THE DRAMATIC AND POETICAL WORKS OF THE LATE LIEUT. GEN. J. BURGOYNE; TO WHICH IS PREFIXED, MEMOIRS OF THE AUTHOR. VOL. I

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J. BURGOYNE

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Trieste

Mary Anne Goodson

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1808.

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A

SKETCH OF THE LIFE

OF

LIEUTENANT-GENERAL BURGOYNE.

FEW circumstances have more frequently, or with more reason, been lamented, by writers of biography, than the deficiency which they have found of materials, for enabling them to trace the progress of celebrated but originally obscure characters, at their first entrance into a state of active existence. The early life of many who steadily worked their way up to distinguished eminence is buried in total darkness. This blank in the history of individuals, though to superficial observers its occurrence may be thought of little moment, is undoubtedly a subject of regret, as it would be

not less useful than curious to know throughout what slow gradations, and by what continued struggles, worth and genius eventually surmounted all those obstacles which had been opposed to them by the malignity of fortune. The lesson of patience and perseverance, thus practically taught, would be of more avail than all the volumes of reasoning upon these virtues, which have been, or which ever can be, written by sages and by moralists.

Among those, no memorial of whose youth remains, is to be numbered John Burgoyne, a man who rose to no mean celebrity, as a writer, a senator, and an officer. The time and place of his birth are unknown. Even his parentage is doubtful. He is said, but upon what authority does not appear, to have been the natural son of Lord Bingley, who died, at an advanced age, in 1774.

That his education was of the most liberal kind is sufficiently testified by subsequent evidence. It is not improbable, also, that he was either destined for, or resolved upon, the profession of arms, at a very early period. The dates of his subaltern promotions elude discovery, and are not, perhaps, in themselves of much importance; but,

on the 10th of May, 1758, he was raised to the rank of lieutenant-colonel. In the August of 1759, he was appointed lieutenant-colonel-commandant of the sixteenth light dragoons. With this regiment he served, in 1761, at Belleisle, where, during the siege of Palais, he was entrusted with a negotiation for an exchange of prisoners.

A more busy service awaited him upon his return home. Spain had now acceded to the family compact, and, after vain endeavours to draw over Portugal from its alliance with England, had resolved to attack that country in the hope of an easy conquest; a hope which arose from her conviction of the weak and undisciplined state of the Portuguese army. In this exigency Great Britain hastened to the succour of an ally, who had preferred the chance of utter ruin to the shame of having violated her faith.

The troops destined for this service arrived in the Tagus on the sixth of May. They were immediately marched to join the Portuguese army, under the command of the Count de la Lippe Buckeburg, and took the field in the course of July. The campaign had been commenced by the Spaniards on the side of Tras los Montes, in which