

FROM LIFE'S SCHOOL TO THE "FATHER'S HOUSE". A BRIEF MEMOIR AND LETTERS OF AMELIA, ANNIE, AND THOMAS JOHNSON, WIFE, DAUGHTER AND SON OF JAMES JOHNSON, COMMISSIONER OF CUSTOMS, CANADA. COMPILED AND EDITED BY M.R.J

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From life's school to the "Father's house". A brief memoir and letters of Amelia, Annie, and Thomas Johnson, wife, daughter and son of James Johnson, commissioner of customs, Canada. Compiled and edited by M.R.J by M. R. J.

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M. R. J.

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A brief Memoir and Letters

OF

AMELIA, ANNIE, AND THOMAS JOHNSON,

WIFE, DAUGHTER AND SON

OF

JAMES JOHNSON

COMMISSIONER OF CUSTOMS, CANADA.

COMPILED AND EDITED BY

M. R. J.



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1888.

PREFACE.



THE life of a faithful servant of our Lord Jesus Christ can never fail to benefit those who come within its influence.

She whose letters follow the brief sketch of her life, here given, was one who lived a life of faith in the Son of God; who endured as seeing Him who is invisible; who, while in the world, was "kept from the evil."

Mrs. J. Johnson "departed this life in God's faith and fear," on the 24th of January, 1888. Her sorrowing family, in the hope that her example and words may be made, by God's blessing, a help and stimulus to some, as well as a comforting memorial to her friends, publish these simple details of her home life, and last illness.

Farewell friends ! but not Farewell ;
Where I am, ye too shall dwell ;
I am gone before your face
A moment's worth, a little space.
When ye come where I have stepped,
Ye will wonder that ye wept :
Ye will know by true love taught,
That *here* is all, and *there* is naught.
Weep awhile if ye are fain ;
Sunshine still must follow rain ;
Only not at Death, for Death
Now we know, is that first breath
Which the souls draw when we enter
Life, which is of all life centre.

—ARABIC HYMN.

FROM LIFE'S SCHOOL
TO THE "FATHER'S HOUSE."

OTTAWA, Ont., Canada,
March 14th, 1888.

MY DEAR A,

You ask for some particulars with regard to the life and the last days of our dear mother, who passed away seven weeks ago.

MOTHER! How we love to dwell on the word! How we love to recall the dear face; the smile of rare sweetness; the clear hazel eyes; the wavy brown hair which to the last showed scarce a thread of silver.

From our earliest childhood she was an inspiration to us. By precept and example she incited us to diligence, teaching us the nobleness of self-denial and the unworthiness of a life lived for self. To educate and improve every faculty to its utmost capacity, and to use these faculties so as to benefit others—"to be a blessing"—were the aims in life she held up before us. How many times has she held the childish, upturned faces between her hands and said, as she imprinted a kiss upon the brow, "The Lord bless you and make you a blessing."

While it was always her habit to "look well to the ways of her household," she was abundant in her labors

for the suffering and sinful wherever it was her lot to dwell. Her thoughtfulness for others, and her industry, knew no bounds. Possessed of a rare degree of ingenuity, she never failed to discover some means of reaching those whom she wished to influence, from persons of refinement and culture down to the lowest outcast.

"You never give anybody up," a friend said to her one day, on hearing of the reformation in heart and life, through her efforts, of one who had been far gone in sin. And this was true: in the face of dissuasion, opposition, ridicule, she went out after the erring ones and strove to lead them to a new life.

During her married life her lot was cast in several different cities. In each of these, a lasting monument in the shape of some beneficent work set on foot by her, was left, to mark the fact that she had sojourned there.

She never went from a place without leaving it in some respects better through her influence, while her work for individuals, carried on so quietly that eternity alone will bring it to light, was unceasing.

She was wonderfully brave in sorrow, though naturally of an extremely sensitive, nervous temperament. She had a great deal of elasticity and sound common sense. Through and in and over all, her firm unwavering faith in an ever-present God sustained her in the most trying circumstances, and crushing bereavements. Her children will never know what she suffered in parting with four of them at one time, two sons being sent to a college in New York State, and two daughters to Mt. Holyoke Seminary in Mass. Whatever seemed to her to be for

their highest good, must be done at whatever cost to her own feelings.

On three occasions during her lifetime God called her to give to Him a loved one from her circle of six, three boys and three girls. The first to be taken was a lovely infant of twenty months ; then, many years later, the eldest daughter, the pride of the family, just as she had completed her twenty-first year : four years elapsed, and then the eldest son, over whose career she watched with unusual solicitude, was called to join the sister whose loss he had never ceased to mourn with more than ordinary grief.

The following extract, from a letter written by her in 1883, will give an insight into the cheerful view she took of life, and her hope for the world. After alluding to some calamities which had recently taken place in different parts of the world, she adds :—

How delightful it would be to know that all these things indicate the speedy coming of our Lord ; coming to put things in order, to bring light out of darkness, order out of confusion ; to make an end of the works of the devil. It looks to me like expecting a great deal, to look forward to being taken to Heaven without dying ; as so many do who are looking for the "coming." Now, though I can never make up my mind to accept the theories we have on this subject, nor understand the Bible statements concerning the end, still I hope on and ever *that it may be soon*. Not that I do not enjoy life as well as ever I did, indeed better I think ; I fear sometimes I love life and the blessings that are heaped upon me, too well, so that I am almost always filled with praise and thanksgiving, but there are so many reasons why we should desire the *new departure*. The wicked never will understand the folly of sin ; generation after generation, it is the old story of blindness and rebellion, and will be till the coming of the Lord. This, I think, the Bible plainly says. That,

however, should never discourage those who are working for their fellows ; their work is with Him who says, " a cup of cold water shall not lose its reward."

But perhaps we are not looking for the reward—well then, from the same source we have, " Cast thy bread upon the waters and thou shall find it after many days." " In due season we shall reap, *if we faint not.*" Was it not strange (and the idea has just struck me) that when the seventy returned to Jesus and told Him that the devils were subject to them through His name. He said, " Rejoice not that the devils are subject unto you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in Heaven." Now is it not the case that we would be likely to rejoice more over the subjection of the evil one, than at the fact that our names are written in Heaven ? We do so want to see the kingdom of Satan overthrown, his awful power over the children of men broken, his dens of iniquity destroyed, his captives delivered, etc., etc. So we should, and I feel sure that a God of love will find means to turn all Satan's plans, all that he does, and all that he ever did to the furthering of His gracious designs of mercy to the children of men. I cannot help this conviction.

Once in speaking to a friend of the work God had given her to do, she said it was mainly in the direction of " Gospel Temperance." Many through her instrumentality were saved from lives of bondage to the fatal appetite for liquor, while her interest in the great work of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union was intense. Of this Miss Frances E. Willard, President of the National W.C.T.U., writes as follows :

We have just received the beautiful, pitiful card and newspaper notice of your blessed mother's departure. Surely she was ripe for Heaven ! But how sorely you will miss her.

Very clearly comes to my memory the good Bishop who called on me summers ago at the White Mountains, and told me of the saintly woman who had prayed that the white ribbon movement might come to the Dominion capital, and he was so earnest that I agreed

to go when I had no such plan. Then I went with dear Anna Gordon, and was your guest twice. What solicitude your mother showed, how kind your father was, and how graciously the ladies rallied. Dear Heart ! She has gone home to her own native climate and companions. We work on in faith and hope.

From her family, who were privileged to watch with her night and day during her illness from New Year's morning until the twenty-fourth, the memory of that sacred season can never pass away. From the first she knew she was going home, and her one desire was to prepare us for it, her one thought was to comfort those she was leaving behind. For herself, she longed to go; her constant prayer was, "Oh take me," but to those whose hearts were breaking she had always some sweet word of comfort. "The Lord will sustain you," she would say; or again, "you must think of it as a *Victory*, and do not mourn when I am gone." Once when she had said to one of us, "you do not expect me to recover now, do you?" And the answer, through choking sobs, had been, "yes, darling mother, we all expect you to get well,"—she turned a little wearily and softly prayed, "O Lord, teach them better,"

"Dear children," she said one day, "isn't it wonderful that we should have this experience."

She suffered much from difficulty of breathing and extreme weakness. It always comforted her to listen to words from Holy Scripture, repeated in her hearing by her ever attentive pastor, or her sorrowing family. On Saturday night, the 14th of January, she was wonderfully restful and filled with a peace and joy, not of earth, and