fessenden to spend much time in writing for newspapers and periodicals. A taste for scientific pursuits still further diverted him from his legal studies, and soon engaged him in an affair which influenced the complexion of all his after-life.

A Mr. Langdon had brought forward a newly invented hydraulic machine, which was supposed to possess the power of raising water to a greater height than had hitherto been considered possible. A company of mechanics and others became interested in this machine, and appointed Mr. Fessenden their agent for the purpose of obtaining a patent in London. He was, likewise, a member of the company. Mr. Fessenden was urged to hasten his departure, in consequence of a report that certain persons had acquired the secret of the invention, and were determined to anticipate the proprietors in securing a patent. Scarcely time was allowed for testing the efficacy of the machine by a few hasty experiments, which, however, appeared satisfactory. Taking passage immediately, Mr. Fessenden arrived in London on the 4th of July, 1801, and waited on Mr. King, then our minister, by whom he was introduced to Mr. Nicholson, a gentleman of eminent scientific reputation. After thoroughly examining the invention, Mr. Nicholson gave an opinion unfavorable to its merits; and the question was soon settled by a letter from one of the Vermont proprietors to Mr. Fessenden, informing him that the apparent advantages of the machine had been found altogether deceptive. In short, Mr. Fessenden had been lured from his profession and country by as empty a bubble as that of the perpetual motion. Yet it is creditable both to his ability and energy, that, laying hold of what was really valuable in Langdon's contrivance, he constructed the model of a machine for raising water from coal-mines, and other great depths, by means of what he termed the "renovated pressure of the atmosphere." On communicating this invention to Mr. Nicholson and other eminent mechanics, they acknowledged its originality and ingenuity, and thought that, in some situations, it might be useful. But the expenses of a patent in England, the difficulty of obtaining patronage for such a project, and the uncertainty of the result, were obstacles too weighty to be overcome. Mr. Fessenden threw aside the scheme, and, after a two months' residence in London, was preparing to return home, when a new and characteristic adventure arrested him.

He received a visit, at his lodging in the Strand, from a person whom he had never before seen, but who introduced himself to his good-will as being likewise an American. His business was of a nature well calculated to excite Mr. Fessenden's interest. He produced the model of an ingenious contrivance for grinding corn. A patent had already been obtained; and a company, with the Lord Mayor of London at its head, was associated for the construction of mills upon this new principle. The inventor, according to his own story, had disposed of one fourth part of his patent for five hundred pounds, and was willing to accommodate his countryman with another fourth. After some





**THOMAS K. FESSENDEN**

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inquiry into the stranger's character and the accuracy of his statements, Mr. Fessenden became a purchaser of the share that was offered him; on what terms is not stated, but probably such as to involve his whole property in the adventure. The result was disastrous. The lord mayor soon withdrew his countenance from the project. It ultimately appeared that Mr. Fessenden was the only real purchaser of any part of the patent; and, as the original patentee shortly afterwards quitted the concern, the former was left to manage the business as he best could. With a perseverance not less characteristic than his credulity, he associated himself with four partners, and undertook to superintend the construction of one of these patent-mills upon the Thames. But his associates, who were men of no respectability, thwarted his plans; and after much toil of body, as well as distress of mind, he found himself utterly ruined, friendless and penniless, in the midst of London. No other event could have been anticipated, when a man so devoid of guile was thrown among a set of crafty adventurers.

Being now in the situation in which many a literary man before him had been, he remembered the success of his fugitive poems, and betook himself to the pen as his most natural resource. A subject was offered him, in which no other poet would have found a theme for the Muse. It seemed to be his fatality to form connections with schemers of all sorts; and he had become acquainted with Benjamin Douglas Perkins, the patentee of the famous metallic tractors. These implements were then in great vogue for the cure of inflammatory diseases, by removing the superfluous electricity. Perkinism, as the doctrine of metallic tractors was styled, had some converts among scientific men, and many among the people, but was violently opposed by the regular corps of physicians and surgeons. Mr. Fessenden, as might be expected, was a believer in the efficacy of the tractors, and, at the request of Perkins, consented to make them the subject of a poem in Hudibrastic verse, the satire of which was to be levelled against their opponents. "Terrible Tractoration" was the result. It professes to be a poetical petition from Dr. Christopher Caustic, a medical gentleman who has been ruined by the metallic tractors and who applies to the Royal College of Physicians for relief and redress. The wits of the poor doctor have been somewhat shattered by his misfortunes; and, with crazy ingenuity, he contrives to heap ridicule on his medical brethren, under pretence of railing against Perkinism. The poem is in four cantos, the first of which is the best, and the most characteristic of the author. It is occupied with Dr. Caustic's description of his mechanical and scientific contrivances, embracing all sorts of possible and impossible projects; every one of which, however, has a ridiculous plausibility. The inexhaustible variety in which they flow forth proves the author's invention unrivalled in its way. It shows what had been the nature of Mr. Fessenden's mental toil during his residence in London, continually brooding over the miracles of mechanism and science, his enthusiasm for which had cost him so dear. Long



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afterwards, speaking of the first conception of this poem, the author told me that he had shaped it out during a solitary day's ramble in the outskirts of London; and the character of Dr. Caustic so strongly impressed itself on his mind, that, as he walked homeward through the crowded streets, he burst into frequent fits of laughter. The truth is, that, in the sketch of this wild projector, Mr. Fessenden had caricatured some of his own features; and, when he laughed so heartily, it was at the perception of the resemblance.

"Terrible Tractoration" is a work of strange and grotesque ideas aptly expressed: its rhymes are of a most singular character, yet fitting each to each as accurately as echoes. As in all Mr. Fessenden's productions, there is great exactness in the language; the author's thoughts being thrown off as distinctly as impressions from a type. In regard to the pleasure to be derived from reading this poem, there is room for diversity of taste; but that it is an original and remarkable work, no person competent to pass judgment on a literary question will deny. It was first published early in the year 1803, in an octavo pamphlet of above fifty pages. Being highly applauded by the principal reviews, and eagerly purchased by the public, a new edition appeared at the end of two months, in a volume of nearly two hundred pages, illustrated with engravings. It received the praise of Gifford, the severest of English critics. Its continued success encouraged the author to publish a volume of "Original Poems," consisting chiefly of his fugitive pieces from the American newspapers. This, also, was favorably received. He was now, what so few of his countrymen have ever been, a popular author in London; and, in the midst of his triumphs, he bethought himself of his native land.

Mr. Fessenden returned to America in 1804. He came back poorer than he went, but with an honorable reputation, and with unstained integrity, although his evil fortune had connected him with men far unlike himself. His fame had preceded him across the Atlantic. Shortly before his arrival, an edition of "Terrible Tractoration" had been published at Philadelphia, with a prefatory memoir of the author, the tone of which proves that the American people felt themselves honored in the literary success of their countryman. Another edition appeared in New York, in 1806, considerably enlarged, with a new satire on the topics of the day. It is symptomatic of the course which the author had now adopted, that much of this new satire was directed against Democratic principles and the prominent upholders of them. This was soon followed by "Democracy Unveiled," a more elaborate attack on the same political party.

In "Democracy Unveiled," our friend Dr. Caustic appears as a citizen of the United States, and pours out six cantos of vituperative verse, with copious notes of the same tenor, on the heads of President Jefferson and his supporters. Much of the satire is unpardonably coarse. The literary merits of the work are inferior to those of "Terrible Tractoration;" but it is no less original and peculiar. Even where the matter is a mere



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versification of newspaper slander, Dr. Caustic's manner gives it an individuality not to be mistaken. The book passed through three editions in the course of a few months. Its most pungent portions were copied into all the opposition prints; its strange, jog-trot stanzas were familiar to every ear; and Mr. Fessenden may fairly be allowed the credit of having given expression to the feelings of the great Federal party.

On the 30th of August, 1806, Mr. Fessenden commenced the publication, at New York, of "The Weekly Inspector," a paper at first of eight, and afterwards of sixteen, octavo pages. It appeared every Saturday. The character of this journal was mainly political; but there are also a few flowers and sweet-scented twigs of literature intermixed among the nettles and burrs, which alone flourish in the arena of party strife. Its columns are profusely enriched with scraps of satirical verse, in which Dr. Caustic, in his capacity of ballad-maker to the Federal faction, spared not to celebrate every man or measure of government that was anywise susceptible of ridicule. Many of his prose articles are carefully and ably written, attacking not men so much as principles and measures; and his deeply felt anxiety for the welfare of his country sometimes gives an impressive dignity to his thoughts and style. The dread of French domination seems to have haunted him like a nightmare. But, in spite of the editor's satirical reputation, "The Weekly Inspector" was too conscientious a paper, too sparingly spiced with the red pepper of personal abuse, to succeed in those outrageous times. The publication continued but for a single year, at the end of which we find Mr. Fessenden's valedictory to his readers. Its tone is despondent both as to the prospects of the country and his own private fortunes. The next token of his labors that has come under my notice is a small volume of verse, published at Philadelphia in 1809, and alliteratively entitled "Pills, Poetical, Political, and Philosophical; prescribed for the Purpose of purging the Public of Piddling Philosophers, Penny Poetasters, of Paltry Politicians, and Petty Partisans. By Peter Pepper-Box, Poet and Physician." This satire had been written during the embargo, but, not making its appearance till after the repeal of that measure, met with less success than "Democracy Unveiled."

Everybody who has known Mr. Fessenden must have wondered how the kindest hearted man in all the world could have likewise been the most noted satirist of his day. For my part, I have tried in vain to form a conception of my venerable and peaceful friend as a champion in the stormy strife of party, flinging mud full in the faces of his foes, and shouting forth the bitter laughter that rang from border to border of the land; and I can hardly believe, though well assured of it, that his antagonists should ever have meditated personal violence against the gentlest of human creatures. I am sure, at least, that Nature never meant him for a satirist. On careful examination of his works, I do not find in any of them the ferocity of the true blood-hound of literature, such as Swift, or Churchill, or Cobbett, — which





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fastens upon the throat of its victim, and would fain drink his life-blood. In my opinion, Mr. Fessenden never felt the slightest personal ill-will against the objects of his satire, except, indeed, they had endeavored to detract from his literary reputation, — an offence which he resented with a poet's sensibility, and seldom failed to punish. With such exceptions, his works are not properly satirical, but the offspring of a mind inexhaustibly fertile in ludicrous ideas, which it appended to any topic in hand. At times, doubtless, the all-pervading frenzy of the times inspired him with a bitterness not his own. But, in the least defensible of his writings, he was influenced by an honest zeal for the public good. There was nothing mercenary in his connection with politics. To an antagonist, who had taunted him with being poor, he calmly replied, that he "need not have been accused of the crime of poverty, could he have prostituted his principles to party purposes, and become the hireling assassin of the dominant faction." Nor can there be a doubt that the administration would gladly have purchased the pen of so popular a writer.

I have gained hardly any information of Mr. Fessenden's life between the years 1807 and 1812; at which latter period, and probably some time previous, he was settled at the village of Bellows Falls, on Connecticut River, in the practice of the law. In May of that year, he had the good fortune to become acquainted with Miss Lydia Tuttle, daughter of Mr. John Tuttle, an independent and intelligent farmer at Littleton, Mass. She was then on a visit in Vermont. After her return home, a correspondence ensued between this lady and Mr. Fessenden, and was continued till their marriage, in September, 1813. She was considerably younger than himself, but endowed with the qualities most desirable in the wife of such a man; and it would not be easy to overestimate how much his prosperity and happiness were increased by this union. Mrs. Fessenden could appreciate what was excellent in her husband, and supply what was deficient. In her affectionate good sense he found a substitute for the worldly sagacity which he did not possess, and could not learn. To her he intrusted the pecuniary cares, always so burdensome to a literary man. Her influence restrained him from such imprudent enterprises as had caused the misfortunes of his earlier years. She smoothed his path of life, and made it pleasant to him, and lengthened it; for, as he once told me (I believe it was while advising me to take, betimes, a similar treasure to myself), he would have been in his grave long ago, but for her care.

Mr. Fessenden continued to practise law at Bellows Falls till 1815, when he removed to Brattleborough, and assumed the editorship of "The Brattleborough Reporter," a political newspaper. The following year, in compliance with a pressing invitation from the inhabitants, he returned to Bellows Falls, and edited, with much success, a literary and political paper, called "The Intelligencer." He held this employment till the year 1822, at the same time practising law, and composing a



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volume of poetry, "The Ladies' Monitor," besides compiling several works in law, the arts, and agriculture. During this part of his life, he usually spent sixteen hours of the twenty-four in study. In 1822 he came to Boston as editor of "The New England Farmer," a weekly journal, the first established, and devoted principally to the diffusion of agricultural knowledge. His management of the "Farmer" met unreserved approbation. Having been bred upon a farm, and passed much of his later life in the country, and being thoroughly conversant with the writers on rural economy, he was admirably qualified to conduct such a journal. It was extensively circulated throughout New England, and may be said to have fertilized the soil like rain from heaven. Numerous papers on the same plan sprung up in various parts of the country but none attained the standard of their prototype. Besides his editorial labors, Mr. Fessenden published, from time to time, various compilations on agricultural subjects, or adaptations of English treatises to the use of the American husbandman. Verse he no longer wrote, except, now and then, an ode or song for some agricultural festivity. His poems, being connected with topics of temporary interest, ceased to be read, now that the metallic tractors were thrown aside, and that the blending and merging of parties had created an entire change of political aspects, since the days of "Democracy Unveiled." The poetic laurel withered among his gray hairs, and dropped away, leaf by leaf. His name, once the most familiar, was forgotten in the list of American bards. I know not that this oblivion was to be regretted. Mr. Fessenden, if my observation of his temperament be correct, was peculiarly sensitive and nervous in regard to the trials of authorship – a little censure did him more harm than much praise could do him good; and methinks the repose of total neglect was better for him than a feverish notoriety. Were it worth while to imagine any other course for the latter part of his life, which he made so useful and so honorable, it might be wished that he could have devoted himself entirely to scientific research. He had a strong taste for studies of that kind, and sometimes used to lament that his daily drudgery afforded him no leisure to compose a work on calorie, which subject he had thoroughly investigated.

In January, 1836, I became, and continued for a few months, an inmate of Mr. Fessenden's family. It was my first acquaintance with him. His image is before my mind's eye at this moment; slowly approaching me with a lamp in his hand, his hair gray, his face solemn and pale, his tall and portly figure bent with heavier infirmity than befitted his years. His dress, though he had improved in this particular since middle life, was marked by a truly scholastic negligence. He greeted me kindly, and with plain, old-fashioned courtesy; though I fancied that he somewhat regretted the interruption of his evening studies. After a few moments' talk, he invited me to accompany him to his study, and give my opinion on some passages of satirical verse, which were to be inserted in a new edition of "Terrible Tractoration."



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Years before, I had lighted on an illustrated copy of this poem, bestrewn with venerable dust, in a corner of a college library and it seemed strange and whimsical that I should find it still in progress of composition, and be consulted about it by Dr. Caustic himself. While Mr. Fessenden read, I had leisure to glance around at his study, which was very characteristic of the man and his occupations. The table, and great part of the floor, were covered with books and pamphlets on agricultural subjects, newspapers from all quarters, manuscript articles for "The New England Farmer," and manuscript stanzas for "Terrible Tractoration." There was such a litter as always gathers around a literary man. It bespoke, at once, Mr. Fessenden's amiable temper and his abstracted habits, that several members of the family, old and young, were sitting in the room, and engaged in conversation, apparently without giving him the least disturbance. A specimen of Dr. Caustic's inventive genius was seen in the "Patent Steam and Hot-Water Stove," which heated the apartment, and kept up a pleasant singing sound, like that of a tea-kettle, thereby making the fireside more cheerful. It appears to me, that, having no children of flesh and blood, Mr. Fessenden had contracted a fatherly fondness for this stove, as being his mental progeny; and it must be owned that the stove well deserved his affection, and repaid it with much warmth. The new edition of "Tractoration" came out not long afterwards. It was noticed with great kindness by the press, but was not warmly received by the public. Mr. Fessenden imputed the failure, in part, to the illiberality of the "trade," and avenged himself by a little poem, in his best style, entitled "Wooden Book-sellers"; so that the last blow of his satirical scourge was given in the good old cause of authors against publishers.

Notwithstanding a wide difference of age, and many more points of dissimilarity than of resemblance, Mr. Fessenden and myself soon became friends. His partiality seemed not to be the result of any nice discrimination of my good and evil qualities (for he had no acuteness in that way), but to be given instinctively, like the affection of a child. On my part, I loved the old man because his heart was as transparent as a fountain; and I could see nothing in it but integrity and purity, and simple faith in his fellow-men, and good-will towards all the world. His character was so open, that I did not need to correct my original conception of it. He never seemed to me like a new acquaintance, but as one with whom I had been familiar from my infancy. Yet he was a rare man, such as few meet with in the course of a lifetime.

It is remarkable, that, with such kindly affections, Mr. Fessenden was so deeply absorbed in thought and study as scarcely to allow himself time for domestic and social enjoyment. During the winter when I first knew him, his mental drudgery was almost continual. Besides "The New England Farmer," he had the editorial charge of two other journals, "The Horticultural Register," and "The Silk Manual"; in addition to



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which employment, he was a member of the State Legislature, and took some share in the debates. The new matter of "Terrible Tractoration" likewise cost him intense thought. Sometimes I used to meet him in the street, making his way onward apparently by a sort of instinct; while his eyes took note of nothing, and would, perhaps, pass over my face without sign of recognition. He confessed to me that he was apt to go astray when intent on rhyme. With so much to abstract him from outward life, he could hardly be said to live in the world that was bustling around him. Almost the only relaxation that he allowed himself was an occasional performance on a bass-viol, which stood in the corner of his study, and from which he loved to elicit some old-fashioned tune of soothing potency. At meal-times, however, dragged down and harassed as his spirits were, he brightened up, and generally gladdened the whole table with a flash of Dr. Caustic's humor.

Had I anticipated being Mr. Fessenden's biographer, I might have drawn from him many details that would have been well worth remembering. But he had not the tendency of most men in advanced life, to be copious in personal reminiscences; nor did he often speak of the noted writers and politicians with whom the chances of earlier years had associated him. Indeed, lacking a turn for observation of character, his former companions had passed before him like images in a mirror, giving him little knowledge of their inner nature. Moreover, till his latest day, he was more inclined to form prospects for the future than to dwell upon the past. I remember -the last time, save one, that we ever met- I found him on the bed, suffering with a dizziness of the brain. He roused himself, however, and grew very cheerful; talking, with a youthful glow of fancy, about emigrating to Illinois, where he possessed a farm, and picturing a new life for both of us in that Western region. It has since come to my memory, that, while he spoke, there was a purple flush across his brow, - the harbinger of death.

I saw him but once more alive. On the thirteenth day of November last, while on my way to Boston, expecting shortly to take him by the hand, a letter met me with an invitation to his funeral. He had been struck with apoplexy on Friday evening, three days before, and had lain insensible till Saturday night, when he expired. The burial took place at Mount Auburn on the ensuing Tuesday. It was a gloomy day; for the first snow-storm of the season had been drifting through the air since morning; and the "Garden of Graves" looked the dreariest spot on earth. The snow came down so fast, that it covered the coffin in its passage from the hearse to the sepulchre. The few male friends who had followed to the cemetery descended into the tomb; and it was there that I took in my last glance at the features of a man who will hold a place in my remembrance apart from other men. He was like no other. In his long pathway through life, from his cradle to the place where we had now laid him, he had come, a man indeed in intellect and achievement, but, in guileless simplicity, a child. Dark would have been the hour, if, when we closed the



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door of the tomb upon his perishing mortality, we had believed that our friend was there.

It is contemplated to erect a monument, by subscription, to Mr. Fessenden's memory. It is right that he should be thus honored. Mount Auburn will long remain a desert, barren of consecrated marbles, if worth like his be yielded to oblivion. Let his grave be marked out, that the yeomen of New England may know where he sleeps; for he was their familiar friend, and has visited them at all their firesides. He has toiled for them at seed-time and harvest: he has scattered the good grain in every field; and they have garnered the increase. Mark out his grave as that of one worthy to be remembered both in the literary and political annals of our country, and let the laurel be carved on his memorial stone; for it will cover the ashes of a man of genius.

**“MAGISTERIAL HISTORY” IS FANTASIZING, HISTORY IS CHRONOLOGY**



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"It's all now you see. Yesterday won't be over until tomorrow and tomorrow began ten thousand years ago."

- Remark by character "Garin Stevens"  
in William Faulkner's INTRUDER IN THE DUST



**Prepared: June 27, 2014**





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# ARRGH AUTOMATED RESEARCH REPORT

## GENERATION HOTLINE



This stuff presumably looks to you as if it were generated by a human. Such is not the case. Instead, someone has requested that we pull it out of the hat of a pirate who has grown out of the shoulder of our pet parrot "Laura" (as above). What these chronological lists are: they are research reports compiled by ARRGH algorithms out of a database of modules which we term the Kouroo Contexture (this is data mining). To respond to such a request for information we merely push a button.



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Commonly, the first output of the algorithm has obvious deficiencies and we need to go back into the modules stored in the contexture and do a minor amount of tweaking, and then we need to punch that button again and recompile the chronology – but there is nothing here that remotely resembles the ordinary “writerly” process you know and love. As the contents of this originating contexture improve, and as the programming improves, and as funding becomes available (to date no funding whatever has been needed in the creation of this facility, the entire operation being run out of pocket change) we expect a diminished need to do such tweaking and recompiling, and we fully expect to achieve a simulation of a generous and untiring robotic research librarian. Onward and upward in this brave new world.

First come first serve. There is no charge.  
Place requests with <Kouroo@kouroo.info>. Arrgh.