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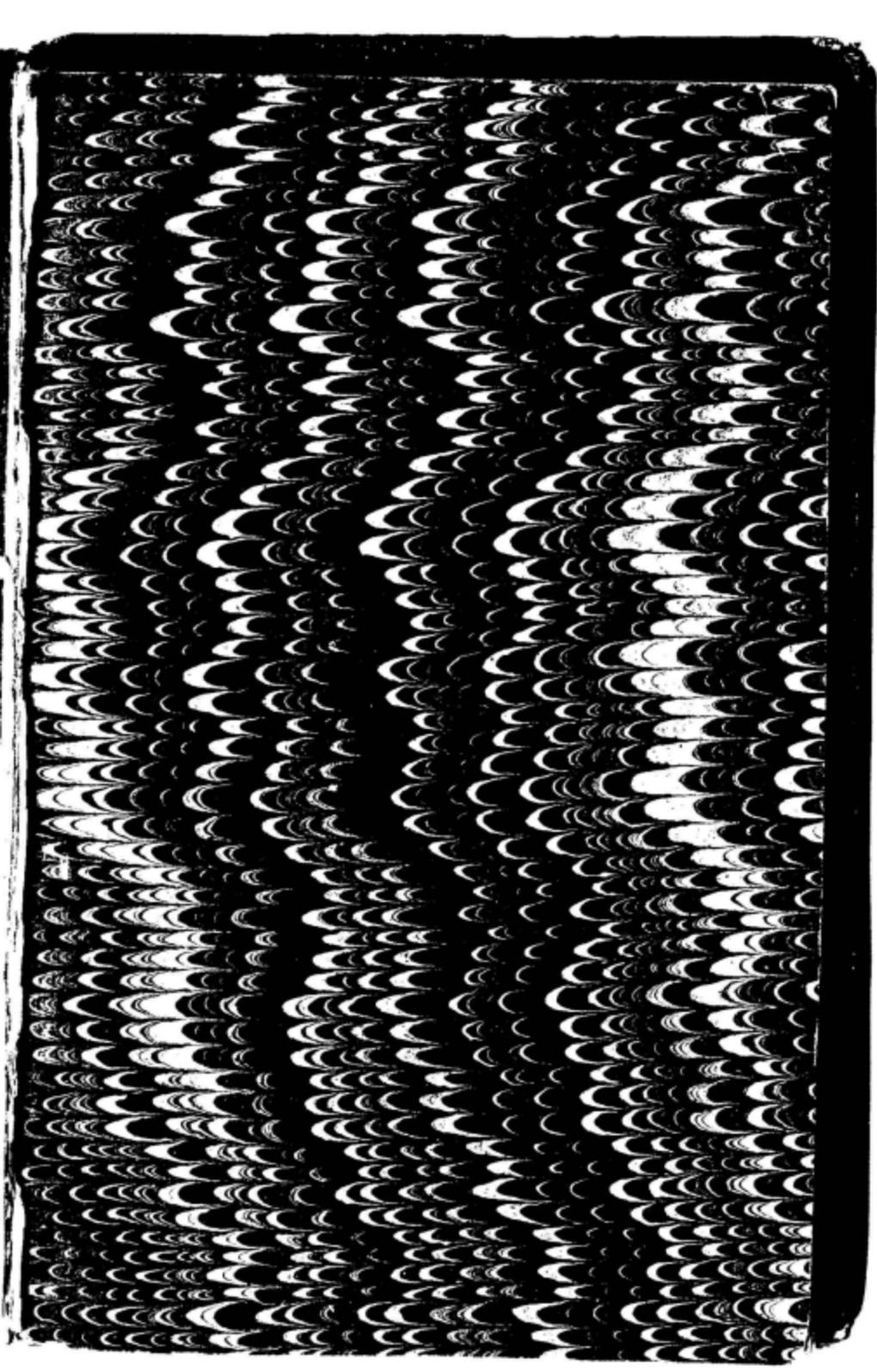
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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.



NARRATIVE
OF
MARY HARBRIDGE.



Boston:
MASS. SABBATH SCHOOL SOCIETY,
No. 13 Cornhill.

1839.



FRONTISPIECE.

“ASLEEP IN CHRIST:”

A

SHORT NARRATIVE

OF

MARY HARBRIDGE,

AN ENGLISH SABBATH SCHOOL SCHOLAR.

By her Pastor.

WRITTEN FOR THE MASS. S. S. SOCIETY, AND REVISED
BY THE COMMITTEE OF PUBLICATION.

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1839.

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NARRATIVE
OF
MARY HARBRIDGE.

MARY HARBRIDGE was born in a pleasant; rural village in England, which was blest with its humble meeting-house, and Sabbath school. She was very fond of her Sabbath school and of her books, and very quick in committing her lessons to memory. Nothing could induce her, when in health, to be absent; and while present, she conducted

herself with a degree of propriety far beyond her years.

What a blessing to the world are Sabbath schools! Ministers of the gospel, and teachers in Sabbath schools, can never know on earth, either the value or the full effect of their labors. At the very time when, perhaps, they may suppose they are laboring in vain, and spending their strength for nought, the Spirit of the living God may be, and no doubt often actually is, at work, silently, but effectually, upon the minds and hearts of the children of men. The good seed of the kingdom, scattered by the anxious hand

of the pastor or teacher, takes root, and springs up in fruit which redounds to the great Husbandman's praise.

Mary was not only a regular, orderly, attentive, and diligent scholar, in the school, but when the hour of public worship arrived, and the teachers and the taught became alike hearers of the word of God, she was marked by the peculiar attention which she paid, for a person so young, to the preaching of the gospel. With intense eagerness has she been seen to listen to the voice of the minister, when warning men of

their danger, and exhorting them to repentance and faith in the Savior's name. Perhaps, even then, the Lord Jesus was drawing her heart to himself, and preparing her youthful and tender spirit for his heavenly kingdom. But, whenever divine grace began to work on her heart, there is clear evidence to show that she was a genuine partaker of that grace.

It pleased God to afflict her, for above a year before her death, with sickness and disease, which prevented her attendance at school and public worship. This she often regretted, and longed for the period

to arrive, when she should again attend both those means of grace. But her heavenly Father ordered it differently from her expressed hopes and wishes. He had designed some better thing for her, even a habitation in the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Her malady increased, and her appearance gave evident indications that this earth was not long to be her home. But she heard and conversed of death with the utmost calmness, and without any dread. She had scarcely a wish to recover; and was not only willing, but even desirous to die.

I visited her frequently in her last illness, and spoke to her of God, of Christ, of sin, of pardon, of death, of heaven, of hell. And although she said but little, I had reason to conclude that she had a competent understanding of the meaning of my remarks; and the little that she did say was satisfactory and to the point. I told her that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and that he loved little children, when they sought him in prayer, and depended on him to pardon and to save them: and when I asked her whether she knew who Jesus Christ was, and

whether she trusted in what he had done and suffered, in order that she might be saved, she gave such answers as satisfied me that she was one of those whom the Savior deigns to love, and of whom a portion of his heavenly kingdom is composed. I never left her, without commending her in prayer to that Savior, whom it was my honor and happiness to recommend to her confidence and her affection.

One morning, not long before her death, she surprised her afflicted mother by telling her of the difficulty which she had felt, in the preceding night, while engaged in

prayer. The conclusion to which we came, from her account of the exercise through which she had passed, was, that it was Satan, the great tempter and enemy of souls, who was distressing and harassing this heir of glory. What a mercy it is, that, when Satan desires to have us, that he may sift us as wheat, our compassionate High-Priest prays for us, that our faith may not fail!

Her decline was very gradual, but not so much so, but that approaching dissolution was apprehended for a considerable time before she departed. Yet, before

her death was really apprehended, she said to her mother one day, about the middle of a week, "O mother, I should so like to have died last Sabbath."

"Should you, my dear?" said her mother. "But why last Sabbath?"

"Because," said she, "I felt so happy; and I thought that if I had died then, I should go to be with Jesus for ever."

It is remarkable, that three weeks from the day to which she referred, and, consequently, on the Sabbath-day, she sweetly slept in Jesus, and we trust, woke up in his eternal embrace.

From being a robust and healthful girl, she was reduced almost to a skeleton, and was the subject of extreme weakness; but she was mercifully preserved from feeling much pain, except, indeed, as death approached, nature had a few struggles in effecting the separation of the soul from the body. But, if they were sharp, they were few, and soon over.

Her thoughts did not seem to be so much taken up about her body, as about heaven. And, young as she was, she felt and expressed solicitude about her parents and relatives, with regard to spiritual

things. On one occasion, she said, "O that my dear father and mother were going with me to glory!" And on another occasion, she called her elder sister to her bedside, and exhorted and charged her to be a good girl, that they might meet in heaven at last.

But the time was rapidly approaching, when the meek, the gentle, the patient and pious Mary Harbridge must die. Death had already, and for many days past, marked her as his prey. The week wore away, and her languid frame grew weaker and weaker towards its close. Often had she lisped out

her desires, of herself, in prayer, or united in the prayers which had been presented on her behalf. But on the last night of her last week on earth, as though she had already tasted of the bliss of heaven, and had become impatient to drink of the full river of its bliss, with an earnestness which surprised her sorrowing relatives, she frequently cried out to the Lord Jesus to come and receive her spirit. Her prayer was heard. Her desire to die on a Sabbath was gratified; though the Savior chose another Sabbath than the one to which she had referred.

Whilst preparing for public wor-

ship, I received a message from her parents that they thought she was dying, and requesting my attendance by her bedside. With melancholy pleasure I complied with this request, and found her literally "not far from the kingdom of God." A few words of comfort and hope were addressed to this dying child. A few questions were proposed to ascertain the state of her mind, now that she had entered "the valley of the shadow of death." Particularly, I asked her whether she was still and entirely relying on the merits and death of the Lord Jesus Christ for pardon and for heaven. Without

any hesitation, except such as was occasioned by her extreme weakness, and with energy and earnestness, she answered, "Yes, sir." I told her that I believed the blessed Savior would soon hear her prayer, and come and receive her spirit, and make it happy for ever in heaven. I commended her again to the mercy of God, and to the compassion and grace of the Savior, and bade her farewell. That was, as I thought many of my former visits would have been, my final interview with her. She continued, with the peacefulness and placidity of a lamb, panting away her life,

till about two o'clock the same day, Sabbath, May 28, 1837, when she sweetly fell asleep in Jesus, to commence, and enjoy, an eternal Sabbath in the paradise of God. She was in the twelfth year of her age.

I attended her remains to the house appointed for all living. And, as her emaciated body was committed to the silent grave, "earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be like unto his glorious body,

according to the mighty working, whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself,"* I cheerfully responded "Amen" to the delightful sentiment thus employed, at the grave of one who sleeps in Jesus, as I believed this our departed sister did.

"I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them."

* Church of England Burial Service, used at her funeral.

REMARKS.

1. What encouragement does this simple narrative afford to parents, ministers and Sabbath school teachers, in their efforts to train up children for God and for heaven. It is highly probable that, in this instance of early happy death, the instructions received in the Sabbath school were rendered permanent and availing, under the blessing of God, by the preaching of the word, and by parental instruction at home. Fellow-workers with God! how abundant and animating are

the motives which should sustain your efforts and enkindle your zeal. "The redemption of the soul is precious." "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good." Therefore, "let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due

season we shall reap, if we faint not."

2. The young may see, from hence, that death is no respecter of persons or of ages. Whenever he receives his commission, he promptly fulfils it. None are too young to die. A great proportion of mankind do actually die in early life. How unspeakably important, then, is it, that young persons should earnestly seek the possession of true religion, and an interest by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, as the preparation absolutely necessary for death and for heaven! Nor let any young person suppose

that true religion will diminish their enjoyments, or disqualify them for future life. On the contrary, it will afford them the highest satisfaction on earth, and fit them for heaven whenever they are called to die. But, without religion, they will live unblest, and die accursed. “He that believeth on the Son (of God) hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.” Jesus Christ is able and willing to save, even to the uttermost, all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. To

banish despair, and to inspire hope, he most mercifully declares, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out."

Reader! "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."



H Y M N .

Lord, what is life?—'Tis like a flower
That blossoms and is gone ;
We see it flourish for an hour,
With all its beauty on ;
But death comes like a wintry day,
And cuts the beautiful flower away.

Lord, what is life?—'Tis like the bow
That glistens in the sky ;
We love to see its colors glow,
But while we look, they die :
Life fades as soon : to-day 'tis here,
To-night perhaps 'twill disappear.

Six thousand years have passed away,
Since life began at first ;
And millions, once alive and gay,
Are dead and in the dust :
For life in all its health and pride,
Hath death still waiting by its side.

Lord, what is life?—If spent with thee,
 In duty, praise and prayer,
 However long or short it be,
 We need but little care :
 Because eternity will last
 When life and death itself are past.

Death of a Sabbath Scholar.

I saw a bud, both fair and bright,
 Its leaves were fast unfolding ;
 I saw't expand, with pure delight,
 New beauties were disclosing.

It bloomed awhile, with brilliant hue,
 Then every leaf was fading ;
 I looked again this bud to view,—
 Death's frosts had been invading.

Nor flower, nor stem, nor root was seen,
Where once this bud was blooming ;
Nought but the fragrance now remained,
The atmosphere perfuming.

It was a plant of heavenly clime,
Celestial sunbeams needing ;
Without these rays it died in prime,
Its homeward course then speeding.

My youthful friends, this blooming bud,
Was Mary,—when rejoicing ;
Her mortal frame by death's stern rod,
Like faded leaves was wasting.

This fragrance too, a lesson speaks
Of something yet as living,—
Of virtues, and a spirit meek,
Her mortal frame surviving.

Ye mourning friends, lift up your eyes,
Behold this spirit joining
With angel seraphs, in the skies,
Heaven's hallelujahs singing.

S. S. Visiter.

Funeral of a Sabbath Scholar.

I saw a gentle, infant train
 Surround an open tomb,
And heard their simple, dirge-like strain
 Rise plaintive 'mid the gloom.

Ah, why should they, in life's gay dawn,
 Thus chant the mourner's stave?
So lately from the cradle drawn,—
 Why throng they to the grave?

But there, in narrow coffin laid,
 A little form was seen,
In death's habiliments arrayed,
 All pallid and serene ;

And when with mortal pain he strove,
 “ Friends, will you come,” he cried,
“ And once more sing the hymn I love,
 My clay-cold bed beside ?”

He sank, as withering buds decay,—
In faith and hope he fled ;
And now, how sweet that solemn lay
Swells o'er his lowly bed !

But ere in earth's dark mouldering breast,
That beauteous child they lay,
His fond companions closely pressed,
To kiss the breathless clay.

Yet still, no tear of frantic grief
Those brilliant eyes distained ;
No lawless sob, that mocks relief,
The parting moment pained.

Light is the burden of the breast,
Whose undeveloped powers,
Mark, in its buried playmate's rest,
Nought save a couch of flowers.

With lamblike brow, and eye intent,
They watched the closing ground,
Until the verdant turf was blent
Firm o'er the narrow mound.

And then each lowly bending head
 Revealed a pensive grace,
 As silent, two and two, they sped
 Forth from that hallowed place,—
 Pondering, perchance, that never more,
 That buried boy must share
 Their sports around his father's door,
 At summer evening fair ;—

Or musing on his dying words,—
 “ God bless my teacher dear,
 He led me in the way to heaven,—
 So death I do not fear.”

For who may scan what holy seed
 In infant hearts is sown,
 Until that awful book they read
 Before the Judge's throne,—

Which spreading wide, a flaming scroll,
 When skies and seas depart,
 Unfolds each secret of the soul,
 And crowns the pure in heart.

S. S. Visiter.



