

# JUVENILE ENTERTAINER.

"Torquet ab obscenis jam nunc sermonibus aurem."

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## THE JUVENILE ENTERTAINER

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### CONDITIONS.

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## BIOGRAPHY.

### JOHN PHILIP BARATIER

This wonderful youth, who was just exhibited by Providence upon the stage of life, to show the extensive powers of the human mind, and then disappeared, as if fitted for a higher sphere was born in 1721, at Schwobach, near Nuremberg Anspach. His father was minister of the French church at that place, having fled from France on account of his being a protestant, at the time of the revocation of the edict of Nantes. He was a man of great piety and learning, and undertook himself the education of his son, who made so great a progress under his instructions, that at the age of five years he is said to have understood the Greek, Latin, German, and French languages. His father, surprised and delighted with his uncommon genius, next proceeded to teach him Hebrew, and in less than a year he was able to read the historical books of the Bible in that tongue. At the age of nine years he could translate any part of the Hebrew scriptures into Latin, even re-translate those versions into Hebrew, an attainment which is almost incredible. At the same age he could repeat by heart the Hebrew Psalter, without having taken any other pains to commit it to memory than by frequently reading it with his father. Before he had completed his tenth year he drew up a Hebrew lexicon, of uncommon and difficult words, to which he added many curious critical remarks.

In 1731 Baratier was admitted a member of the university of Altdorf. The same year he wrote in French a letter to M. Le Maitre, minister of the French church at Schwobach, on a new edition of the Bible, Hebrew, Chaldaic, and Rabbinical, which letter was published in a German Literary Journal.

The Margrave of Anspach in 1734 settled upon him a pension of fifty florins a year, and allowed him the free use of the books in his library. The fruits of his industry appeared in a translation from the Hebrew, with historical and critical notes, and dissertations of the "Rabbi Benjamin's Travels in Europe, Asia, and Africa, containing an account of the state of the Jews in

the twelfth century." This work was published at Amsterdam, in two volumes octavo, in 1734, the author's thirteenth year; and the whole is said to have been finished by him in four months.

This wonderful youth, in the midst of his philosophical pursuits, found leisure for the study of the mathematics; and with such effect, that he invented a method of discovering the longitude at sea, which he laid before the academy of sciences at Berlin, in a long letter, dated January 21, 1735, the day in which he completed his fourteenth year. Finding that his letter was well received, he resolved to maintain and explain his project in person; and accordingly, in March, following, set out for Berlin. On his way thither, he passed, with his father, through Hall, the chancellor of which celebrated university offered him the honorary degree of master of arts. This flattering proposal induced Baratier, on the spot, and in the presence of several professors, to draw up fourteen theses in philology, ecclesiastical history, & philosophy, which he caused to be printed the same night, and supported them the next day for three hours with great applause, upon which he received his degree with marks of high distinction.

He arrived a few days afterwards at Berlin. On the 24th of March, the mathematical class being assembled, with all the heads of the university, and many members of other classes, Baratier was called in. M. de Vignoles, the rector suggested to him some difficulties respecting his project on the longitude; to which he replied with great readiness and ability. After this he presented in Latin the plan of an astronomical instrument, which he proposed to execute. The learned Jablonski, the president, reported that he had examined Baratier in the king's presence, and had found him well acquainted with the oriental languages, and various other branches of learning, on which he was unanimously admitted, with the customary formalities, a member of the society.

On his return to Hall with his father, whom the King of Prussia at this time appointed to the pastoral charge of the French church in that city, young Baratier directed his studies to theology, and with such success, that in 1735 he printed a work in Latin against Socinianism, under the title of Ante-Artemonius. To this book he added a dissertation on the Three Dialogues, commonly ascribed to Theodoret. This latter performance he afterwards defended in a German Journal against some French critics; and in the same journal he printed a Dissertation on two works attributed to St. Athanasius.

The King of Prussia, to whom he was introduced, by way of trying the extent of his knowledge, asked him whether he understood the public law of the empire. Baratier was obliged to confess he did not. "Then," said the King, "go and study it before you pretend to the character of a man of learning."

This roused the literary emulation of the youth. He renounced for a time all other studies, and

applied himself to this with so much ardour, that in fifteen months he was enabled to defend a thesis on law with great credit.

His intense application, however, and the continual exercise of his mental faculties, which he did not relieve by amusements, or a proper degree of relaxation, speedily destroyed a constitution which was naturally very delicate. A complication of complaints attacked him, and after a decline of some months, during which he employed himself in collecting materials for a voluminous work on the Antiquities and History of Egypt, he died at Hall, in 1740, aged nineteen years, eight months, and seven days.

The extensive learning of this surprising young man, neither made him proud nor ill-natured. He was affable and courteous in his behaviour, meek and contented in his disposition, frugal and abstemious in his mode of life. If his ardent thirst for wisdom and intellectual riches demands our admiration, his early end holds out a lesson for the due management even of literary pursuits, and warns us not to trifle with the means of prolonging our bodily health and strength, which are so necessary to render the highest mental talents honourable to ourselves, by being beneficial to society.

## NATURAL HISTORY.

### THE SALAMANDER.

Though the ancients have described a lizard bred by fire, and existing in flames, the moderns have discovered that it was a fabulous assertion, and that they have merely the offspring of a heated brain.

The salamander, which was once supposed to live upon that element which must inevitably prove the destruction of life, resembles a frog in the form of its body, though, like every species of the lizard, it has a long tail: like that animal its snout is rounded, and its eyes placed in the back of the head; the claws of its toes are short and feeble; and it is covered with a rough skin.

Not only the salamander, but every one of the lizard species are supposed to be of a venomous kind; but it appears to be the effect of prejudice or misconception, for they are destitute of fangs like the viper, and have very small teeth; as to the saliva, which has been supposed poisonous, no effects of that nature have ever been produced.

The salamander, which is best known in Europe, is generally from eight to eleven inches in length: when taken in the hands it imparts a chilling sensation, and appears to be incapable of supporting heat, as it always makes choice of a cool retreat. Like the frog, it seems to be a torpid animal, and in that instance differs from the rest of the lizard kind, as the generality of them are continually in motion, if we except the winter months, which are chiefly devoted to sleep; during that period the water lizard changes its skin every fortnight; but in the summer twice of thrice in that space.