

**A BRIEF SKETCH OF  
THE LIFE OF ANNA  
BACKHOUSE**

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A Brief Sketch of the Life of Anna Backhouse by Eliza Paul Kirkbride Gurney

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**ELIZA PAUL KIRKBRIDE GURNEY**

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BACKHOUSE**



A BRIEF SKETCH

OF THE

LIFE OF ANNA BACKHOUSE,

BY ONE

WHO KNEW HER WELL, LOVED HER MUCH, AND WAS  
OFTEN INSTRUCTED BY HER.

"For honourable age is not that which standeth in length of  
time, nor that which is measured by number of years.

"But *wisdom* is the gray hair unto men, and an *unspotted life* is  
old age."

JOHN RODGERS,  
BURLINGTON, NEW JERSEY.

1852.

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NOTE.

THIS little volume is only printed for A. B.'s family and particular friends, and it is requested that it may not be published without the consent of the Editor.

West Hill, 1852.

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S. J. T.

BRIEF SKETCH  
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CHAPTER I.

WE so rarely meet with instances of youthful piety, so often may it be sorrowfully said of those in early life, "*all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's;*" that when eminent young Christians are taken from us, and no record is made of their instructive histories, we feel that the Church is robbed of her due, and an opportunity is lost of magnifying "*the exceeding riches of the grace of God,*" which made them what they were.

Such are the convictions which have induced the writer, to attempt a little sketch of the life and character of ANNA BACKHOUSE, chiefly compiled from her letters, journals, etc. She was the daughter of Joseph John and Jane Gurney, and was born at Earlham, near Norwich, the 21st of 12th month, 1820. Endowed by nature with more than ordinary talent, she had also the great advantage of the most minute care and refined culture; and ample was the compensation she made for all the pains

that were bestowed upon her. Her beloved mother died while she was quite in her infancy; but she had the high privilege of being, first, the pupil, and afterward, the intimate companion of her gifted father and aunts; from whose rich stores of varied information, and still richer treasuries of heavenly lore, her vigorous and thirsting spirit did not fail to draw abundant and continuous supplies. To all these beloved relatives, she was closely attached. *Their will was her law* in early childhood, and, in after life, her unremitting attention to their wishes, and earnest solicitude to promote their welfare in every way, were strikingly beautiful. Her love for her only brother was also exceedingly strong; and, though fifteen months his junior, her watchful care over him, and constant anxiety on his account, when he was about to enter on the busy stage of life, were truly *maternal*. Indeed, in the rigid fulfilment of her relative duties she seemed to forget herself; and being of a slight and delicate frame, there is little doubt that her health was affected, and her constitution impaired by the too frequent demands that were made upon her sympathy; the mind and body acting and reacting on each other, before her powers were sufficiently matured to bear the stress so early laid upon them. This greatly added to the natural refinement and delicacy of her whole appearance; and one's first thought on seeing her, was, that she was not long to be a dweller in this vale of tears, but was "heir to a holier inheritance." On con-



versing with her, the impression was confirmed. In the soft and subdued tones of her voice, the sweetness and gentleness of her manner, the unnatural brightness of her hazel eye, and the amiability and loveliness of her disposition, this youthful Christian confessed herself "a stranger and a pilgrim on the earth, seeking a *better* country." The compiler of this little sketch, who knew her intimately for several years, never saw a shade of anger or discontent pass over her lovely, intellectual countenance. However clouds might gather on the brows around her, *her* beaming face maintained its undisturbed serenity; and she was truly an unflinching cheerer, comforting all who were in any sorrow—may we not reverently say—with the rich consolation wherewith she herself was comforted of God. Some extracts from her later journal, which it is designed to insert in this little memoir will evince that this is not the language of partial affection; but that this dear child was indeed remarkably disciplined in the school of Christ, *taught* of her gracious Lord!

In her father's second marriage, her loss of maternal care and tenderness, was, for a time, most happily supplied; but, in her fifteenth year, she was deprived by death of a mother, around whom her ardent affections were closely entwined. This might be said to be her first acquaintance with sorrow, as she was not old enough to realize her loss, when her own beloved mother died; and very bitter was the unlooked for trial to her loving young heart: but,

with characteristic disinterestedness, she soon lost sight of her own share in the bereavement, in the fulness of her sympathy for the honoured parent who had to drink the cup of bitterness to the very dregs. From this time, she became his confidential companion and bosom friend. A stronger tie has, perhaps, not often subsisted between father and daughter, than the one which bound *them* together. So close, indeed, was their union, that it is believed she never recovered from the shock of hearing of his sudden removal from this changing scene. May it not be said, in the beautiful words of the inspired writer?—

“They were lovely and pleasant in their lives,  
And in death they were not divided.”

In her simple and touching reminiscences of this beloved parent, she says :

“We were exceedingly fond of our father. At the same time, *his word was law*. It never entered our minds, I believe, openly to disobey him ; and I am reported to have been in the habit of informing visitors, that papa required ‘implicit obedience.’

“We were very little children, when he began occasionally to take us into his study, for times of religious retirement and prayer. After sitting a short time in silence, he would often kneel down, and pour forth his prayers in the most simple words he could use. I think I shall never forget the very great solemnity, the holy, and, to me, as a little child, the *almost awful* feeling of some of these occasions ! We continued this practice, at times, till he went to America ;

and I well remember, that, when he gave us some parting religious advice, he spoke with comfort of these seasons of retirement; and said, that he hoped he had, in some measure, fulfilled his paternal duty, in endeavouring to train us in the *habit of prayer*. It was a subject he constantly pressed on our attention; begging us, also, to be most regular in reading the Scriptures to ourselves, morning and evening, and in endeavoring to wait upon the Lord. Having mentioned this, I think I must not omit another subject, which he also very frequently pressed upon our minds, so that they are connected in mine, as those on which he spoke to us the most often, and the most earnestly: this was, the immediate and *perceptible* guidance of the Holy Spirit—a doctrine which he endeavoured to explain to us, and the practical application of which he tried to make us *feel*, even at a very early age—‘THE GOLDEN CLUE,’ as he called it; a clue by which he was himself led, both in small things and great, more than any other person I ever knew.”

Can we for a moment doubt, that the watchful care and religious training, to which allusion is thus incidentally made, were remarkably and permanently blessed to the spiritual benefit of this dear child? and that, under the cherishing influence of the dews of Heaven, they produced those lovely Christian fruits, for which she was so conspicuous? And may it not act as a stimulus to those who are entrusted with the education of the young, to endeavour, both by precept and example, to “bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?” In the same little sketch of her father, she says:

“Often, while we were taking a ramble in the park,