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## ORIGINAL ANECDOTES OF MR. WILLIAM BAKER.

WILLIAM BAKER, a learned printer, (son of Mr. Wm. Baker, a man of most amiable character and manners, and of great classical and mathematical learning, and more than forty years master of an academy at Reading, Berks,) was born in the above town in the year 1742. He was from his infancy a boy of a very grave turn; seldom, if ever, joining in the usual juvenile sports of his schoolfellows, but spending the hours allotted to amusement, as well as the vacations, in his father's library. His applications were such, in the mathematics, and afterwards in classical pursuits, as greatly to injure his health, and even to endanger his life. The great progress he had made determined his father (who was himself originally intended for the church) to wish to get him into holy orders, to which also his own inclinations led him, especially as they were at that time flattered by a dignitary of the church, whose encouragement and interest gave him hopes of success in the very moderate views he had entertained; but the friendship of this great man ended, as too frequently happens, in empty promises and disappointments. He was then put apprentice to Mr. Kippax, printer, in Cullum-street, London; a business which, as it had so close a connection with literature, seemed to meet his approbation; and his even and contented disposition made him easier than perhaps many young men would have been under the disappointment he had met with. In his new way of life, the same indefatigable industry was pursued in the attainment of learning; his leisure hours were employed, as formerly, with the best of the ancients; and this was frequently his employment while others were asleep. To enable himself to increase the small collection of books he possessed, he used, while an apprentice, to work over-hours at his business, for which he was allowed certain perquisites, which he chiefly applied in the purchase of the best editions of the classics; which collection at his death, although not very numerous, was very choice, and was purchased by Dr. Lettsom. Before he had attained his twenty-first year, the great exertion to which this way of life subjected him had again so undermined his health, that a very eminent physician and friend of his gave very little hopes of his restoration. Emaciated and reduced by spontaneous hemorrhages, hectic fever, cough, &c. his life was most severely threatened: by the aid of country air, medicine, &c. he once more recovered. On the death of Mr. Kippax, he took up his business, which he carried on till his death, first in Cullum-street, and afterwards in Ingram-court, in partnership with Mr. Galabin, who was many years in the common-council of Langbourne-ward, and afterwards bridgemaister of the city of London. Amongst his acquaintance may be mentioned some men of the first eminence in letters, viz. Dr. Oliver Goldsmith; Dr. Edmund Barker; the Rev. James Merrick, translator of Tryphiodorus and author of many other pieces; Mr. Robert Robinson; the Rev. Hugh Farmer; the Rev. Cæsar De Miffy, one of the French chaplains to the king; James Elphinston, Esq. &c. &c. An elegant correspondence in the Latin language, between him and Mr. Robinson, and some letters of enquiry into difficulties in the Greek language, which still exist, are at once so many proofs of his great erudition

and the opinion entertained of him by some of the first scholars. Such was his extreme modesty, that many among his oldest and most familiar acquaintance, whose inclinations had not led them to the same pursuits, were perfectly ignorant of his great learning; and, even in companies where it was the topic of discussion, his opinion could never be known without an absolute appeal to his judgment, and such companies he has many times quitted a silent hearer only. This was probably a loss to the public, as it prevented the communication of some of the fruits of his intense studies; and it is to be lamented, that the same diffidence made him very backward in appearing before the public as a writer: we have but two little works known to be his. Many smart jeux d'esprit, published in some fugitive works, are now lost to the world in the loss of their author. The two small works above alluded to are, "Peregrinations of the Mind through the most general and interesting Subjects which are usually agitated in Life, by the Rationalist," 12mo, 1770, in essays, after the manner of the Rambler. "Theses Græcæ Latinæ selectæ," 8vo, in 1780, a selection from the Greek and Latin writers, every one of which from he had taken a passage he had read with critical attention throughout. He left behind him some manuscript remarks, intended chiefly to point out the frequent abuse of grammatical propriety in the English language in common conversation, and even among reputable writers, and among people of the first rank in education and manners. He had also a good talent for poetry, and wrote several detached poems, published in magazines; as well as a very correct taste in compositions for the pulpit, and he actually composed several excellent sermons for some of his clerical friends, which were accepted and used, one particularly, as the first ever preached by an old and intimate associate. Of the Greek, Latin, French, and Italian, languages, he was completely and critically master; the Hebrew he had some knowledge of; and to his own he had paid much judicious attention. But he was truly Gray's flower, "born to blush unseen." After great exertion in walking, about Christmas, 1784, (of which he was always very fond when he could indulge,) against approaching night he felt violent pain in his side, which however he did not complain of till assistance probably came too late; and after the most excruciating sufferings, for near nine months, which he bore with uncommon fortitude and patience, exerting his social disposition to the last, even with facetious pleasantry when free from pain, he finished his truly amiable life on the 29th of September, 1785, in the forty-fourth year of his age. He was kindly attended by men of the first eminence, whose skill availed nothing, as his disease was of such an unmanageable nature, that all the efforts of the greatest professional skill and judgment were unavailing, viz. a prodigious diseased enlargement of the omentum, which weighed upwards of twelve pounds instead of as many ounces. He was interred in the vault of St. Dionis Backchurch, the parish in which he had resided ever since his first arrival in London; and an elegant Latin epitaph to his memory is placed on the tomb of his family, in the church-yard of St. Mary, Reading.

Dr. Bolton,  
Dear of  
Carlisle.

