

**MEMOIR OF
MARY CALVERT**

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Memoir of Mary Calvert by G. Stringer Rowe

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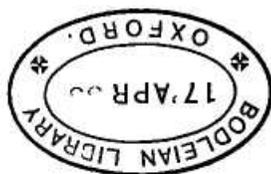
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MEMOIR OF MARY CALVERT.

IF a habit of cheerful self-sacrifice, a frequent exposure to hardship, and sometimes to deadly peril, for the sake of others, make good the claim to true heroism, Mrs. Calvert's was, beyond all question, a heroic life. It was far more. The simple unconsciousness of her nobility, the gentle tenderness and modesty which clothed her bravest courage, the untiring and unfaltering instinct whereby she discovered opportunities of giving help and benefit to those around her, at the cost of her own unsparing toil, and often of her own suffering,—these fine features reached in her an excellence which no endowment or development of merely human qualities can explain. All that, in her course and character, excited the admiring wonder of many in different parts of the world, was to her the cheerful service of religious devotion, whereby, for much love's sake, she acknowledged God in all her ways, and rendered

all praise to Him with this witness, *By the grace of God I am what I am.*

When the history of that grace began in her life, it is impossible to determine. We know, it is true, the exact time of the crisis when she herself wholly submitted to the grace of God : but long before this, both by natural gifts and the imperceptible training of early circumstances, as well as by benignant influences, which, without her knowledge, were fashioning her temperament and character, God was preparing her for the important work to which she was to be called.

It was in the year 1814, in the village of Aston Clinton, in Buckinghamshire, that Mary Fowler was born, the last child, and of course the pet, of the family. Doubtless the little one received a larger share of loving tenderness because her young life was overcast by the shadow of disease, causing her much sharp suffering, and demanding the most assiduous nursing care which the mother could bestow, a care which in itself involved the infliction of pain, to the sore trial of the mother's heart. Already, in those early days of distress, so hard for a young child to bear, there gleams the spirit of brave unselfishness which in after years

shone out with a beautiful and all-pervading lustre.

"Don't cry, mother," said the courageous little sufferer many a time; "I will bear it if it will make me better."

And it did make her better; for skilful treatment, and the mother's untiring love, succeeded in mastering the trouble; and Mary came to enjoy, after all, a healthy, vigorous and bright childhood.

All that was strong in her nature was fostered by the bracing influences of her country home, amidst which she seemed to grow up without the sense of fear, and would express her surprise when less daring members of the family betrayed a timidity which she evidently was unable to understand. Her enjoyment of horse-exercise was unbounded, and continued throughout life.

She cared little how mettlesome or unruly the steed, if it would only go freely. Once at least her nerve was severely tested, when a spirited horse which she was riding refused the control of her childish arm, and went away at full speed towards a long, low shed. She saw the danger, dropped the bridle, got her feet clear, and, as the horse darted from under her

into the shed, caught the eaves with her hands, and dropped to the ground, somewhat shaken and bruised, but not seriously hurt. Many another adventure befell the child in the pursuit of her favourite out-of-door pleasures; but they impressed her as so little extraordinary, that they passed from her own memory, though some of them are well remembered by her friends to this day.*

All these things would be of too trifling im-

* Many years afterwards, when Mrs. Calvert was in the Fiji Islands, she found, on visiting one of the stations, some horses. Unbroken as they were, the rare chance of a good ride could not be foregone; and, to the terrified astonishment of the natives, the white lady sped away not only without fear, but with evident delight. And after many years more, far away at the South African Diamond Fields, when a dear friend placed at her disposal a noble black horse, her waning strength seemed to be nerved afresh by the favourite exercise. At Kimberley, people know what riding means, and many there learned to admire the firm seat, and light, steady hand of the missionary's wife, as she hastened here and there on 'Blackey,' visiting the sick and other friends. Even then she was little dependent upon others' help in mounting or alighting.

Still a few years more, and our dear friend lay dying in her last earthly resting-place—in England once more. Within a few days of the end, in extreme weakness, she whispered to her son, 'Blackey would be of no use to me now.'