

Edmund Pearson's Annotations
to *Autobiography of a Criminal*

Prepared by Daniel Allie
www.HenryTufts.com

Pearson's Annotations.

The following pages contain Edmund Pearson's annotations to his edition of Henry Tufts, *Autobiography of a Criminal* (Also found in the Loompanics edition). Page numbers, however, have been changed to match those of my new edition. Annotations mentioning Pearson's abridgements, as they are no longer relevant, have not been included.

—Daniel Allie

Book I.

Chapter I.

14. "a name free from reproach" Harvard Quinquennial Catalogue mentions two of the name Thomas Tufts. The B. A. of 1701, who died 1733, seems the candidate for the honor of being grandfather of Henry Tufts.

Chapter IV

38. "Old York Jail" Perhaps the sole survivor of Tufts' numerous jails.

Chapter V

41. "number four" Old "Fort Number 4," now Charlestown, N. H.

41. "Claramont" Claremont.

Chapter VI

53. "a set of pictures, called *shows*" The peep-show, a feeble ancestor of the moving-picture theater has almost vanished from knowledge. It was once an important feature of wayfaring life. See Richardson Wright: *Hawkers and Walkers in Early America*, p. 180. Also, an article by F. Weitenkampf in the *Bulletin* of the New York Public Library, June 1921: 25:359-66.

55. "Indians of Sudbury, Canada" Not the present Sudbury, in the province of Ontario, but according to Col. Higginson, a township in Maine.

Chapter VII

56. "Pigwacket country" Something about the Pigwacket country, probably its euphonious name, fascinated travelers as well as poets and prose-writers for more than a century. Its limits are hard to determine; it is usually said to have been in Maine, although a contemporary map applies the name to places in New Hampshire. O.W. Holmes, in *Elsie Venner*, Chapter II, invents a town called Pigwacket Center. "Lovewell's Fight," in the old ballad, took place (1725) on Saco Pond, and the balladist sings:

"Twas nigh unto Pigwacket, on the eighth day of May,
They spied a rebel Indian soon after break of day."

Book II

Chapter I

81. “marched directly to Portsmouth” Henry Tufts is named as a private soldier in Capt. Smith Emerson’s company (Elijah Denbow, 1st lieut.) on Seavey’s Island, Portsmouth Harbour, November 5, 1775. *New Hampshire Provincial Papers*, 14:233.

82. “Gen. Sullivan and Col. Cilley” John Sullivan, 1740-95; Joseph Cilley, 1735-99. Gen. Sullivan was, at this time, detached from Washington’s army, for the defense of Portsmouth.

83. “Lechmore’s point” Lechmere Point; now East Cambridge.

Chapter III

104. “shooling” Shooling, -i.e., begging or sponging.

Chapter V

129. “pompion” Pumpkin.

Chapter VII

146. “destroy entirely my favorite schemes” Many of our professional criminals still have this unfavorable view of Canada and its penal system.

148. “smerries” Smerries. The meaning is obvious, but the word does not seem to be known to dictionary makers. Perhaps it is Tufts' invention, to avoid repeating “smocks,”—a word so indelicate, in his opinion, that he has had to apologize for its use.

159. “twenty-five miles from Newburyport” If the present Palmer is meant, this is decidedly an underestimate by modern computation.

Book III

Chapter I

196. “contribute to the advancement of your felicity” [In] [t]his preposterous conversation ... the author was merely trying his hand in the syle of 18th Century romances. [edited to remove Pearson’s mention of abridging this passage—D.A.]

202 “dance Sallanger’s round” Farmer and Henley, in *Slang and its Analogues*, trace this circumlocution to “*Sallenger’s Round*,—a loose ballad and tune *tempus* Elizabeth.”

Chapter III

221. “Thursday the fourteenth of August, 1793” On the subject of this trial, and later events of the same summer, described in the next chapter, see note on page 347, “The Six Silver Spoons.”

Chapter IV

228. “Rev. Mr. Frisbey” This was the Rev. Levi Frisbie, pastor of the First Church of Ipswich, 1776-1806. See T. F. Waters: *Ipswich in the Massachusetts Bay Colony* Vol. II.

243. “its misshapen birth” This may be one of the earliest vocabularies of slang published in this country. The words, as Tufts says, are English in origin. His remark that they were “imported in gross” from Europe almost seems a punning acknowledgement to Francis Grose’s *Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue*. But I do not find that they are taken verbatim from any edition of Grose available to me.

Chapter V

249. "from Lee, to Lemington" Limington is the present spelling. Maine, at this time a part of Massachusetts, became a separate State in 1820.