

**MEMOIRS OF THE  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
OF PENNSYLVANIA,  
VOL. II, PART II**

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Memoirs of the Historical society of Pennsylvania, Vol. II, Part II by Various

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**VARIOUS**

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**Philadelphia :**  
E. LITTELL, CORNER OF CHESTNUT AND SEVENTH STREETS.  
1830.



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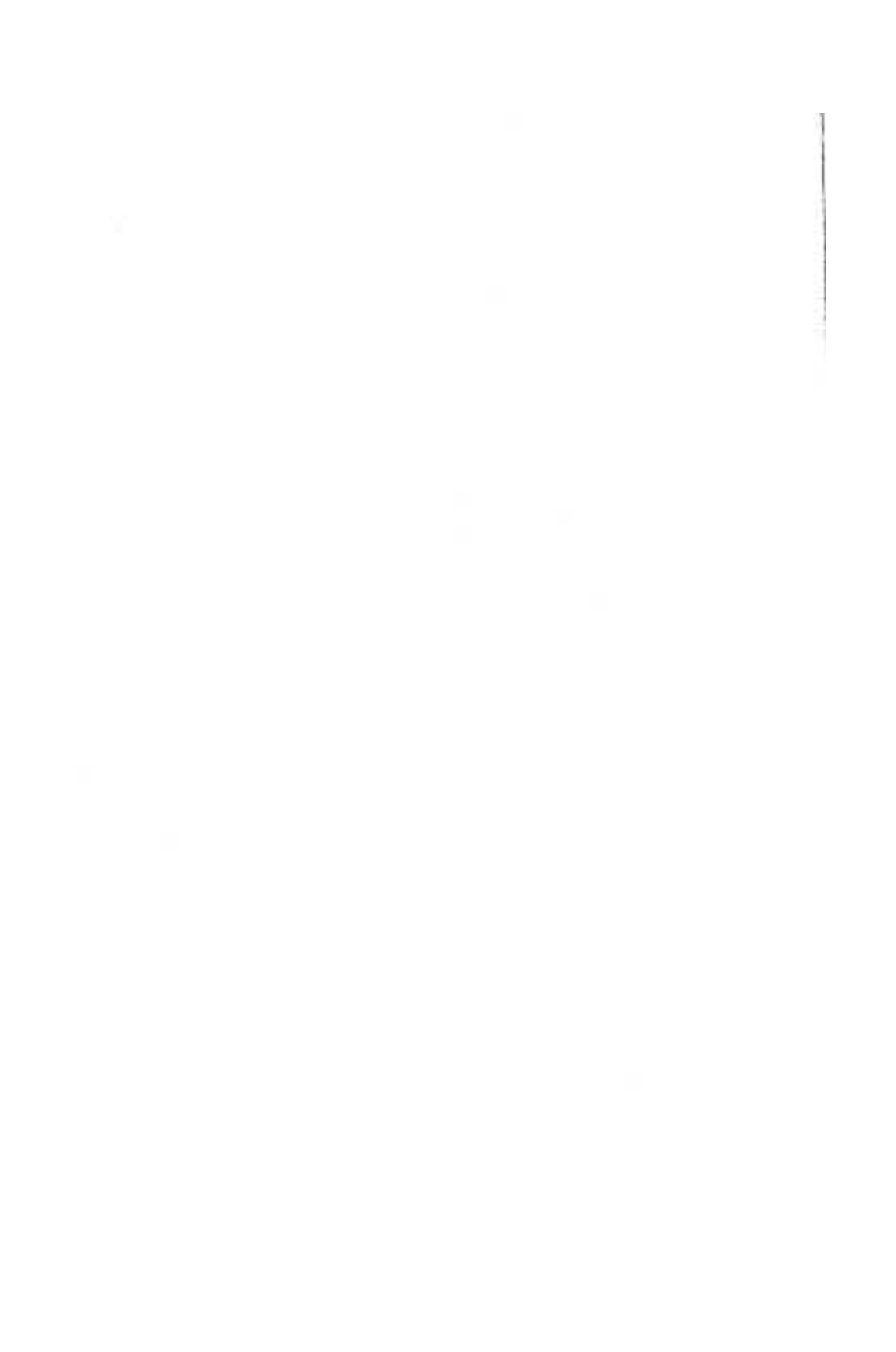
AFTER a considerable interval of time, the Committee of Publication have the satisfaction of presenting to the Society and the public another half volume of their Memoirs, which will be found, they hope, equal in interest to either of the preceding numbers.

When the publication of the Memoirs of the Historical Society was undertaken in 1835, an expectation was expressed, that the Society would be able to issue, every six months, a half volume of their transactions. This has not hitherto been in their power. The ardour with which the undertaking was commenced, seemed for a time to have somewhat flagged; and during the greater part of the last two years, few original communications were offered.

The attention of the resident members appears, however, at present, to be newly excited. During the last six months, the principal portion of the contents of this number has been furnished, and continued interest and activity may be anticipated.

Several communications are now in preparation, and this committee think they may promise the publication of a series of interesting memoirs on the numerous important subjects hitherto overlooked, as well as on those which have been noticed but not exhausted.

*February, 1830.*





NOTICE OF THE LIFE

OF

SAMUEL POWEL GRIFFITT'S, M. D.

BY B. H. COATES, M. D.

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"Esse quam videri."

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THE office of a historical society is by no means confined to the revival of the neglected and decayed memorials of former years. Amid our regrets for the successive and irrecparable loss of those precious records of our ancestors which time awful had spared, and which we would fain rescue from oblivion, to be completed, compared, and explained, it is perhaps an injustice to posterity to leave to them the same unsatisfactory task with regard to our age which we have already incurred from those who went before us. All that tends to dignify and augment the attachment which every virtuous citizen feels towards his native soil; all that may enable those who are to come after us to grow familiar with the worth which has preceded them; all that may elucidate the nobler parts of the never-exhausted study of man, or enable the youthful aspirant for honest fame or self-rewarded usefulness so to qualify and direct his efforts as to merit well of humanity, and of a conscience that will not flatter,—all furnishes materials well worthy of future perusal, and fully coming within the scope of our association. Preserved

in the documentary pages of historical collections, a kind of perpetuity is given to the records inserted in them; and though, from the comparatively local character of the interest which hangs round antiquarian volumes, the number of those who peruse them may be limited, they still remain, the attested materials of future history, revered from an innate desire for their preservation, and possessing a value which progressively increases with advancing years. In this they, in a great measure, share the fate of those medallions to which the form and actions of illustrious men are committed for preservation, and for which they offer no mean substitute; seen, like them, by few, but sought after with the more earnestness, as the tide of time rolls on, from the very circumstance of the smallness of their numbers.

Views of this kind have induced me to offer, for the attention of the society, a brief sketch of the life and character of Dr. SAMUEL POWEL GRIFFITHS. In so doing, I can lay no claim to the merits of a primary collector of scattered facts; as most of the materials presented in this paper have been already laid before a part of the public in a memoir by Dr. Gouverneur Emerson, published in the *North American Medical and Surgical Journal*: to which, however, I have been able to make some small additions. Nor will the narrative be found fruitful in striking events; as the life of this excellent physician was passed exclusively among civic scenes. Yet it is not, perhaps, on this account, the less useful. It affords the spectacle of eminence acquired in the peaceful walks of life, by the exertion of those virtues, the opportunities for which occur within the reach of every one; and it is, on this account, the better fitted as a pattern for the imitation of others.

Dr. Griffiths was born in Philadelphia, July 21st, 1759. He was the third and last child of William Griffiths and

Abigail Powel, members in unity with the society of Friends. His father left him an infant: from his mother he received that education which qualified him so well, by the regular, moral, and religious habits it produced, for the exercise of a life of piety and usefulness. As he ripened in age he grew convinced of the correctness, in principle and practice, of the religious body with whom he found himself associated; and soon became, as he continued till the day of his death, one of their most valued, consistent, useful, and influential members. He became an excellent classical scholar at the college of Philadelphia; acquiring a facility in speaking, and a correctness in criticising the Latin language, which was often admired, when, at a subsequent period, he attended the examinations of the public schools under the care of Friends; and, in addition to the branches of study then universal among well informed men, he acquired a high degree of proficiency in the French language.

Dr. Griffiths first applied himself to the study of medicine under the superintendance of Dr. Adam Kuhn; well known among us as a learned pupil of the celebrated Linnæus, and then occupying the office of professor to a small class of materia medica and botany in the college of medicine in this city. Between this respected teacher and his pupil ensued a friendship, which time only confirmed and augmented. Drs. Griffiths and Wistar, then both students, volunteered their professional assistance for the wounded at the battle of Germantown; an occasion on which their religious principles did not permit them to assume an authorized and formal charge. After remaining for some time with Dr. Kuhn, the young aspirant for medical honours found himself obliged, in conformity with the universal custom of the time, to proceed to Europe for the completion of his education. We had not then an university whose