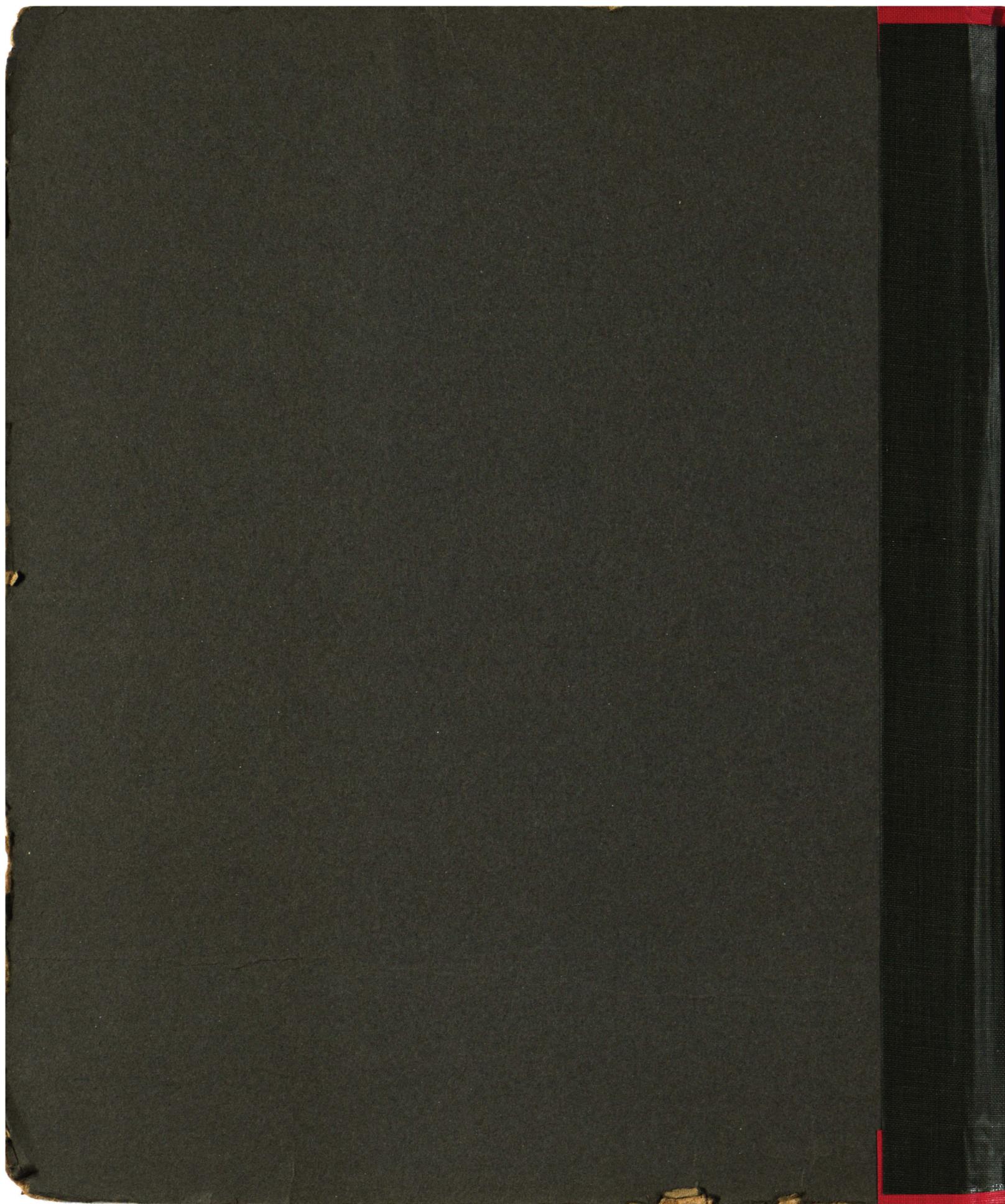
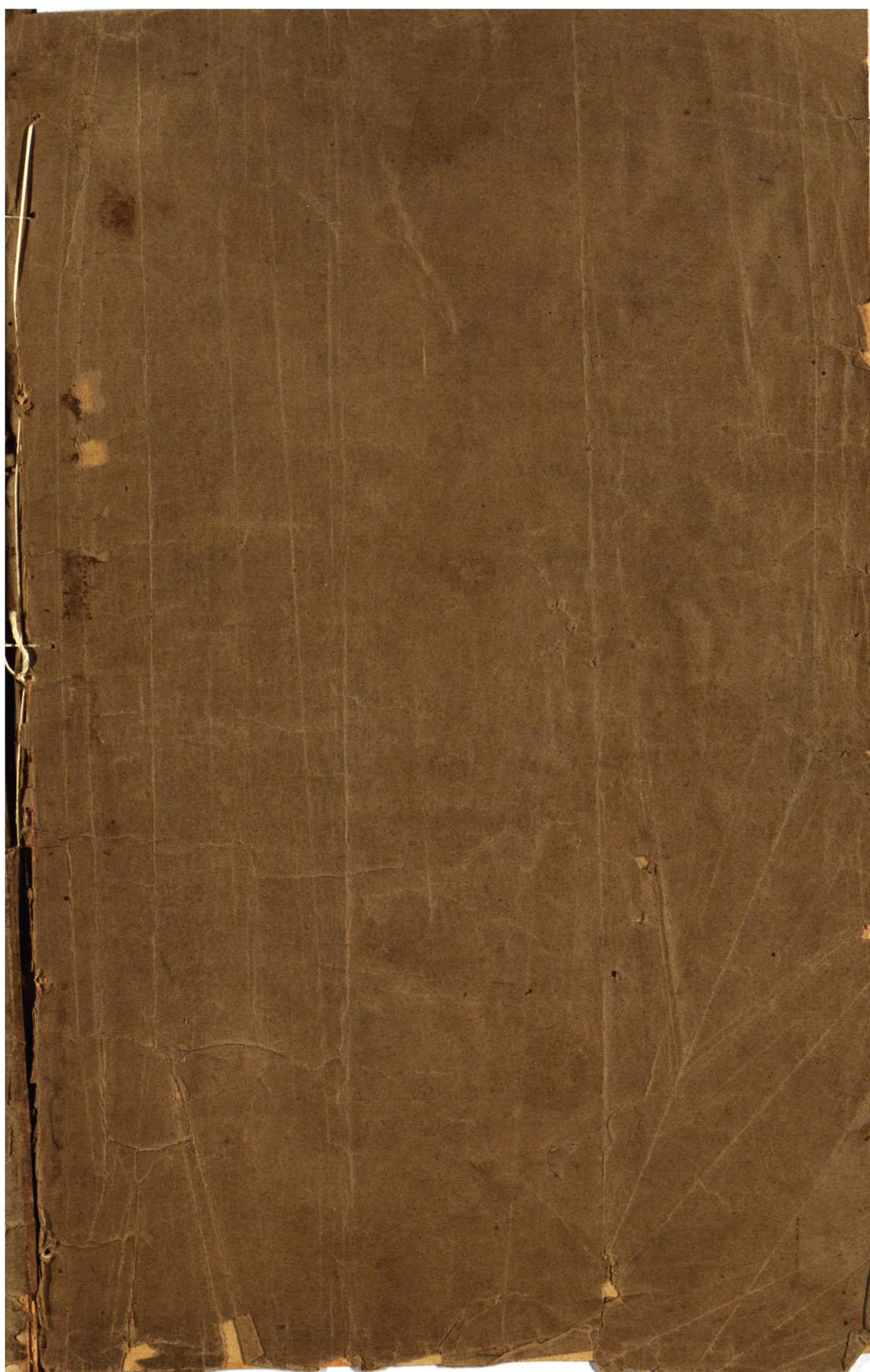


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A SHORT HISTORY

OF THE LATE

MRS. MARY O. T. WICKLIFFE.

BY MRS. C. MENTELLE.

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LIFE OF MRS. WICKLIFFE.

MISS MARY (familiarly called Polly) OWEN TODD, was born at Lexington, Fayette county, Kentucky, then a part of Virginia, on the 9th of June, 1781. She was the daughter of Col. John Todd and Jane Hawkins, his wife. Her father, one of the first settlers in Kentucky, had acquired large tracts of land in the country, about and even in Lexington, which was not as yet a town when he first settled. Here, he and his family had to bear every kind of hardship incident to all the new settlements west of the Alleghanies; where food was scarce, and to be obtained by hunting only, and life exposed to the Indian tomahawk, for the Indians were waging a war of extermination against the first settlers in their battle ground, which they did not inhabit themselves. In 1782, however, was fought the last decisive engagement between the white and the red men, at the Blue Licks. I have seen an old Baptist preacher who had borne a part in it, and he recounted the event with all the fire of youth and the accuracy of mature age, diminishing nor exaggerating a scene sublime enough in its simplicity. After describing the different spots on which the several detachments had fought without unity of action, and against the opinion of Col. Todd, who wished to wait for a reinforcement not far distant, but was overpowered by the eagerness of the men: "There," said he, "fell that good and brave man; I saw no more, we had no time, every man sought his own safety." The news reached the widow and her only child; but Mrs. Todd had a firm courage, and her own preservation and that of her daughter, bade her live and assume all the conjugal duties to herself.

Mrs. Todd went to settle in a good log house two miles south of Lexington, on her own estate, with some slaves, who continued to open fields around and about her almost

as far as the eye could reach, and only bounded by her own luxuriant pristine forests. *Mansfield* had all the splendor of beautiful nature, very few of the luxuries of the world, and plenty of what is necessary—fortune, happiness, and the most cordial hospitality. Pleasure, pure and true as the inhabitants, was not wanting; visits to the already improved Lexington, the citizens of which lived always on a friendly footing with their former friend; and two brothers-in-law, (the excellent Col. Robert Todd and Levi Todd,) with her own numerous connections, formed their society. Small cheerful dancing parties, walking, fishing, water melon and peach eating parties, nutting, blackberry hunting, quilting, etc., (the pleasures of those times,) of which little Polly Todd, the delight of her mother, partook until seventeen years of age, and which left her a candor, a simplicity of manners and tastes, that never forsook her.

Little Polly received as good an education as the times and country afforded, and if not as showy as the present mode of pretended perfection, it was at least useful and solid. Great modesty, religious principles without bigotry, left to her a native cheerfulness and innocence of heart and mind. She was likewise endowed with a genius that was fed and improved by the sublime scenery of nature. Her wishes were few, and she had no artfulness. Her mother, although prudent, had a nobleness of feeling that would have reviled at a mean action; the daughter imbibed and improved those noble principles, which a world, to which she was almost a stranger, had never yet checked. In the meantime, her mother had been forced, by some circumstances unknown to me, to sell some part of her own ample jointure. She married a second time, and mismanagement diminished her property still more. Yet Miss Polly Todd, the heiress of thousands of acres, of Man Lick Salt Works, &c., had certainly been an object of great attraction, even if her pretty person and her unobtrusive good qualities had been out of the question. At that time, a sure income of six or seven hundred pounds was much; her own must have exceeded that sum. Her own ideas of luxury and ease extended no farther than a plain, but good carriage, with a double hewn log house that she had in contemplation to build near her own pond, half a mile east of her mother, and but for a little thicket, in view of her. It would be so agreeable to run through the

field, embrace that beloved mother, and run home again if she pleased! At that age, and with those dispositions, she mistrusted no one; but her credulity was not the result of incapacity of judging, but of her innocent candor and sincerity. At a more advanced period, experience taught her mistrust, which bred a contempt for those who had abused her confidence, or deceived her expectations; she forgave, but she did not forget ill-treatment, for she felt that she did not deserve it, and that undue advantage had been taken of her candid, open disposition. She could forgive error, and excuse them, but never wilful faults or crimes.

I have been thus particular in detailing the first years of Polly Todd, as those early impressions have influenced all her life, and that the modifications produced by the subsequent events upon her temper, gave her more opportunities of correcting by reflection and sincere belief, what she thought might be reprehensible in her conduct.

Chance introduced us to each other in 1798, and by slow degrees we became better acquainted. Her mother invited me often to her house, and I could go but seldom. My foreign manner could not, at first, be very agreeable to a daughter so eminently American, and exclusively Kentuckian, even in the infancy of Kentucky, and I was ten years older. But principles and hearts are of no country.

Yet, if there was pleasure, there was as yet no familiarity between us, and about that time, came to Lexington a young man of a handsome face, agreeable manners and literary attainments: his mind was cultivated, his tastes refined, and the wildness of his deportment augured well for his temper. Mr. Russell's connections were said to be good, and were, he being a younger son of a collateral branch of the Duke of Bedford. He boasted of no fortune, but he could not be poor; always neatly and fashionably dressed. He was known to few, perhaps only to a single person in Lexington, a highly respected man, who could have told what he was really and did not, and introduced him to Mrs. Irvin, (late Mrs. Todd,) and her daughter. A supposed congeniality of tastes in reading and poetical genius, joined to so prepossessing a person, won Miss Polly's heart, which opened for the first time to a passion that woman alone can feel—enthusiastic, warm, disinterested. Her mother might have spoken of enquiries, but they were confined to the man who had introduced Mr. Russell—

what he would or could say I know not, but have reason to believe that he kept much of the truth to himself. It was said that he knew Mr. Russell to be subject to epilepsy, brought on by his own fault. The marriage was resolved upon, and the prudent relations of Miss Todd obtained a marriage contract, by which "all her property was secured to her without any control or possibility of delapidation by her husband." They were "married." Several persons observed that Mr. Russell drank more and stronger potations than a gentleman usually drank, even in those days, on a joyful occasion; but the bride herself saw and could see nothing in the man of her choice, who certainly concealed both his fatal propensity and his disorder from a very young and unsuspecting wife. A few days after her union, in the generous confidence of a noble heart, she brought the contract to him, and tearing it to pieces, told him "that true love and perfect confidence could have no separate interests." For a few months she was supremely happy. The house at the pond was built, the carriage bought, every dream realized beyond expectation and even hope, and a mother enjoying all this! But even then, I remember that Mrs. Irwin had her fears about its duration; more clear sighted, with more experience of the world and her own fate, it is no wonder.

Russell had an elegant taste, and he improved the pond; a small flat-boat supplied a fine rowing within banks which he had constructed to retain and deepen the waters. The grounds were cleared judiciously, so as to create points of view—happy if he had known the full value of happiness; but he ceased to put a restraint on his vicious inclinations. Let us draw a sable curtain over this miserable period of Mrs. Russell's life—she saw her love blasted, contemned; could she retain even esteem for a husband so degraded? Degraded not only in his own person, but wishing or caring not to degrade this wife, so pure, so innocent, by bringing her into contact with his filthy companions. Her life was threatened every day, every night, by his insane drinking fits. She concealed all this from her mother, and assumed that firmness of courage which expects every evil, and fears none. I have often admired it afterwards, because it shone only on great occasions, for she was timid when not called upon to be otherwise. At last, his epileptic fits achieved his dissolution. On the day of his death, kneeling to his so much injured wife, he

asked her pardon for having deceived her, both as to love and dispositions of body and mind. It is the fate, said he, of such candid and unsuspecting beings like yourself, if they are rich, to be deceived by fortune hunters like me. [This I did not see, but I was told of it by witnesses that I could rely on, and I never relate a fact without having the best authority for it.] He was dead! I saw his young widow at her mother's the next day. It was not to be supposed that she could lament his death, otherwise than on his own account—a dreadful oppressive weight was taken from her faculties; but it left the bitterness of disappointed, unrequited love. That man, to whom she had been so devoted, had been all the time, and in every respect unworthy of her innocence, of her warm affections, of even her cold esteem, and of her noblest sacrifices. How far he had abused her generous credulity, she had yet to learn. Soon, however, came long lists of debts contracted before his marriage. She was told that she might refuse to pay those; but she was a mother—she knew the difficulties into which such demands would plunge her, but she resolved that the memory of her son's father should be redeemed from a shameful insolvency brought on by his vices. Lands were sold, even Man's Lick, I think; and thus the debts of her husband were all paid after some years. She seldom spoke of it, and many are those who, to this day, are ignorant to what extent her property was diminished; if they knew the cause, most of them forgot it.

Many of the first years of her widow-hood were spent at the pond, where she raised partly that son, the object of her fondest but not blind affection. John was free, cheerful, of robust habits; not brought up as the heir of thousands, but as a modest, free American. His mother, though indulgent in what she thought right, was inflexible in the contrary case. What John saw about him, did not raise his ideas of his own importance; that was not suffered: his mother knew what real worth consisted in, and all her endeavors tended to inculcate the same ideas into his mind. In the meantime she was not alone, two of her cousins lived with her in rotation for a number of years. I knew them both, and have spent many a day with Mrs. Russell, and either Polly or Sally Hawkins, in all the simplicity and cheerfulness of the country, at the pond. What innocent recollections are joined with that place, which nobody ever entered without pleasure, or left without regret!

Russell had a good library, and the greatest part of his books had the arms of the house of Bedford on the inside. Some person told Mrs. Russell that this denoted his being a relation of that family, so illustrious, and whose greatest boast was Lord Russell, beheaded under Charles 2d, on a charge of high treason, and his wife, Lady Rachel Russell, has left an inimitable example of virtue and a volume of excellent letters. The surmise was true, and Mrs. Russell's young friends would laughing call her "Your Grace of Bedford." But that kind of ambition was far from her thoughts. She always said, to be an American was superior to any rank that Europe could offer, and it has not come to my knowledge that Russell ever boasted of it. His widow read much; history and poetry were her favorite books, they improved her judgment and taste; her poetical effusions were far above mediocrity, and sometimes even sublime. From her mother she learnt to manage a family, and in her subsequent intercourse with a more enlarged circle, she adopted as much of its refinement as agreed with her sound principles upon their intrinsic value, as they might contribute to her real comforts or those of her friends, without yielding much to the opinion of a fictitious world. When upon a change in her situation in after times, she entered into the cares of a younger family, she gradually gave up her own simple tastes to the wishes of the modern generation; but all that was done by degrees, and an attentive regard on the part of the new family to what she herself thought proper.

Her residence at the pond was a happy period of her life; the influence of all her virtues and high toned feelings, her unbounded cheerfulness, her hearty and joyful laugh; were contagious; and those who could understand her value, preferred one day of that quiet retreat, spent with her alone, in a conversation at once solid and cheerful to the gayest scenes the world could afford. It has been thought, perhaps, that Mrs. Russell was not a competent housekeeper; that is a mistake. She certainly might not be a tormenting notable dame; she loved ease, tranquillity and peace—her limited wants were attended to. Her indulgence to her servants was great, perhaps too great for their own good, and she was sensible of it; she even looked upon it as a fault, but she could at times be roused to firmness, for there was that in her temper that could not brook either disobedience or wilful neglect.

Born a Virginian, she knew the extent of her rights, and if she suffered them to slumber for a length of time, she could exert them with vigor, when called upon by her sense of what was due to herself or others. She had a natural sense of dignity that precluded undue familiarity with her servants, and she never listened to kitchen news, and they were sent out of the room if she was in intimate conversation with a friend; it was not done from a love of mystery, but from a sense of what was most proper for both. During her last illness, a recent murder was spoken of "instrument of the divine vengeance," &c. Two servants were in the room. "Improper talk," said she, and I saw that she wanted to say more; but the subject was changed. As to the rest, their welfare and well being were sacred duties. "Were they not part of her family?" "Were they not family servants?" For these reasons, she had no overseers, and although every thing might not be managed as profitably as possible, yet I have seen as many as sixty or seventy hay stacks, and other farm produce in proportion; if the sales had been as well attended to or faithfully reported, it is certain that her own farm was more profitable to her than the rents of all her tenants, the greatest part of whom were more burdensome than profitable; dilapidating her lands, not paying their rents, and setting at defiance the laws which they knew she desired her agents not to enforce, except in extreme cases, and those were often averted by personal application to her. "This one was so poor!" another "had so many children!" a third was "so honest, but had been so unlucky!" a fourth was "decidedly a rogue, and should be expelled, but he had a lease!" at last, all these good people thought the land decidedly their own, and "Mrs. Russell could not, and would not, for her own sake, deprive them of their home;" and they kept possession upon endurance. I have often seen her with a very reduced income, hardly able to keep up even the little state that she thought right,—the carriage too old for further service, until kind Mr. Redd observing this, built her a vehicle, for which she felt as grateful as if she never could repay for it. I saw him driving into the yard, and she enjoying it with all the glee of a child to whom a pretty useful toy has been given; I believe Mr. Redd took the old fragments of her former carriage in part or even whole payment. And the owner of such property told me often, that she could scarcely collect five or six

hundred dollars per year, hardly sufficient to keep herself and family in clothing and other necessaries! I have often heard her say so, and I often saw her short of even market money, although she used so little, besides what came sometimes from her own farm. "Now see," would she say, "could any one suppose that I may be so poor, and thus do we judge without knowing," and she laughed heartily at the idea of being so rich and so poor.

In mixed company she was generally silent, either from timidity, or extreme diffidence; she rated her abilities far below their standard, and this humble opinion of herself was such as to impede in part her utterance of her sentiments, but when a subject interested her warmly, then her countenance brightened and intelligence illuminated her features and gave a flow and ease to her words; wisdom, knowledge or enthusiasm then embellished her conversation; but, in general, she reserved her bright powers for the intimacy of confidence and friendship. When showing me some poetry of her composing, I asked her why she did not show them to some more persons, "No," said she, laughing, "no body would give me credit for any wit; I am too fat, and my face is too round for wit: don't you know that fat people are pronounced to be fools?" Mrs. Russell from her birth, situation, and retirement, was not perhaps naturally exempt from pride, quickness of temper, or tenaciousness of opinion. She knew how to adhere inflexibly to what she thought right; but she was sensible of those slight infirmities of her human nature; and the aim of her religious reflections tended always to check those dispositions in so much that I became afraid that her christian humility might weaken her proper confidence in herself, and let her sink below her level. I expressed my fears on that score in some of our conversations, and that extreme humility might meet the extreme of pride, "No danger as yet," said she. Anxious of never giving offence, she would explain her meaning in the kindest manner, and the semblance of a reproof, or an admonition never could be misinterpreted into anger or bad feelings, and left the best impressions and improvement in those to whom they were addressed; they felt better in spite of themselves.

After a number of years spent thus in comparative solitude, (for alone she never was,) her cousins marrying at a distance; her son wanting the benefits of a good school,

and her attendance at church being often impossible from the state of the roads, she resolved to live in town; at first alone, and then with her mother, who had again become a widow; at the price of some more sacrifices. Mrs. Russell purchased a comfortable and larger house, where she enjoyed a larger circle of friends, until wishing to have the benefit of both town and country, she built on her own land, a tract then called the race-ground from its being used as such. John Russell was sent to college at Eaton or Princeton, and his mother and grand-mother, living together, improved the grounds slowly; but as much as would abundantly supply their own wants, as to vegetables and fruit. A superb row of poplars on the street, was the emblem of the tranquil majesty within. From what I have already said, her life ran in the same even "tempor" between maternal and filial love, religion, friends and cheerfulness. Her pecuniary circumstances growing rather worse, as her son's maintenance at college and the increase of ministers, who would often make her house their home, relying more upon her supposed means than knowing her real situation; which, however, increased so much in difficulties, that she would sometimes take one; two or three boarders, either clergymen or the sons of friends going to college. "It helps me to pay the expenses of my table," she observed to me, "without this; I could scarcely go on!" The richer part of the clergy if they came in great numbers, on synodical occasions, would offer her a remuneration, which she accepted the more willingly, as she entertained a greater number for nothing, although some of them, not used to much elegance, would be at great variance with her own ideas of neatness, and annoyed her servants, whom she pitied for their extra work.

At last, that son, so long wished for, arrived; he was tall; indeed his growth had overshot his years; he resembled both his parents; but his constitution was already tainted with the symptoms of the disorder, the liver complaint, that was to destroy him; as to the rest, he was every thing his mother could wish. His morals were good; his modesty was like hers, bordering upon too much diffidence in his own powers of body and mind; he was amiable and retired; but an unforeseen event put him to the test as to ambition. The Duke of Bedford dying without children, his title and succession devolved upon collateral branches, the nearest of which were John's father, or on his default,

upon himself. Letters to that effect came from England to Baltimore, and were forwarded here to John. Mrs. Russell encouraged his going at least to Baltimore, and perhaps from thence to England, if the case required his presence. The young man did not think much of the title, and still less of his long enjoying it, if he recovered it; for his mother remonstrating upon the high price of a horse for the journey, "Mother," said he, "you are saving an estate for one who shall not live to inherit it!"

He went to Baltimore, spoke to lawyers, and perhaps startled at the difficulties and money, that he might encounter and spend; and perhaps having learned more of his father's conduct there than could be agreeable to so pure a mind,—he gave up the effort, hardly begun, and came back; neither him or his mother regretting the rank or fortune thus abandoned, and never speaking of it. The horse survived his young master, and although used occasionally by the mother, was always cherished until his death.

Two or three years after this, happened the death of that beloved son. There shone the energetic feelings of that mother, who, upon hearing that her son, coming back from the mouth of the Kentucky river, where he had been on a visit to his relations, was forced to stop at Shelbyville. The news bore that he was dying, she flew to his assistance or to receive his last breath. She looked so overcome with despair, that a traveller, coming from Shelbyville, and not knowing her, conjectured that she must be the mother of the sick young man of whom he had heard, he stopped at the carriage door and said, "Madam, your son is rather better." She had neither time nor words to thank the stranger, whose words restored some courage to her, without which she might not have been able to proceed.

The scene which followed, I have heard described more than once by her mother; but cannot attempt. That beloved son died in her arms. Those who have known Mrs. Russell superficially cannot conceive the sublime courage with which she directed all the preparations to bring back her dead son to hers and his last residence. She followed the funeral carriage step by step in her own, that sad object always in view; and arrived at last, after having seen the coffin deposited in a room to await the burial, she ran into her mother's room, and all energy vanishing with the

necessity which had called for it, she flung herself on the carpet near her mother, that mother whose feelings could understand hers, and gave way to a long agony of screams and sobs. The Presbyterian minister, a man of true feelings and worth, seeing me two or three days after the interment, as I was going to retire, telling him that he could console her better than I; "No," said he, "the first moments of such a grief must be given to nature and friendship; religion acquires more power when the heart has been soothed into more tranquility." That was a good minister! H. Bishop.

A few days afterwards, I returned there to stay all night, as I did sometimes. She was in bed, exhausted with sorrow and want of sleep, but otherwise placid; her heart bleeding in silent agony. She received me as she always did; and when her mother withdrew for the night, I sat up by her bedside and read aloud Lady Russell's letters, that woman who had been the only person that her husband chose to write all his notes during his trial; who followed him almost to the scaffold, after having written a most touching, but useless letter to Charles the 2d, in behalf of that husband—she, left to a sorrow which lasted as long as herself; but having the courage to survive forty years, although she lost many of her children. Lady Russell had two of her daughters very sick at the same time; one of them died, the mother assisting her all the time she could spare from the other, who incessantly enquired after her beloved sister. At last, Lady Russell answered her calmly, "I saw your sister out of bed this morning;" thus saving the life of the invalid, who only knew the real meaning of her mother's words after her own recovery. Mrs. Russell listened in perfect silence, in the contemplation of a grief and fortitude still superior to her own. At nearly two o'clock, she entreated that I should come to bed; she slept. I left her more tranquil in the morning. I went often; her joys and griefs were mine; in either, I was happy near her. It may be asked, how two persons so different in belief could ever agree so well with each other; but what I think does not proceed from hardened and unprincipled motives, I cannot censure, although I may disapprove, and she knew it. As for my reasons, I never introduced them into our conversations. I joined her family devotions when she had any; I would have deemed it sacriligious to shake her sincere belief; it made her

happy; it improved her; and whenever I see those beneficial effects of religion, I respect them too much to endeavor to shake such a belief. Mrs. Russell knew all this; she knew I was no dissembler, but that I respected her, and her religious feelings. As to the rest, she knew that I was devoted to her, and that our hearts agreed perfectly; that was enough for her. To this perfect understanding of each other, I owe the friendship and confidence with which she has honored me for so many years; it has enabled me to judge and know her better than any one else, for she kept very few things secret from me, particularly during her long widowhood. Without being mysterious, she was impenetrable when she thought it her duty to be so; for duty was always her rule of action.

Some years after the death of her son, another trial awaited her in that of her mother, whom a fatal accident brought to the grave at a premature green and vigorous old age. During eleven weeks of acute sufferings and gradual corruption, her daughter attended her with energetic, enduring tenderness; never leaving her room, providing to all her wants, and never fearing either trouble or fatigue, hardly knowing what sleep was, unless during the uneasy slumbers of that mother, whose groans went to her ears even during her own short sleep. At last, the death of that other beloved being opened afresh the wound in the heart of John's mother. Her recommendations (the buying and liberation afterwards of the black girl who had faithfully attended her in her last sickness,) were religiously obeyed, though at much inconvenience to Mrs. Russell, for Mrs. Irvin had left no property.

Thus bereft of the greatest and dearest ties of life, Mrs. Russell had few motives for exertion. Of her son she never spoke willingly; but if she led to the fatal subject, as she did sometimes in the night if I stayed with her, she did it in a manner which showed that when she did not, she only repressed her feelings as being too sacred to be lavishly exposed to every body. One night, I asked her, if she had ever seen him in her dreams, "Many times," said she, "but then I was sleeping."—"Once, once only, I was laying on my back, uneasily dosing, when he seemed to appear before me; 'mother,' said he, 'you thought me dead, but I was only travelling;' he opened his arms, I was going to embrace him, when the motion aroused me, he vanished. I felt for a moment as if reason had forsaken me, a sensa-

tion of insanity came over me, but for a few seconds, and left me; thankful for my escaping such a dreadful fate, and resolving to endure my loss with more resignation." Such being her feelings, no one ever dared to pronounce his name. When her own thoughts turned that way, her uplifted tearful eyes told of her mental prayer for that still beloved object. She had a miniature painting of him, over which she would secretly pour her grief. Mr. Wickliffe, with a delicate attention, had a large portrait drawn from the miniature, in order to soothe her affliction by indulging it openly at all times. She had sent back to Baltimore Mr. Russell's portrait. Her mother's was made by Jouett, six weeks before her accident, and is one of his best pieces. A minister of her own church having, as she thought, alluded to her son's not being an accepted of God, she left his church, and joined the other. She could not, or would not comprehend an eternal damnation for errors of which two of her very dear relations had been guilty; if she, at last, adopted that belief, it was with such reluctance that she never spoke of it.

Mrs. Russell had had several offers of marriage; but as long as her son lived, never would have thought of it; her mother had recommended the measure, but it was not to be so soon accomplished. One of those offers was too ludicrous to be omitted here. A merchant of small wares in Lexington, having scraped together some hundreds of dollars, thought he would invest his capital in landed property, even with an encumbrance on the premises. He had perhaps seen Mrs. Russell as she passed in the street, or perhaps she had bought a toy in his shop, but even that is not certain. The man was old, ugly, of coarse vulgarity of manners, of low stature and lower feelings; a foreigner, and speaking bad English. With all these advantages, he presented his little puckered up visage at the Pond, and opened his business without any preface. The astonishment, and at last the anger of Mrs. Russell cannot be described, as soon as she could at all take the full sense of his meaning, she pointed to the door, and bid him go out, and never show himself there again, under pain of being driven in another way, and I believe called her servants to enforce her words. For some time she felt both frightened and mortified at the adventure, but at last laughed heartily at it, although it still left her a disagreeable impression.

Mrs. Russell, the timid, was no coward; mental energy gave her bodily courage; she feared not being solitary in her different houses, even if they did not shut well, and they never did—even in cases of real danger, she preserved her presence of mind. Being with her one night, we heard noises in the house; “Nothing,” said she, “but the servants;” as to fears of them, that was out of the question: “Were they not her own?” She felt that she could not fear her own people; and she was right as to her person, although some of them might not be so scrupulous as to her property, and she knew them, therefore, she did not entrust them too far; as to the rest, she felt secure, that none of them would have suffered the least harm to be done to her. As to white thieves, it was only of late that she could be persuaded of their existence. We could hear the howlings of the insane at certain periods of the moon; I asked her if she never thought that some of them might come in her house; she had never had any idea of it, “Besides,” she said, “I have a good deal of the Todds in me, as well as a portion of Welch blood, and they are both stout enough.”

Her property was diminishing fast, both from neglect and previous embarrassments; the rest, consisting of enough landed property, both in town and country, was rendered unprofitable in the hands of a woman not inured to business; but that consideration was not uppermost in such a mind as hers—she felt lonely, childless, motherless; her heart wanted an object to rest, to confide in, and to love.

Mr. Wickliffe, himself a widower, offered his hand and was accepted. She knew him previously, although not intimately; but he had been an excellent husband and a tender father, and she knew it. Those who affected to think that he was more in love with her property than with herself, were far from the truth; that object might spoil nothing in his opinion, but that he sought his own happiness, and secured it by the match, was proved by his subsequent conduct. As to her, she felt her blasted and dormant affections revive in full force, and had friends made any objections, her mind was made up against all, as may be seen by this short anecdote: She told me of her intended marriage a few days before it took place. I had been where it had been discussed, of course I knew it; after her communication, I replied merely, “It is said,—

“Say nothing,” interrupted she, “it would be useless, I love him!” That was pronounced with as much energy as if she had said it at seventeen; thirty-six or seven years before. “Well,” replied I, “you did not leave me time to finish my sentence; it is said that he has been the best of husbands and fathers.” Had I heard any more, it never was my practice to repeat any thing that might breed discord and enmity, even had it not been useless at the time. She then spoke of some arrangements that she had made as to her property; told me that her servants should never pass into any other family, and many other things in justification for her entering again in the married state, and ended by repeating, “I love him!”

Mrs. Wickliffe was uniformly what Mrs. Russell had been; in any thing that was not in conformity to her tastes, she modified these so as to meet a new generation and a state of the world quite altered from what both her husband and herself had seen it; but she was inflexible only in her principles. She was a Presbyterian, and remained so. Her friends she never forsook; the intercourse might be interrupted from circumstances, the affections remained. She weighed party spirit in the balance of integrity, and was silent as to persons for whom she entertained a regard. Her soft influence was like the perfume of the heliotrope and violet, it embalmed her atmosphere, and had its effect over every one that came within it. Her mild precepts and admonitions, even if they were not attended to at first, left an impression that recurred in after-times. One of Mr. Wickliffe’s daughters she adopted as her own, and Margaret repaid her affections and care with the most unbounded love. The other had a married sister, to whom her society was necessary, and lived with her. Mrs. Wickliffe had the reverence of all her husband’s children, and had it been otherwise, her husband would in no case have let her suffer from their neglect, for he also truly loved her, and was sensible of her worth and his own happiness; he spoke of it sometimes, and felt it always. She taught me the real value of the man she loved so entirely—he made her happy, I liked him. His first care after marriage, was to clear off her estates from every encumbrance which long neglect had accumulated upon it; she spoke of all this to me, and I was not surprised when, after a year, or perhaps more or less, she told me, that upon mature reflection, she had deemed it but

justice to throw into his hands all her property; she detailed the reasons—they were good. She did it from conviction, for no argument of persuasion had any share in the measure; and far from that, he had made her several times an offer to use any part of her property as she thought proper, any thing else to the contrary notwithstanding. This she told me repeatedly, and I might have doubted many things, but her word, never! Mrs. Wickliffe was a person that could, on no consideration, no, even to save a husband from blame, have stooped to a falsehood. When she wanted to liberate some of her negroes, particularly her mother's faithful attendant, she had her husband's full approbation for doing it; he took every proper measure to send them to Liberia, and joined her in forwarding their preparations, and supplying them with money and letters of recommendation.

That Mrs. Wickliffe was an abolitionist, was true in the best sense of the word, from benevolence and from her conception of the sense of the scriptures, but not in the sense which party spirit has given to that word; what she wished and contemplated for the black part of the human race, was the recognition of what she thought its rights; and support by its labors in the freedom of enjoying it. As to forwarding those ends by fraud or violent means, it never entered her mind, she thought colonization and industry the only ways to secure permanent good. As to a mixture of the two races, it never could enter her unsullied mind. Yellow people she considered as the offspring of vice, and as such, she could feel no sympathy for the degraded parent. Her detestation of that kind of immorality which can unfeelingly devote to slavery and infamy, its own offspring could certainly find no favor with her.

In fact, her abolitionism, although grounded on opinion and conviction, might unconsciously to herself, be mingled with the idea, that in case of the general liberation, her own people should certainly be the sharers in their own right, instead of obtaining it as a favor, liable to uncertainty; for this was one of her last thoughts and last recommendations to her husband; he gave his promise, and it soothed her mind and alleviated the pains of her body in her last days.

Mrs. Wickliffe has been thought deficient in generosity. What has she not done for me? and what had I done to deserve it? But independent of this, she did not think that

money was a reward for feelings; she had no notion to give to the undeserving, or to encourage idleness; she would give the means of working, and encourage the laborer. Her town houses were often let to poor people, who paid but small rents, and that not always; her smoke house, her dairy, her garden, her fruit, were often taxed by the demands of the poor, and a good reason for not giving much money was, that she seldom had much to spare; and lastly, as I was informed, even of late, she gave a great deal, but never boasted of it. Besides what she might give to her servants, she gave them praises, hearty praises and thanks, when they were deserved. Upon her return from a journey, she found her house in complete order, every thing had been arranged so that she might feel the comforts of home; several pots of her most beautiful flowers were arranged in full bloom in the porch: "See," said she to me, "how happy I am in servants that will take such pains for their mistress!" The woman was there who had done it, and withdrew with tears in her eyes and her face beaming with pleasure. I have often witnessed these scenes. If she went abroad for some days, every servant came to bid a farewell, which she returned with cordiality; little children running to the carriage to say, "Good bye, missus!" Could that be purchased with money?

I asked her once, what might be her opinion as to what is generally called extravagance? "It is the doing things beyond our means, or even within our means, or to their full extent, leaving us unprovided for in case of unforeseen events; there may be extravagance even in eating cabbages and bacon, if one cannot afford it; prudence is the best test of what we should do in this and any other case."

She had now been happy for seventeen or eighteen years; real sorrow she knew not during that period—she could not certainly be more exempt from little vexations than others; but they were not such as to leave any durable impression, and that is the lot of very few.

Her constitution was good; but head aches and dyspeptic affections had disturbed her for many years, this denoted some disorder in the liver; but she never thought of that, until in 1843, she became rather more fleshy, and subject to catch colds; her fine constitution seemed gradually to give way; yet there was no danger, a course of judicious remedies might have averted the evil. She wished it; but in the course of the fall she read a pamphlet in

which a paragraph alluded to her son, and coupled his name with a vice for which she had no indulgence, however lightly some people may think of it. I do not suppose that the writer was aware of the effect that what so many look upon as a youthful frolic, would have on Mrs. Wickliffe; but I have been very unsuccessful in my endeavors to represent her as she really was, if it cannot be understood how and in what manner the blow struck her. That son whose name had not been pronounced for years, without her leading to it; whose image was entombed in her heart as in a holy temple, and that temple desecrated! that adored image brought to light in a disgraceful manner! She said little on the subject—it was not in her nature to say much; but from that time, it was observed that her innocent tastes left her in a short time; her flowers were neglected, every thing seemed tasteless; she still attended to her household business, but that was a duty, and duty was always paramount; but very few things could rouse her languid energies, which had nearly left her,—her ailments became more serious; but she would go to Louisville, partly because travelling always agreed with her, and still more to see her beloved Mrs. P. There she visited all her former friends, as if she bade them a mental adieu. A person telling her that at her time of life, the constitution is liable to a change, “Yes,” she replied, “mine is completely changed, I feel it sensibly.” She had caught a fresh cold by exposing herself; but instead of returning home, she insisted upon going to see her relations, at the mouth of the Kentucky river. There she saw new objects of sorrow; of her most beloved cousins and former companions, two were at the point of death; every thing seemed blasted in that family, so respectable and so respected—what a sad omen to herself, who felt already so ill!

On her return home, I hastened to go and see her; she was not confined to bed, but she already felt reluctant to walk much, and riding was attended with some difficulty in getting in and out of a carriage. She received me as usual, and in the course of conversation recited four lines of fine poetry, in which the author describing the beauty of the spring-dew, expressed his idea of never seeing it again; “So it shall be with me!” said she. I looked at her, she fixed her expressive eyes upon me, “It is so, I shall never see another spring!” I was struck with her man-

ner; there was no despondency, no repinings, no wish that it should be so, but an inward conviction of the truth of what she uttered; still I hoped she was mistaken, and went again in a few days—there was company. But she found time to tell me, “Nelly is dead! do you know it?” She added nothing; she wanted to have said more, but she knew what I thought her feelings must be in the loss of her earliest companion. It was another wound added to the others, and they were all bleeding afresh in her heart. We spoke of her recovery, she wished to go to the springs, Mr. W. thought it would do no good, she thought otherwise; at any rate, the ride might benefit her, and she went. The benefit of her journey was very transient, if there was any. On her return, her bodily faculties were still more impaired, her mental ones, never. Even riding became more painful, and at last impossible. When asked how she was, she would answer, “Why I do not suffer, and every body says I am better.” That Mrs. Wickliffe suffered no acute pain, was evident from her uttering no cries, as I knew would have been the fact in the contrary case. But when alone with me, and upon my questioning her closely, she would detail her different inward feelings, and compare them, or combine them with her spasmodic suffocations. I found her more prostrated every succeeding Saturday than the preceding one. When every thing was attributed to hysterical sensations, that she would not walk, I endeavored to persuade her to do it, “And you who know me, can you suppose that if I thought I could, I would always remain on that couch;” then she detailed some feelings which seemed, to me, to denote some inward malady, connected with the faculty of motion, although there was no paralytic affection, as she could certainly move freely in bed, or on her couch.

It is not my purpose to detail all the particulars of a long illness. Mrs. Wickliffe did not, at all times, despair of her recovery; but I think she felt death much more certain than she expressed it; her frequent prayers, all breathing affection for her husband, his family, and her own friends; her conversations with him on what she wished to be done, “Not,” she said, “that I expect to die; but in case;” her holding my hand in hers silently, two weeks before the event, and many smaller circumstances, all proved to me what she thought of her fate.

She died on Friday, the 27th of September, this year

(1844), between nine and ten o'clock in the morning. In her is departed one of the few models of excellence that this country has produced—that plain but elegant cordiality of manners, which marked the line of what was called the Virginia and Kentucky world, and the modern manners of this new generation. Her character and thoughts I have endeavored to represent; she has been my constant study; my constant admiration, love and reverence. What I saw, I related; and leave this as a memorial of what she was, and what I felt. I have adhered to the most perfect truth, it had no need of ornaments.

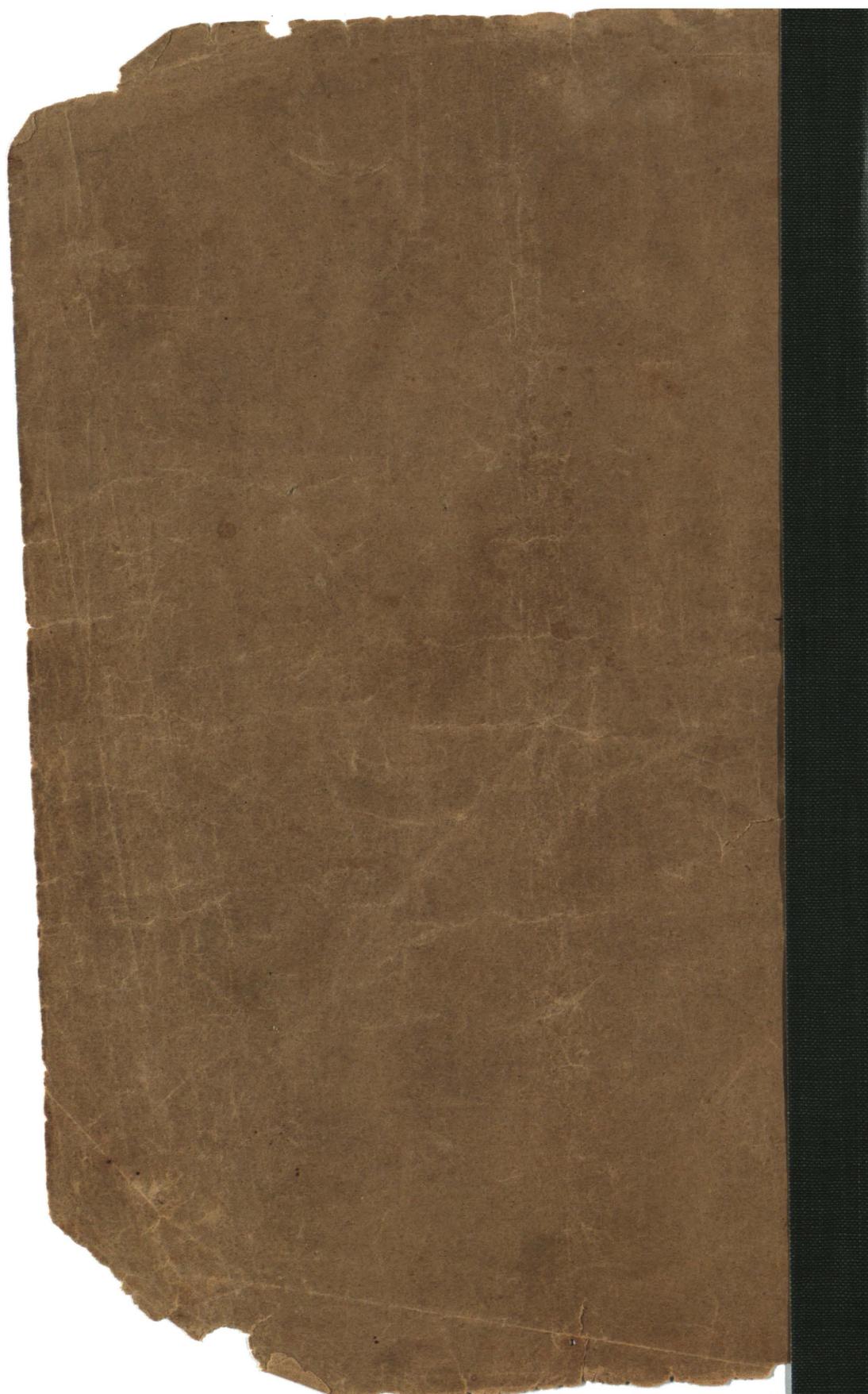
EPITAPH OF MRS. WICKLIFFE.

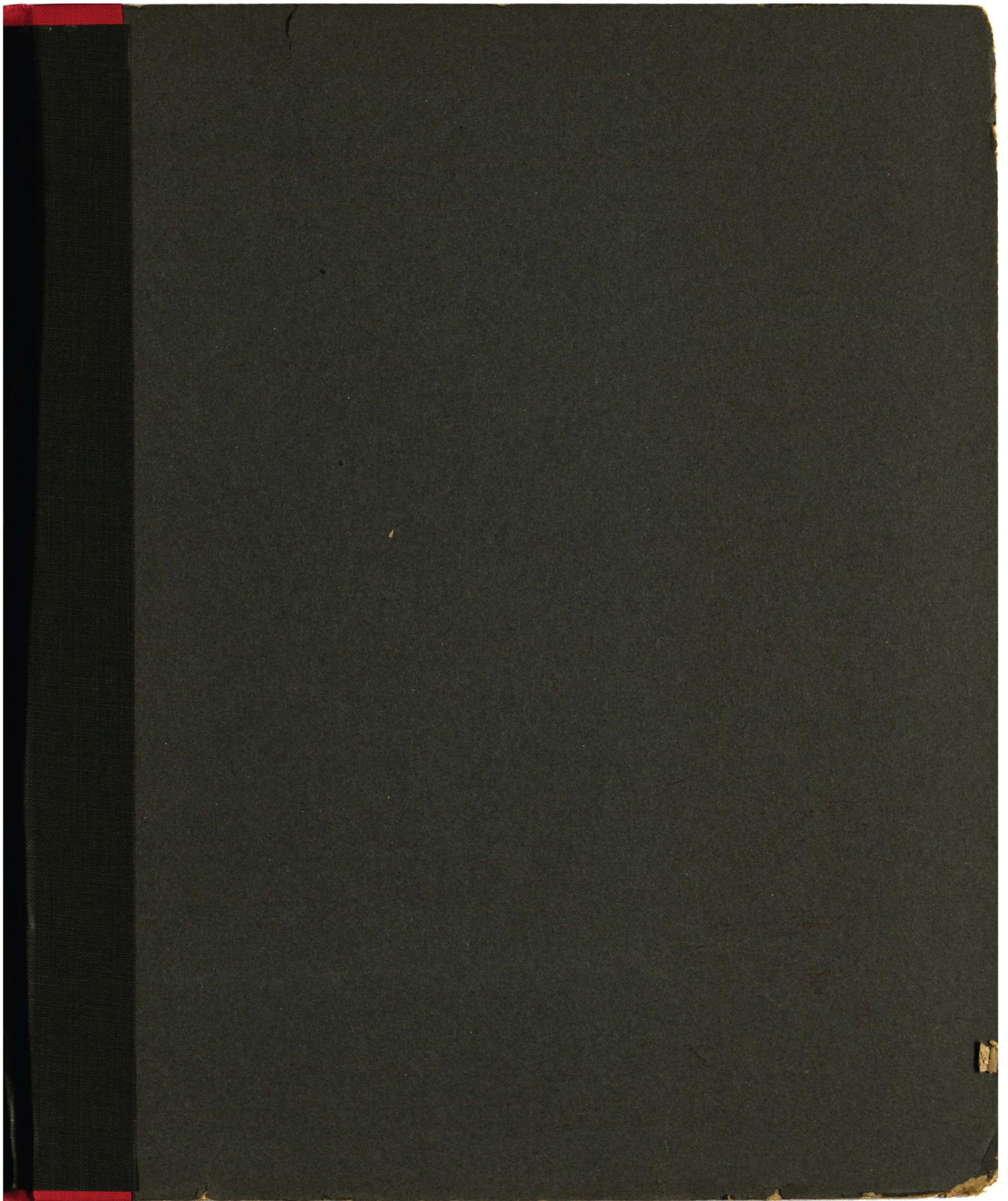
Here lies the body of
MRS. MARY O. T. WICKLIFFE,
Whose life,

Like an emanation of the Divinity,
was sent to the world to serve as an
example of every virtue, and of true
christian perfection; after having
the delight and comfort of all who
knew her, her soul was reunited to
her God in Heaven, the only home
that was worthy of her.

Ob. Sept. 27, A. D. 1844.

Ætat. 64—5.





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