

**THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF
LITERATURE OF THE UNITED
KINGDOM: A BRIEF ACCOUNT
OF ITS ORIGIN AND PROGRESS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649431267

The Royal Society of Literature of the United Kingdom: A Brief Account of Its Origin and Progress by Edward W. Brabrook

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

EDWARD W. BRABROOK

**THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF
LITERATURE OF THE UNITED
KINGDOM: A BRIEF ACCOUNT
OF ITS ORIGIN AND PROGRESS**

John G. Surratt
Jan/92

THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF LITERATURE
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM.

A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF ITS ORIGIN
AND PROGRESS.

Prepared, under the direction of the Council,

By

EDWARD W: BRABROOK, F.S.A.

*Late Secretary R.S.L.; Vice-President Anthropological Institute;
Chief Registrar of Friendly Societies.*

LONDON:
HARRISON AND SONS, ST. MARTIN'S LANE,
Printers in Ordinary to Her Majesty.

1891.

Royal Society of Literature.

A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF ITS ORIGIN AND PROGRESS.

IN October, 1820, in "accidental conversation," a "person" who can be identified as Thomas Burgess, then Bishop of St. David's, afterwards of Salisbury, suggested to another the advantages which might be expected from the institution of a Society of Literature, somewhat resembling the French Academy of Belles Lettres. The suggestion was communicated to Sir Benjamin Bloomfield, and by him to King George the Fourth, who had but recently ascended the throne.

On the 2nd November, the Bishop received His Majesty's command to attend at Carlton House to discuss the matter, and was directed to draw up a plan in elaboration of a general

A 2

outline which he had previously submitted. He also made a respectful communication on the matter to the Secretary of State for the Home Department.

His Majesty became the Patron of the proposed Society, and assigned out of his Privy Purse the annual sum of 1,100 guineas to be applied in pensions of 100 guineas each to ten Royal Associates, and (as at first proposed) in a premium of 100 guineas for a prize dissertation. Bishop Burgess's biographer (Harford, p. 344) says that the King told the Dean of Salisbury that this munificence on his part arose from a misconception of the Bishop's. The King had intended to give £1,000 down, and an annual subscription of £100 only; but the Bishop proclaimed so widely the King's munificent intention of giving 1,000 guineas a year, and it was commented on in the Press in terms so eulogistic, that he was obliged to acquiesce in it, and did so cheerfully.

By May, 1822, a sufficient number of sub-

scribers had associated themselves with the proposed Society to enable a provisional Council to be formed under the presidency of the Bishop, who met the obstacles opposed to the formation of the Society with his characteristic perseverance.

One plausible objection raised was, that under cover of literary discussion, incessant controversies on political and religious topics might be raised, and the Society, under its Royal patronage, made an instrument of attack or defence of particular sects or parties according to the passions or interests of individual members.

It was not till the 2nd June, 1823, that a Constitution and Regulations were ready to be submitted by the Bishop to the King, and received his Majesty's approval under his sign manual, communicated to his Lordship by Sir William Knighton, a name still associated with the Society as that of one of its Vice-Presidents.

On the 17th June the first meeting of the

Society, convened by public advertisement and by circular, was held at the house of the Literary Fund in Lincoln's Inn Fields. At this meeting the Officers and Council of the Society were elected as follows:—

President: The Bishop of St. David's (afterwards of Salisbury).

Vice-Presidents: The Bishop (C. J. Blomfield) of Chester (afterwards of London); the Lord Chief Justice (Abbott; afterwards Baron Tenterden); the Right Hon. J. C. Villiers; the Right Hon. Sir Gore Ouseley; the Hon. G. Agar Ellis; Sir James Mackintosh; the Ven. Archdeacon Nares; Colonel William Martin Leake.

Treasurer: Archibald E. Impey.

Librarian: The Rev. H. H. Baber.

Secretary: The Rev. R. Cattermole.

Council: The Marquis of Lansdowne, Lord Grenville, Lord Morpeth, Sir Thomas Acland, Bart., Sir Alexander Johnstone, Francis Chantrey, Taylor Combe, the Rev. G. Croly,

James Cumming, William Empson, the Rev. Dr. Gray, Prince Hoare, William Jerdan, the Ven. Archdeacon Prosser, the Rev. Dr. Richards, the Rev. Charles Sumner.

At this time the Society appears to have consisted of about 120 Members, the three Royal Dukes, of York, Clarence, and Cambridge, having been the first Fellows enrolled after the King, and each having contributed a composition of 100 guineas. Lord Bexley, the venerable Bishop of Durham (Shute Barrington), and the Rev. Lewis Way made similar liberal donations to the funds of the Society.

Two guineas was fixed by the regulations as the minimum annual subscription, but a great number of the Fellows subscribed five and ten guineas each. Among these were the Dukes of Newcastle and Rutland, and several Bishops and Peers.

The first Council Meeting was held on Saturday, 21st June, 1823, at the apartments of the Rev. H. H. Baber in the British Museum ;

and the first Ordinary Meeting on 5th November, when Granville Penn, Fellow of the Society, read an account of an unknown manuscript of 1422, illustrating the last declaration of Henry the Fifth. The reading of the paper was not completed until the meeting of 19th November.

The Council proceeded, among its first duties, to the election of the ten Royal Associates, who were to be persons of distinguished learning, authors of some creditable work of literature, and men of good moral character. Those selected were:—

Rev. Edward Davies, Author of Celtic Researches.

Rev. John Jamieson, D.D., F.R.S.E.

Rev. T. R. Malthus, F.R.S.

T. J. Mathias, F.R.S., F.S.A., Author of Runic Odes

J. Millingen, F.S.A., Author of Peintures Antiques.

Sir Wm. Ouseley, LL.D., Author of Persian Miscellanies.