

**MEMOIRS OF MRS.
JOANNA BETHUNE**

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Memoirs of Mrs. Joanna Bethune by George W. Bethune

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GEORGE W. BETHUNE

**MEMOIRS OF MRS.
JOANNA BETHUNE**

MEMOIRS

OF

MRS. JOANNA BETHUNE.

BY HER SON,

THE REV. GEORGE W. BETHUNE, D.D.

WITH AN APPENDIX,

CONTAINING

EXTRACTS FROM THE WRITINGS OF MRS. BETHUNE.

*Selected & Edited
By
T. Kenans Prime*

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EDITOR'S NOTE.

ABOUT one year before the Rev. Dr. Bethune went abroad and died, he asked me to aid him in preparing a biographical sketch of his mother. He desired me to read her journals, meditations, recorded prayers and letters, and from them to select such passages as might be thought useful if published as an Appendix to the Memoir. After I had completed the examination, I placed the manuscripts in his hands, with the selected passages marked; and he then wrote the Memoir which is now presented to the reader. It is his last work—a beautiful living tribute by a gifted, affectionate son to his sainted mother. Other works of this eloquent and distinguished scholar, poet, preacher, and orator have been published, but nothing from his pen will be read with greater admiration than this simple memorial of the mother who taught him to speak.

The extracts from the writings of Mrs. Joanna Bethune, which are given as an Appendix to the Memoir, are a rich legacy to the Church. In many respects they are not less valuable and interesting

than the remains of her remarkable mother, Mrs. Isabella Graham. They exhibit a life of extraordinary activity, of deep spiritual feeling, and strong faith in the promises of God to parents for their children and children's children.

Extending over a long series of years, these extracts, which might have been continued to fill several volumes, complete the biography written by her son, and show the mother in the midst of her incessant toil for the young: founding the Sunday-school Union system, Infant Schools, the Orphan Asylum, and abounding in every good work, humbly seeking Divine aid in the minutest and most secular duties, and, above all, praying without ceasing for the conversion of her posterity to the latest generation.

Christian ladies will read these pages, and be stimulated and guided in noble self-denying labors for the world around them; and aged women will here find a beautiful example of holy living and dying that will comfort and cheer them in the evening of their days.

The life of the author of this Memoir remains to be written. His death, so sudden and in a far-away country, was a shock and a grief to his friends and the Christian community from which they have not yet recovered; but they will receive with mournful satisfaction these last fruits of his pen, the yearnings

of his warm heart for her with whom he is now at rest in glory.

The lines below, addressed some years ago by the Rev. Dr. Bethune to his mother, will give the reader a vivid idea of the tender feeling with which the Memoir is written :

TO MY MOTHER.

My mother ! Manhood's anxious brow
 And sterner cares have long been mine,
 Yet turn I to thee fondly now,
 As when upon thy bosom's shrine
 My infant griefs were gently hush'd to rest,
 And thy low-whisper'd prayers my slumber bless'd.

I never call that gentle name,
 My mother ! but I am again
 E'en as a child ; the very same
 That prattled at thy knee ; and fain
 Would I forget, in momentary joy,
 That I no more can be thy happy boy :

The artless boy, to whom thy smile
 Was sunshine, and thy frown sad night
 (Though rare that frown, and brief the while
 It veil'd from me thy loving light) ;
 For well-earn'd task, ambition's highest bliss,
 To win from thine approving lips a kiss.

I've loved through foreign lands to roam,
 And gazed o'er many a classic scene ;
 Yet would the thought of that dear home,
 Which once was ours, oft intervene.

And bid me close again my weary eye,
To think of thee and those sweet days gone by.

That pleasant home of fruits and flowers,
Where by the Hudson's verdant side
My sisters wove their jasmine bowers,
And he we loved, at eventide,
Would hastening come from distant toil to bless
Thine and his children's radiant happiness.

Alas the change! the rattling car
On flint-paved streets profanes the spot,
Where o'er the sod we row'd the Star
Of Bethlehem and forget-me-not.
Oh, woe to Mammon's desolating reign!
We ne'er shall find on earth a home again.

I've perused o'er many a yellow page
Of ancient wisdom, and have won,
Perchance, a scholar's name; but sage
Or bard have never taught thy son
Lessons so dear, so fraught with holy truth,
As those his mother's faith shed on his youth.

If, by the Saviour's grace made meet,
My God will own my life and love,
Methinks, when singing at His feet,
Amid the ransomed throng above,
Thy name upon my glowing lips shall be,
And I will bless that grace for heaven and thee—

For thee and heaven; for thou didst tread
The way that leads me heavenward, and
My often wayward footsteps led
In the same path with patient hand

And when I wander'd far, thy earnest call
Restored my soul from sin's deceitful thrall.

I have been bless'd with other ties—

Fond ties and true; yet never deem
That I the less thy fondness prize;

No, mother! in my warmest dream
Of answer'd passion, through this heart of mine
One chord will vibrate to no name but thine.

Mother, thy name is widow. Well

I know no love of mine can fill
The waste place of thy heart, or dwell

Within one sacred recess; still,
Lean on the faithful bosom of thy son,
My parent—thou art mine, my *only* one!