

**A MEMOIR OF
WILLIAM GIBBONS**

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A Memoir of William Gibbons by Theodore Tebbets

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THEODORE TEBBETS

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WILLIAM GIBBONS**

A Memoir

OF

WILLIAM GIBBONS,

BY

THEODORE TEBBETS.

And, doubtless, unto thee is given
A life that bears immortal fruit,
In such great offices as suit
The full-grown energies of heaven.

Printed for his Friends.

NEW YORK.

WPM.

Carroll
T. Webb

. . . Thy young life was rounding to its prime,
Graceful and gradual, with a tidal scope;—
Its outer ripple fell with silvery ohme,
Already, near the waiting feet of Hope.

And of great galleons, freighted to the brim,
She—looking seaward with expectant eyes—
Up from beyond the far horizon's rim
Already saw the filmy topmasts rise.

But ah! That tide shall never reach its height;
Those stately vessels never hail the shore:
Before the voice could form the words, "'tis night,"
Darkness came down--the vision is no more.

Oh! sudden night! Oh! weary, weary pang!
None of those parting memories sad and brief,
Around which Love with clinging arms might hang,
And sob itself to slumber and relief.

No clasp of hands--no mutual sigh for sigh—
No flickering smile before the soul is past—
No look to tell us from the closing eye
That what we love has loved us to the last.

Our startled hearts half disbelieve in death
For those round limbs,—that lip with life's perfume;
They half believe we can with yearning breath
The just extinguished taper re-illuminate.

Yet thought hath still for us the gracious boon
That, loving, pure and joyous as the day,
Thy tender graces, hid ere manhood's noon,
Shall know not alienation or decay.

Though of the moon, behind the twilight hill,
To man a silver thread alone appear,
For God she waxes not nor wanes, and still
Turns to the sun a perfect, full-orbed sphere.

And though the visible for us may die,
Though the receding ocean leave the shell,
Faith's listening ear can catch the murmured sigh—
"Love on, dear hearts! The dead can love as well."

WILLIAM GIBBONS, the oldest child of James Sloane and Abby Hopper Gibbons, was born in Philadelphia on the sixteenth of January, 1834. He died in Cambridge, Massachusetts, on the seventeenth of December, 1855.

His father was born in Wilmington, Delaware, where his father, Dr. William Gibbons, was an eminent physician for more than forty years. William's mother, the daughter of the well-known philanthropist, Isaac T. Hopper, was born in Philadelphia. Both parents, and their ancestors, belonged to the Society of Friends, so that William was trained in the principles and the practice of "Quakerism," and early formed, what he never

lost, a strong love for the principles and peculiarities of that people,—

The simple tastes, the kindly traits,
The tranquil air, and gentle speech,
The silence of the soul that waits
For more than man can teach.

When he was only thirteen months old his parents removed to New York, where he spent the rest of his life, except the last few months at Cambridge. The characteristics of later years were manifested in early childhood. From the beginning, he was remarkably truthful, ingenuous, and conscientious. He first sought what was right, then what was pleasant. It is remembered that one First Day morning he was sent in from the garden to put on clothes suitable for his employment; as he did not return for a long time, anxious search was made for him through the neighborhood; he came back at last, equipped for work, but having first gone in his "best clothes" to the "Friends'" meeting. A friend at Perth Amboy writes: "My reminiscences of his boyhood, when he used to visit us, are singularly vivid and delightful. With a single exception, he was the only child I ever knew who seemed to

have no conscious self. The happiness of others seemed to be his proper personal capital: the more they had, the richer was he."

His imagination was lively, and he frequently extemporized little narratives suggested by natural objects, claiming that he owned the landscape with all the flocks and herds. As he grew older, this faculty and his love of imitation roused a fondness for dramatic exhibitions, which he always enjoyed with the keenest zest. He was brought up at home and was not sent to school till he was nearly seven years old. He was a prompt and discriminating learner, and an obedient, affectionate pupil; but he was not a precocious child; his mind was rather symmetrical and evenly developed and free from tricks of one-sidedness and exaggeration; he was fond of reading and had a quick and retentive memory; he was a genuine boy, full of vivacity and frolic, a lover of active sports and of innocent mischief; brave, affectionate, open-hearted, with a prompt sense of honor and justice. His robust constitution was never impaired by vice, or by premature sobriety and dignity, or by undue urging of the intellect; and so

he was a healthy boy and a remarkably vigorous youth, with an equal capacity and an equal relish for both work and play. One of his earliest letters, written in large school-boy hand, indicates that he was by no means lacking in sportiveness:

. When it snows, I and a lot of other boys, as we are going home from school, make snow-balls and fire them at the men who go around cleaning the pavements, and when they turn around to see who it is, we bow to them, ask them if is not a pleasant day, and say we do it merely to attract their attention. Sometimes they chase us, but they have never yet succeeded in catching us. At other times we will stop omnibuses and ask their drivers what time it is.

. When he was about nine years old, he entered the school of Messrs. Leggett and Guillaudeu, under whose charge he continued until he began his professional studies, about eight years later. Between the teachers and the scholar a strong affection was formed, which lasted to the end of William's life. He had discernment enough to perceive that there is no necessary state of enmity between an instructor and his pupil, but rather an opportunity for a most pleasant and profitable

friendship. His teachers found him a diligent and enthusiastic student, especially in mathematics, for which he always had a peculiar fondness. "Geometry," he once wrote to his sister, "thou wilt find an easy and an agreeable study. Some of the problems are to me more beautiful than nine tenths of the pictures in the exhibitions." And afterwards, in college, he used to exceed the requirements of his tutor, by presenting several demonstrations besides the one in the text-book. In all his studies, however, he was never so proud as to chafe under correction, or to spurn the suggestion of an error. He was always eager, on the contrary, to be set and kept right. His choice of companions, in his school-days, was determined by genuine sympathy and respect. Among his earliest playmates were several boys of his own age whose parents were day-laborers. But they were none the less worthy of regard in his estimation, and he never gave up the friendship, and never neglected them on occasions of home-entertainment. He had a happy faculty, too, of placing them on easy terms with his other acquaintances, and making all distinction on grounds of social rank disappear.