

**A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH
OF THE LATE WILLIAM
GEORGE MATON, M. D.**

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A Biographical Sketch of the Late William George Maton, M. D. by John Ayrton Paris

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JOHN AYRTON PARIS

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Yours faithfully
W. L. Norton

A

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

OF THE LATE

WILLIAM GEORGE MATON, M.D.

FELLOW OF THE ROYAL AND ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETIES,
VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE LINNEAN SOCIETY,
AND FELLOW OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS.

READ AT AN EVENING MEETING OF THE
COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS.

BY

JOHN AYRTON PARIS, M.D. F.R.S.

FELLOW OF THE COLLEGE.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

OF THE LATE

WILLIAM GEORGE MATON, M.D.

WILLIAM GEORGE MATON was born at Salisbury on the 31st of January, 1774. His father, George, was a wine-merchant of considerable repute in that city, and having served the highest municipal office, was usually addressed as "Mr. Chamberlain Maton;" although far from affluent, he bestowed a liberal education upon his children. The subject of the present memoir was the eldest of *four*, all of whom he survived. His elementary education was obtained at the Free Grammar School of his native place, and it also appears that he was early initiated in the rudiments of Natural History, since a passion for scientific pursuits, even while a schoolboy, soon displayed itself, and is said to have considerably interfered with the progress of his more legitimate

studies. This predilection was much strengthened by several concurring circumstances. He had not attained his tenth year, when it was his good fortune to have attracted the notice and fostering regard of the Reverend Thomas Rackett of Speetisbury, a gentleman too well known in the circles of scientific and literary distinction to require from me any further notice than an expression of acknowledgement and thanks for much of the valuable information which is contained in the present memoir. Some time afterwards he formed an acquaintance with that distinguished chemist and philosopher, Mr. Charles Hatchett, which, in the progress of time, ripened into a friendship that terminated only in the grave. The former of these gentlemen introduced his young friend to Dr. Richard Pulteney of Blandford, a physician of considerable eminence in the West of England; and the learned author of various works on Natural History, and, more especially, of one entitled "*A General View of the Writings of Linnæus.*"

In July, 1790, he was admitted at Queen's College, Oxford, as a commoner, and shortly afterwards he added to his scientific acquaintance Mr. Aylmer Bourke Lambert, a prominent name in the annals of botany, and Dr. John Sibthorp, Professor of Botany, and author of the "*Flora*

Oxoniensis" and "*Flora Græca*." It is fair to conclude that the constant and intimate intercourse which he enjoyed with these distinguished persons had a material influence in moulding his mind, and in inspiring it with a generous and noble emulation; indeed, we learn that in the preparation of both the works of Dr. Sibthorp, MALTON was a zealous assistant. During the composition of the "*Flora Oxoniensis*," he attended the Professor in his herbarizing excursions; and although, from motives of prudence, he resisted tempting solicitations to accompany him to Greece, he nevertheless corresponded with him on subjects connected with the scientific objects of his travels. With the other eminent persons above-mentioned we shall hereafter find that he not only continued through life to cherish a warm friendship, but that his name has become honourably associated with theirs in the history of science; and, let me here observe, that although botany, to borrow the metaphor of Lord Bacon, was to him as "a first-born child, yet he did not make it his heir, to the exclusion of every other;" indeed, I have reasons for believing that, had he not been influenced by professional considerations, the study of conchology would have enjoyed a preference.

During the Oxford vacations he generally

visited London, for the purpose of mixing with the society of scientific men, and of attending the meetings of philosophical bodies.

It was on the 18th of March, 1794, when only in his twenty-first year, that he was elected a Fellow of the Linnean Society, which had the effect of introducing him to a wider circle of naturalists, all bound together by a common attachment to that distinguished botanist and most amiable man Sir James Edward Smith. We have only to search the Transactions of that learned body, to discover ample evidence of the zeal and industry with which MARON laboured to advance the progress of his favourite science. In the third volume, we shall find a paper, read before the society in 1794, describing a new species of *Tellina*, not noticed by Linnæus; the shell was found on chalky parts of the bed of the river Avon, and in rivulets communicating with it near Salisbury, and hence he gave it the name of *Tellina rivalis*. In the fifth volume of the same work is a paper entitled "*Observations on the Orcheston Long Grass.*" The object of this communication was to prove that the long grass of this celebrated meadow of Orcheston Saint Mary is not only not a species peculiar to the spot, as botanists had asserted, but that it is composed of most of the species which grow in other meadows,