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AN ACCOUNT
OF THE
INSTITUTION
OF THE
SOCIETY FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT
OF THE
LITERARY FUND:

*The CONSTITUTIONS and TRANSACTIONS
of the SOCIETY:*

A LIST OF THE SUBSCRIBERS;
AND
THE CASH ACCOMPT OF THE FUND
TO MAY 1815.

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INSTITUTION OF THE SOCIETY.

IN the infancy of all Societies, and generally in their progress, if there be any pity, it is for obvious and dreadful sufferings. The sentiment of compassion and sympathy with distress is susceptible of improvement: in proportion to the advancement of civilization; the impressions of misery are gradually combined with the reflections of the mind, on the nature and utility of the objects.

Orphans, therefore, and widows, the lame, the blind, the dumb, and all objects of obvious misery, produce opulent and splendid charities—while authors, who have formed our understandings; taught us the art of reasoning; and directed us in the best modes of profiting by our bodily exertions, have been suffered to languish in poverty, and to perish in want.

Presuming, however, that the distress and misery of an useful writer must be acknowledged as affixing on the public an imputation of ingratitude of the worst description, because it suffers a benefactor to be punished by the benefit he has conferred; that all Societies which authors contribute to instruct, to solace or even to amuse, owe them protection and support; that the existence of political bodies,

their strength, security, and happiness, depend on the circulation of real knowledge, which is the soul, the tutelar genius of the State, and of which authors, meriting that honourable appellation, must ever be the ministers; it was proposed to a select Club of Literati in 1773 to establish a FUND, on which writers of real utility in distress might rely for assistance and relief.

After several deliberations the proposal was not considered practicable.

In the year 1788, the idea of a Literary Fund was revived by the death of Floyer Sydenham, a learned and amiable man, in consequence of an arrest for a small debt, and in most distressful circumstances.—The author of the proposal determined to make his first appeal, not to the justice and gratitude of the public, but to the humanity of individuals.

At the next meeting of the club he obtained EIGHT GUINEAS to insert an advertisement he had drawn up; which during two years, produced only subscriptions to defray its own expence, and to print the Constitutions on which it was proposed to form the Society.

In 1790, the Society was publicly founded: for it held an anniversary; appointed officers, and bestowed a benefaction.

In 1792, a gentleman* associated with him several private performers in a play, for the benefit of

* Captain Thomas Morris.

the Institution. In 1794, he recited a poem at the anniversary—he was joined and succeeded by several gentlemen * of considerable talents and reputation, who have rendered poetic recitation a pleasing and advantageous part of the Festival.

In 1795, a gentleman † proposed to subscribe £100, which he afterwards bequeathed to form a capital. In 1797, the proposal was made in a different manner, and the subscription for the PERMANENT FUND was opened.

In 1803, a Nobleman ‡ of high rank and character became a Member of the Institution, declaring it to be his duty, as a Statesman, and a Member of his Majesty's Cabinet, to encourage a Society, whose deliberations and proceedings may affect important sources of public prosperity and public happiness.

The Noble Earl submitted that opinion to his Royal Highness THE PRINCE OF WALES, who adopted it in the most gracious manner; accepted the Patronage of the Society, and assigned a house for the meetings of its Committees, and the reception of its records and books.

Such, however, was the consideration of the Society for the humane destination of its funds, that in providing furniture, &c. it determined to shield them by a special provision; and a subscription for THE HOUSE FUND was opened, which allows the

* Mr. Fitz-Gerald, Mr. W. Boscawen, Dr. Symmons, &c.

† Mr. Samuel Salte.

‡ Earl of Chichester.