

MARCH

SIR ISAAC NEWTON DIED MARCH 20, 1727.

In 1725, when Newton had reached his 83rd year, he was seized with a violent cough and inflammation of the lungs; and in consequence of this attack, he was prevailed upon to take up his residence at Kensington, where his health experienced a decided improvement. On February 28th, 1727, he went to



POSTHUMOUS MASK OF SIR ISAAC NEWTON.

London to preside at a meeting of the Royal Society, the fatigue of which brought on a return of his former complaint. He returned to Kensington, on Saturday, the 4th of March, and was attended by Dr. Mead and Dr. Cheselden, who pronounced his disease to be stone, and held out no hope of his recovery. On Wednesday, the 15th of March, he seemed a little better. On the morning of Saturday the 18th, he read the newspapers, and conversed for some time with Dr. Mead, when, all his senses and faculties were strong and vigorous; but at six o'clock of the same evening he became insensible, and he continued in that state during the whole of Sunday, and till Monday the 20th, when he expired, between one and two o'clock in the morning, in the 85th year of his age. His body, on March 28th, lay in state in the Jerusalem Chamber, and was thence buried in Westminster Abbey. The house at Kensington was in Orbell's Buildings; but in Boswell's "Life of Johnson," Newton is erroneously stated by Dr. Burney to have died in St. Martin's-street, Leicester-square. (See "Curiosities of London," by John Timbs, page 456.)

A short time before his death, Newton uttered these memorable words, characteristic of his patient humility. "I know not," he remarked, "what I may appear to the world; but to myself I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the sea-shore, and diverting myself in finding now and then another pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me."

The Royal Society possesses the original mask of Sir Isaac Newton's face, from the cast taken after death, which belonged to Roubiliac. It was met with many years since by Mr. Samuel Hunter Christie, at the shop of a dealer in statues, in Tichborne-street. To Mr. Christie's question, whether he had any bust of the philosopher to dispose of, the dealer replied that though he had no bust, he had an old mask of Newton, which his father had purchased fifty or sixty years before, at the sale of Roubiliac's effects, and which he had kept on his shelves

amongst various articles of his trade. It was evident that the dealer regarded the relic as little better than useless lumber, and this is confirmed by his having consented to dispose of it for a few shillings. Mr. Christie, having borne off his prize, had a few casts taken from it, and subsequently enjoyed the great satisfaction of placing it in a repository, not only the most fitted for its reception, but where it will be hallowed and preserved with religious care as long as the Royal Society exists. Though much injured by rough treatment, it will be seen by those acquainted with the authentic portraits of Newton, that the mask presents the characteristic features of the Society's former illustrious President. In the Hunterian Museum, at Glasgow, is a similar mask, presented by Flaxman the sculptor, whose father became possessed of this relic after the death of Roubiliac, who executed from it the marble statue in Trinity College, Cambridge. There is, also, a bust in the College library, by the same sculptor.

To the Grammar-school at Grantham, Newton was sent in his twelfth year; was there taught by Mr. Stokes, and was boarded at the house of Mr. Clark, an apothecary, in that town. Sir Isaac acknowledged that he was at first inattentive to his studies, and very low in the school; in play-hours he mostly employed himself in constructing mechanical contrivances—as a windmill, a water-clock, and a carriage; he was, altogether, "a sober, silent, thinking lad." In his fifteenth year he was taken from Grantham School, from a motive of economy, to manage his mother's farm and country business, and he often attended Grantham market, to sell grain, &c.; but neither his marketing nor his management was profitable; for the perusal of a book, the execution of a model, or the superintendence of a water-wheel of his own construction, absorbed all his thoughts; when the sheep were going astray, and the cattle were devouring or treading down the corn. Newton's mother wisely sent him back to Grantham school, where he remained until he proceeded to Trinity College, Cambridge. It has very properly been resolved to erect in Grantham some lasting memorial of Newton.

M. Biot relates that one of Newton's uncles having one day found him under a hedge, with a book in his hand and entirely absorbed in meditation, took the book from him, and found that he was occupied in the solution of a mathematical problem. Struck with finding so serious and so active a disposition at so early an age, he urged Newton's mother no longer to thwart him, but to send him back to Grantham, to continue his studies.

Among the early passions of Newton was his love of drawing, and writing verses. His own room was hung with pictures, drawn, coloured, and framed by himself, sometimes from copies, but often from life. Among these were portraits of Mr. Stokes, the master of Grantham school; and of King Charles I., under whose picture were the following lines, believed to have been written by Newton:—

A secret art my soul requires to try,
If prayers can give me what the wars deny.
Three crowns distinguished here, in order do
Present their objects to my knowing view.
Earth's crown, thus at my feet I can disdain,
Which heavy is, and at the best but vain;
But now a crown of thorns I gladly greet,
Sharp is the crown, but not so sharp as sweet;
The crown of glory that I yonder see,
Is full of bliss and of eternity.

The room in which Newton lodged at Grantham is stated to have been covered with charcoal drawings of birds, beasts, men, ships, and mathematical figures.



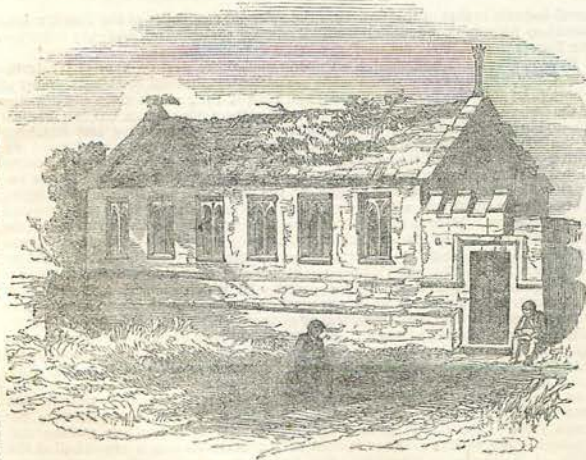
GOLD WATCH PRESENTED TO SIR ISAAC NEWTON BY MRS. CONDUIT.

The Royal Society now possesses by far the largest collection of Newton memorials and relics extant; and it is gratifying to know that they are in the keeping of so illustrious and ancient an institution, over which Newton presided for a quarter of a century.

To the Society was bequeathed in 1853, a very handsome gold watch, which the philosopher carried during the latter years of his life. It was presented to him by his niece, Mrs. Catherine Conduit, on the 4th January, 1708, as an inscription on the inner case records. The chasing on the outer case (of which our Artist has given a very faithful drawing) is beautifully executed.

These relics include one of the solar dials made by Newton when a boy; "the first reflecting telescope, invented by Sir Isaac Newton, and made with his own hands, 1761;" a small lock of Newton's silver-white hair; and three portraits of him in oil, painted by Jervas, Marchand, and Vanderbank.

The manor-house of Woolthorpe, in which Newton was born, was engraved in the ILLUSTRATED LONDON ALMANACK for 1852.



THE GRAMMAR-SCHOOL AT GRANTHAM.