



LITTLE GEORGE.

*Prov. Shelter for
Colored Children*

31863

A
BRIEF MEMOIR

OF AN

INMATE OF THE

"SHELTER FOR COLORED ORPHANS,"

IN PROVIDENCE, R. I.

By the Superintendent.

PROVIDENCE:
H. H. BROWN, PRINTER.
1846.

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Those that seek me early shall find me.—
PROV. 8: 17.

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GEORGE W. ROBINSON was born in Providence in the year 1833. His mother, regardless of the best interests of her child, placed him as a boarder in families where he was subject to the worst influence. He thus acquired habits which were calculated to destroy both body and soul, and had it not been for the interposition of Divine Providence, he would have fallen a victim to vice and wretchedness.

At the age of six, through the influence of kind friends with whom the

mother then resided, he was placed at the "Shelter for Colored Orphans." It was soon ascertained that George was not to be trusted a moment out of sight, having become quite an adept in petty thieving, accompanied by its foster brother, lying. Many fears were entertained, that the seeds of iniquity, which had fearfully germinated, could never be eradicated;— but after about eighteen months of labor, the fallow ground appeared to be giving way, and we have reason to hope that the prayerful culture of the precious seeds of truth, implanted by a Heavenly Father's hand, have now fully ripened, and the fruit gathered into the garner of love on high.

Nothing worthy of note occurred in his history until about this period,

when one bad habit after another seemed gradually to wear away, and George began to manifest to his anxious teachers some developments for future good. About this time, a cherished friend of the Institution visited the school, and as had been frequently her custom, addressed a few remarks to the children. George was present, and having been more or less from his infancy, afflicted with the asthma, laboring at this time under a severe attack, he was seated in the school room in an arm chair, which attracted the attention of the kind friend, who particularly addressed herself to him. With her peculiar sweetness of manner, she directed his thoughts to a home [of rest beyond this vale of tears, vividly describing

the glorious mansions of blessedness, which the adorable Redeemer had gone to prepare for those that love him,—closing with the precious truth, “all this, dear George, was prepared for thee, if thou wilt be a good boy and love the Saviour.” This conversation was evidently not lost, but made an impression on his mind, which was never forgotten; it rather acquired strength, until he awoke to the full fruition of that rest, which he could find in heaven alone.

For the last year of his life he was much afflicted with his disease, seldom able to attend meeting or Sabbath school, and gradually failed; but while the outward man was decaying, the inner man was ripening for a glorious immortality. For about five months

previous to his decease, his deportment was unexceptionable:—so quiet, patient and obedient, as not even to require the most gentle admonition from his teachers. He would often sit in his chair, apparently buried in thought, and when questioned by those who watched him with tender solicitude, as to the subject of his meditations, he would give an evasive answer, and quietly pursue his own course. He manifested a deep interest for the best welfare of the children, frequently in a peculiarly gentle manner, asking if it was agreeable to the superintendent, that such and such a course of conduct should be pursued by certain members of the family, evidently grieved if anything occurred which he thought would not meet her wishes,

But the seat is now vacated, and our faithful little friend has passed away—we no longer hear his admonitory voice—it is hushed in the silence of the grave; but, “though dead, he yet speaketh.” O, may we give heed to his example and dying testimony of living faith in Christ.

And here let us pause—for I would tread lightly on the ground over which I am now called to pass, as it lies on the very verge of Eternity. I trod with him the pathway to the entrance of the valley; yea, I walked down to the cold stream of death, and as we drew nearer and nearer to the swellings of Jordan, and heard the hoarse billows as they sent up their dashing waves over the head of my suffering boy, the voice of Jesus was heard in

the distance—“It is I; be not afraid.’ It came closer and closer, until hand was locked in hand, and they vanished from my sight and left me alone, to retrace my steps over the rugged path of life, until I too shall be summoned to join his gentle spirit in yon world of light. I thought I heard by the ear of faith, a louder, sweeter note vibrate from the golden harps of paradise, as the ransomed soul took its place among the blood-washed throng—but the veil of mortality hid the vision from my view. O, can I faithfully delineate the precious scene, as we passed our hurried way to the brink of death? I will try, God helping me.

On Saturday evening, January 3d, this dear boy was severely attacked with difficulty of breathing and could gain no

relief until about one o'clock, when he slept quietly the remainder of the night. Early on Sabbath morning he rose and with great exertion attempted to sit up, but soon found it impossible. He rapidly grew worse until the superintendent was compelled to feel that his work was finishing on earth. As he sat in his chair supported by pillows and panting for breath, she felt it her duty to unfold to him her apprehensions: faithfully, but tenderly, was his true condition revealed to him, fearing he might be appalled at the disclosure of the solemn truth that he might not live one hour: but the statement was received with perfect calmness and as he was asked, how he felt in the prospect of death replied, that "he knew he was a great sinner, but he had no fears." After much conversation, he stated that

"he felt he had given all up to Christ," & remarked that a fortnight that evening, at a little meeting held with the dear children by the superintendent, he felt that he gave himself up into the hands of God. The little gathering to which he alluded, was indeed a memorable season. We read, we prayed, we sang together, we talked of holy things—but O, how unconscious of the heavenly Visiter, who condescended to make one in our midst. We have reason to think that George had passed from death unto life, a few months previous, but at this little meeting received a sealing evidence of his acceptance with God. He observed, he had for a long time used the Lord's prayer, until he felt he was mocking God by repeating it without feeling it, and had since, as he expressed it, "used

his own words." He was anxious to hear the Bible read, selected the chapter containing the prayer of the publican, and seemed to make it his own. It was a moment of intense interest;—evidently sinking beneath the power of disease, the superintendent sent for a tried friend of these little ones, who cheerfully hastened to his side. As she entered the room, we were reading the 14th of John, and as we closed, we remarked that the dear friend would like to know how he felt, and would be willing to answer any questions he might like to ask, or to do anything he wished. She asked him what she should do for him; he said, "Pray, pray, pray." She knelt in prayer, the tears coursed their way down his emaciated cheeks, as he followed her in her pleadings with God,

He was exceedingly distressed thro' the day—every means were resorted to, that affection and skill could suggest, to alleviate his complaint, but in vain, and nothing seemed to comfort him but reading the Scriptures, repeating hymns, or conversing on the glorious hopes of the gospel. As we began repeating a verse or hymn, he would join his weak and tremulous voice to ours, apparently with the whole heart. We were surprised at his knowledge of the bible. He possessed, it is true, a very retentive memory, and had enjoyed the privilege of reading and hearing much from the sacred volume; but there was something more than this, and in his case the promise seemed verified, that "the Spirit shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance."

As an illustration of this, the friend present, admiring the expansion of mind which enabled this little one to receive and comprehend such great truths, selected the 5th chapter of II Corin. and when the first verse was read, a pause was made, and he was asked, if he understood its meaning; he said, "Not quite." As the superintendent was about to simplify it to his comprehension, he exclaimed, while his whole face was lighted up with an intelligent expression of joy and love, and putting his hand on his emaciated body, "*I have it now!* It means, if this earthly tabernacle, *this body*, is dissolved, we have an house on high—the spirit will go to heaven"!—at the same time raising his eyes with a look of full and adoring confidence. The truth of a glorious

immortality burst upon his mind, as the Divine Spirit alone could reveal, and he needed not the teaching of man.

As he reclined upon the bosom of the superintendent, who gladly administered to his wants, he would look in her face with an expression so wishful and supplicatory, that he was repeatedly asked if anything could be done to comfort him? He would reply, "I thought you would read; it does not tire me to hear the bible read;"—seeking for consolation from the immutable words of God. Precious boy! God never said unto thee, seek ye my face in vain. During the day, he expressed perfect confidence in Christ, saying, "You know it says, '*whosoever* cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.'" When asked upon what he based his hope of

heaven, he replied, "on the blood of Christ." Not a fear—not a doubt—he felt *he* had received the Saviour by faith; Jesus would verify *his* promise, and receive him. He expressed his gratitude for the home that had been provided for him, and could the kind friends who have contributed to the comfort and support of these sheltered little ones, have heard the dying testimonial of gratitude of this dear boy—could the word, "grateful," vibrate as sweetly on their ear, as it did on ours, they would be amply repaid for all their labors of love. He recognized, too, the hand of God in the provision of this home, saying, "but my Heavenly Father put it into their hearts to do it, and that makes it the more precious." An attempt was made to portray the holiness of God's charac-

ter before him, and he was asked how he enjoyed the prospect of going to dwell forever with a Being of spotless purity, where all was perfect holiness. "This, this," he said, "was what made heaven a desirable place to him." The superintendent said to him, George, you know you have sinned. "Oh, yes," he said. What then will you do with those sins you feel that you have committed? You know it is represented as God's keeping a book of remembrance; that is, our sins are all registered in God's great memory, and he can never forget, and the bible says, we must be judged by the deeds done in the body; what then will become of those sins? He said, waving his thin hand, as though passing it over the book of remembrance, "*blotted out, —blotted out.*" Dear child, we doubt

not they *were* blotted out by the precious blood of Christ!

He asked that we would repeat the hymn,

“Worthy the Lamb that was slain for us,” and as we could not recall it at the moment, he said, “he believed it was in Watts’ Divine Songs, which was on the table under the tree,” referring to a New Year’s tree that had been prepared by some kind friends, for the gratification of the children. It was sent for; he took it, passed his trembling finger over the index, and said, “It is not here; I thought it was, but here is another,” pointing to one expressive of the goodness of God in the great plan of redemption. As it was read, he seemed to feast on its precious words. He was gratified with having his favorite hymns

repeated, and spoke particularly of those two, commencing,

“Alas! and did my Saviour bleed?”

and

“There is a fountain filled with blood,”

joining in their recitation with touching pathos of manner, and seeming to appropriate them to himself. He appeared to behold a new field of revealed glory in the works of creation; his mind seemed to be reaching forth with increased energy, and grasping things which alone could be unfolded to his view by the light of eternity. Never will the superintendent forget his expressive countenance, when, as the shades of evening gathered around them, and a brilliant star appeared in the eastern horizon, he enquired, “is that the first star God made?” referring to the peri-

od of time when his Heavenly Father spake the beautiful firmament into existence, and feeling pleasure, that *that* might be the first glittering orb that rose in obedience to the God of love.

His intense distress for breath increased through the night, and he rested but little; yet so thoughtful of others, that he was very anxious the superintendent should seek some repose for the body, which he feared he wearied too much, saying "he did not wish to give any more trouble in taking care of him, than he could possibly help," often asking the friend who kindly watched with him through this suffering night, "if she could not sleep a little." In the midst of great distress he said to her, "Well, I have enjoyed this day, though I have suffered pain," alluding to the

rich consolation he had received from the presence of the Saviour and in conversation with the friends who loved to talk with him on heavenly things—after a little while, he said "I am willing to suffer if the Lord thinks it best; I hav'nt suffered what Christ suffered for us." And again, "I hope I shall feel better in the morning, but I am willing to be sick, if it is God's will." After a season of deep thought, he enquired of the superintendent, if she felt he was suffering in consequence of the sins of his mother, saying, 'You know it says in the scriptures, that the iniquities of the parents shall be visited upon the children.' She told him, that no doubt he inherited disease and a feeble constitution from his mother, and to that might be attributed much of his present sufferings,

and in view of it, asked him how he felt toward his mother. "I feel," said he, "to forgive her." How would you treat her, if it was in your power to deal with her as you pleased? "I would treat her *as a mother*." He had the day previous, expressed a wish to see his mother, that he might talk with her, and tell her he forgave her, and how wrong she was living and doing, especially in saying, as he had heard she had done, that she had no son. "So wrong," he added in a plaintive tone of voice, "to say she had no son;—but I forgive her, for the Saviour on the cross cried, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.'" There had been a great change wrought here,—for he had often expressed a strong hope that he might live to be of age, that he might

convince his mother he could be something, even if she had forsaken him; saying, "she would then be old, and he would take care of her, and then she would be glad to own him." This, was the fruit of an ambitious nature—the other of sanctified grace.

Towards morning, his teacher raised him, to change his position, and thus give some relief, and seeing that he was failing every hour, she asked him how the valley appeared to him, as he descended through its deep shadows? He replied, that all, all was light, for the Saviour had gone before him; his rod and his staff, they comforted him. Not the shadow of a fear rested on his mind, which seemed to be fast ripening under the genial rays of the Sun of righteousness. She told him the reason "all was

light" before him, was because he had the bible, in which life and immortality had been brought to light through the gospel, while it was all dark to those who had not this precious book, saying, you know, George, the heathen have not the bible to comfort them, as they draw near the hour of death. We should be miserable without the bible, shouldn't we? "Yes," he replied with strong emphasis, "miserable enough." After a season of silence, during which his emaciated hands were clasped in the attitude of prayer, he says, "You may give my dollar to the missionaries, referring to a dollar he had found about a year previous in the streets, and which he had given to his teacher to reserve for a specified object. He had never spoken of his little treasure from that

time until now, and she had almost forgotten the circumstance; but the view which his mind received of the wretched state of the heathen, in contrast with his own happy condition, led him to desire to do something for them, and he gave his all. "You may give my dollar and *two cents*," he added with emphasis. He was told that his money should be given as he wished, but that he knew there were many missionaries and different stations, and he was asked where he would like to have it sent.—He said he should wish it "to go to Mr. Jones," the beloved missionary at Siam, whose dear children he had frequently seen. He also manifested a tender anxiety for the spiritual interests of those with whom he had lived, especially for a dear invalid girl, of nearly the

same age with himself, who had shared with him for many a month the fostering care of our "Shelter Home," and the kind attentions of the dear friends who love to administer to the comfort of its inmates.

He was the subject of intense suffering through Monday and able to talk but little, but enjoyed exceedingly spiritual conversation and as he was repeatedly asked relative to his hopes as he drew near the close of life, he would repeat in his peculiar expressive manner, "all, all is light." The friend whose conversation four years previous to his death, impressed his mind and to which he referred on Sunday in his first conversation with his teacher, hearing of his extreme illness came to see him. She expressed her sorrow at seeing him

in so suffering a state and said, George perhaps thou hast remembered that beautiful and impressive passage of scripture, in which the Saviour says, "suffer"—As she pronounced that word, he immediately joined his voice to hers and repeated those sweetly encouraging words of our Redeemer to little children. He spoke in full terms of his hope in Christ and seemed to derive great satisfaction from her visits, altho' he was unable to converse as he had done the day previous. We could but notice the expression of love, respect and gratitude that filled his eyes as he looked on that dear friend whom we believe, was instrumental in awakening in his mind a desire of good things. A young friend called, to whose parents he knew the Institution was indebted for many acts

of kindness, and his teacher asked him if he had nothing to say to her. He said, "tell her to seek the Saviour *now*, in *health*, not to wait for sickness."— Another friend present said to him, George, are you willing to suffer and die? He replied, "If it is God's will, I am." In the course of the day he was asked if it was the Lord's will to restore him to health, how would he wish to live? "just as I would wish to die," was the all comprehensive answer. He expressed the most grateful love for the dear friend who contributed so much to his comfort bodily and spiritually, by being present the last two days of his earthly existence, and was exceedingly anxious not to trouble her by his restlessness, and would strive to make himself as easy as possible, without wearying

those around him. Dear, dear patient sufferer, it was a rich reward for all that was done for thee, to witness thy holy calmness, thy simple trust in Christ, as the king of terrors approached. O, could we follow in thy footsteps as we grapple with the mighty destroyer, and be crowned with as victorious faith.

On Monday evening, he bore the marks of rapidly approaching dissolution. The cold sweat of death had been wiped again and again from his aching brow; the deep, sepulchral voice, when able to articulate a word, told the tale of the departing spirit. He became weaker and weaker, until he closed his eyes in intense agony; he opened them once more, and looked upon his teacher with an expression of perfect peace and recognition—closed them again, and all

was hushed in silent death—his ransomed soul took its flight to that world, where “the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest.” At twelve years of age, half of which were spent in suffering, known only to the afflicted part of God’s family to which he belonged, he found a resting place for his aching heart, and now roams with ineffable delight amid the *freed* spirits on high.