

FLORIO, JOHN (1553?–1625), author, was born about 1553, according to the inscription on his portrait issued in 1611, where he was described as fifty-eight years old. His father, Michael Angelo Florio, a Florentine protestant, whose family was originally settled at Sienna, fled to England shortly before Edward VI's reign from persecution in the Valteline, and was in 1550 preacher to a congregation of Italian protestants in London. Sir William Cecil and Archbishop Cranmer both patronised him, but charges of gross immorality were brought against him; he was ultimately banished from Cecil's house, where he had resided, and he temporarily severed his connection with the Italian church in London (cp. Strype, *Memorials*, II. i. 377–378; Strype, *Cranmer*, pp. 343, 881, 883). A manuscript by him in the Cambridge University Library, 'Regole de la Lingua Thoscana,' shows that he was for some time a teacher of Italian in London, perhaps in the service of William Herbert, first earl of Pembroke, to whose son Henry, 'Signore Arrigo Herbert,' this work is dedicated (London, 21 Aug. 1553). The elder Florio also wrote, 'Catechismo, cioè forma breve per amestrare i fanciuli: Laquale di tutta la Christiana disciplina cõtiene la somma ... Tradotta di Latino in lingua Thoscana,' without date or place, and 'Historia de la vita e de la morte de l'illustrissima Signora G. Graia, già Regina eletta e publicata d'Inghilterra: e de le cose accadute in quel regno dopo la morte del re Edoardo VI,' with Italian translations of several works attributed to Lady Jane Grey, 1607. The former work was probably published in London; the latter has been conjecturally assigned to a Dutch publishing house: on its title-page the author is described as 'Fioren- tino già predicatore famoso del Sant' Euangelo in più cità d'Italia et in Londra.' 'Apologia ... scritta contro un heretico,' 1557, is also attributed to him. After the accession of Queen Mary, the elder Florio, according to Wood, took his family to the continent again, and there John received his early education.

We know that John Florio resided in his youth at Oxford, and about 1576 became tutor in foreign languages to Emanuel, son of Robert Barnes, bishop of Durham, who was a commoner of Magdalen College. Florio matriculated at Magdalen in 1581 (Wood), 'and was a teacher and instructor of certain scholars in the university.' He dedicated his 'First Frutes' to Leicester in 1578, from 'his lodgings in Worcester Place,' Oxford. He similarly dated from Oxford a translation from the Italian of Ramuzio, dedicated to Edmund Bray, high sheriff of Oxfordshire, 25 June 1580; and inscribed to Sir Edward Dyer a manuscript collection of Italian proverbs, also from Oxford, 12 Nov. 1582. In his 'Second Frutes,' 1591, he writes that his first patron, Leicester, whom 'every miscreant does strike, being dead,' had been succeeded by one Nicholas Saunders of Ewell. In the same place he makes highly appreciative reference to Spenser, 'the sweetest singer of all our western shepherds,' who, he says, had heralded Leicester's virtues. A few years later Florio was, according to his own account, taken into 'the pay and patronage' of the Earl of Southampton, in which he 'lived some years' (*The Worlde of Wordes*, 1598 dedication), and to the Earl of Pembroke he was soon under heavy obligations.

At the close of the sixteenth century Florio was living in London on intimate terms with all the chief literary men and their patrons. In 1598 he dedicated his great Italian-English dictionary to Roger, earl of Rutland, Henry, earl of Southampton, and Lucy, countess of Rutland. He there calls himself 'Resolute John Florio,' and venomously attacks one 'H. S.' who had insulted the sonnets of one of his friends. Hunter suggests that 'H. S.' may be Henry Salisbury, author of a Welsh dictionary, and a protégé of the Earl of Pembroke. Florio's admirable translation of Montaigne's 'Essays' was licensed to Edward Blount in 1599, but was not published till 1603. Each of the three books is separately dedicated—the first to Lucy, countess of Bedford, and Anne, lady Harington; the second to Elizabeth, countess of Bedford, and Penelope, lady Rich; the third to Elizabeth, lady Grey, and Mary, lady Nevill. To the countess of Bedford's exhortations and to Sir Edward Wotton's advice Florio attributes his preparation of the work and acknowledges assistance from Theodore Diodati [see Diodati, Charles] and his 'sympathising friend, Maister Doctor Gwinne' [see Gwinne, Matthew, M.D.]. The latter is doubtless author of the many pieces of commendatory verse contributed to this and other of Florio's works under the title of 'Il Candido.' Sir William Cornwallis [q. v.], writing of a recent translation of Montaigne in his 'Essayes,' (1600), says: 'Montaigne speaks now good English. It is done by a fellow less beholding to nature for his fortunes than wit, yet lesser for his face than his fortune. The truth is he looks more like a good fellow than a wise man, and yet he is wise beyond either his fortune or education.' This is undoubtedly a reference to Florio. Cornwallis obviously saw in manuscript Florio's translation, which was entered at Stationers' Hall four years before its publication.

Farmer and Warburton have argued that Shakespeare ridiculed Florio in Holofernes in 'Love's Labour's Lost.' They chiefly rely on the bombastic prefaces to the 'Worlde of Wordes' and to Montaigne. But there is really nothing there to justify the suggestion. Florio writes more in the vein of Armado than of Holofernes, and beyond the fact that he was a teacher of languages in London he bears no resemblance whatever to the latter, a village schoolmaster. Florio as the protégé of Lords Southampton and Pembroke doubtless met Shakespeare, but this is pure conjecture. We are on safer ground in tracing the original of Gonzago's description of an ideal state in the 'Tempest' to Florio's translation of Montaigne's essay. One copy of the 1603 edition of the Montaigne at the British Museum contains an

autograph signature said to be by Shakespeare himself. It was purchased as a genuine autograph for 140l. in 1838, having been in the possession of the Rev. Edward Patteson of East Sheen, Surrey, whose father, Edward Patteson, minister of Smethwick, Staffordshire, had had it in his possession at least as early as 1780. Sir Frederick Madden, in a letter originally addressed to the Society of Antiquaries (26 Jan. 1837), and afterwards republished from the 'Archæologia' as a separate pamphlet, vouched for the authenticity of the autograph. But later investigation has left little doubt that it is an eighteenth-century forgery. Another copy of the same date in the same collection bears a signature alleged to be that of Ben Jonson. This is doubtless genuine.

In 1603 Florio became reader in Italian to Queen Anne at a salary of 100l. a year, and on 5 Aug. 1604 was appointed by the king gentleman-extraordinary and groom of the privy chamber. In 1610 John Healey dedicated to him his translation of 'Epictetus.' After 1620 Florio resided at Fulham, and he died there in August or September 1625. Wood says that he retired to Fulham shortly before his death on account of the plague; but although he owned the lease of a house in Shoe Lane, Fleet Street, Fulham was his ordinary place of residence for at least five years before he died. By his will, dated 20 July 1625, and proved 1 May 1626, he left most of his small property to his wife Rose. A daughter, Aurelia, married to John Molins, a surgeon of Shoe Lane, is mentioned. To the Earl of Pembroke he bequeathed 'all my Italian, French, and Spanish books, as well printed as unprinted, being in number about 340, viz. my new and perfect Dictionary, as also my ten dialogues in Italian and English and my unbound volume of divers written collections and rhapsodies.' Florio desired these books and manuscripts to be placed in Pembroke's library, either at Wilton or Baynard's Castle in London, and begged the earl to protect his wife from the molestation of his enemies, and to hand over to her any profit arising from the publication of his manuscripts. His executors were Theophilus Field [q. v.], bishop of Llandaff and afterwards of Hereford, and Richard Cluett, vicar of Fulham. Nothing is certainly known of the fate of Florio's manuscripts. Oldys possessed an autograph of 'Giardino di Ricreatione,' which is now in the British Museum (see No. 3 below), and Wood says that Pembroke handed over much manuscript material to Torriano, who edited Florio's Italian-English Dictionary in 1659, adding an English-Italian part. A suit of arms impaling Florio's was granted to his son-in-law Molins on 23 Aug. 1644. The poet Samuel Daniel [q. v.] has been claimed as Florio's brother-in-law, on the ground that in the commendatory verse prefixed by Daniel to the 1613 edition of the Montaigne the translator is addressed as 'brother,' whereas in the earlier edition of 1603 Daniel had merely called Florio his friend. But the difference in the designation is amply accounted for by the fact that Florio and Daniel were in 1613 brother-officers in the queen's household. There is no other evidence of a family relationship, and the theory may safely be rejected.

Florio's works are: 1. 'His First Fruits, which yield familiar speech, merry proverbs, witty sentences, and golden sayings,' London, 1578, with which is bound up 'Perfect Induction to the Italian and English Tongues,' both dedicated to Robert, earl of Leicester. The 'First Fruits' consist mainly of simple dialogues in English and Italian. The British Museum has only an imperfect copy. 2. 'A Short and Briefe Narration of the Two Navigations and Discoueries to the North-weast Partes called New Fraunce. First translated out of French into Italian by that famous learned Man, Geo. Bapt. Ramutius [Ramuzio], and now turned into English by John Florio,' London, 1580; dedicated to Edmund Bray. 3. 'Giardino di Ricreatione,' London (Woodcock), 1591; dedicated to Master Nicholas Saunders of Ewell, esq.—a collection of 6,150 proverbs, all in Italian. A manuscript is in the British Museum with a dedication to Sir Edward Dyer (Addit. MS. 15214). It has been in the possession successively of Oldys, Isaac Heard, and B. H. Bright. 4. 'Florio's Second Frutes to be gathered of twelve Trees of diuers but delightsome tastes to the tongues of Italian and English men. To which is annexed his Garden of Recreation, yielding 6,000 Italian proverbs,' London (Thomas Woodcock), 1591; dedicated to Nicholas Saunders. This work consists mainly of Italian and English dialogues, with a reprint of No. 3. 5. 'A Worlde of Wordes: a most copious and exact Dictionarie in Italian and English, collected by John Florio,' London (for E. Blount), 1598 [see dedication noticed above]; sonnets by Il Candido, i.e. Gwynne, and verses by B. B. are affixed. A list of seventy-six books consulted by the compiler is given. In 1611 the dictionary was reissued as 'Queen Anna's New World of Words, or Dictionarie of the Italian and English Tongues, collected and newly much augmented by Iohn Florio,' London (for E. Blount and W. Barret). An Italian dedication to the queen is followed by an English address by the author, an Italian poem by Alberico Gentili, an Italian and English sonnet by Il Candido, and English verses by Samuel Daniel, James Mabbe, and John Thorys. 'Necessary Rules and Short Observations for the True Pronouncing and Speedie Learning of the Italian, collected for Queen Anne,' forms an appendix of 73 pages. A third edition, 'Vocabolario Italiano et Inglese,' revised by Gio. Torriano, appeared in 1659, together with an English-Italian part, apparently prepared from Florio's manuscripts. A fourth edition in 1688, further revised by J. Davis, M.D., was dedicated to Maria d'Este, queen of England. 6. 'The Essayes on Morall, Politike, and Millitarie Discourses of Lo. Michael de Montaigne. First written by him in French, and now done into English,' London (for E. Blount), 1603 [for dedication see above]. There are prefatory verses by Il Candido and Daniel. The second edition, dated 1613, is dedicated to Queen Anne, and is declared to be translated

from the last French edition. A reprint edited by Mr. Justin Huntly McCarthy, M.P., appeared in 1889.

A fine portrait of Florio, aged 58, engraved by W. Hole, is prefixed to the 1611 edition of the Italian Dictionary. A painting by Mytens is said to have belonged to the Earl of Dorset, and to be now at Knole Park, Sevenoaks.  
[Hunter's *New Illustrations of Shakespeare*, i. 23, 145, 146, 261, 273, 281; Wood's *Athenæ Oxon.* ed. Bliss, ii. 380; *Notes and Queries*, 3rd ser. viii. 4; Florio's *Works* in *Brit. Mus. Libr.*]