

## BIOGRAPHY.

## MRS. CHAPONE.

Mrs. Hester Chapone, an ingenious writer, was the daughter of Thomas Mulso, Esq. and was born in England, October 27th, 1717.

At a very early age she exhibited proofs of uncommon genius, and facility of apprehension. With an imagination peculiarly lively, and a temper equally warm and ardent, she read more works of fancy, than was quite consistent with judgment, or compatible with true happiness. Romances appear to have been the favorite reading of females at that period; and it is not to be wondered that this young lady, influenced by the example of those around her, should have read with avidity works so alluring in their composition, though so little instructive in their tendencies, or beneficial in their effects. Useless, however, as such a study might have been to the generality of youthful readers, it was not wholly unproductive of advantage to her, for at nine years old, she composed a romance, called 'The Loves of Amoret and Melissa,' which, we are told, exhibited 'ferocity of invention, and extraordinary specimens of genius,' and laid the foundation of that respect, and that admiration of her talents, to which her subsequent character and writings have so fully entitled her. From pursuits so unprofitable, she at once commenced a course of studies, which were as far as well as elegant. Though chiefly self-taught, she acquired a thorough knowledge of the Latin, French, and Italian languages. She read the best authors on morals and philosophy; and so acute was her judgment, that no disguise of flowing diction, or ornamental style, could mislead it. At an age when, perhaps, few readers are capable of very deep discrimination, she would scrutinize and controvert every point on which her own opinions did not acquiesce. That she read the Holy Scriptures both with delight and benefit to herself, her excellent directions for the study of them in her letters is a sufficient testimony.

Amongst those who composed her literary circle, was Mr. Richardson, through whom she afterwards became acquainted with Mr. Chapone, a young gentleman then practising law in the Temple. Their attachment was mutual, but not hasty or imprudent. She obtained her father's consent, and a social intimacy continued for a considerable period, before it ended in marriage. In the mean time, she became acquainted with the celebrated Miss Carter; a correspondence took place between them, which increased their mutual esteem, and a friendship was thus cemented, which lasted during a course of more than fifty years.

Miss Mulso's first production was an Ode to Peace, which she afterwards addressed to Miss Carter on her intended publication of the translation of Epicurus. About the same time she wrote the story of Fidelity, which, though composed purposely for the Advertiser, yet such was her timidity, that no hint but the earnest persuasions of Miss Carter, and her friends, could have prevailed upon her to take courage to send it to the press.

In 1769, she was married to Mr. Chapone, and removed to London. Here she enjoyed every degree of happiness which mutual attachment could confer; but it was of short duration. In less than ten months after they were married, Mr. Chapone was seized with a fever, which terminated with his life after about a week's illness.

At first she seemed to bear this calamity with fortitude, but it preyed on her health, and for some time her life was despaired of. She, however, gradually recovered, and resigned herself to a state of life, in which she yet found many friends and many consolations. Most of her time was passed away in London, or in occasional visits to her friends, among whom she had the happiness to number many distinguished characters of both sexes—Lord Littleton, Mrs. Montague, and the circle who usually visited her house. In 1770, she accompanied Mrs. Montague into Scotland. In 1773, she published her 'Letters on the improvement of the mind,' originally intended for the use of her

niece, but given to the world at the request of Mrs. Montague, and her other literary friends. This work was followed by a volume of 'Miscellanies,' published without her name. The latter years of her life were embittered by the loss of the greater part of the friends of her youth; this, together with other privations, began to affect her mind, and at the persuasions of her sympathizing friends, she removed to Hadley.

In October, 1801, she completed her 74th year. On the Christmas day following, without any previous illness, having declared herself unusually well the day before, she fell into a slumber, from which nothing could arouse her, and which her physician, who attended her, immediately pronounced the forerunner of death; and, at eight o'clock in the evening, without one apparent struggle or sigh, she breathed her last in the arms of her niece.

Her works were published in 2 volumes, 12mo.

FROM A LATE ENGLISH PAPER.

SIR WALTER SCOTT'S LETTER  
RESPECTING BURNS.

As for Burns, I may truly say, *Virgilium vidi tantum*. I was a lad of 15 in 1786, 7 when he came first to Edinburgh, but had sense and feeling enough to be much interested in his poetry, and would have given the world to know him—but I had very little acquaintance with any literary people, and still less with the gentry of the west country, the two sets that he most frequented. Mr. Thomas Grierson was at that time a clerk of my father's. He knew Burns, and promised to ask him to his lodgings to dinner, but had no opportunity to keep his word, otherwise I might have seen more of this distinguished man. As it was, I saw him one day at the late venerable Professor Ferguson's, where there were several gentlemen of literary reputation, among whom I remember the celebrated Mr. Dugald Stewart. Of course we youngsters sat silent, looked and listened. The only thing I remember which was remarkable in Burns' manner, was the effect produced upon him by a print of Banbury's, representing a soldier lying dead on the snow, his dog sitting in misery on one side—on the other, his widow with a child in her arms. These lines were written beneath:

"Cold on Canadian hills, or Minden's plain,  
Perhaps that parent wept her soldier slain.  
Bent o'er her babe, her eye dissolved in dew,  
The big drops, mingling with the milk he drew,  
Gave the sad presage of his future years,  
The child of misery baptised in tears."

Burns seemed much affected with the print, or rather the ideas which it suggested to his mind. He actually shed tears. He asked whose lines were, and it chanced that nobody but myself remembered that they occur in a half-forgotten poem of Langhorne's, called by the unpromising title of *The Justice of Peace*. I whispered my information to a friend present, who mentioned it to Burns, who rewarded me with a look and a word, which though of mere civility, I then received, and still recollect, with very great pleasure.

His person was strong and robust—his manners rustic, not clownish—a sort of dignified plainness and simplicity, which received part of its effect, perhaps, from one's knowledge of his extraordinary talents. His features are represented in Mr. Nasmyth's picture, but to me it conveys the idea that they are diminished as if seen in perspective. I think his countenance was more massive than it looks in any of the portraits. I would have taken the poet, had I not known what he was, for a very sagacious country farmer of the old Scots school; & none of your modern agriculturalists, who keep labor-

ers for their drudgery, but the douce gentleman who held his own plough. There was a strong expression of sense and shrewdness in all his lineaments—the eye alone, I think, indicated the polite character and temperament. It was large, and of a dark cast, which glowed (I say literally glowed) when he spoke with feeling or interest. I never saw such another eye in a human head, though I have seen the most distinguished men of my time. His conversation expressed perfect self-confidence, without the slightest presumption. Among the men who were most learned of their time and country, he expressed himself with perfect firmness, but without the least intrusive forwardness; and when he differed in opinion, he did not fail to express it firmly, yet at the same time with modesty. I do not remember any part of his conversation distinctly enough to be quoted, nor did I ever see him again except in the street, where he did not recognize me, as I could not expect he should. He was much caressed in Edinburgh, (but considering what literary emoluments have been since his day) the efforts made for his relief were extremely trifling.

I remember on this occasion I mention, I thought Burns' acquaintance with English poetry was rather limited, and also, that having twenty times the abilities of Allan Ramsay and of Ferguson, he talked of them with too much humility as his models—there was, doubtless, national predilection in his estimate.

This is all I can tell you about Burns. I have only to add, that his dress corresponded with his manner. He was like a farmer dressed in his best to dine with the laird. I do not speak in *malam partem*, when I say, I never saw a man in company with his superiors in station and information, more perfectly free from either the reality or the affectation of embarrassment. I was told, but did not observe it, that his address to females was extremely deferential, and always with a turn either to the pathetic or humorous, which engaged their attention particularly. I have heard the late Duchess of Gordon remark this—I do not know any thing I can add to these recollections of forty years since.

## MADAME PASTA.

We must relate an anecdote of Madame Pasta. Some gentlemen who knew her well, informed a friend of ours, when he was in Paris, that she would come home from the opera, and sit in a passion of tears at the recollection of what she had been acting. They told him that nothing could be more unaffected, and that she would say she knew it to be idle, but that she 'could not get it out of her head.' This is just what imaginative people would expect her to say. She never pretended that she had taken herself for the character she represented; but she had sympathized with it so strongly that it became the next thing to reality; and if our hearts can be touched, and our colour changed, by the mere perusal of a tragedy, how much more may not a woman's nature be moved that has been almost identified with the calamities in it; that by force of imagination, has brought the soul of another to inhabit her own warm being; and has entertained it there as the very guest of humanity, given it her own heart to agitate, and taken upon herself the burden of its infirmit-ies!

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