

A
NARRATIVE

OF THE

L I F E

OF

MRS. HAMILTON.

WRITTEN BY HERSELF.

The following is a true account of the dealings of God with the Widow Sarah Hamilton, who was born and educated in the Romish Religion, and afterwards converted to the Christian Faith, as will appear in this Narrative.

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A NARRATIVE

OF THE

LIFE OF MRS. HAMILTON.

I WAS born in the city of Frankfort, in Germany, in the 7th year of my age my father came to Charleston, in South Carolina; his name was George Beckhouse, by profession a Roman Catholic. He lived at Charleston, until I was about 16 years of age, when I was married to Mr. Alexander Hamilton, an eminent merchant, who in the contest between Britain and America, was shot dead in his own house, which was consumed, with all our property, by fire. In this distressed situation, having no children except an adopted daughter, thus contemplating on my misfortune, my best friend with all our substance snatched from me, as it were in an instant, created in me new and awful sensations, which are beyond my power to relate. I then fled to a rich uncle for an asylum, who treated me with the greatest respect and attention, and welcomed me to his house and servants, with all the accommodations that they could yield or afford; he offered to make me his heir, and directed his servants to treat me with all the kindness and respect as though they were really mine. I lived there in the enjoyment

of all the comforts this world could afford, but was still disconsolate, in consideration of my heavy loss; and so dressed myself in mourning, and thus passed through some lonesome day and wearisome nights, for a considerable time; at length being desirous to obtain some relief, I began to seek after various means of recreations, until viewing one particular scene which brought the death of my husband to my mind with such powerful sensations, that I head nearly fainted. The shortness of life, and certainty of death; the fading nature of all worldly enjoyments were then plain to my view, and my distress was inexpressible. I went home, took my bed with a heavy heart drowned in melancholy, and with pensive mind and wearied limbs, I fell asleep and dreamed*. I thought I was in a beautiful place as ever I saw; where there was all the most truly delightful and fashionable things in the world; also cards and dice, plays that I had been familiar with in my younger days. We drank wine out of golden bowls, and had every thing the world deem delightful. I sat at the card table with an Episcopalian priest, and took a golden bowl and drank a health to him, and then casting my eyes forward, I beheld a beautiful field adorned with flowers of various kinds and fine colours and a great company of shining people, dressed in white

* Although some people may make light of all dreams, yet I would beg your pardon for inserting this, for it was peculiarly interesting to me, however foolish it may look to others.

robes, with white palms in their hands. They all sang with melodious harmony, such singing as I had never heard before. I saw also the angels from heaven, joining their songs with them. The melody, union and harmony of the scene was truly inexpressible. I then looked on the before mentioned priest, and he looked black and very disagreeable, and myself likewise, I then set down the bowl, & said to them, I must begone. As soon as I rose up I saw a great wall between me and those shining ones, the materials of which seemed to be of metal, stone and glass. As I looked earnestly I saw a place where I could go through only I must take off an extravagant head dress which I had on. I was determined that no ornament in the world should hinder me from the enjoyment of so happy a situation as I saw on the other side of the wall, or to deliver me from my disagreeable company. So I cast my head dress into the fire and came to the wall; but I discovered a great sea before me, and must of necessity pass through it in order to get to that beautiful field. While I was meditating how I should get thro' the sea, a negro came and pushed me into it: & it was very boisterous and the waves were so high, that I was soon drove ashore again. The Capt of these shining ones then came to me and said, Do you see a beautiful palace? I answered, Yes: which was as large as this globe, but it was still above this world, and had seats of solid gold all around it. And this beautiful man asked me, if I saw the golden seats. I told Him I did: He

told me - I should have one of those seats, provided I conquered my enemies. I now went with the greatest joy inexpressible; and there opened a bottomless pit immediately before me, and the mouth of the pit reached from wall to wall: and about three stories down here was a beam. And with grief I thought it was impossible for me to get to the palace; as I made a turn to go back, the ground gave way from under me, and I fell into the dismal pit, but happened to lie upon this beam, and there I sat three days. Then there came another man from those shining ones, and asked me, What I did there? I told him the pit was deep, and I could not get out, he then put his hand in his pocket and took out a small ball of thread, and told me to take hold of one end thereof. I told him, I was afraid the thread would break, and I should be entirely lost; but he told me nevertheless to take hold, *I got hold of it with both hands, and to my inexpressible joy, was immediately out of the horrible pit. I then awoke, and behold it was a dream.

After some months meditation on my dream, I fell asleep and dreamed the same dream again, and also a third time. This brought me to such serious reflections, that I might in a manner say, that I hardly durst sleep at all; yet was still at a loss for the interpretation of my dream. I arose very

* For this is Christ the rock,

early one morning and went to my uncle and aunt, and told them that I saw my uncle and aunt, the priest, and the people, extremely black in a dream, and that I felt very much concerned about it; but not so much as to prevent my going to balls, and other places, public where at times they would ask me to tell my dream, out of curiosity. I accordingly told it them frequently; and after a while by such conduct my troubles entirely left me. But in about a year and nine months thereafter, there came a gentleman from Georgia to visit me; he was a very rich man; and possessed wealth in abundance. The second time he visited me, he invited my uncle and aunt and myself to visit him, and see his plantation: accordingly we all went together, and beheld his situation, which was truly elegant. His house was very large and ornamented inside and out; on the top was a balcony, and a summer seat therein. The third time he came to visit me, he brought me just such a head dress as I dreamed about, and it pleased me. We concluded to marry, and appointed a time when the nuptial ceremony should be solemnized. But about that time there was a people called Baptists in that place, who were ridiculed, and all manner of evil spoken against them. I confess that I ha-

ted the very sight of th m, and had it been in my power, would soon have banished them out of my sight and the country too. The afore said gentleman took a walk one day, and when he returned, he told my uncle, that one of his slaves was that day going to be dipt by a man that lookéd more like a hangman than a priest; this much displeas'd me. I immediately replied, that I wonder'd gentlemen of note wou'd suffer such fellows to go about the country cheating and deceiving poor ignorant people in such a manner. My uacle said he would go and flog the slave home and not suffer the dirty wench to be so deluded, were it not thát a gentleman had appointed to visit him that day. I told him I would go, if he would furnith me with a carriage. Accordingly I went. I no sooner came to the place, than I saw the minister, and knew as soon as I saw him, although I never saw him before, that it was the same man as I saw in my dream, that handed me the ball of thread and helped me out of the pit. The sight of this man so affected my mind, that I was as one thunderstruck. He was the very one whom I saw amongst the shining throng of happy people, and I amongst the accursed black crew. I then thought I was cursed in very deed, which flung me immediately almost into despair; and thus in the greatest agony, I fell to the earth. Viewing myself undone for ever, and eter-

nally lost. I was in the most deplorable situation conceivable, and despaired of ever going from that place. I thought that the earth was just about to swallow me up alive, into everlasting destruction, of both soul and body, and really expected to fall immediately into the bottomless pit, where there was no recovery. My distress was so great, the people discovered it, gathered around me on all sides, and supposed me in a fit, and sought means to recover me, but in vain; for my distress was of such a nature that medical assistance was entirely baffled; I fainted and fell to the ground; they lifted me into the coach again, and carried me home to my uncle's house. A great company of people followed me. This situation of mine greatly exasperated the minds of the people; some swore they would kill the minister, because they supposed he had bewitched me: and my uncle immediately sent for the Romish Priest to dispel the witchcraft from me; but his presence was very disagreeable to me. I told him to be gone, for we were all going to hell together. Another minister then came to me, but I could not bear the sight of him neither, for it appeared to me that he had helped me to commit the unpardonable sin. I told him to be gone quick, and that he would neither go to heaven himself, nor let others: and as he was turning to go from me, my aunt told him not to mind what I said; for I was crazy.

Then this minister began to weep to see me in such a situation, and advised my uncle to send for that Baptist minister, to see if he could take the witchcraft from me. He accordingly sent for him seventy five miles. The minister willingly came—they set victuals and drink on the table for him, but durst not let even a servant go into the room where he was, lest he should bewitch them also. At length he came to speak with me, and asked me how I did: I told him I was a poor, miserable, lost creature. He told me, if I was lost, I was one of those very persons that Christ died for, and came to seek and to save. I told him that was impossible, for I had committed the unpardonable sin: he said that he thought that might be my mistake, for I did not know enough. After he had talked some time, he put his hand into his pocket and took out the New Testament: it was the first that ever I saw.* He read the third chapter of Mark, and gave his mind concerning the unpardonable sin. He told me he was going to visit a gospel sinner, whose case he thought was much worse than mine, this way of expressing himself frightened me very much indeed, for I now thought he did not understand my case at all: he said, God willing he would see me again to morrow. I said, pray Sir, don't forget me; and when he saw me so affected, he

* This alludes to the want of it in her education.

said, Shall I pray for you before I go? I answered Yes. What shall I pray for? I told him to pray that the Lord might have mercy on me; with these words he seemed affected, which gave me to understand that he thought there was no mercy for me; but he kneeled down and prayed; I kneeled also; and when he spake of the spotless purity of God, before whom finless angels veiled their faces, crying, Holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, and that the holiness and purity of God filled immensity. I thought it was impossible that I could have mercy; and when he had finished his prayer, he went away. After he was gone, I remembered that the man of God told me that Christ came to save even the worst of sinners, and I thought that I could not be worst than the vilest. I then considered that the spotless angels of whom he spake, would rejoice over one sinner that repenteth, though ever so vile. I then imagined myself in a great king's house, who had an only son, and one of the king's servants had committed crimes worthy of death, and the executioner was about to strike the fatal blow, when the king's son came forward and offered to die, that the servant might live, the which he did, and set the servant at liberty; which circumstance most readily applied to my case. I thought I was the very servant; surprising astonishment filled my soul. I beheld the son of

God expiring in agonies unknown, by the malicious rage of wicked men. I thought he died to save my life, and rose again for my justification, although I was at first at a loss to see how one could die for so many; but when I saw and considered that the natural sun could shine on thousands, and each person have as great a share of the sun as though he was alone, I by this similitude understood the mystery that although Christ died for many, yet each one had a whole Saviour. I then saw that God could be just and justify him that believeth in Jesus, even such a wretch as I was. In this view, no tongue can tell the extasy of joy that I was in, and became the subject of; my distress left me, and I could give glory to God with all my heart. I longed to praise him with every breath; my prayer was, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Lord, speak, for thy servant heareth.

Upon my uncle and aunt hearing this of me, they came to the door; I said to them, dear uncle and aunt, I shall not go to hell for Christ died for me and I have got a whole Saviour. My uncle then shut the door, but my aunt burst into tears in hearing me talk on this subject. It then came into my mind that Christ was baptized of John in Jordan and I must follow the example, and convince the world that I was not ashamed to own my Saviour before men. The next day the minister came,

as he told me, with the man whom he went to visit, and I told them that I had found comfort, that Jesus had appeared for my relief, and that I was now willing to take Him for my prophet, priest, and king; that I felt determined to obey Him in all things; and that I thought His laws and commands were perfectly just, and gladdening to every obedient soul. This declaration from me, came so unexpected to the minister, that he was overjoyed and surprised, and said to the other man, that yesterday was the first time that ever I heard any thing read from the Bible, and now she is able to teach me (said he) Glory to God in the highest, for He teaches as never man taught neither is heavenly instruction dependent wholly on human education. I then asked him if he was willing to baptize me; he told me he was glad of the opportunity, if I desired it; I told him I longed to follow my Lord and Master down the banks of Jordan, and that he would have to send for me, for I could not go to the place myself; he told me he would, and accordingly sent for me the next Lord's day morning. When I came down to the water side, I related the dealings of God with me, which account proved instrumental in God's hand's of the awakening of fifteen souls. After the baptism was administered, they helped me home to my uncle's; but behold he shut the door against

me, and refused to let me in. I called to my daughter, but she gave me no answer. I now began to conclude, that he that would live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution.

Thus was I disowned by all my former friends and relations, in that place, and the minister seeing me in this distressed situation pitied me, and told me, that as long as he had one shilling of money left, I should share part of it, and desired me not to give way to trouble of this kind. he then carried me away and hired my board for three weeks, at the end of which time he came again, and baptized those fifteen persons before mentioned. for they all gave satisfactory evidence of a work of grace in their hearts, and also brought a carriage for me to go with him to North Carolina as I did and there I lived with him and his people three years: and a happy happy three years it was to my poor soul, a though rejected by my natural relations: yet I think I had daily communion with a friend that sticketh closer than earthly friends and relations; even Jesus, who was to me the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. I really enjoyed that peace of mind which the world can neither give nor take away: yea, this peace was like a river, flowing from the right hand of God. So great and inexpressible was this peace and happiness, which I then enjoyed that all other happiness looked extremely despicable and wholly un-

worthy my attention. The world with all its gay and enticing charms courted my affections to no purpose, I thought I had rather suffer afflictions with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season having respect to the recompence of reward, which I daily enjoyed; esteeming the reproaches of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: yea I esteem the present afflictions not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed hereafter; and I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness, being possessed of all the pomp, grandeur, and affluence, that this world can afford. I think, therefore, that however unworthy I may be of such honour, I would wish to invite and exhort all who know not these things by happy experience, that they would try the experiment for themselves. You may think it strange that I talk as I do, but O, my friends, I long for your happiness, I long to see you rejoice in hope of the glory of God; yea, I long to see the saints on earth join their rejoicing songs of praise to God, with the seraphic angels in heaven, at the news of the return of one more prodigal. Come then, O sinner! come and be happy; for why will ye die? That God in whom you live, move, and have your being, tells you plainly, that he delighteth not in the death of him that dieth; but that he should

turn and live; saying, Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die! Behold Jesus interceding at the right hand of the throne of God for you; that God would exert his almighty power, in turning your mind from sin to righteousness. O how can you reject such pathetic expressions of divine benevolence? Or why shall Jesus entreat in vain? O why will you oppose the wishes of your best friend? Or how can you bear the thoughts of being cast off from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, sentenced to everlasting destruction? O my dear friends! think of these things, lest you should come to cry when there be none to regard or answer you; But least I weary your patience I will pursue my narrative:—

After living three years in North Carolina as I observed, I began to think of my father, and his family, all buried in misery and Popish superstition, and wilfully ignorant. I thought it was possible, in case I could see them, that I might be made an instrument in God's hands, of leading them to a consideration of the folly of their ways. I therefore thought very anxious about the matter. I also felt a natural affection for them. I also considered that my father was a rich man, and I in a dependant situation, and knew, that if he had not lost his former regard for me, that he would help me, notwithstanding our difference of

opinion; and that he would, as I then thought, delight to have me live with him. When I told my intentions to the brethren they told me, I need not go away on account of my being burthenfome to them, for they were willing I should live with them as long as I wished; that I need not regard their expence, for they had as willingly maintain me as their own children; for we are one, said they; but still, if I could not content myself to stay, that they would help me, the which they did. I then thanked them, and took my leave. And as I rode off in a carriage the driver conducted very disagreeably; I relented his conduct towards me, and was angry with him (the which gave me scruples.) Now was I filled with doubts concerning myself, and began to think I was not a Christian at all, but a mere hypocrite, and had been trying to deceive myself and others; but I could not deceive God who knoweth all things. I had thought I never should be angry again, let what would happen to me. This gave me great anxiety of mind, which lasted for a considerable time. We at length however, arrived within three miles of my father's house, where I stopped, in hopes that my father would send for me to come home. But the next day my brother came to the house where I was, and the woman of the house said to me, there's your brother. The reader can hardly imagine the joy I felt to see my brother again, whom I had not seen for many years. I thought he would re-

voice also to see me, and therefore went to meet him, and reached out my hand to him as a token of friendship; but, shocking to relate, I saw in his face signs of disapprobation; he frowned and stepped back; and refused to give his hand; and said to me, My father says, you shall not enter his house, for you are a disgrace to the whole family. He esteems you as a runaway, and a deluded heretic. These reflections from my brother, you may well think excited powerful sensations in my mind. To be thus disowned by my own father and brother, and called a heretic; now came a fair trial of my faith and confidence in God. I concluded that the cause of their aliation of affection towards me, was because I was a Christian, and if so, it would become me to act like Christ: who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; and when he was persecuted, threatened not. I think I can truly say, that all he said to me, only served to engage my soul to give glory to God that I was counted worthy to suffer for Christ's sake, which I through grace, was determined to do; but still Satan tempted me to give up my determination to live devoted to God; I was almost tempted to go to my father and feign a repentance of my dissenting from the Romish Church. But no sooner had I looked into the consequences of such a thing, but I took up my Testament which my brethren had given me, and had a desire to read some directions from God what to do; and the first

sentence I read, was, "He that will not forsake father and mother for my sake, is not worthy of me." I now immediately saw my duty plainly, and felt resolved to obey God rather than man. Nevertheless I thought I would go to the Romish church, where I might see my father, and that he might see me also; peradventure, all his paternal affection was not lost for me, and that when he saw me in a reduced state of poverty and distress, it might possibly affect his heart. I accordingly went. But, O my heart ached to see those stupid mortals bowing to their images and priests, expecting they had power to pardon sin. Shocking thought! I even trembled at the sight, and could hardly contain myself. As soon as the exercise was over my father came out. I went to him, but was so overcome, that I could not speak for some time; at length I recovered strength, but could not forbear screaming, and fell down before him; but instead of exciting pity in him, he turned from me, as from an heretic unworthy of his notice, and would say nothing to me. I then went home again, and hired my board for a short time, with what money I had left, which my brethren had given me for the expences of my journey. Soon after this, my father, whom I still hoped had not lost all regard for me, sent a gentlemen to me who addressed me in the following language:—

Mrs. Hamilton: Your honoured father

sent me to state to you the conditions on which
 he will receive you as his child again, and
 forgive you all your past disgraceful folly;
 which shall not once be mentioned against
 you. And in case you comply, you must re-
 turn to the church from whence you have
 revolted, and confess your sins in revolting
 as you have, and renounce your frantic no-
 tions of witchcraft and Christianity, as you
 call it; and you shall become my beloved
 daughter; but if not you must expect noth-
 ing from me, not even to own you as a daugh-
 ter; for I am determined to disown you in
 case of your obstinacy. I told the gentleman,
 that it was impossible that he should disown
 me, for his name was on his record with the
 rest of his children, and also my looks so fa-
 voured his, that all who saw us would know
 for a certainty that I was really his child.
 But notwithstanding all my confidence, I con-
 sidered that I must of necessity leave that
 place soon, for my money was now almost
 spent, and where to flee I did not know, being
 destitute of any Christian friends there, the
 which put me in mind of Nicodemus, who
 followed his Lord by night. But still I had
 great trouble of mind: I rather feared
 that I was like Judas, who denied and be-
 trayed his Lord for filthy lucre's sake, that is,
 in consideration of the temptation that I before
 spake of, concerning my going back to the
 Romish church with a lie in my mouth, the
 notwithstanding I thought to serve my God

privately, the which I now disapproved of with great indignation. However, my father was unwilling to give the matter over so, without another trial to reclaim me from my heresy, as he named it, he therefore employed a Romish priest, and a certain Mr Smith, who lived near me at that time; crafty men indeed, I had already lived there until my money was about gone, and my clothes were then selling at a low rate, almost nothing, and in this melancholy situation, not a friend to tell my troubles to, I hrd none but God to appeal to for redress of grievances. The woman of the house where I lived seldom spoke to me on any subject whatever; in this torlorn situation, where to go or what to do I could not tell: one consideration still comforted me; I viewed God to be my friend, and that He would deliver me out of all trouble in his own way; and I felt willing to place my dependence on him. One day, to my great astonishment, my landlady invited me to go with her on a visit: Come, said she, Mrs Hamilton, go with me to visit Mrs. Smith to day, perhaps it may have a tendency to shake of this sober melancholy, that seems thus to hang about you. I accepted the invitation, not thinking of any plot against me. Mr Smith began soon after I went in to talk with me concerning my faith and dissenting from the Romish church. I asked him, if he believed the Bible; I hope so, said he; Well you reccollect Sir, in Revelation

how St. John attempted to fall down and worship the angel who said see thou do it not, but worship God : Now if John was forbid worshipping the holy angel, shall or can I fall down and worship a sinful priest? 'Tis Jesus has died and spilt his blood to pardon my sins, and make an atonement, and now sits as an intercessor at God's right hand : God forbid therefore that I should worship any other than the living and true God. Upon which the Romish priest sprang from behind the curtain where he had been concealed in the greatest heat of passion imaginable ; it so affrighted me to see a man in such a rage, that I rose up to go out of his sight : but it dropped into my mind, that there was now an opportunity for God to display his power, and that if the Lord would help me, I would now speak in the vindication of his cause. I accordingly stepped back ; and I really believe that the Lord assisted me in discharging my duty at that time ; yet notwithstanding all that was said, he accosted me with rough language, which it is unnecessary here to repeat. At this time Mr. Smith was so enraged, I saw he would turn me out of his house, I therefore went out of my own accord ; and I really believe, if I ever prayed to God in my life it was then I had strength from God to talk to them ; my tongue seemed to be let loose, and my heart was enlarged ;

traitors, robbers, thieves, and other malefactors; along with whom I was now obliged to take my abode. The number of my sequestered companions, I cannot possibly determine, for this place was a receptacle for the criminals of all the southern provinces of New Spain so that its ill fated inhabitants were very numerous.

Before I had been here three weeks, I was thrice taken out of my irksome den, and conducted by a strong guard of soldiers to the abode of the President, by whom I was more punctiliously examined than I had been by any of my former judges. I now related my unfortunate adventures in the most affecting style I was master of, indulging a feeble hope of obtaining my liberty: but alas! at the close of my third examination, the magisterial President, told me, that all I had said in my defence availed very little: I had no lawful business upon their coasts; and therefore must be re-committed to the dungeon and there remain till he should write to the court of Old Spain, and received answer, to direct his further proceedings concerning me.

I was now in the most lamentable situation I had ever been in since the commencement of my misfortunes. Mine eyes scarcely ever beheld any thing but one common scene of awful darkness; and my ears were seldom saluted by any thing but the rattling of adamant chains, or the oaths and blasphemies of the despairing wretch.

wretches who were here secured in heavy irons, and condemned either to make a speedy and painful transition into eternity or to spend here the remainder of their dreary lives, without ever more beholding the cheering light of day. Like the other prisoners I had also strong manacles upon my hands, heavy irons upon my legs, and chains about my neck and waist, and had likewise my feet secured in the stocks through the night; and to complete my wretchedness the provisions that were given us scarcely sustained our life — But happily my grievances were in a short time redressed; I soon perceived the indulgent Providence which had before led me thro' numberless dangers and difficulties, seemed yet to stretch forth a kind hand towards me.

A short time after my examination before the obdurate president a beautiful female was conducted into the dungeon; and being directed to me, she, with a look of sympathy and kindness, desired to hear the particulars of my adventures. I cheerfully complied with the kind request, by giving her a detail of the most remarkable vicissitudes of my checkered fortune. Her sympathetic heart seemed to be greatly affected by my former as well as present sufferings. She informed me, that, having descended from English parents, she entertained a great affection for those whom she esteemed her countrymen; and consequently being moved with compassion on beholding me as I was carried, in my fetters, to the Governor, and
 hearing

A FEW LINES

Deemed Applicable to the Foregoing; Or like Narratives.

HAIL mighty Jesus; how divine
Is thy victorious sword;
The stoutest rebel must resign
At thy commanding word.

Deep are the wounds thine arrows give;
They pierce the hardest heart:
Thy smile of grace the slain revive,
And joy succeeds the smart.

Still gird thy sword upon thy thigh,
Ride with majestic sway:
Go forth Sweet Prince triumphantly,
And make thy foes obey.

And when thy victories are complete;
When all the chosen race
Shall round the Throne of glory meet,
To sing thy conquering grace,

O may my humble soul be found
Among that favour'd band;
May I with them thy praise forth sound
Throughout IMMANUEL'S land.

F I N I S.