

ment for the relief of poor lying-in women; a dispensary—and in short, (for a limited stay prevented my being able to see and know all,) I believe nothing is omitted for the benefit of the community in general, in this respectable and affluent town.

L.

*To the Proprietors of the Belfast Magazine.*

IN this time of alarming appearance of scarcity, we are individually called upon to come forward with our mite, not only of pecuniary assistance, but of what advice may occur to us, tending to avert the dreadful calamity. It is said by a wise man, "In a multitude of counsellors there is safety," and it has also been experienced, that in a multitude of counsellors there is confusion. However, the discriminating eyes of the benefactors of the poor can select the offered sentiments according to their judgment. Liberal subscriptions are made in many places to purchase food, which is sometimes given, and sometimes sold at a cheap rate, to the most necessitous; but let the benevolent reflect whether the poor may not be most effectually assisted in time of scarcity by the opulent diminishing their own con-

sumption of the article used by the poor, in which scarcity is felt, using other things for their own tables, giving to those who are in want of food of a different kind, diminishing the oats given to horses, and by various other means.

The report of the Society for bettering the condition of the poor, and other publications of like tendency, afford variety of receipts for making soups at small expense. These claim the attention of all ranks, and the savings which may be made of the potato is a matter of great consequence. Before the potatoes are washed for boiling, a large number of eyes or buds may be procured daily, without rendering any one potato unfit for food. The top of the potato contains the best buds—cut this off, and one, two, or more sets can be obtained thus. The potato scoop also takes out the bud, and need not penetrate deeply. If this is universally attended to, previous to and during the time of planting potatoes, both present and future advantages (may we not add incalculable?) may be obtained thereby.

L.

*An article which came in too late for its proper place among the Original Communications, will be found at the close of the Biography.*

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF DISTINGUISHED PERSONS.

### MEMOIR OF THE LATE DR. CURRIE OF LIVERPOOL.

JAMES CURRIE, M.D. was born at Kirkpatrick-Fleming in Dumfriesshire, on May 31st, 1756. His father was the established minister of that parish, whence he afterwards removed to that of Middlebie. Dr. Currie was an only son: he had six sisters. He received the rudiments of learning at

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the parish school of his native place, whence he was transferred to the grammar-school of Dumfries, one of the most reputable seminaries of the kind in Scotland. His original destination was for a commercial life, and he passed some years of his youth in Virginia in a mercantile station. Disliking this profession, and unwilling to be a witness of the im-

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pending troubles in the American colonies, he quitted that country in 1776. and in the following year commenced a course of medical study at the university of Edinburgh, which occupied him almost without interruption for three years. A prospect of an appointment in the medical staff of the army, which would not admit of the usual delay of an Edinburgh graduation, induced him to take the degree of Doctor of Physic at Glasgow. He arrived, however, in London too late for the expected place; but still determining to go abroad, he had taken his passage in a ship for Jamaica, when a severe indisposition prevented his sailing, and entirely changed his lot in life. He renounced his first intention; and, after some consideration respecting an eligible settlement, he fixed upon the commercial and rapidly increasing town of Liverpool, which became his residence from the year 1781.

The liberal and enlightened character which has long distinguished many of the leading inhabitants of that place, rendered it a peculiarly favourable theatre for the display of the moral and intellectual endowments for which Dr. Currie was conspicuous, and he soon rose into general esteem. Indeed, it was not possible, even upon a casual acquaintance, for a judge of mankind to fail of being struck by his manly urbanity of behaviour, by the elegance and variety of his conversation, by the solid sense and sagacity of his remarks, and by the tokens of a feeling heart, which graced and dignified the qualities of his understanding. No man was ever more highly regarded by his friends; no physician ever inspired more confidence and attachment in his patients.

In 1783, Dr. Currie made a very desirable matrimonial connexion with Lucy, the daughter of William

Wallace, Esq. an Irish merchant in Liverpool. Of this marriage a numerous and amiable family was the fruit, by which his name promises to be worthily perpetuated. His professional employment rapidly increased; he was elected one of the physicians of the infirmary, and took his station among the distinguished characters of the place of his residence.

His first appearance from the press was on occasion of the lamented death of his intimate friend Dr. Bell, a young physician of great hopes settled at Manchester. His elegant and interesting tribute to the memory of this person was published in 1785, in the first volume of the transactions of the Manchester Philosophical and Literary Society, of which they were both members. He was elected a member of the London Medical Society in 1790. and communicated to it a paper "On Tetanus and Convulsive disorders," published in the third volume of its memoirs. In 1792, he became a Fellow of the Royal Society. A very curious and instructive "Account of the remarkable effects of a Shipwreck," communicated by him to that body, was published in the philosophical transactions of that year.

The mind of Dr. Currie was not made to be confined to a narrow range of speculation, and nothing interesting to human society was indifferent to, or unconsidered by, him. The war with France consequent to its great revolutionary struggle was regarded by him, as it was by many other philanthropists, with disapprobation, with respect as well to its principles, as to its probable effect on the happiness of both countries. A pamphlet which appeared in 1793, under the title of "A Letter Commercial and Political, addressed to the Right Hon. William Pitt, by Jasper Wilson, esq.," was gene-

rally understood to proceed from his pen. The energy of language, the weight of argument, and the extent of information, displayed in it, drew upon it a large share of notice. It soon attained a second edition, and various answers attested the degree of importance attached to it in the public estimation. One of the respondents took the unwarrantable liberty of directly addressing Dr. Currie, in print, as the author, at the same time affecting the familiarity of an intimate acquaintance, although no correspondence between them had subsisted for a number of years. It can scarcely be doubted that this infringement of the rules of liberal controversy was made with the malignant purpose of exposing Dr. Currie to popular odium, and injuring him in his profession. He felt it as such; but the particular line of his principal connexions, together with the solid basis of the character he had established, enabled him to despise the efforts of party malice.

The greater distinction a professional man acquires from pursuits not belonging to his profession, the more necessary it becomes for him to bring himself into notice as a successful votary of the art or science to which his primary attention is due. Of this point Dr. Currie was very far from being neglectful. To those who employed him he was abundantly known as a skilful and sedulous practitioner, and the medical papers he had already published gave him reputation among his brethren. This reputation was widely extended and raised to an eminent degree by a publication which first appeared in October 1797, intitled "Medical Reports on the effects of water, cold and warm, as a remedy in Febrile diseases; with observations on the nature of Fever, and on the effects of Opium, Alcohol, and Inanition." The practice of affusion of cold wa-

ter in fevers, which is the leading topic in this work, was suggested to the author by Dr. Wright's narrative in the London Medical Journal, of his successful treatment of a fever in a homeward-bound ship from Jamaica. Dr. Currie copied and greatly extended it, and investigated the principles by which its use should be directed and regulated. He discovered that the safety and advantage of the application of cold was proportionate to the existing augmentation of the animal heat, and he found the thermometer a very valuable instrument to direct the practitioner's judgment in febrile cases. He may therefore be considered as the principal author of a practice which has already been attended with extraordinary success in numerous instances, and bids fair to prove one of the greatest medical improvements in modern times. The work, which contained many ingenious speculations and valuable observations, was very generally read and admired. A new volume was added to it in 1804, consisting of much interesting matter on different topics, especially in confirmation of the doctrine and practice of the former volume respecting cold affusion. The free and successful employment of this remedy in the scarlatina, was one of its most important articles. The author had the satisfaction of receiving numerous acknowledgments of the benefit derived from his instructions both in private, and in naval and military practice. He himself was so much convinced of the utility of the methods he recommended, that a revision of the whole work for a new edition was one of the latest labours of his life.

Dr. Currie might now, without danger to his professional character, indulge his inclinations for the ornamental parts of literature; and

an occasion offered in which he had the happiness of rendering his taste and his benevolence equally conspicuous. On a visit to his native county in 1792 he had become personally acquainted with that rustic son of genius *Robert Burns*. This extraordinary but unfortunate man having at his death left his family in great indigence, a subscription was made in Scotland for their immediate relief, and at the same time a design was formed of publishing an edition of his printed works and remains for their emolument. Mr. Syme of Ryedale, an old and intimate friend of Dr. Currie, strongly urged him to undertake the office of editor; and to this request, in which other friends of the poet's memory concurred, he could not withhold his acquiescence, notwithstanding his multiplied engagements. In 1800, he published in 4 vols. 8vo. "*The Works of Robert Burns, with an Account of his Life, and a Criticism on his Writings: to which are prefixed some Observations on the Character and condition of the Scottish Peasantry.*" These volumes were a rich treat to the lovers of poetry and elegant literature, and Dr. Currie's part in them, as a biographer and critic, was greatly admired, as well for beauty of style as for liberality of sentiment and sagacity of remark. If any objection was made to him as an editor on account of unnecessary extension of the materials, the kind purpose for which the publication was undertaken pleaded his excuse with all who were capable of feeling its force. Its success fully equalled the most sanguine expectations. Repeated editions produced a balance of profit which formed a little fortune for the destitute family; and Dr. Currie might congratulate himself with having been one of the most effectual friends of departed genius that the annals of British poetry record.

Every plan for promoting liberal studies and the improvement of the human mind, had in him a zealous and active supporter. In the formation of those literary institutions which have done so much honour to the town of Liverpool, he, with his intimate and congenial friend, the distinguished author of the *Lives of Lorenzo de' Medici and Leo X.*, stood among the foremost; and their names were always conjoined when mention was made of the worth and talents which dignified their place of abode. No cultivated traveller visited Liverpool without soliciting Dr. Currie's acquaintance, and his reception of those introduced to him was eminently polite and hospitable.

In his life of *Burns*, remarking upon that partiality for their own country which appears almost universally in the natives of Scotland, he has observed, that "it differs in its character according to the character of the different minds in which it is found; in some appearing a selfish prejudice, in others a generous affection." He was himself a striking exemplification of this fact; for the sentiment in him was principally shown in the kindness with which he received all his young countrymen who came recommended to his notice, and the zeal with which he exerted himself to procure them situations suited to their qualifications. Indeed, a disposition in general to favour the progress of deserving young persons was a prominent feature in his character. He loved to converse with them, and mingled valuable information with cheering encouragement.

Though externally of a vigorous frame of body, Dr. Currie had a predisposition to those complaints which usually shorten life; and in the year 1784 he had experienced a pulmonary attack of an alarming nature, from which he was extraordinarily recovered by the use of horse exer-

cise, as related by himself in his case inserted in the second volume of Dr. Darwin's *Zoonomia*. He was, however, seldom long free from threatenings of a return, and his health began visibly to decline in the early part of 1804. In the summer of that year he took a journey to Scotland, where among other sources of gratification, he had that of witnessing the happy effects of his kindness on the family of Burns. His letters on this occasion were delightful displays of benevolence rejoicing in its work. He returned with some temporary amendment: but alarming symptoms soon returned, and in November he found it necessary to quit the climate and business of Liverpool. How severely his departure was felt by those who had been accustomed to commit their health and that of their families to his skill and tenderness, can only be estimated by those who have experienced a similar loss. He spent the winter alternately at Clifton and Bath; and in the month of March appeared to himself in a state of convalescence, which justified his taking a house in Bath, and commencing the practice of his profession. From the manner in which his career opened, there could be no doubt that it would have proved eminently successful; but the concluding scene was hastily approaching. As a last resource he went in August to Sidmouth, where, after much suffering, which he bore with manly fortitude and pious resignation, he expired on August, 31st. 1805, in the 50th year of his age. His disease was ascertained to be a great enlargement and flaccidity of the heart, accompanied with remarkable wasting of the left lung, but without ulceration, tubercle, or abscess.\*

The death of every wise and good

\* Most of the foregoing is extracted from an account of Dr. Currie, by Dr. John Aikin, written for the *London Monthly Magazine*.

man is a diminution of that stock of wisdom, virtue, and good deeds, on which the community depends for its health and happiness; but the death of Dr. Currie in the middle period of life, and in the midst of his career of usefulness, must appear a most serious loss to mankind. His powers of mind were of the highest rank, equally fitted for action and speculation; his morals were pure; his principles exalted; he bore pain and illness many years with calmness and resignation, and finished his course with affording an example of that patience and fortitude which so eminently distinguished his character through life.

Few men have left the world with a more amiable and estimable character, proved in every relation of life public and domestic. In his professional conduct he was upright, liberal, and honourable, with much sensibility for his patients without the affectation of it; fair and candid towards his brethren of the faculty; and though usually decided in his opinion, yet entirely free from arrogance or dogmatism. His behaviour was singularly calculated to convert rivals into friends; and some of those who regarded him with the greatest esteem and affection have been the persons who divided practice with him.

Dr. Falconer, of Bath, gives the following delineation of his character:—

“His medical abilities were confessedly very great.—Persevering, ingenious, and penetrating, few circumstances escaped his observation; and his talent of applying to practice the facts which he had observed, was seldom equalled. He was also a remarkable instance of the improvement which the cultivation of the moral duties produces upon the understanding. His judgment was not clouded by jealousy, or his view of the subject or case in question, obscured by partiality, or darkened

by prejudice. Equally ready to adopt the suggestions of others, as he was those of his own judgment, he never deviated from the point aimed at, because the whole of the path was not traced out by himself. Superior to such considerations, which never prevail in exalted minds, he rested his character on higher grounds, and the discerning part of mankind soon became sensible, that such acquiescence, when it met his own unprejudiced ideas, was an honour to his character. Candour and benevolence were the guides of his conduct, and led him to esteem and reputation in the present world, softened his passage to the tomb, and in his last moments, disarmed the dart of death. Original, however, in his ideas, he was better suited to point out the way, than to follow the speculations of others; and what he advised, obtained a kind of involuntary preference, which nothing but a consciousness of merit in the adviser could have secured. His counsels, though destitute of the recommendation of peremptory assertion, or lavish display of pretended success, which sometimes overpower, when they do not convince, carried with them the more powerful charms of sense, judgment, reflection, and acquaintance with the subject, and were accompanied with a most amiable and satisfactory manner of manifesting these admirable qualifications to the understanding of those with whom he conversed. Nor did pain and sickness, however embittering they were to the enjoyment of life, cloud his faculties, or disorder his temper. He resigned life with the same benevolent disposition of mind in which he had lived, and with undiminished powers of understanding. The faculties of his mind were not, however, confined to professional subjects. Well versed in elegant knowledge, he continued the pursuits of ornamental literature with those of

the severer studies. Poetry, history, and other branches of knowledge that improve the understanding, and animate the mind to exert itself in every capacity, were held by him in high esteem, and were favourite objects of his attention. On these models, selected from the best authors, he formed his own style of writing, which was pure, elegant, and correct; and often adorned with passages which, in beauty of language, and delicacy and propriety of sentiment, yield to none of which our country can boast. The lovers of science might wish his life to have been longer protracted: in which wish all the friends of the country, who knew him, would willingly join; but wiser Fate says No: and Reflection steers in and warns us, that "his warfare is accomplished;" and that we must not, from partial, or interested, or indeed any human considerations, presume to wish the prolongation of suffering to him, who had so long, and so eminently struggled with pain and misery; and in the midst of these painful exertions, uniformly laboured for the benefit of mankind."

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MEMOIRS OF MRS. LINDSEY.

IN the Memoirs of the Rev. Theophilus Lindsey, published in No. 5, page 360, of the Belfast Monthly Magazine, frequent mention was made of the warm co-operation of his excellent wife in all his plans. She possessed an uncommonly active and energetic mind, and it has been justly said of her, that her masculine mind understood, and was in unison with the principles of her husband. Unfortunately, the present mode of female education has tended to make women so trifling, and so unfit for serious studies, that few are equal to Mrs. Lindsey. How many, as Shakespear emphatically says, are content "to wear out their lives in