

MEMOIR

OF

MISS BARBARA WILSON,

OF LEITH.

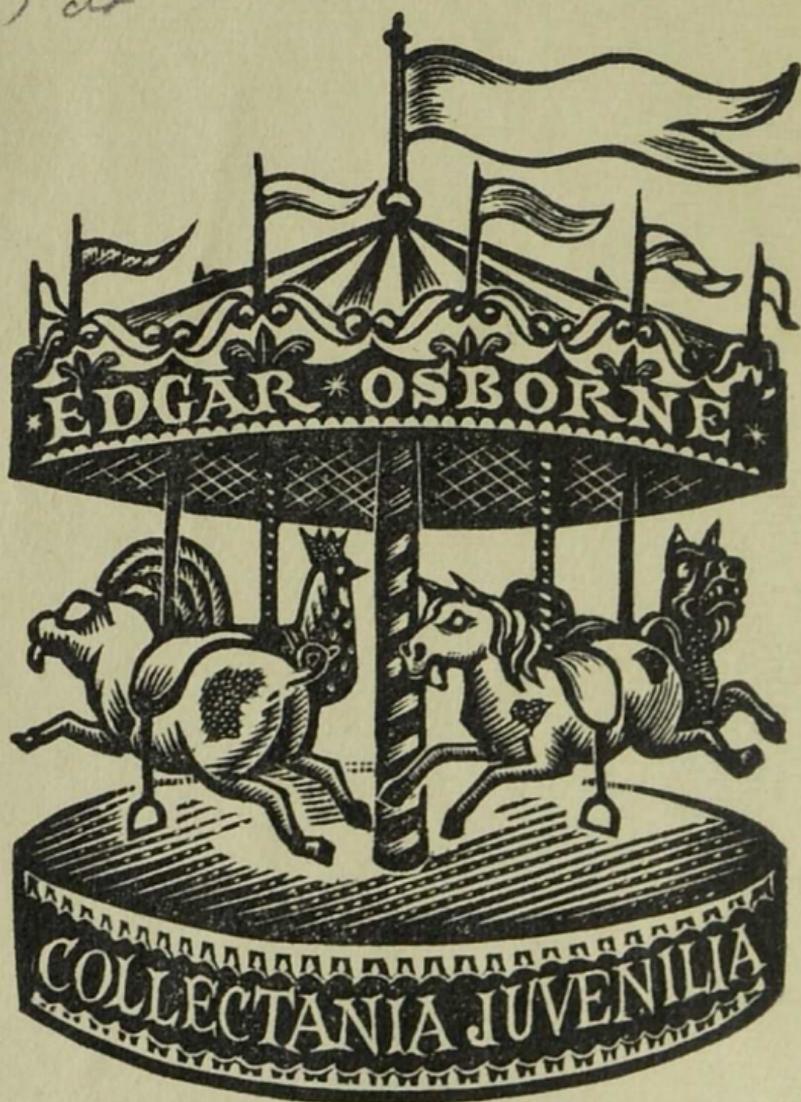
BY

HER MOTHER.

EDINBURGH :
GRANT & TAYLOR ALBANY STREET.
CHARLES ZEIGLER, SOUTH BRIDGE.
GLASGOW : G. GALLIE.

1845.

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MEMOIR.

In the month of February 1802, and in the fifteenth year of her age, our daughter Barbara was seized with a nervous complaint, which at first did not seem alarming, but which at last, in spite of all medical skill, proved mortal. This trial, though heavy and severe to flesh and blood, —a chastisement not joyous but grievous in the extreme,—did yet, to the eternal praise of the exceeding riches of free grace, and of the truth of the Divine testimony, nevertheless afterwards yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness.

In the month of November, that same year, I was seized with the influenza, and continued feverish till January. My daughter Barbara, who had been, during the past year, in a declining state, was in a moment, in this month of January, while I was confined to bed, seized with cramp in both hands and feet, attended by faintings and heavy sickness. Flannel, dipped in warm water, and then wrung, was applied to her hands and feet, after which she recovered a little. I then caused her to be laid in bed beside myself. My heavenly Father saw meet to

grant me recovery, affording me strength to wait on my sweet charge till she was removed from all created enjoyments below.

I have to commemorate what I witnessed of the wondrous loving-kindnesses performed by the Lord, in the time of her low and distressed state. This time of affliction was to her a time of love and of merciful visitation. The Lord brought her into the wilderness, and caused her to pass under the rod, in awakening, convincing, and causing her to cry out in the bitterness of her spirit,—‘What shall I do to be saved!’ but eternal praise be ascribed to Him, the God of all comfort and sweet consolation, who in this dark and momentous hour left not his work in her soul unfinished, but in wonderful sovereignty and condescension, in infinite love and mercy, brought her within the bond of the everlasting covenant, and poured into her soul the refreshing oil of hope, peace and joy, praise and consolation.

A few days after she had been visited by this affliction, one night while in bed, she awoke me, saying, ‘O mother, many gospel sermons have I heard, and many opportunities have I had of embracing the Saviour; but, oh, I doubt I have neglected them all!’ I observed that she was much agitated; but to her most grievous complaint I was enabled to reply, by repeating some promises that appeared suitable to her present case, and also by speaking of the freedom and riches of grace, and of the all-sufficiency of the Saviour to save the chief of sinners.

The progress of affliction in her body, attend-

ed with such anguish of spirit as at times almost overwhelmed her, doubled this trial to me. It was, indeed, most grievous. My bowels yearned over my distressed and disconsolate child; yet, as I could look back and view the time when, in my own soul, I had experienced the awakening and convincing work of the Divine Spirit of God, and also his most gracious and powerful influences, whereby my mind was savingly enlightened in the knowledge of Christ Jesus my only Saviour; so I had hope that this was in her case, also, a work preparatory to her conversion—a work of the Third Person of the ever-adorable Trinity, who, according to the economy of grace and redemption, proceeds in wonderful condescension to awaken the dead sinner, to arouse him to thoughtfulness, and to convince him of his lost and undone state by the fall of the first Adam, preparatory to the glorious work of enlightening his mind in the knowledge of the only Saviour, and of the way of life through him, whereby he takes of the things of Christ and shows them to the poor sinner, whom he has awakened and convinced.

The following blessed, and seasonable, and sweet promises, were to me, at this time, the balm of Gilead that strengthened and upheld my wounded spirit. ‘A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory.’ ‘I will be the God of your seed.’ I felt in consequence, as it were the actings of faith accompanied by the mingled feelings of fear, and earnest desire. These things were the causes of

frequent errands to the throne of free grace and rich mercy; were matter of petitions put into my mouth to plead there; and did in the end become matter of joy, thanksgiving and praise. But of this more particularly afterwards. I return to narrate, in so far as was competent for me to discern them, the particulars of the work of grace begun and carried on in the case of my dear child.

Like as a father pitieth his children, so, yea infinitely more, did her heavenly Father pity her, in her low and afflicted state, and time of great extremity. Yea, these wounds, these greivous wounds, made in her soul by the convincing work of the Holy Spirit, by means of the law, did the God of all comfort most tenderly bind up. He healed the diseases of her soul, and crowned her with loving-kindnesses and tender mercies; her dark night soon issued in a morning of hope, joy, and eternal consolation.

In that dark season of storm, and tempest, and fear, she remained three days. On one of the nights of this season, whilst in bed bathed in tears, and in extreme bitterness of soul, she cried aloud, 'O what would I not do to be interested in the Saviour!' Through grace I was immediately directed to reply,—'My dear, you have nothing to do but just to believe, and to receive the Saviour, who hath already wrought all the work that was necessary for your salvation; who, in his doing and dying, fulfilled all righteousness, fully satisfied the justice of the sin-avenging God, magnified the law, and made it honourable, and brought in an everlasting righteousness. This

righteousness is freely offered to you as a complete covering and a sure foundation to which to betake yourself by faith, and on which to place with confidence all your hopes for time and for eternity.' These words silenced her, so that she fell into a natural sleep.

Next morning, about three o'clock, she awoke me with these words: 'O mother, I think I have got a promise,—I'll tell it to you—it is this—'Fear thou not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am thy God;' but oh, I cannot apply this promise. O mother, I am afraid to sleep, lest I should forget it. O mind this promise.' Being much fatigued, she again fell asleep. In a short time after, however, she awoke me, saying, 'O mother, I have forgotten my promise. Do you mind it?' I could not recollect it at the moment. As she seemed quite uneasy, I said to her, 'O my dear, do not fret; your God who gave you the promise, will bring it again to your remembrance.' In a few moments she cried out, 'O mother, I mind, I mind my promise. Take the Bible and search for that promise.' I did so, and on searching the repository of eternal truth, found, as in a golden mine, in the prophecies of Isaiah, chap. xii. ver. 10, that blessed and comfortable word of mercy and salvation, which became a staff and stay to her; a lamp to her feet and a light to her path. Although still she complained that she could not particularly apply the promise by faith, yet she said to me, 'Mother, can you think what has forcibly come into my mind? You remember that Peter, while walking on the water, was afraid of sinking, and

cried out to the Saviour; and that the Saviour immediately stretched forth his hand and caught him, and said unto him, 'O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt! While thinking of and repeating the words of the Saviour, she said, 'Although I cannot particularly apply the promise, yet I think I am willing to wait on him;' and then repeated several texts of Scripture, particularly some of the first verses of the Fortieth Psalm, beginning with these words,

'I waited for the Lord my God,
And patiently did bear;'

as also the fifth verse of the Sixty-second Psalm,

'My soul, wait thou with patience
Upon thy God alone.'

I answered, 'My dear, patience is a promised grace, a gift from himself; and be assured, that when this grace is bestowed, all other promised graces will follow.'

From this morning may be dated the beginning of months in her experience—a sweet morning indeed—a morning to be held in everlasting remembrance,—a morning in which her mind began to be savingly enlightened in the knowledge of her dear Redeemer; in which the promised Comforter came to the relief of her soul, by teaching her, and bringing to her remembrance, words of grace and truth by which he was saved!

From this morning, the grace of patience was most remarkably bestowed on her, and took the place of all those tumultuous perplexities and fruitless labours under which she was brought through the power of unbelief and legality,—

these chief evils, whence arise our natural proneness of heart to work for life, seeking after righteousness by works. Now she began to feel a sweet calmness of mind, and now her whole desire was to hear and be taught, particularly from the Bible, the way of life and salvation through the Saviour. She was now evidently one of those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, and whom our Lord pronounces blessed. She searched for wisdom as for hid treasure, yea, she lifted up her voice for understanding. To the instructions and advice of christian friends and acquaintances she was singularly attentive, and usually desired them, before they departed, to pray with and for her.

One day the Rev. David Ross, of Burntisland, called, and while talking particularly concerning the care of the Shepherd of Israel, said, 'Whether life or death may be the issue, there can be no loss in being prepared for the worst. In this case death will be to you only the shadow of death; and this Shepherd will be with you to support, uphold and carry you safely through the valley of the shadow of death.' Of these words she never lost sight, but spoke of them even in her last moments.

Her eyes having become very weak through her affliction, I read to her frequently; and while reading the precious promises recorded in the thirty-seventh chapter of Ezekiel, she heard and spoke of them with wonder and joy; and found rest and comfort in them, especially in what is said in the 14th verse,—'And I will put my Spirit in you, and ye shall live.'

Our minister, the Rev. R. Culbertson, who frequently visited her, joined with her in prayer, and explained places of Scripture to her, asked her one day if there was any part of Scripture rather than another which she wished him to explain. After he was gone, she said, 'You know, mother, that I am backward in asking questions; but inform him yourself that I just wish him to speak of the doing and dying of the Saviour.' Thus, through the saving influences of God the Spirit, was she made earnestly to breathe, and hunger, and thirst after saving knowledge, and the promise was graciously accomplished in her experience—she was filled—she was made to understand the fear of the Lord, and to find the knowledge of her God; for the Lord giveth wisdom, and out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.

The Doctor who attended her, having directed that she should be taken to the country, she pled that the place of her residence might be at some distance from home, in order that she might enjoy the greater quiet, be more retired, and see as few visitants as possible, beside those from whose conversation she might derive instruction and spiritual edification. I took her, accordingly, to lodgings in the country about two miles distant from Leith. By this time she was so much reduced, and so weak, that although the greatest care was taken to have the chaise driven softly, it was with the greatest difficulty I could support her from fainting. However, she was safely carried to her lodgings. Next day, from the impression made by change of air, and from

the fatigue she had undergone in being removed, she became exceedingly sick, and had also a touch of cramp in her stomach. At this sudden attack I was greatly alarmed, and sent an express for her father and her brother David, thinking that this attack would presently issue in death. However, the time of her departure had not yet arrived. She recovered again, and became able to speak, though in a tone of voice scarcely audible. With her feeble voice she said to me, 'O mother, I am not afraid to die, since now I can apply the promise to myself. I claim him as my own God. O yes, yes, he is mine own God.' After her father and brother came, she grasped them both, expressing her interest in God as her own God, with great joy and gladness beaming in her countenance, and evidently seeming to wish that we might all rejoice with her. About an hour and a-half after this she became exceedingly low and speechless so low indeed, that we could scarcely perceive her breathing, and in this state she remained about seven hours.

These seemed to us to be her last moments, at which I, in particular, was much alarmed, having been all along blinded to her real state, for indeed I fondly continued expecting her recovery almost to the hour of her death. Yet neither was this the time of her departure, although, had this been the case, it would have become me, with humble resignation, yea, with thanksgiving and praise, to have said amen to the Divine demand; especially after having heard from her lips those comfortable words,

expressive of the full assurance of her faith, whereby she claimed an interest in God as her own God; after having heard her declare that she was not afraid to die; and after the satisfactory evidence afforded me, that this declaration was made in consequence of her beholding the sting of death removed by the obedience and death of the Saviour. After this severe turn, however, she again in some degree recovered, and I too fondly flattered myself that complete restoration to health would be granted to her in due time.

In her natural disposition she was cheerful, pleasant and most engaging. Hence, although reduced to a state of great bodily weakness, she actively employed herself, as far as she was able, excepting when engaged in the exercises of reading, prayer and meditation, in needle-work, and in directing all the little affairs of our lodgings. What reason of thankfulness have I, even when recollecting these circumstances, as in providence they were the means of mitigating her distress, and of making the present time seem less heavy and tedious. Manifold were the tender mercies which our heavenly Father displayed towards us, when, separated from the rest of our family, we dwelt together in this place by our two-selves alone. This little place was a Bethel. Surely, the Lord was in that place, though I knew it not.

Although she seldom complained of acute pain, yet considering that she was frequently seized with fainting, and that her bodily strength was sensibly declining; considering also the clear

evidences she displayed of being fast ripening for glory, it might have been expected that I would be prepared to meet the heavenly call; but alas! how was I blinded, and how did I shun each intimation of the fatal event. Vainly and fondly grasping at creature enjoyment, my soul was cleaving to the dust, and sought to retain a sweet flower that was quickly withering away,—a shade that was fast declining,—a beloved child, that was within a few weeks of passing through the Jordan of death into the promised land of eternal rest.

About four weeks before she was taken home to her mansion in glory, I said, ‘My dear, do you think you will be spared and recover health again.’ She answered, with a smile, ‘It may be that I may recover: you know there is nothing impossible with God.’ After pausing a few minutes, however, she said, ‘O no, no, mother,—it is even a hard thought to think of parting with father and mother, and sisters and brothers, and with all earthly enjoyments; but I am going to the full enjoyment of my God and my Saviour. I once thought to have been spared to take care of you, and to have been a comfort to you, but the Lord himself will take care of you, and he will comfort you.’

When reading any part of the divine testimony, and particularly the prophecies of Isaiah concerning the work of the Saviour, she became elevated with joy, and spoke with such clear views of the undertaking and work of the Saviour in the room of his people, that she seemed capable of teaching instead of needing to be herself taught.

She frequently expressed her great astonishment at the perfidy of these three kingdoms, in their breach of covenant, after having come under vows and engagements so solemn to Almighty God; whilst especially the dreadful contempt poured forth against the great and terrible God, in burning these covenants publicly in the cities, by the hands of the hangman, filled her with horror and alarm.

Her spirit sunk within her at the awful lengths to which these apostates went in persecuting the Lord's faithful witnesses, while she wondered at the patience and forbearance of God, in not avenging, long ere now, the breach of covenant, and the bloodshed of his witnesses.

About this time her brother D., being about to set off for the Divinity Class at Whitburn, came to take farewell of her, not thinking this would be the last opportunity he would enjoy of conversing with his sister in this world. While by themselves he proposed to her a few questions for his own information and satisfaction, relating particularly to the grounds on which she rested her hopes. When I came into the room, he told me that she gave the most satisfactory evidence that her hopes were built on the only sure foundation, Christ Jesus. We then joined in prayer, and found, in the discharge of this duty and unspeakable privilege, much enlargement of heart, particularly in pleading for a sufficiency of grace, and for the light of the Divine countenance to uphold and comfort her in walking through the valley of the shadow of death.

Her disease was now making rapid progress

towards her dissolution. So much had her weakness increased towards the end of this week, that she could not move without aid.

She spoke often now, as well as formerly, of her brother J. with the most affectionate concern, and regretted that she would never see him in this life.

On Sabbath and Monday she was much overcome by heavy sickness. On the latter of these days she frequently repeated to me her promise—her first promise, ‘Fear thou not, for I am thy God;’ and said, ‘Mother, I see now that by getting one promise we get all the promises;’ and then cried out in an ecstasy of joy, ‘O that shepherd of Israel who is to carry me safely through death!’ I said to her, ‘My dear, you have mind of Mr Ross’s words;’ to which she replied, ‘O mother, I never forget these words.’

On Tuesday evening, she was so afflicted with violent headaches, that she could find no ease. Yet, in the midst of her trouble, she displayed great patience and cheerful resignation to the will of her heavenly Father. Early on Wednesday morning, she desired me to send for her father. He came that same morning before six. By this time the violence of the pain in her head had abated. At the sight of her father she was overjoyed, seemed to gather new strength, addressed him in the most affectionate and endearing language, and soon turning the discourse to spiritual things, spoke with great composure and cheerfulness of mind, and with much propriety, and even sublimity of expression, of the heavenly country, of her interest in

the Redeemer, and of her unshaken confidence and full assurance of entering in a little, and fully possessing the promised land. After having then addressed her father, she, in the most endearing manner, entreated us both, together with her aunt, to sit down before her bedside and take our breakfast, pressing us to eat heartily. I wished her to partake with us. 'O no,' said she; 'I know both my dear father and you need your breakfast, but I shall take a mouthful of whey.' About eight o'clock she took farewell of her father. His feelings could stand this trial no longer. Besides, as owing to a particular circumstance it became absolutely necessary for him to return home, and as we thought she might survive a few days longer, he left us. Immediately after her father was gone, with her feeble strength she raised herself up in her bed, and with the most anxious and expressive look addressed me thus,—'O mother, there is no time for me to speak of earthly things, but this you must do. Take some of my father's hair, of your own, and of my hair,—cause a jeweller to put it in a topaz-pin, pay it with the money I have gathered, and send it to my brother James.' On this she desired to join in worship, which we did, sung part of a psalm that I do not now recollect, read the 15th chapter of the 1st epistle to the Corinthians, and the 4th chapter of the Revelation. I observed that this chapter contains a deep mystery, which it is impossible now to explain, but in a short time you, my dear, will get it all fully explained. In prayer I found at this time, as on former occa-

sions, that when petitioning for her temporal recovery I could scarcely command one word to plead in her behalf; but when pleading that resignation, preparation, sufficiency of grace, and an abundant entrance into the heavenly kingdom in glory might be administered to her, the case was quite otherwise, for then I experienced freedom and fluency.

About the tenth hour she was seized with faintings. After recovering a little, she was again overcome with heavy sickness and said, 'O mother, when will this sore fight be over?' I immediately repeated her promise, saying, 'O my dear, do not fret; your God will strengthen and help,—he will help and uphold thee with the right hand of his righteousness.' According to this promise, that she had confidently received by faith, she was, in this hour of conflict with the last enemy, strengthened and upheld, so that she complained no more.

About the twelfth hour our minister, Mr C., called. She desired him to pray, with which he complied. In prayer he requested, that if the Lord did not see meet to bring her back from the gates of death, he would grant that, like good old Simeon, she might have to say, 'Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.' At these words she smiled, and moved her head, with joy in her countenance. Mrs J., a christian acquaintance whom she much esteemed, being present, spoke with her, of whom, in the most christian manner, she took farewell. In

like manner did she take farewell of her minister. Both having departed, there remained with us only one young lady, who had been very useful to us in the time of this affliction. In the most affectionate manner she embraced her aunt, and took farewell of her. She desired her brother Alexander to come near her, of whom, after having advised and exhorted him in heavenly language, she likewise, in the most loving and affectionate manner, took farewell; as also of the above young lady, thanking her for the attention she had paid. At her desire I had sent an express for her sister Catherine, whom, with the greatest eagerness, she wished to see. It being now about two o'clock, she, turning her eyes towards the door, anxiously said, 'O, shall I not see my sister C.' At this very time C. was just entering the room. Immediately observing her, she said, with all her remaining strength, 'Come here my sister.' In the most loving and affectionate manner they embraced each other. In her heavenly frame she spoke of their being about to be separated for the present, but with cheerfulness reminded her that it would be but for a short time,—that they would meet again. 'Yes,' added she, while she seemed to collect and exert her whole strength and spirit to express herself, and did so in an ecstasy of joy, 'Yes, and meet again at the last day, and then to sing praises to all eternity.'

Turning from her sister, she threw her arms around me, grasping me to her breast and sweet

mouth. Fearing her natural feelings should overcome her feeble strength, and being myself already overcome by excessive grief, I said, 'O my dear, we are cleaving to the dust; it will not be long ere we meet never to part.' She added immediately, 'O yes,'—loosed her grasp,—held back her head and hand, but quickly took my hand again, holding it loosely. I observed to her that she was within a little of enjoying her inheritance. She smiled, moving her head with joy, and with her whole strength said aloud, 'That fadeth not away.' She then said quickly, 'Mother, turn me.' After turning her, I observed her, though still speaking, to fall exceedingly low. I listened, but could not distinctly hear her, and thinking she inclined to sleep, was afraid that by speaking she might be too much fatigued. Still expecting her time to be prolonged a little longer, and not viewing these words as the last I should hear from the lips of my sweet departing child, I only said, 'O my dear, I cannot hear you;' but she, having fought the good fight of faith, and finished her course with joy, to my deep consternation closed her eyes, and fell asleep in death.

She died on the 23d day of August, at three o'clock afternoon, being within a few months of the sixteenth year of her age.

The last words which, though indistinctly, I heard her utter I could not recollect till a few days afterwards, when they came afresh into my mind. They were these in 2d Peter: 'Looking

for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat.'

Although for the present this chastisement appeared most grievous, yet I found it at last, in sweet experience, yielding the peaceable fruits of righteousness. Yea, my sackcloth was loosed, and I was girded with gladness, to the end that my glory might sing praise, and never be silent. O that my heart were enlarged, and my mouth opened, in shewing abroad the praises of redeeming love, and in making thankful acknowledgments to the Lord my God of his great mercies, and of his faithfulness, displayed in the performance of his gracious and precious promises to me, and to my seed!

I must not omit mentioning what took place in providence, as bearing testimony to the truth of the mutual love and friendship of Christians, even in their early years.

E. Ellis, grandchild of my late pastor, the Rev. Adam Gib, was in her eleventh year seized with a decline, at about the same time as my daughter Barbara was seized with her affliction. These young saints, who bore a striking resemblance to one another in their personal affliction, having commenced a heart-love and sympathy for each other, did, during their illness, speak of one another, and by turns send gifts to each other of what they thought would be acceptable as tokens of affection.

My daughter B. often observed to me how delightfully she thought in sleep they were both entertained in breaking, and plentifully eating the most delicious and savoury bread. These young christian sisters, and fellow-partners in fatherly love and also in fatherly chastisement, partakers of the heavenly calling, and heirs of the heavenly kingdom, having mutually and mystically feasted on the bread of life, and having patiently endured, affording the fullest and clearest evidence that their hopes were fixed within the veil, whither the glorious forerunner had for them entered, did both upon the same day, being the 23d day of August, and within the space of three hours of each other, enter on the full possession of their everlasting inheritance, and on the eternal enjoyment of their God.

THE DYING SAINT.

From the Horæ Lyricæ of Dr Watts.

HARK ! she bids all her friends adieu ;
Some angel calls her to the spheres ;
Our eyes the radiant saint pursue,
Through liquid telescopes of tears.

Farewell, bright soul, a short farewell,
Till we shall meet again above,
In the sweet groves where pleasures dwell,
And trees of life bear fruits of love.

There glory sits on every face,
There friendship smiles in every eye,
There shall our tongues relate the grace,
That led us homeward to the sky.

O'er all the names of Christ our King,
Shall our harmonious voices rove ;
Our harps shall sound from every string,
The wonders of his bleeding love.

Come, sovereign Lord, dear Saviour, come,
Remove these separating days,
Send thy bright wheels to fetch us home ;
That golden hour, how long it stays !

How long must we lie ling'ring here,
While saints around us take their flight?
Smiling, they quit this dusky sphere,
And mount the hills of heavenly light,

Sweet soul, we leave thee to thy rest,
Enjoy thy Jesus, and thy God,
Till we, from bands of clay releast,
Spring out and climb the shining road.

While the dear dust she leaves behind,
Sleeps in thy bosom, sacred tomb!
Soft be her bed, her slumbers kind,
And all her dreams of joy to come.

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