

A S E N A T H .

BY

BERTHA CHARLOTTE.

L O N D O N :

THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY ;

56, PATERNOSTER ROW,

AND

65, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD.

364.



ASENATH;

OR,

THE POWER OF DIVINE GRACE EXEMPLIFIED IN
THE HAPPY DEATH OF ASENATH H—D,

May 5th, 1839, aged Twelve Years.

BY BERTHA CHARLOTTE.

LONDON:

THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY;

Instituted 1799.

SOLD AT THE DEPOSITORY, 56, PATERNOSTER ROW,
AND 65, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD;

AND BY THE BOOKSELLERS.

ASENATH.

WHO that has watched the opening spring of nature, and gazed upon the rich and variegated carpet, which with liberal hand she clothes creation's surface; or traced the wisdom, skill, and love creation's God displays, in decking our fields and gardens in such beauteous robes of modest and unassuming glory; who that in the delightful season of spring has inhaled the fragrance, or been charmed with the simple elegance, of those lowly but striking illustrations of Divine providence, the humble primrose or sweet scented violet; and, though the privileged spectator of such scenes, can yet remain insensible to the enkindlings of grateful love towards their adorable Author, or refuse to lend his tribute to

the universal song of praise all nature seems to render?

At this delightful season of the year, how I love, with a little child as my companion, to wander through our fields and lanes, and, listening to its innocent prattle, feel a sweet tranquillity and composure, which carries onward my charmed imagination to an eternal spring in glory, and bids me "look through nature, up to nature's God."

But I must remember that it is not now my business to speak of nature's beauties, delightful as may be the theme they furnish. No, my dear young friends, a lovelier flower far than ever bloomed in nature's garden, who in the spring-time of life escaped from the vicissitudes of earth, to blossom in the eternal and unfading fields of Paradise, now occupies my thoughts. My loved Asenath was a too tender plant to flourish long in these uncongenial climes; her gentle spirit could ill

have borne the storms and trials of time, or the rough usages of an ungracious world, therefore a God of love "cut short his work in righteousness," and in early youth gave this heir of glory not only a title to, but meetness for, the shining world of light. I became acquainted with this lovely child in the autumn of 1837; and from this period, till a few months previously to her removal to a land of rest, it was my privilege to have almost daily intercourse with her.

Several traits in dear Asenath's character particularly engaged my attention, one of which was, her habitual seriousness; for although a placid smile, that spoke her inward peace, was never absent from her countenance, I cannot remember ever to have seen her yield to giddy or thoughtless laughter, or any spirit appearing to partake of trifling or levity. Her consistent course testified that she

lived a moment at a time, and that moment with reference to an eternal world. It was evident to every close observer, that this dear lamb of the Saviour's flock possessed a mind and intellect of a superior order; her application to her studies was invariably close, sometimes intense; her school exercises were always accomplished to the satisfaction of her preceptress, and her general proficiency procured her the warm approbation of affectionate and admiring friends. She was extremely fond of perusing religious publications, especially biography, but the Bible was her greatest treasure and delight; and I have seen her absorbed in deep meditation for two or three hours successively, while perusing the word of life.

My dear young friends, is it so with you? Do you thus value that precious book which tells you of a Saviour's love? and, like the dear subject of this little memoir, is it sweet employment to you,

thus to hold converse with your God? Oh think what you would be without the Bible, and pray for grace to love and practise its sacred truths. But this was not all; dear Asenath was not satisfied with its mere perusal; she desired also to understand it, and frequently applied to Christian friends for an explanation of those passages she could not, unaided, comprehend.

Her memory was very good; she not only learned by heart many and long portions of the word of God, but also a great deal of prose and poetry. She was particularly fond of "Janeway's Token for Children," the whole of which she committed to memory; also the memoir of a little boy known to her parents: the latter was a source of great consolation to her in the last stages of her illness, when unable to read.

Another practice of this dear and sainted child is also worthy to be recorded:

during the period allowed her for recreation, at the completion of her morning's studies, her juvenile companions frequently found her wanting in their happy circle, but knew not the cause of her absence, or place of her resort; nor was this circumstance explained, till subsequently to her departure to glory. On conversing with the villagers respecting her, one of them observed: "Oh I knew she was not long for this world, for almost every day, when the weather was fine, I have seen her in the churchyard for nearly two hours together, sometimes sitting upon a gravestone in deep thought, sometimes kneeling by the side of a grave."

Thus did this young disciple early learn to converse with death. Again let me ask you, my dear young friends, is it so with you? Can you think of death without fear? Could you feel happy in making it so frequently the subject of your thoughts? Shall I tell you how

Asenath found it a pleasure to meditate upon what so many children dread the thought of? Her youthful heart was given to the Saviour, and had been already fixed upon the happy land where its best, brightest, and eternal treasure was safely hidden; and therefore, this dear child saw in death, the kind messenger that should place her in the Saviour's embrace; and meditation upon the silent dwelling-place of the departed, imparted to her satisfaction more real and permanent than the society of her young companions, and joining their youthful sports. Such was the uniform and consistent course that marked the short career of my truly dear Asenath; but in the counsels of her heavenly Father, the period for transplanting this bud of grace to bloom in glory now drew near. About the commencement of February, 1839, she became indisposed, but as she had always been a delicate child, at first

nothing serious was apprehended. She sometimes indeed complained of extreme weakness and languor, but when inquiry was made respecting her health, almost invariably replied, "I think I am rather better."

Although she had at this time no cough, it soon became evident that consumption had crept into her bosom, and would speedily lay this frail flower of mortality low in the dust; her disease, from its commencement, appeared to defy the power of medicine.

It has been a source of deep regret to me, that during some part of this dear child's illness, severe domestic and personal affliction deprived me of the privilege of seeing her. But I shall not easily forget the first visit I was permitted to pay her, when the chastening rod of my heavenly Father had been graciously withdrawn. Her residence was about a mile from my own; nature looked glad, and the sun

shone brightly as I directed my steps through the fields and churchyard, towards the peaceful habitation of my loved Asenath; the feathered tribe participated in the joys of returning spring; their song of melody floated on the air, and the atmosphere seemed to ring with the echo of the universal song of praise, now rising to nature's God.

My frigid heart also was attuned to devotion, and became deeply affected with a sense of the goodness of my God, and tears of grateful love bedewed my cheek. I at length reached my Asenath's earthly home, and entering the chamber, found the beloved sufferer calmly reclining on a sofa. I there beheld the pale and emaciated countenance of one, upon whom I had frequently gazed with intense interest, and in whom I had already discovered the glimmerings of that holy fire I fondly hoped would one day constitute her a burning and a shining

light, in this dark world of sin and sorrow. But how greatly was this promising flower now withered! how rapidly hastening to decay! It was evident death had marked her for his prey: the ravages of disease had made a strange alteration in this dear child's appearance; scarcely a vestige remained of what she had been, of what she was when I last beheld her, save the placid smile, which yet lighted up her otherwise deathly visage with a calm and heavenly lustre. Bending over this loved though fading flower, was a beloved, affectionate, and almost heart-broken mother, while a flood of tears told the sad tale of sorrow she could not otherwise express.

I took the withered hand, and imprinted a kiss upon the pallid cheek of the youthful sufferer. To my inquiries respecting her health, she replied, "I am very ill, but I think rather better than I have been." She was much weaker than I

had expected to find her, and had not sufficient strength, without assistance, to raise her head from the pillow; and while articulating only a short sentence, she was obliged to rest several times. She expressed great joy at seeing me, and said, "Now I shall be happy, for I was so afraid I should die without seeing you." She appeared greatly to feel her fond mother's deep emotion, and entreated her not to weep. "Your grief," said she, "hurts me more than all my sufferings: do not weep, my dear mother; I am going to be taken from the evil to come, and God will comfort you." I inquired if she felt afraid to die; she replied, "No." "Do you feel happy when you think about dying?" She answered, "Yes, I like to think about it." "Why do you like to think about it?"—"Because I think—I feel—I shall go to heaven when I die." "Why, my dear Asenath, do you think, and feel you shall go to heaven?"—"Because

I feel that Jesus died for me; I know he loves me, and I love him." The earnestness with which this dear child expressed her feelings, surprised and delighted me; she appeared to call to her aid all her remaining strength and energy, and her natural diffidence and timidity had vanished, while she declared her simple confidence in her Saviour's love. I did not know the exact state of Asenath's mind; previously to her illness, her extreme reserve preventing free and open conversation on this subject; but I had long cherished the hope, that this dear child, by blessed experience, knew somewhat of the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit.

When she had recovered her strength, which had been exhausted by the exertion of speaking, I affectionately took her hand, and steadily gazing on her faded countenance, solemnly inquired, "Asenath, have you felt yourself to be a

sinner?" "Oh yes," she replied; and added with great emphasis, "a very great sinner." "Describe what your feelings were at that time." She replied, "Oh, I felt grieved, sad, miserable." "You do not feel so now, Asenath: what removed this burden from your mind?" Her strength was again exhausted, and she very faintly replied, "Praying." After she had rested some time, I said, "And do you think, my dear Asenath, that God hath comforted and forgiven you because of your prayers?" With deep feeling she replied, while a solitary tear rolled down her emaciated face, "No, no; but with my mind I looked to Jesus dying; and I felt that God had forgiven me, because of Jesus's dying for me." She was obliged to rest several times while repeating this sentence, and when she had concluded, was greatly exhausted. Fearing my last question had wounded the gentle bosom of the dear patient sufferer, addressing

her in a soft whisper, I said, "Do not think, my dear Asenath, I wish to hurt you; I have felt very anxious respecting you, and I could not feel happy unless certain that you were resting upon the right, the only true foundation: of this I am now fully satisfied. Yes, my dear Asenath, you have every reason to be happy; you are now dearer to my heart than ever; you are my beloved sister in Jesus." A silence of some moments ensued, and they were moments full of solemnity. With peculiar interest I gazed upon the faded form before me, and I thought the placid countenance of Asenath spoke of immortality, as her languid eyes gazed with fond affection upon her weeping mother, whose afflicted spirit seemed to say, "Would God I could die for thee."

I again addressed myself to Asenath, and asked when first she felt the happiness of which she had been speaking.

“One day,” she replied, “while I was praying, when first taken ill.” I asked, “Do you think, dearest child, you could have felt and enjoyed all this of yourself?” She replied, “No; the Spirit of God has done it all: I felt the Spirit of God was working on my mind a long time ago.” Her overwhelming weakness again returned. I said to her, “You can bear no more now, my dear Asenath.” She replied, “No, but will you pray for me?” and she then became unconscious of all around her. The dark shades of evening had already appeared, and I slowly returned to my own abode.

The scene I had witnessed, the testimony I had heard, had penetrated my very heart with a sacred awe, and inspired me with a stronger love of that religion, which could disarm death of its sting, and triumph over the grave. I thought nature herself seemed to sympathize with the chastened feelings of

my spirit; the winged warblers' melodies were hushed, and a solemn stillness reigned around.

As I crossed the village churchyard, each grassy mound seemed to admonish me to work while it is called to-day. My heart then condemned me for not having made a greater effort previously, to ascertain my Asenath's religious state, by more frequent visits and intercourse, especially when I reflected upon a circumstance I had that afternoon been made acquainted with. After making some inquiries respecting me, and being ignorant of the cause of my absence, she had wept bitterly, and said, "Why does not Miss S— come to see me? I must have displeased her about something, or she would certainly have been to see me. Oh yes, she must be displeased with me; yet I cannot tell what it is about. She will suffer any inconvenience to visit the sick poor at Burton and Winfrith, yet she

does not come to me." My absence, as above stated, had been occasioned by severe personal and domestic affliction; but upon meditating upon this dear child's words, I could not help feeling, Had I pictured to my mind, and kept ever present with my thoughts, the weary Traveller reclining on Jacob's well, who although exhausted with fatigue and persecution, could yet count it his meat and drink to do his Father's will, should I have thus acted? would not the bright example of my Lord have constrained me to forget my own sorrows, to administer consolation to others?

I was soon again privileged to gaze upon the peaceful countenance of my much loved Asenath, who evidently grew weaker each succeeding day. Her extreme languor and exhaustion, made it necessary our conversation should be very brief. I inquired how she felt; she replied, "Very weak." "And do you still

feel so happy?" She answered, "Yes, very, very happy; I feel I shall soon be in heaven." "Do you ever feel any doubts and fears respecting your acceptance with God?"—"I did one day," she replied; "I was afraid I was deceiving myself; but I prayed, and was comforted, and I have not felt so since." "Do you feel quite willing to die?"—"Yes," quite willing, if it is God's will." "Would you rather get well again, and love and serve God on earth, or die, and go to heaven?" She replied, "I do not know." "But would you not like to go to heaven?"—"Yes, when I die." "Is Jesus precious to you," I inquired. She answered, "Yes, I feel him very precious." "Do you find comfort in prayer?"—"Yes, very great; and so I do when Mr. M'C—b, prays with me." (The gentleman to whom she referred, was the active and zealous curate of the parish in which her parents lived.) I then observed, that she must feel it a

great deprivation to be unable to read. She replied, "I know not what I should do without the portions of Scripture and hymns I have committed to memory; these comfort me, when I cannot talk or hear any one read." Her exhaustion now became so great, that she could not articulate another word. Her affectionate mother stood weeping over the fond object soon to be snatched from her embrace, and the youthful sufferer appeared deeply affected at her mother's tears; she gave me a beseeching look, which seemed to say, "Comfort my poor mother;" and I then took my leave of this youthful though bright example of Christian patience and resignation, in the hope of being shortly permitted to visit her again.

Providence had determined that the next should be my last interview. Unexpectedly compelled to visit Devonshire, I called to apprise her of my approaching

absence from home ; she then appeared exceedingly calm and happy. When I inquired the state of her mind, she replied, "All is peace ; oh it is so delightful to think of heaven !" I said, "Well then, my dear Asenath, tell me now, which you should like best ; to die, and go to heaven, or get better, and be a useful Christian upon earth." She replied, "I do not know : if it is God's will that I should die, I should like to die ; but if it is his will that I should get better, I should like to get better. God's will is my will." I said, "Our heavenly Father knows what is best for us ; and my dear Asenath appears to feel with the poet, that it is

Sweet to lie passive in his hands,
And know no will but his."

She appeared unable to converse much at this time. I then said, "I hope, if we meet no more in this world, we shall in heaven." "Yes," she replied, "I hope—

I feel quite sure we shall." After a short pause, she added, "Do comfort my poor mother when I am gone. Oh, I wish she would not grieve; tell her, we shall be together for ever in heaven."

I soon after bade this young disciple of the Lord adieu, fondly hoping again to gaze upon her saint-like countenance, ere she quitted this vale of tears: an all-wise God, however, had otherwise determined. On the day I returned to the village, the remains of dear Asenath were being borne to their resting-place, in the churchyard of a village ten miles distant.

For the space of a week after my last interview with her, she rapidly declined, but continued in the same happy and peaceful state of mind. One day, when she was unusually overpowered with weakness, her sister carried her across the room several times in her arms, during which she groaned deeply, and her sister becoming alarmed, exclaimed,

“O mother, what is the matter with Asenath?” With a placid countenance she gazed on her, and calmly said, “Why, my dear sister, I am dying; that is what is the matter with me.” On the Thursday evening, it was evident the hand of death was upon her; the whole of one side of her body became quite dead, and the power of articulation was nearly exhausted. Almost the last words of this dear lamb that could be understood by those around her, were, “Pray—pray—pray.” In this state she continued until the evening of the following sabbath, when her ransomed spirit burst the shackles of mortality, and took its flight for glory. She died on the 5th of May, 1839, at the early age of twelve years.

And now, my dear young friends, affectionately would I entreat you, pray that grace would make you like this dear and now glorified child. A wicked and deceitful world will tell you, that you cannot be

religious and happy too; but dear Asenath has borne witness that its testimony is false. One thing, dear children, let me point out to you as worthy of imitation in her history, and that is, her diligent employment of time. Duty was not to her grievous or wearisome; her studies were cheerfully engaged in, the time allotted to them diligently employed, and that set apart for amusement spent in meditation upon eternity, thinking of the love of Jesus, and his affection and tenderness towards the young; and so when death at last arrived, it was no subject of terror or alarm, but welcomed, and gladly submitted to, as her introduction to the happiness of heaven.

Oh may we learn to love his name—
That name divinely sweet;
May every pulse through life proclaim,
And our last breath repeat.

Imitate this dear child's example in love of the sacred Scriptures. Asenath

found them dear to her, because there she read of Jesus, heard of heaven, and learned the way. Oh love, then, my dear young friends, the blessed Bible; pray for the blessed Spirit to teach you to understand it; and then, though you may be called to suffer, as this much loved child, that sweet tranquillity that marked her closing hours will also attend yours. Like her, seek to make it your delight to commit to memory portions of Scripture and sacred hymns. Oh what a testimony to the value of religious instruction did this dear child afford, when she said, "I know not what I should have done without the portions of Scripture and hymns I have committed to memory!"

Happy for you, if you can say—

Oh may these heavenly pages be
My ever dear delight;
And still new beauties may I see,
And still increasing light.

If any of my dear young readers are

Sunday scholars, let them copy this dear child's example; they know not what unspeakable comfort it may afford in a future time of trial. Try also, my young friends, to make religion the business of your lives, remembering how the short career of dear Asenath illustrated those beautiful lines:

'Tis religion that can give
Truest pleasures while we live;
'Tis religion must supply
Solid comfort when we die:
After death, its joys shall be
Lasting as eternity.

But where is dear Asenath now? The eyes that once beamed with affection, the lips that uttered accents of tenderness, have long been closed in the darkness and silence of the grave; but the happy spirit no winding-sheet could encompass, or grave entomb; that has winged its flight to glory. My dear young friends, you, too, must die; a grave in some

churchyard probably waits to receive your now healthy bodies : think, then, where dear Asenath is, and where I feel assured you would desire to be.

While pity prompts the rising sigh,
Oh may this truth imprest
With awful power, " I too must die,"
Sink deep in every breast.

She is gone to be happy in heaven ; not because she was good on earth, but because the blessed Jesus made her his child, taught her to know and love him, and so by his grace made her holy, and fit to live with him for ever. He loves you, dear children, as dearly as he loved my Asenath ; and if, like her, you seek him while you are young, when you die he will gather you where that dear lamb has gone, to be happy with him for ever.

May God graciously bless this little memoir to your spiritual good ; and should it fall into the hands of those dear

children who were once Asenath's playmates, may they follow her bright example here, and be united to her, redeemed spirits in glory.

Oh may we travel as she trod,
The path that leads to heaven,
And seek forgiveness from that God
Who has her sins forgiven.

Dear Saviour, hear our humble cry,
And our young hearts renew ;
Then raise our ransom'd souls on high,
That we we may see thee too.

Oh flee, my dear young friends, to the cross of Jesus ; beneath its shadow shall you then sit down with great delight, and the fruits of redemption be sweet to your taste. Seek to know and love Asenath's God and Saviour : Asenath's peace and joy in believing shall then become yours in time ; Asenath's present rest your future and eternal home. "Seek the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near," Isa. lv. 6. Oh, may the words of the gracious Saviour dwell in your hearts—"Suffer

the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not," Mark x. 14, for "I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me," Prov. viii. 17.

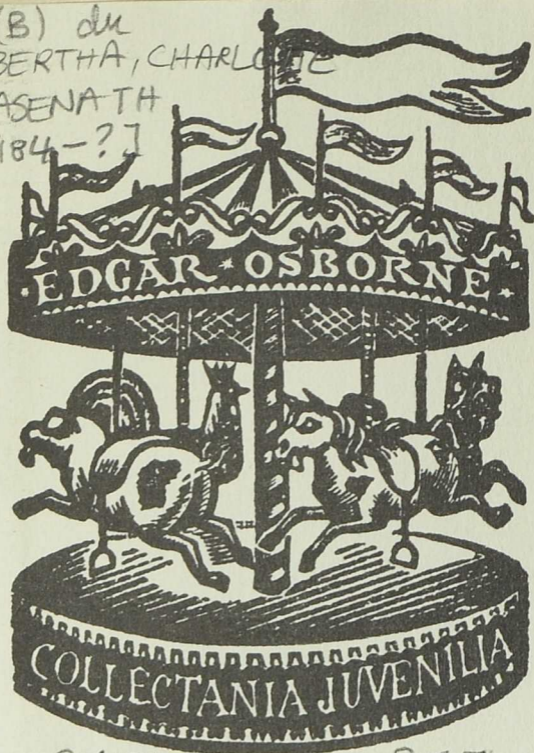
Farewell, lovely child, all thy sorrows are ended;
 Thy sufferings now are eternally o'er;
 To Jesus thy purified soul has ascended,
 The regions of glory and bliss to explore.

Thy passage was swift through this dark world of
 weeping;
 Thou didst patiently bow to the chastening rod;
 And now, my Asenath, thy spirit is reaping
 The bliss bought with blood in the mansions of
 God.

Farewell, then, bless'd spirit thy conflicts are ended;
 Thy steps may we follow, thy Saviour embrace,
 Then with thee, when to Jesus our souls have
 ascended.
 Will we shout the achievements of sovereign grace.

THE END.

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BERTHA, CHARLOTTE
ASENATH
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THE POPPY.

HIGH on a bright and sunny bed
A scarlet poppy grew,
And up it held its staring head,
And thrust it full in view.

Yet no attention did it win,
By all these efforts made;
And less unwelcome had it been
In some retired shade.

From this may I a hint obtain,
And take great care indeed,
Lest I appear as pert and vain
As does this gaudy weed.