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"Glory to God in the highest, and on Earth peace, good will toward men."

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### BIOGRAPHY.

#### WILLIAM GIFFORD, Esq.

Yesterday (Dec. 31.) died, at his house in James street, Buckingham-gate, in the 71st year of his age, WILLIAM GIFFORD, Esq. author of the *Daxiad* and *Mæviad*, translator of *Juvenal* and *Persius*, and editor of the *Quarterly Review* from its commencement down to the beginning of the year just past. To the translation of *Juvenal* is prefixed a memoir of himself, which is, perhaps, as modest and pleasant a piece of autobiography as ever was written.

Mr. Gifford was born at Ashburton, in Devonshire, in April, 1758. "The resources of my mother were," he says, "very scanty. With these, however, she did what she could for me; and as soon as I was old enough to be trusted out of her sight, sent me to a schoolmistress of the name of Parret, from whom I learned in due time to read. I cannot boast much of my acquisitions at this school: they consisted merely of the contents of my child's spelling-book; but from my mother, who had stored up the literature of a country town, which, about half a century ago, amounted to little more than what was disseminated by itinerant ballad singers, or rather readers, I had acquired much curious knowledge of *Catskin* and the *Golden Bull*, and the *Bloody Gardener*, and many other histories equally instructive and amusing."

At eight years of age Mr. Gifford was put to the free school, to learn to read and write and cypher. "Here I continued about three years, making," he says, "a most wretched progress, when my father fell sick and died. In somewhat less than a twelve-month my poor mother followed him to the grave. She was an excellent woman, bore my father's infirmities with patience and good humor, loved her children dearly, and died at last, exhausted with anxiety and grief, more on their account than her own. I was not quite thirteen when this happened; my little brother was hardly two; and we had not a relation nor a friend in the world. Every thing that was left was seized by a person by the name of Carlile, for money advanced to my mother. It may be supposed that I could not dispute the justness of his claims; and as no one else interfered, he was suffered to do what he liked. My little brother was sent to the almshouse, and I was taken to the house of the person I have just mentioned, who was also my godfather."

When little more than thirteen Mr. Gifford was sent on board a coaster at Brixham. In this vessel he continued nearly a twelve-month; and here he got acquainted with nautical terms, and contracted a love for the sea, which never diminished. In his 15th year, on the 1st of January, 1772, (exactly 55 years from the present day,) his godfather bound him apprentice to a shoemaker. "As I hated," says he, "my new profession with a perfect hatred, I made no progress in it; and was consequently little regarded in the family, of which I sunk by degrees into the common drudge; this did not much disquiet me, for my spirits were now humbled."

"I possessed at this time but one book in the world, it was a treatise on Algebra, given to me by a young woman, who had found it in a lodging house. I considered it as a treasure; but it was a treasure locked up; for it supposed the reader to be well acquainted with simple equation, and I knew nothing of the matter. My master's son had purchased Fauson's introduction: this was precisely what I wanted; but he carefully concealed it from me, and I was indebted to chance alone for stumbling upon his hiding place. I sat up for the greatest part of several nights successively, and before he suspected that his treatise was discovered, had completely mastered it. I could now enter upon my own; and that carried me pretty far into the sciences."

"This was not done without difficulty. I had not a farthing on earth, nor a friend to give me one; pen, ink, and paper, therefore, (despite of the

flaprant reffark of Lord Oxford,) were for the most part, as completely out of my reach as a crown and sceptre. There was, indeed, a resource; but the utmost caution and secrecy were necessary in applying to it. I beat out pieces of leather as smooth as possible, and wrought my problems on them with a blunted awl; for the rest my memory was tenacious, and I could multiply and divide by it to a great extent.

"Hitherto I had not so much as dreamed of poetry; indeed, I scarcely knew it by name; and whatever may be said of the force of nature, I certainly never lisped in numbers. I recollect the occasion of my first attempt; it is, like all the rest of my non-adventures, of so unimportant a nature, that I should blush to call the attention of the illest reader to it, but for the reason alledged in the introductory paragraph.

A person, whose name escapes me, had undertaken to paint a sign for an ale-house; it was to have been a lion, but the unfortunate artist produced a dog. On this awkward affair, one of my acquaintances wrote a copy of what we called verse: I liked it, but fancied I could compose something more to the purpose. I made the experiment, and by the unanimous suffrage of my shopmates, was allowed to have succeeded. Notwithstanding this encouragement, I thought no more of verse, till another occurrence, as trifling as the former, furnished me with a fresh subject; and thus I went on till I had got together about a dozen of them. Certainly, nothing on earth was so deplorable, such as they were however, they were talked of in my little circle, and I was sometimes invited to repeat them even out of it. I never committed a line to paper for two reasons—first, because I had no paper; and secondly—perhaps I might be excused from going further; but, in truth, I was afraid, as my master had already threatened me, for inadvertently hitching the name of one of his customers into a rhyme."

"In this humble and obscure state, poor beyond the common lot, yet flattering my ambitious with day dreams, which, perhaps, would never have been realized, I was found, in the 20th year of my age, by Mr. William Cookesley—a name never to be pronounced by me without veneration. The lamentable doggerel which I have already mentioned, and which had passed from mouth to mouth among the people of my own degree, had, by some accident or other, reached his ear, and given him a curiosity to inquire after the author.

"It was my good fortune to interest his benevolence. My little history was not untinged with melancholy, and I laid it fairly before him. His first care was to console; his second, which he cherished to the last moment of his existence, was to relieve and support me.

"Mr. Cookesley was not rich: his eminence in his profession, which was that of a surgeon, procured him, indeed, much employment; but in a country town, men of science are not the most liberally rewarded: he had, besides, a very numerous family, which left him little for the purposes of general benevolence; that little, however, was cheerfully bestowed, and his activity and zeal were always at hand to supply the deficiencies of his fortune."

Through the kindness of Mr. Cookesley, a subscription was raised, for purchasing the remainder of the apprenticeship of William Gifford; and for enabling him to improve himself in writing and English Grammar." In two years and two months from the day of his emancipation, he was pronounced fit for the University. The place of Bib. Lect. was procured for him at Exeter College Oxford. On the 15th of January, 1781, Mr. Gifford lost his friend and benefactor.

His introduction to the father of the present Earl Grosvenor is thus narrated:—

"I had contracted an acquaintance with a person of the name of—, recommended to my particular notice by a gentleman of Devonshire, whom I was proud of an opportunity to oblige. This person's residence at Oxford was not long, and when he returned to town, I maintained a correspondence with him by letters. At his particular request, these were inclosed in covers, and sent to Lord Grosvenor. One day I inadvertently omitted the direction, and his Lordship, necessarily supposing the letter to be meant for himself, opened and read it. There was something in it which attracted his notice; and when he gave it to my friend, he had the curiosity to inquire about his correspondent at Oxford, and upon the answer he received, the kindness to desire that he might be brought to see him upon his coming to town. To this circumstance, purely accidental on all sides, and to this alone, I owe my introduction to that Nobleman.

On my first visit, he asked me what friends I had, and what were my prospects in life: and I told him that I had no friends, and no prospects of any kind. He said no more: but when I called to take leave, previous to my returning to college, I found that this simple exposure of my circumstances had sunk deep into his mind. At parting, he informed me that he charged himself with my present support, and future establishment; and that till this last could be effected to my wish, I should come and reside with him. These were not words of course—they were more than fulfilled in every point. I did go and reside with him; and I experienced a warm and cordial reception, a kind and affectionate esteem, that he has known neither diminution nor interruption from that hour to this—a period of 20 years!"

"In his Lordship's house, I proceeded with *Juvenal*, till I was called upon to accompany his son (one of the most amiable and accomplished young noblemen that this country, fertile in such characters, could ever boast) to the Continent. With him, in two successive tours, I spent many years—years of which the remembrance will always be dear to me, from the recollection that a friendship was then contracted, which time and a more intimate knowledge of each of other have mellowed into a regard that forms at once the pride and happiness of my life."

For the last five or six years of his life, Mr. Gifford occupied his leisure hours in preparing for the press, a new edition of the works of Ford and Shirley. The former is completed in two volumes, and ready for publication. Of the latter, five volumes and one half of the sixth, are printed; and it is much to be hoped that they will be given to the world in the precise state in which Mr. Gifford has left them.

#### THE DUKE OF ARGYLE.

The last hours of the great Argyle exhibited a tranquillity and magnanimity seldom if ever exemplified. Before he left the castle of Edinburgh, on the day of his death, he dined at his usual hour with the clergyman who attended, along with some others, and manifested his usual cheerfulness. According to custom, he went to bed and slept soundly for about a quarter of an hour. While in bed, one of the members of the Council came and desired to speak with him; he was refused admittance, and informed that Argyle was in bed, and had given orders not

"I have a melancholy satisfaction in recording that this revered friend and patron lived to witness my grateful acknowledgment of his kindness. He survived the appearance of the translation but a very few days, and I paid the last sad duty to his memory by attending his remains to the grave. To me, this laborious work has not been happy; the same disastrous event that marked its commencement, has embittered its conclusion, and frequently forced upon my recollection the calamity of the rebellion, of Jericho—He laid the foundation thereof in Abram, his first born, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son Segub."—1806.