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978-1-108-07738-5 - Illustrations of the Literary History of the Eighteenth Century:
Consisting of Authentic Memoirs and Original Letters of Eminent Persons, and Intended
as a Sequel to the 'Literary Anecdotes': Volume 5

John Nichols

Excerpt

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ILLUSTRATIONS
OF THE
LITERATURE
OF THE
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

JOSEPH GULSTON, Esq. F. S. A.

THE notices of this respectable Gentleman in the "Literary Anecdotes"* are so brief and imperfect, that I gladly avail myself of the opportunity of presenting to my Readers a Biographical Sketch of Mr. GULSTON—by one who is well qualified to do justice to the subject, and "who is too great a venerator of the Johnsonian School, not to think Truth the first essential in any narrative."

—

The GULSTONS were originally of Wymondham in Leicestershire; when, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, John Gulston, one of the Prothonotaries of the Common Pleas, son of Willam Gulston, son of Thomas Gulston of Wymondham †, bought the

* Vol. II. p. 44, 160; vol. V. p. 263; vol. IX. p. 605.

† The first of this family that can be traced at Wymondham is William Gulston, who was presented to the Rectory in 1538, by the Prior and Convent of Tutbury, and held it till 1560. After one intermediate incumbent, Nathaniel Gulston, son of William, was presented to the rectory by Queen Elizabeth, and

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manor and advowson of Widihall, co. Herts, and had the arms granted to him by Camden*. The family remained there till the year 1770, when they sold the estate to Mr. Comyns, at whose death, five years after, it was sold to Mr. Ellis.

Of a younger branch of this family was Joseph Gulston, Dean of Chichester, and Chaplain to King Charles the First. Peck, in his *Desiderata Curiosa*, mentions his preaching in Carisbrook Castle, Nov. 12, 1648. That he was attached to Charles's person till his execution is most probable. His will was proved in 1674, and mentions several children. That the family emigrated to Portugal is most certain, and nothing more is known of them till the father of Mr. Gulston, whose memoir is intended to be here given, appears as head of the first mercantile

died in 1581. William Gulston occurs Parson in 1584. Nathaniel Gulston, D. D. Rector in 1632, died in 1647. William Gulston, probably Rector also, died in 1654.—William Gulston, Clerk, occurs as Patron of the Rectory in 1660 and 1669.—William, son of Nathaniel Gulston, D. D. was born at Wymondham; educated at Grantham School for three years, under Mr. Stokes, the then master there; after which, being seventeen years of age, he was entered a Sub or Proper Sizar in St. John's College, Oct. 4, 1653, having for his tutor Mr. Baker, at that time one of the Senior Fellows there. He took the degree of M. A. 1661, was afterwards S. T. P. and at length Chaplain to Frances Duchess of Somerset, by whom he was, in 1669, presented to the rectory of Simondsbury, co. Dorset. Being nominated to the See of Bristol by King Charles II. he was consecrated at Lambeth on the 9th of February, 1678; but continued to hold, *in commendam*, his rectory of Simondsbury; and dying at his parsonage, April 4, 1684, was buried on the 18th day of the same month, in the chancel of the parish church. Before his advancement to the See of Bristol, he gave intimation of an intention to annex to it this rich rectory, of which he had purchased the perpetual advowson, but on his promotion forgot his promise. His son, Seymour Gulston, M. A. who was afterwards Rector on his own presentation in 1695, sold the advowson to Robert Biron, of Frampton, Esq.; and dying in 1706, was buried with his father.—See the *Hist. of Leicestershire*, vol. II. p. 404. N.

* Argent, two bars nebulée Gules, over all a bend Sable, charged with three plates. Crest, an ostrich's wing of five feathers, three Argent, two Gules, over all a bend Sable, charged with three plates.

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house in the British factory at Lisbon, where he was born. His father (who never was in England) left him a brother and two sisters to provide for. The brother was sent to Barbadoes, where an estate was purchased for him; he proved very idle and extravagant, married ill, and when he died left a widow and five children pennyless. Mr. Gulston took them all under his own care; the eldest son he placed in his own house, Edward was lost at sea, and Charles was smothered in the Black Hole at Calcutta; the eldest daughter married ill; Dorothy, the youngest, married the Rev Mr. John Penton. Of Mr. Gulston's sisters, the youngest married, in Lisbon, Mr. Brooke, who immediately carried her to England, to seven maiden sisters of his own: she lived but two years. The eldest sister Anne was uncommonly beautiful, haughty, vain, and overbearing to the greatest degree; Mr. Gulston was proud of her, and the ascendancy she gained over him amounted to absolute fascination. She first married Mr. Simondi; a Swede, who was Consul from Sweden to Lisbon. Mr. Gulston did not approve of the match; nor did she like the man; but his diplomatic dignity, and a litter which cost him five hundred pounds, the only carriage in which women of distinction were conveyed, turned the scale in his favour. He did not live long, and left her little more than her litter, and one daughter. She returned to Mr. Gulston, and had the command of his house and fortune. She soon after fell in love with Mr. Goddard, a merchant, married him, and a second time became a widow, not much benefited in circumstances. Money was a thing vastly beneath her attention, and her brother's generosity prevented her ever feeling the want of it. She was still in the zenith of her beauty, and might have married to very great advantage; but she had acquired a taste for independence: she coquetted with all, tyrannized over some, and governed her

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brother with despotic sway. The daughter, Miss Simondi, was brought up in a style then unknown: Mrs. Goddard idolized her, and thought no indulgence too great, no expence too profuse. The girl, naturally not good tempered, became as tyrannical as her mother, and when any disappointment happened, fits and faintings were the certain consequence.

A Portuguese merchant, whose name was Sylva, being particularly connected with Mr. Gulston in the line of business, became very intimate with the family; he was far from opulent, and was burthened with seven daughters; Mericas, the youngest, was nearly as old as Miss Simondi, they were fond of each other, and by degrees Miss Simondi was never contented without her playfellow. Mericas was very pretty, and uncommonly engaging; except to attend the duties of her religion, she lived entirely at Mr. Gulston's; he was very fond of her, and while quite a child, would set her on his knee, and call her his little wife.

In process of time, it was decided that the whole family should come and settle in England. Miss Simondi could not part with her companion, and insisted upon taking her with them. Mons. Sylva was but too happy to settle his daughter so advantageously, making only one condition; "That she should continue to be a Roman Catholick." The young Mericas was much more attached to her English friends than to her paternal roof; her mother was dead, some of her sisters were become nuns; the same fate might be her own, and she had no inclination for the convent.

When they arrived in England she was nearly seventeen. Mr. Gulston took a house in Pall-mall, and a smaller one in the city, where his clerks, counting-house, &c. were established; but he resided entirely with his sister. For a long time every thing went on very well. Miss Simondi preserved

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a certain superiority over Mericas, but in a general way there was little difference made between them. At last the family harmony was dissolved by those baneful monsters, when coupled together, love and jealousy. Henry Penton, Esq. of Winchester, visiting at the house, and paying great attention to the young people, Miss Simondi fell desperately in love with him; she lost her appetite, had fainting fits, and Mrs. Goddard became almost distracted. Mr. Penton said nothing; it was suspected he preferred the lively Portuguese to the love-sick Swede. This was not to be endured; both mother and daughter were outrageous, and insisted upon Mericas being sent back to her father. Mrs. Goddard proposed settling fifty pounds a year upon her, and was so impatient to get rid of her, that she was sent to a sort of Convent then existing in Hammersmith, till a ship might sail for Portugal. Mr. Gulston *then*, and probably not till then, found out that he could not part with her. Mrs. Goddard had ordered Mr. Diaz, Mr. Gulston's confidential head clerk, to be ready to embark with Mericas for Portugal; but Mr. Gulston with spirit said he would convey her himself, and see her safe under Mons. Sylva's protection. Mrs. Goddard and Miss Simondi were too tender-hearted to bear taking leave; so they saw her no more. Mr. Penton proposed for Miss Simondi; Mr. Gulston made her fortune up ten thousand pounds, and they were married immediately.

It never once occurred to Mrs. Goddard that her brother could be attached to such a girl as Mericas, and was perfectly happy that he never seemed to think of marrying, as she fondly appropriated all his wealth to her daughter, and had given Mr. Penton reason to almost depend upon it. In the mean time Mr. Gulston frequently visited the poor deserted girl; and circumstances made him decide upon a step, which otherwise he might perhaps never have taken; he was strictly a man of honor,

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and would not, had it been in his power, have betrayed his trust. The great difference in point of age makes it unlikely that Mericas should have been in love with Mr. Gulston, though she declared, through life, she really did love him. Certain it is, she loved nobody better, and her heart was filled with esteem and gratitude. These sensations, with the alternative of Lisbon, a poor father, and a convent, soon decided her choice, and she consented with joy to accept Mr. Gulston as her husband. He took leave of his sister, as going to Lisbon, and fetched Mericas away publicly from Hammersmith. This was many years before the Marriage Act took place; they were married at the Fleet, and afterwards by a Catholic priest, in presence of Mr. Diaz. They went directly to a retired place, on the coast of Devonshire, where they remained till it became absolutely necessary for Mr. Gulston to *return from Lisbon*.

Mericas was not in the least aware of the consequences of keeping the marriage secret, and when Mr. Gulston told her he must conceal it for a time, she was not at all sorry, for she dreaded seeing Mrs. Goddard. He put her to board in a house near Greenwich, where she hired a trusty servant of the name of Hannah. The people who kept the house were an elderly man and his wife; they were told she was Mrs. Thompson, whose husband was gone to India. Much were these good people edified at the exceedingly retired life Mrs. Gulston led; for except that now and then her *uncle* took her out to visit a friend, she never quitted the house. A daughter was born, and happily arrived in proper time from Mr. Thompson's supposed departure.

After living four years this forlorn wretched life, a sad stroke obliged Mr. Gulston to go to Lisbon in good earnest. His nephew had defrauded the house of a large sum of money, and had disappeared. Mrs. Gulston was wretched at the thoughts of his

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leaving her, and petitioned to move any where for change of scene, and to have her daughter with her, who till now had been out at nurse.

The reason of Mr. Gulston's keeping his daughter at a distance from her mother was on account of religion. People may talk of bigoted Catholicks, but so bigoted a Protestant was Mr. Gulston, and so inveterate was he against the Roman Catholicks, that he was actually ashamed of having married one. Perhaps it was owing to his having been brought up in Portugal, which was in those days groaning under the tyranny of the Inquisition. With this way of thinking, he repeatedly told his wife, he would own his marriage if she would abjure. This she steadily and constantly refused, but promised if he would let her have her child, that so far from influencing her, she should never know her mother was a Catholick, at the same time hoping to see her under the protection of a father long before she was old enough to know there was more religions than *one*. Under this promise, and that he should still pass for her uncle, Mr. Gulston consented to her removal, and to her having her daughter. He had an acquaintance whose children were at a boarding-school at Maidstone, where they took, what is termed, parlour-boarders. To this place Mrs. Gulston and her daughter removed before her husband quitted England. He was absent about a year, and on his return sent for his family to Mortimer-street, Cavendish-square, but evaded acknowledging his wife, under the pretence of his circumstances being deranged by the unfortunate event at Lisbon, of his nephew defrauding the house. Some loss he certainly had sustained, and he did not think his income large enough to support his sister in the style he had always done, and have a separate establishment for his own family. A secret reason (perhaps unknown to himself) had also great weight. He was so accustomed to be governed by this impe-

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rious woman, that he really was afraid of her, and had not courage to own his situation. When Mrs. Gulston brought him a son, she flattered herself he would acknowledge his marriage; but still he put it off. He became immersed in business; for he had now come into Parliament, connected himself with the Duke of Newcastle and Mr. Pelham, had contracts for the army, scrip, &c. and was perfectly occupied in becoming rich, so much so, that he seldom visited his family.

At length a severe illness with which he was seized at Bath awakened the husband and father. In a great hurry he dictated all legal proofs of his marriage, and provided amply for his family; but as Mrs. Gulston did not know this at the time, it may easily be conceived what her agonies were on hearing the husband, who had never owned her, was dangerously ill; and it must be allowed, the prospect before her was distressing to the greatest degree. Her father was dead, she was a foreigner, unknown, appearing under a false name, her character injured, and possessing not a single friend to whom she could apply. Let those who are apt to complain, reflect on the melancholy life Mrs. Gulston lead for fifteen years, secluded from all society, in the bloom of youth, a religion to conceal, and yet adhering strictly to all its duties, with an uncertain prospect of ever seeing better days, viewing things even on the best side. Mr. Gulston allowed her income sufficient for her way of life; but she certainly denied herself many things, in order to purchase indulgencies from her spiritual director. He was a man her husband knew and much approved; he never came to the house, and Mrs. Gulston always went with her daughter to church; but for this leave she was obliged to pay; and going to early matins instead of high mass, was a sin for which she could not be absolved, but on condition of paying certain sums towards supporting the

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Catholic poor, masses for the dead, &c. Excepting on the days she expected Mr. Gulston, she wore gowns of yard-wide stuff; her daughter she dressed in silk and cambrick every day.

Mrs. Goddard was informed of the acknowledgment of the marriage by a letter, accompanied with a settlement for life, which enabled her to continue the same establishment as when her brother lived with her. She returned no answer; but some months afterwards a sort of reconciliation took place, and the families kept up a cold formal intercourse, which in time softened into something like mutual good will.

Mrs. Goddard died some years before her brother, and Mrs. Gulston attended her through a long tedious illness; she was at last subdued by her own sufferings, and repeatedly asked Mrs. Gulston's forgiveness, which was granted with the true sincerity of a Christian mind.

Mr. Gulston, whose life is here to be given, was born either in 1745 or 1746; but for an account of his entrance into that life, it will be far better to give to the publick a MS. written by his only sister; and such is the excellence of the account, that it requires no apology for the insertion.

“The earliest recollection I have of existence, may be dated from my having attained my fourth year; when I found myself and my mother in a great boarding-school at Maidstone in Kent, under the name of Mrs. and Miss Thompson. We lived entirely in a separate apartment, and never mixed with the numerous inhabitants of the house, except that on Sundays I was coupled with a girl of my own size, and joined the procession two and two to church.

“The only person who came into the rooms (the stately governess excepted) was one of the teachers whose name was Cornish. She came at stated hours to teach me to read. She was esteemed a

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very learned personage, and really was very superior to the generality of people in her miserable employment. She was the orphan daughter of an officer who had taken great pains in her education, and with whom she had lived some time in France; she was very little older than my mother, and they became much attached to each other.

“*Prodigious*, I dare say, was the progress I made, when my career in literature was unfortunately stopped. In little more than a year my mother received a letter, and it was announced that we quitted Maidstone the very next day. Sad was the parting to Miss Cornish. A coach with four horses was at the door early in the morning. No manservant—my mother, self, and maid drove off, and the curiosity of a whole boarding-school could not discover to what place we were going. It was in November, the roads bad, the horses tired; so that it was quite dark when our journey was finished, and we were set down in Mortimer-street, Cavendish-square. In those days Mortimer-street was quite detached from the rest of the town, consisted of very few houses, open behind to the fields, and really more retired than a country village. The house appeared to me too small to live in; but it was perfectly neat, and our family was not large; it consisted of my mother and self, one maid who was ready to receive us, and Hannah, whom we brought with us, an honest faithful creature, who lived with my mother before I was born.

“The next morning Mamma told me we had an uncle coming to see us. The term gave me no idea. I had never heard of a relation, nor had it ever entered into my head that it was necessary to have any. I had just observation enough to perceive, that my mother's hands shook when she pinned my frock. I was convinced this uncle frightened her, and most heartily wished he might not come. At last a double knock (the first I had ever heard),