

A NEW AND GENERAL
BIOGRAPHICAL
DICTIONARY;

CONTAINING

AN HISTORICAL AND CRITICAL ACCOUNT
OF THE
LIVES and WRITINGS
OF THE

Most Eminent Persons

IN EVERY NATION;

PARTICULARLY THE BRITISH AND IRISH;

From the Earliest Accounts of Time to the present Period.

WHEREIN

Their remarkable ACTIONS and SUFFERINGS,

Their VIRTUES, PARTS, and LEARNING,

ARE ACCURATELY DISPLAYED.

With a CATALOGUE of their LITERARY PRODUCTIONS.

A NEW EDITION, IN TWELVE VOLUMES,
GREATLY ENLARGED AND IMPROVED.

VOL. X.

L O N D O N,

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MDCCLXXXIV.

sented to James II. with an introduction and some animadversions by Edward Gee, under the title of, "The Jesuits Memorial for the intended Reformation of the Church of England under their first Popish Prince, 1690," 8vo. 32. There is also ascribed to him, "A Declaration of the true Causes of the great Troubles pre-supposed to be intended against the Realm of England, &c. Seen and allowed, anno 1581." 33. Our author also translated from the English into Spanish, "A Relation of certain Martyrs in England," printed at Madrid 1590," 8vo.

Anecdotes
of Bowyer,
by Nichols,
p. 384.

PARSONS (JAMES), an excellent physician and polite scholar, was born at Barnstaple, in Devonshire, in March, 1705. His father, who was the youngest of nine sons of Colonel Parsons, and nearly related to the baronet of that name, being appointed barrack-master at Bolton in Ireland, removed with his family into that kingdom [A] soon after the birth of his then only son [B] James, who received at Dublin the early part of his education, and, by the assistance of proper masters, laid a considerable foundation of classical and other useful learning, which enabled him to become tutor to Lord Kingston. Turning his attention to the study of medicine, he went afterwards to Paris, where (we now use his own words) "he followed the most eminent professors in the several schools, as Astruc, Dubois, Lemery, and others; attended the anatomical lectures of the most famous [Hunaud and De Cat]; and chemicals at the King's Garden at St. Come. He followed the physicians in both hospitals of the Hotel Dieu and La Charité, and the chemical lectures and demonstrations of Lemery and Boulduc;

From his
own MSS.

[A] In the "Preface to the Memoirs of Japhet," he says, "I spent several years of my life in Ireland, and there attained to a tolerable knowledge in the very ancient tongue of that country, which enabled me to consult some of their manuscripts, and become instructed in their grammatical institutes. Afterwards I became acquainted with several gentlemen from Wales, well versed in their own history and language; men of sense and liberal learning; who, in many conversations upon such subjects, gave me such satisfaction and light, in matters of high antiquity, as to occasion my application to the study of the Welsh tongue also: in which I had equal

pleasure and surprize, when, the more I enquired, the more nearly related the Irish and Welsh languages appeared. When I was sent abroad to study the medicinal art, I frequently conversed with young gentlemen from most parts of Europe, who came to Paris, and followed the same masters, in every branch of the profession, with me; and my surprize was agreeably increased in finding that, in every one of their native tongues, I could discover the roots of most of their expressions in the Irish or Welsh."

[B] He had afterwards another son (a surgeon) and a daughter, who were born in Ireland,

"and

“ and in botany, Jussieu. Having finished these studies, his
 “ professors gave him honourable attestations of his having
 “ followed them with diligence and industry, which en-
 “ titled him to take the degrees of doctor and professor of
 “ the art of medicine, in any university in the dominions
 “ of France. Intending to return to England, he judged
 “ it unnecessary to take degrees in Paris, unless he had re-
 “ solved to reside there; and as it was more expensive, he
 “ therefore went to the University of Rheims, in Cham-
 “ paign, where, by virtue of his attestations, he was im-
 “ mediately admitted to three examinations, as if he had
 “ finished his studies in that academy; and there was ho-
 “ noured with his degrees June 11, 1736. In the July fol-
 “ lowing he came to London, and was soon employed by
 “ Dr. James Douglas to assist him in his anatomical works,
 “ where in some time he began to practise. He was elected
 “ a member of the Royal Society in 1740; and, after due
 “ examination, was admitted a Licentiate of the College
 “ of Physicians, April 1, 1751; paying college fees and
 “ bond stamps of different denominations to the amount of
 “ 41l. 2s. 8d. subject also to quarterage of two pounds
 “ *per annum*. In 1755 he paid a farther sum of 7l. which,
 “ with the quarterage-money already paid, made up the sum
 “ of 16l. in lieu of all future payments.” On his arrival
 in London, by the recommendation of his Paris friends, he
 was introduced to the acquaintance of Dr. Mead, Sir Hans
 Sloane, and Dr. James Douglas. This great anatomist
 made use of his assistance, not only in his anatomical pre-
 parations, but also in his representations of morbid and other
 appearances, a list of several of which was in the hands of
 his friend Dr. Maty; who had prepared an Eloge on Dr.
 Parsons, which was never used, but which, by the favour
 of Mrs. Parsons, Mr. Nichols has preserved at large.
 Though Dr. Parsons cultivated the several branches of the
 profession of physic, he was principally employed in the
 obstetrical line. In 1738, by the interest of his friend Dr.
 Douglas, he was appointed physician to the public Infirmary
 in St. Giles’s. In 1739 he married Miss Elizabeth Rey-
 nolds, by whom he had two sons and a daughter, who all
 died young. Dr. Parsons resided for many years in Red-
 Lion Square, where he frequently enjoyed the company and
 conversation of Dr. Stukeley, Bp. Lytleton, Mr. Henry
 Baker, Dr. Knight, and many other of the most distin-
 guished members of the Royal and Antiquarian Societies,
 and that of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce; giving

weekly an elegant dinner to a large but select party. He enjoyed also the literary correspondence of D'Argenville, Buffon, Le Cat, Beccaria, Amb. Bertrand, Valltravers, Ascanius, Turberville Needham, Dr. Garden, and others of the most distinguished rank in science. As a practitioner, he was judicious, careful, honest, and remarkably humane to the poor; as a friend, obliging and communicative; cheerful and decent in conversation; severe and strict in his morals, and attentive to fulfil with propriety all the various duties of life. In 1769, finding his health impaired, he proposed to retire from business and from London, and with that view disposed of a considerable number of his books and fossils, and went to Bristol. But he returned soon after to his old house, and died in it after a week's illness, on the 4th of April, 1770, to the inexpressible grief of his afflicted wife and sister-in-law, and many of his intimate friends, to whom his memory will always be precious. By his last will, dated in October, 1766, he gave his whole property to Mrs. Parsons; and, in case of her death before him, to Miss Mary Reynolds, her only sister, "in recompence for her affectionate attention to him and to his wife, for a long course of years, in sickness and in health." It was his particular request, that he should not be buried till some change should appear in his corpse; a request which occasioned his being kept unburied 17 days, and even then scarce the slightest alteration was perceivable. He was buried at Hendon, in a vault which he had caused to be built on the ground purchased on the death of his son James, where his tomb is inscribed as below [B]. A portrait of Dr. Parsons,

[B] "Here,
Taken from his sorrowing Family and
Friends
By the common lot of frail Humanity,
Refts JAMES PARSONS, M.D.
Member of the College of Physicians,
and F. R. S. and S. of A.
A Man,
In whom the most dignifying Virtues
were united with Talents the most
numerous and rare.
Firm and erect in conscious conviction,
No consideration could move him
To desert Truth, or acquiesce to her
Opponents.
Physic, Anatomy, Natural History,
Antiquities, Languages, and the
fine Arts,
Are largely indebted to his skill and
industry in each;

For many important Truths discovered
in their Support,
Or Errors detected with which they
were obscured.
Yet, though happy beyond the general
Race of Mankind in mental
endowments.
The sincere Christian, the affectionate
Husband,
The generous and humane Friend,
Were in him superior to the sage
Scholar and Philosopher.
He died April 4th, 1770,
in the 66th year of his age.

Here also lies the Body of JAMES
PARSONS,
Son of the above named Dr. PARSONS,
who died Dec. 9. 1750,
in the ninth Year of his Age."

by

by Mr. Wilson, is now in the British Museum; another, by Wells, in the hands of his widow, with a third unfinished; and one of his son James; also a family piece, in which the same son is introduced, with the Doctor and his lady, accompanied by her sister. Among many other portraits, Mrs. Parsons has fine ones of the illustrious Harvey, of Bp. Burnet, and of Dr. John Freind; a beautiful miniature of Dr. Stukeley; some good paintings, by her husband's own hand, particularly the Rhinoceros, which he described in the "Philosophical Transactions." She is also possessed of his MSS. and some capital printed books; a large folio volume, intituled, "*Figuræ quædam Miscellanæ quæ ad rem Anatomicam Historiamque Naturalem spectant; quas propria adumbravit manu Jacobus Parsons, M. D. S. S. R. Ant. &c.*" another, called "Drawings of curious Fossils, Shells, &c. in Dr. Parsons's Collection, drawn by himself;" &c. &c. Mrs. Parsons, if properly applied to, is ready to give, either to the Royal or Antiquarian Society, a portrait of her worthy husband, and a sum of money to found a lecture to perpetuate his memory, similar to that established by his friend Mr. Henry Baker.

It would be beyond our limits to enter into an enumeration of the many curious articles at various times communicated to the public by Dr. Parsons; which may be seen in the "Anecdotes of Bowyer." We shall therefore close this article with an extract from Dr. Maty's eulogy: "The surprising variety of branches which Dr. Parsons embraced, and the several living as well as dead languages he had a knowledge of, qualified him abundantly for the place of Assistant Secretary for foreign correspondences, which the Council of the Royal Society bestowed upon him about the year 1750. He acquitted himself to the utmost of his power of the functions of this place, till a few years before his death, when he resigned in favour of his friend, who now gratefully pays this last tribute to his memory. Dr. Parsons joined to his academical honours those which the Royal College of Physicians of London bestowed upon him, by admitting him, after due examination, Licentiate, on the first day of April, 1751. The diffusive spirit of our friend was only equalled by his desire of information. To both these principles he owed the intimacies which he formed with some of the greatest men of his time. The names of Folkes, Hales, Mead, Stukeley, Needham, Baker, Collinson, and Garden, may be mentioned on this occasion; and many more might be

N 3

" added,

“ added. Weekly meetings were formed, where the ear-
 “ liest intelligence was received and communicated of any
 “ discovery both here and abroad; and new trials were
 “ made, to bring to the test of experience the reality or use-
 “ fulness of these discoveries. Here it was that the Micro-
 “ scopical Animals found in several infusions were first pro-
 “ duced; the propagation of several insects by section ascer-
 “ tained; the constancy of Nature amidst these wonderful
 “ changes established. His ‘Remains of Japhet, being Histo-
 “ rical Enquiries into the Affinity and Origin of the Euro-
 “ pean Languages,’ is a most laborious performance, tend-
 “ ing to prove the antiquity of the first inhabitants of these
 “ islands, as being originally descended from Gomer and
 “ Magog, above 1000 years before Christ, their primitive
 “ and still subsisting language, and its affinity with some
 “ others. It cannot be denied but that there is much ingenuity
 “ as well as true learning in this work, which helps con-
 “ viction, and often supplies the want of it. But we cannot
 “ help thinking that our friend’s warm feelings now and
 “ then mislead his judgement, and that some at least of his
 “ conjectures, resting upon partial traditions, and poetical
 “ scraps of Irish Filids and Welsh Bards, are less satisfac-
 “ tory than his Tables of Affinity between the several
 “ Northern Languages, as deduced from one common stock.
 “ Literature, however, is much obliged to him for having
 “ in this, as well as in many of his other works, opened a
 “ new field of observations and discoveries. In enumerating
 “ our learned friend’s Dissertations, we find ourselves at a
 “ loss whether we should follow the order of subjects, or of
 “ time; neither is it easy to account for their surprising
 “ variety and quick succession. The truth is, that his
 “ eagerness after knowledge was such, as to embrace almost
 “ with equal facility all its branches, and with equal zeal
 “ to ascertain the merit of inventions, and ascribe to their
 “ respective, and sometimes unknown, authors, the glory
 “ of the discovery. Many operations, which the ancients
 “ have transmitted to us, have been thought fabulous, mere-
 “ ly from our ignorance of the art by which they were per-
 “ formed. Thus the burning of the ships of the Romans
 “ at a considerable distance, during the siege of Syracuse,
 “ by Archimedes, would, perhaps, still continue to be
 “ exploded, had not the celebrated M. Buffon in France
 “ shewn the possibility of it, by presenting and describing a
 “ Model of a Speculum, or rather Assemblage of Mirrors,
 “ by which he could set fire at the distance of several hundred
 “ feet.

“ feet. In the contriving indeed, though not in the exe-
 “ cuting of such an apparatus, he had in some measure been
 “ forestalled by a writer now very little known or read.
 “ This Dr. Parsons proved in a very satisfactory manner;
 “ and he had the pleasure to find the French philosopher
 “ did not refuse to the Jesuit his share in the invention,
 “ and was not at all offended by the liberty he had taken.
 “ Another French discovery, I mean a new kind of paint-
 “ ing fathered upon the ancients, was reduced to its real
 “ value, in a paper which shewed our Author was possessed
 “ of a good taste for the fine arts: and I am informed, that his
 “ skill in music was by no means inferior, and that his fa-
 “ vourite amusement was the flute. Richly, it appears
 “ from these performances, did our Author merit the ho-
 “ nour of being a member of the Antiquarian Society,
 “ which long ago had associated him to its labours. To
 “ another Society, founded upon the great principles of hu-
 “ manity, patriotism, and natural emulation, he undoubtedly
 “ was greatly useful [c]. He assisted at most of their ge-
 “ neral meetings and committees; and was for many years
 “ chairman to that of Agriculture; always equally ready to
 “ point out and to promote useful improvements, and to
 “ oppose the interested views of fraud and ignorance, so in-
 “ separable from very extensive associations. No sooner was
 “ this Society [d] formed, than Dr. Parsons became a
 “ member of it. Intimately convinced of the nobleness of
 “ its views, though from his station in life little concerned
 “ in its success, he grudged neither attendance nor expence.
 “ Neither ambitious of taking the lead, nor fond of oppo-
 “ sition; he joined in any measure he thought right; and
 “ submitted cheerfully to the sentiments of the majority,
 “ though against his own private opinion. The just ideas
 “ he had of the dignity of our profession, as well as of the
 “ common links which ought to unite all its members, not-
 “ withstanding the differences of country, religion, or places
 “ of education, made him bear impatiently the shackles laid
 “ upon a great number of respectable practitioners; he
 “ wished, fondly wished, to see these broken; not with a
 “ view of empty honour and dangerous power, but as the
 “ only means of serving mankind more effectually, check-

[c] The Society for the Encou-
 ragement of Arts, Manufactures, and
 Commerce. He likewise was associated
 to the Oeconomical Society at Bern,
 Dec. 26, 1763.

[d] A Medical Society instituted by
 Dr. Fothergill, and other respectable
 Physicians, Licentiates, in vindication
 of their privileges.

“ ing the progress of designing men and illiterate practi-
 “ tioners, and diffusing through the whole body a spirit of
 “ emulation. Though by frequent disappointments he fore-
 “ saw, as well as we, the little chance of a speedy redress,
 “ he nobly persisted in the attempt; and, had he lived to the
 “ final event, would undoubtedly, like Cato, still have pre-
 “ ferred the conquered cause to that supported by the gods.
 “ After having tried to retire from business and from Lon-
 “ don, for the sake of his health, and having disposed of
 “ most of his books with that view, he found it inconsis-
 “ tent with his happiness to forsake all the advantages which
 “ a long residence in the capital, and the many connexions
 “ he had formed, had rendered habitual to him. He there-
 “ fore returned to his old house, and died in it, after a short
 “ illness, April 4, 1770. The style of our friend’s compo-
 “ sitions was sufficiently clear in description, though in
 “ argument not so close as could have been wished. Full
 “ of his ideas, he did not always so dispose and connect
 “ them together, as to produce in the minds of his readers
 “ that conviction which was in his own. He too much
 “ despised those additional graces which command attention
 “ when joined to learning, observation, and sound reason-
 “ ing. Let us hope that his example and spirit will animate
 “ all his colleagues; and that those practitioners who are in
 “ the same circumstances will be induced to join their
 “ brethren, sure to find amongst them those great blessings of
 “ life, freedom, equality, information, and friendship. As
 “ long as these great principles shall subsist in this Society,
 “ and I trust they will out-last the longest liver, there is no
 “ doubt but the members will meet with the reward honest
 “ men are ambitious of, the approbation of their con-
 “ science, the esteem of the virtuous, the remembrance of
 “ posterity.”

PARTHENAY (JOHN DE), Lord of Soubise, an he-
 roic leader among the Protestants of France, was descended
 of an ancient family of his name, and born about 1512.
 He chose the profession of arms; and, having distinguished
 himself in it, was appointed to command Henry II’s troops
 in Italy about 1550. Before he left Italy, he imbibed the
 sentiments of the Reformed religion, at the court of Fer-
 rara, under the auspices of Renee, duchess of Ferrara, daugh-
 ter of Lewis XII. of France; who gave sanctuary to some
 Huguenot preachers, and embraced their doctrine. The ge-
 neral had some connection with this duchess, his mother
 having