

**JAMES JOHN GARTH  
WILKINSON: A MEMOIR  
OF HIS LIFE, WITH A  
SELECTION OF HIS LETTERS**

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James John Garth Wilkinson: A Memoir of His Life, with a Selection of His Letters by Clement John Wilkinson

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**CLEMENT JOHN WILKINSON**

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WILKINSON: A MEMOIR  
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SELECTION OF HIS LETTERS**



**JAMES JOHN GARTH WILKINSON**

July 6  
1904



J. J. Garth Wilkinson

UNIV. OF  
CALIFORNIA

**JAMES JOHN  
GARTH WILKINSON;**

**A MEMOIR OF HIS LIFE, WITH A  
SELECTION FROM HIS LETTERS;**

BY

**CLEMENT JOHN WILKINSON.**

"The things which are seen are temporal:  
the things which are not seen are eternal."

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## CONTENTS

### CHAPTER I

	PAGE
BIOGRAPHY . . . . .	1

### CHAPTER II

THE SWEDENBORGLIAN . . . . .	152
------------------------------	-----

### CHAPTER III

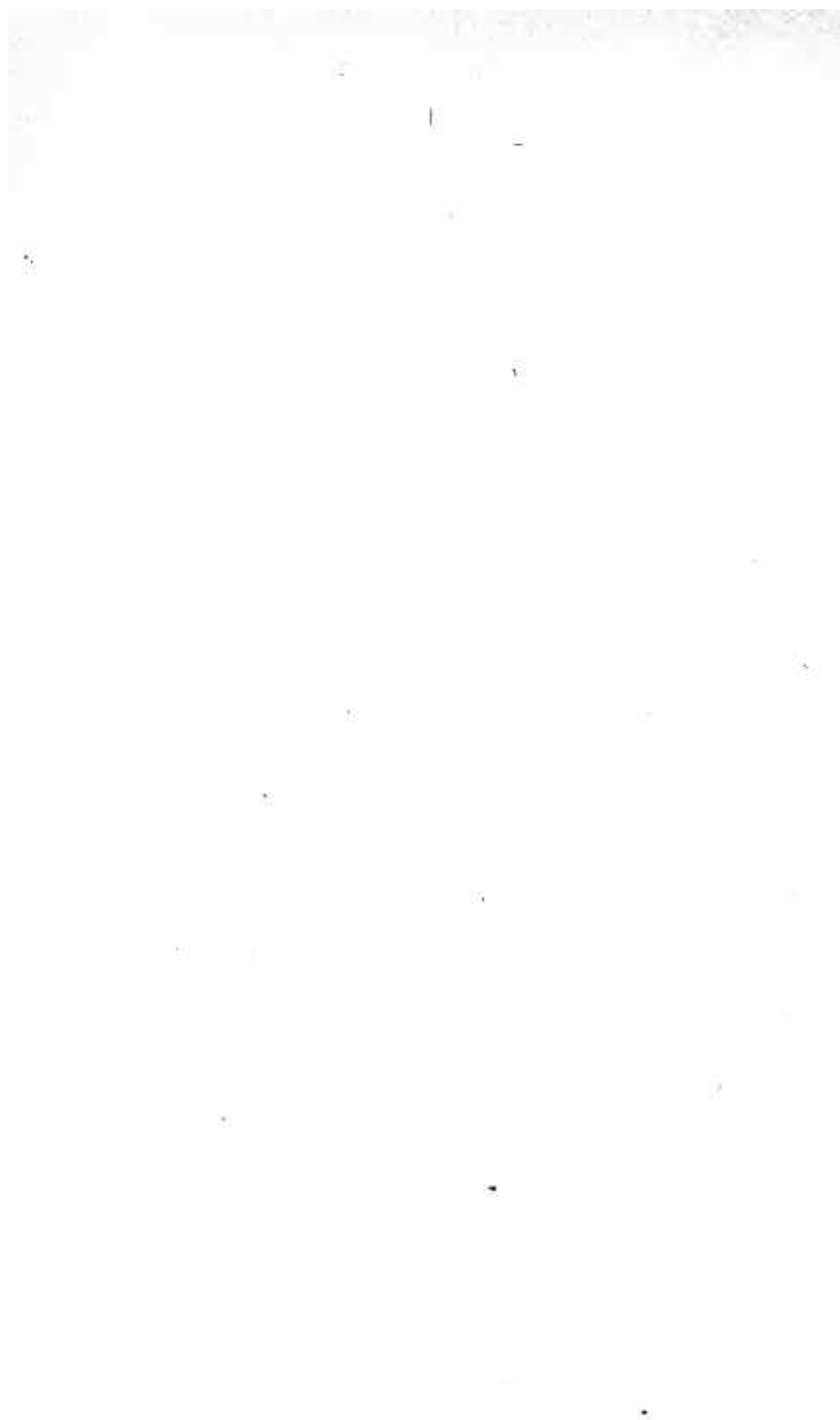
HOMŒOPATHY AND KINDRED DEBATABLE MATTERS . . . . .	243
---	-----

### CHAPTER IV

APPRECIATIONS . . . . .	284
INDEX . . . . .	301

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# JAMES JOHN GARTH WILKINSON

## CHAPTER I

### BIOGRAPHY

THE following fragment of autobiography was written by Dr Wilkinson in 1872, but the task unfortunately was abandoned or postponed.

James John Garth Wilkinson was born in Acton Street, Gray's Inn Lane, London, on the 3rd of June 1812; the eldest of the family of James John and Harriet Wilkinson; his father of Durham, his mother of Sunderland.<sup>1</sup> His childhood was for the most part spent in that neighbourhood, and he played in the urban fields in which Acton Street at that time ended.

<sup>1</sup> He was the eldest of eight children born to his parents. His father came ultimately of Danish stock, and descended from a professional family, whose arms (originally granted to one Lawrence Wilkinson in 1615) still figure in the Town Hall of the City of Durham. John James Wilkinson was a Special Pleader, and in that capacity numbered at one time five Judges among his former pupils; he was also for many years himself Judge of the Palatine County Court in his native city, holding his jurisdiction from the Prince Bishops of that day. Mrs Wilkinson, *née* Robinson, had among her ancestors the Penn family, whence spring the founder of Pennsylvania.

Notwithstanding the care of a tender mother, his childhood was full of dark shadows, partly from his own nature, partly arising from those around him. From his earliest recollection the thought of death pursued him ; chiefly the thought of the dead, which had been wrought into the fears excited by the horrible tales told him by the servants. These fears grew with his growth, and the anticipation of the darkness of night made the days wretched. This dread is the chief recollection of the days next to infancy. He was always afraid in his little walks of seeing some dead body carried in the streets. Opposite the window in Acton Street, in an enclosed field, there were fresh ox-skins hanging ; these made a terrible impression for long. And once, in a journey to Sunderland by coach, among some nettles at the back of the hotel, he thinks at Grantham, he encountered a dead rat, and fell in fear among the nettles ; and was found, and brought to the coach. As time went on, the craving thought of the day was, how long the piece of candle allowed to go to sleep by should be. He generally outwatched the longest pieces, buried under the bedclothes. He was weak and ailing through his childhood.

From a dear religious mother he got no consolation ; nothing that took away superstitious terrors, or reconciled death with nature. His grandmother, Mrs Robinson of Sunderland, and his aunt, Mary Robinson, did their best to answer his questions,