

Women's Travel Writings in India 1777–1854

Volume II

Edited by
Katrina O'Loughlin and Michael Gamer



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1777–1854



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INTRODUCTION

In bringing together *Original Letters from India* (1817) and *Memoirs of Mrs. Harriet Newell* (1815), this volume presents two highly influential works of travel writing published just at the close of the Napoleonic Wars and the War of 1812. At first glance, few writers would appear to have less in common than the Briton Eliza Fay (1755/6–1816) and the American Harriet Newell (1793–1812), whose differences extend beyond the national and generational to those of temperament and world view. Fay was an ambitious and opinionated Londoner who made at least five voyages of business to India; Newell, by contrast, was a pious young American missionary from rural New England who made only one trip and died just six weeks after her arrival in West Bengal – thereby becoming the first American missionary, male or female, to die abroad. Newell eschewed assemblies and balls as the ‘*extravagances*’ of a vain world; Fay believed a deck of cards to be one of the most valuable things one could travel with, easing the monotony of long sea voyages and providing welcome distraction at awkward dinner parties and gatherings among near-strangers.

One suspects Fay would have had even less patience with Newell’s proselytizing than Newell with Fay’s gambling (‘in the evening we sat down to vingt-un, at a rupee a fish. . . . I lost only a dozen’ (p. 301)). In fact, we know exactly how Fay felt about the missionary calling. In her first voyage, travelling between Leghorn and Alexandria, Fay encountered a Franciscan Friar from Rome on a mission to Jerusalem. She found him a figure at once romantic and ridiculous:

no man can be better calculated for the hazardous office he has undertaken. Figure to yourself, a man in the prime of life (under forty), tall, well made, and athletic in his person; and seemingly of a temperament to brave every danger: add to these advantages a pair of dark eyes, beaming with intelligence . . . and, you cannot fail to pronounce him irresistible.
(p. 177)

Finding him in possession of ‘all the enthusiasm and eloquence necessary for pleading the important cause of Christianity’, Fay seems almost prepared to forgive ‘such ridiculous superstitions, as disgrace the Romish creed’ until the friar

exhorts her to give up – ‘as a libation to the bambino (child) Jesus’ – her morning coffee. Fay’s outrage is palpable: ‘Professing my disbelief in the efficacy of such a sacrifice, I . . . excused myself from complying’. The incipient friendship is abruptly ruptured over Fay’s ‘obstinate heresy’. The Reverend Father wishes Fay to the devil and, having made an entertaining anecdote of the encounter for her correspondents, Fay smartly consigns the missionary to the same place (p. 177).

Comparing each woman’s first experiences on the Indian subcontinent – Fay’s in 1780 and Newell’s in 1812 – the similarities between them become more striking. Both arrived in Calcutta as very young women, both were recently married, and both were negotiating new lives in extremely difficult circumstances. Both were members of the emerging middle classes, received formal education, and married men of higher education still. More powerfully perhaps, both Fay and Newell shared what we might call a vocation, a singular sense of purpose and profound personal commitment to projects conceived by their husbands, but in which they had important roles to play. Both, then, are professional wives in companionate marriages, even though their very different convictions and callings would probably seem as alien to each other as they initially appear to us. For Fay, her object was the establishment of her husband Anthony’s legal career and the couple’s economic future in Calcutta, the new centre of administration in Anglo-India. For Newell, it was the ministry of faith. She testifies in her diary: ‘I have confessed Christ before the world – I have renounced my wicked companions – I have solemnly promised, that denying ungodliness and every worldly lust, I will live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world’ (p. 38).

As two adjacent diary entries show, Harriet Atwood’s meeting with Samuel Newell gave a powerful focus to her desired spiritual practice:

Oct. 23 [1810]. Mr. M. introduced Mr. N[ewell] to our family, He appears to be an engaged Christian. Expects to spend his life, in preaching a Saviour to the benighted Pagans.

Oct. 31. Mr. N. called on us this morning. He gave me some account of the dealings of God with his soul. If such a man who has devoted himself to the service of the gospel, has determined to labour in the most difficult part of the vineyard, and is willing to renounce his earthly happiness for the interest of religion; if *he* doubts his possessing love to God; – what shall I say of *myself*?

(p. 53)

Harriet Atwood’s vocation was powerfully shaped by a renewed Christian spiritualism among the communities of Massachusetts in the first decade of the century and by the convictions of the man who became her husband. Almost two generations older, Eliza Fay’s travels were equally shaped by her husband’s personal ambition – at least initially. Irish by birth, married, and admitted to the bar in

London, Anthony Fay sought a position at the newly established Supreme Court of Calcutta. Eliza Fay, by her own admission

undertook the journey with a view of preserving my husband from destruction, for had I not accompanied him, and in many instances restrained his extravagance and dissipated habits, he would never, never, I am convinced, have reached Bengal, but have fallen a wretched sacrifice to them on the way, or perhaps through the violence of his temper been invoked in some dispute, which he was too ready to provoke.

(p. 242)

Fay's fears seem entirely borne out by the details of her narrative. Reactive, short-tempered, and regularly inclined to 'lose all self-command' (p. 221), Anthony Fay in the course of their journey manages to lose their passports and then their money, quarrels with almost everyone the couple meets (and depends upon), short circuits his legal career, and finally abandons his wife at Calcutta to shift for herself after a year. By comparison, Eliza Fay is shrewd, observant, and resourceful: what begins as his career and journey becomes hers. Although she never enjoyed in her husband the 'beloved friend' (p. 89) and 'most affectionate partner' (p. 88) that Newell found in hers, Fay was also determined not to be the '*self* devoted victim' (p. 230) that observers more than once took her to be. Over the next three decades, and as a single woman, she established a millinery business at Calcutta, opened and then sold a private boarding school in England, and traded in her own ship as a merchant between India, Britain, and America.

Both Fay and Newell share a self-discipline and self-actualization through travel and writing that deserve greater attention. As young women actively making choices that are determined for and by them, both are creatures of a particular moment in Anglo-American history, and remarkable 'speculators' in the gendered possibilities before them. In direct and related ways, both women derived their opportunities from British domination of the Indian subcontinent at the turn of the nineteenth century, where two centuries of lucrative trade with Europe had remade the relationships of people, objects, and power along different meridians. The India Regulating Act of 1773 transmuted commercial dominance into administrative power and created the conditions of possibility for both couples' travels. While the Fays sought the new professional opportunities created by British courts at West Bengal, the Newells wished to bring Christianity to vast multicultural and multi-faith communities in the wake of British conquest. Both speculations – one economic and one religious – were made possible by the consolidation of British rule in India and the establishment of Calcutta as its administrative centre. West Bengal (particularly Calcutta and its near-neighbour Serampore) is therefore a point of critical convergence and space of possibility for the two writers and their texts.

To claim that the Fays and the Newells benefitted from British dominance in India is not to suggest that their relationships with the East India Company or the British Government were either straightforward or smooth, however. This is another remarkable connection between the two narratives: both came up very directly against the Company at key stages of their journey. Although so very different, both are part of a growing group of what one contemporary dubbed ‘vagrant Europeans’ in India who plagued the Company from the late eighteenth century.¹ These rogue traders, speculators, and ‘sectarian missionaries’,² who neither worked for the Company nor observed its (declining) authority, were perceived as a direct threat to its monopoly and effective rule.

Attempting to capitalize on opportunities from outside the Company’s jurisdiction – Fay describes their venture as ‘a noble opportunity of making an ample fortune’ (p. 256) – the Fays had not applied for the appropriate permits to travel prior to their journey. This might account for the unusual overland route they pursued, their avoidance of English ships, and their systematic misrepresentation of themselves as either French or Danish to avoid detection by various authorities in Egypt and India. Arriving in West Bengal, Anthony Fay simply presented himself to the Supreme Court and requested work. In doing so he shrewdly calculated that his legal qualifications and nationality might prevail.³ But while his wife carefully courted the acquaintance of leading families in the government of British India (notably the Hastings, Chambers, and Impeys at Calcutta), Anthony Fay became increasingly active in anti-governmental circles, until – as Fay herself revealed in frustration – ‘no hope remains of his *ever* being able to prosecute his profession here’ (p. 255). At this point, the Fays separate, Eliza Fay moves in with the Chambers, and Anthony Fay leaves the historical record. His shadowy behaviour has led at least one commentator to suggest that he was operating as a spy at Calcutta, gathering evidence to be used against either the Governor General or the East India Company in Britain.⁴ Such a prospect certainly presents the Fays’ ill-starred first voyage in a rather different light and raises important questions about Eliza Fay’s knowledge of key events, and how she arranges them in her narrative.

Like the Fays, the Newells also arrived at Calcutta unannounced and unwelcome. Attempting to undertake mission work in West Bengal, they disembarked to discover America at war with Britain and their work banned by the East India Company.⁵ They thus found themselves in the middle of a conflict they neither expected nor fully understood: aligned with the British Baptist missionaries William Carey and John Thomas, and in direct opposition to the East India Company, which believed that mission work caused disaffection among Indian citizens and undermined British authority. The real political and ideological gulf operating between Company and Mission in these years is captured most powerfully in the distance between British Calcutta and Danish Serampore, where the Dissenting missions had been forced to remove. As Karen Chancey shows, the missionary debate in which the Newells became ensnared was fuelled by wider power struggles for which West Bengal had become an

incendiary focal point: conflicts between Dissent and the established Church of England; and between the British Crown and the East India Company over who was ultimately to control India, religiously and politically.⁶ Harriet Newell's narrative foregrounds the complex reality of Christian missionary work in British India, which sometimes was in concert with, and sometimes worked against, the cultural and territorial imperialism of the East India Company and British Government. The perception of a twin threat posed by imperial and evangelical expansion at this period is brilliantly captured in David Hopkins' urgent publication of 1809, *The Dangers of British India from French Invasion and Missionary Establishments* (London, 1809), which imagines imperial France and evangelical Christianity as unlikely co-conspirators bent on undermining British supremacy in India. It is these regional manifestations of global conflicts – the struggle for dominance over the rich territory and trade of India – which connects Fay and Newell's narratives in unpredictable ways.

As unorthodox women travellers and writers working at the edges of British imperialism, Fay and Newell occupy a liminal space in both early nineteenth-century travel to India and historical discourses of life and travel writing. On the margins of dominant cultural, colonial, and faith discourses – however orthodox Harriet Newell subsequently becomes in Protestant circles as the first missionary martyr – their travel accounts provide an oblique perspective on Anglo-American culture and India during the Romantic period. Understanding the broad cultural forces that constitute British India in the Romantic period requires that we recognize the details and small acts of agency of those who travelled there. These are lives in the making; like the genre of travel itself, Fay and Newell are people in motion, shaped by and shaping the historical moments through which they move.

While the texts comprising the four volumes of *Women's Travel Writing in India* are presented in the order of their publication – so that Newell's *Memoirs* precedes Fay's *Original Letters* – we reverse this order of introduction here because, in dealing with the earlier period 1779–1796, Fay provides important contexts for understanding Newell.

Eliza Fay

Eliza Clement was born in 1755 or 1756, probably at Rotherhithe and one of four children of Edward Clement, a shipwright. We know little of her early life and education before her marriage, on 6 February 1772, to Anthony Fay at St Dunstan-in-the-West (Fleet Street, London). We know even less of her husband Anthony Fay, other than that he was born in Ireland, was violent-tempered, and had legal and perhaps political ambitions, gaining admission to Gray's Inn in 1772 and (with Edward Clement's help) Clement's Inn and Lincoln's Inn in 1778. Eliza Clement was just 16 or 17 when she married; six years later and with the full support of her family, she and her husband sailed for India.

Fay had travelled before. Her letters reveal that, prior to embarking with Anthony, she had made the passage from Dover to Calais at least three times, had visited Paris, and had glimpsed Queen Marie Antoinette at Versailles. But this was a voyage of a different order, made at a time of momentous global events. Fay's first letter is dated 18 April 1779 from Paris; just one week earlier, France (then an ally with the American colonies in their War of Independence) had signed a secret treaty with the Spanish to bring them into that war, effectively expanding the Anglo-French conflict into a global one. Enemy aliens in France, the Fays hoisted a French flag on their arrival in port, and then waited restlessly for passports before striking out overland for Leghorn. Theirs was an unusual route to India; the voyage would normally be made by sea and directly from London. The Fays were travelling frugally and perhaps rather naively (they thought, for example, that the Alps were a single high pass rather than an extended mountain range). Their plans changed more than once as they travelled via Lyons, Pont de Beauvoisin, Chalons sur Soane, and Lanneburg, then over Mont Cenis to Turin, Genoa, and Leghorn. At each step, their itinerary was shaped by their letters of introduction and the remittances they carried.

From Leghorn the couple took a passage in first the *Hellespont* and then the *Julius* to Alexandria. From there they travelled again by water to Cairo, where they were caught up in a dangerous dispute about trade movements through Egypt.⁷ The Ottoman Porte and British East India Company had both forbidden British trade through Suez and the Red Sea at this period. But, as Fay explains, 'there never was a law made, but means might be found to evade it' and rogue traders – anxious to use the route to cut travel times and avoid duties – negotiated agreements with local beys for passage (p. 188). It was in this climate and immediately prior to the Fays' arrival, that a caravan of British merchants from the ship *Nathalia* had been plundered and left to die on the overland journey between Suez and Cairo, apparently in recrimination. Making the same journey over the desert in reverse, without the protection of the Company and with realistic fears for their own safety, Fay hides the details of the attack from her family until her arrival at Suez. Boarding the same ship *Nathalia*, only recently returned to its owners after being impounded and stripped, the Fays sailed for India, arriving at the trading port of Calicut on the Malabar coast on 5 November 1779. There they found themselves, once again, enemy aliens on another front of the global Anglo-French War, caught between their Englishness, their putatively Danish ship, and a French Captain. They were promptly imprisoned at the abandoned English Factory by the Governor Sardar Khan on behalf of Hyder Ali, the Sultan of Mysore. After 15 weeks of incarceration in primitive accommodations, they managed to scabble a release with the assistance of a local Jewish merchant, Mr Isaac, and departed Cochin for Madras and finally Calcutta.

Arriving in West Bengal over a year after they had left Dover, Eliza presented her letters of introduction to Mrs Warren Hastings, the wife of the first Governor General of India; Anthony, meanwhile, presented himself to Sir Robert

Chambers, Second Judge of the newly-formed Supreme Court, and Philip Francis, who had been appointed to the Supreme Council at Calcutta in 1773. We note these introductions because they nicely delineate the two sides of yet another political foment into which the Fays stumbled. In this instance, it was the growing animosity between members of the Council and Court at Calcutta, tensions that were to lead eventually to the impeachment of Warren Hastings in 1788. Acquainted with most – and intimate with some – of the members of the highest administrative and trade circles at Calcutta, the Fays were nothing if not close to the action. At one moment, Fay describes an amateur production of *Venice Preserved* acted by leading civil servants and starring Captain Call, the ‘Garrick of the East’ (p. 330, note 265); at another, she is instructed at a public gathering to fix her eyes on the ‘Lady Governess’ indefinitely until acknowledged by her; at still another, she reports breathlessly on the duel between Hastings and Francis. Through commentary pointed and astute, Fay’s talent for character portraiture, comedy, and dramatic narrative shows itself in every page of the *Original Letters* as she documents an evolving city and period of transition from Company to Crown rule. Political events are crossed by personal crisis as Anthony Fay’s legal career founders and he fathers a child with another woman. Lady Chambers steps in as a protector and patron, taking Fay into her home and sheltering her from inevitable public gossip about her husband’s increasingly erratic and anti-governmental behaviour. Successfully suing for legal separation in August of 1781, Fay quietly superintends the return of her modest furniture and effects to their creditors and, with only her clothes left to her, embarks for England.

This, then, is Eliza Fay’s first voyage to India (10 April 1779 – 7 February 1783), just one of five. Her second (March 1784 – September 1794) marks the emergence of Eliza Fay the merchant.⁸ Setting up a partner, Avis Hicks (later Mrs John Lacey), in a milliner’s shop in the former Post Office in the heart of Calcutta, Fay raised sufficient capital to purchase a home of her own and managed her business through a catastrophic economic downturn in the 1780s. Leaving her venture in the hands of her partner’s brother-in-law, Benjamin Lacey, Fay returned to Britain via St Helena. But here, too, controversy seemed to dog her, as Fay was called to respond to charges made by a former servant Kate Johnson, who alleged that in 1782 she had been abandoned by Fay and consequently sold into slavery. In addition, she insinuated that she had witnessed some impropriety on the part of Fay with a ship’s doctor, a significant threat against a separated woman like Fay since any accusation of infidelity could jeopardize her maintenance. Fay chose to pay the nominated fine of £60 rather than stand trial. At this juncture, Fay was evidently trying to return some part of her Indian capital to Britain but – once again working outside the protection of the East India Company – was prevented from landing her cargo in Ostend for transfer home. Instead she trusted it to an American trader Richard Crowninshield, who arranged the sale of her goods in America, and returned her capital in the shape of a ship – the *Minerva*. A timely inheritance made it possible for her to freight

her new ship with goods from London bound for Calcutta, and Fay returned to India on her in August 1795. Loading once again in Bengal with Indian goods for the American market, Fay dispatched the *Minerva* and followed to New York. Here, rather abruptly, her account ends.

The *Original Letters* are organized in two parts, the first and longest of which covers the period from April 1779–September 1782. Comprised of twenty-three letters addressed to Fay’s family via her sisters, ‘Part First’ preserves the recognizable form of a private correspondence. Letters appear written in the moment and betray no knowledge of what might lie ahead, as Fay acknowledges the receipt of packets and news from home even as she details her own movements, state of health, and spirits. Although still epistolary in form, ‘Part Second’ differs both in its level of detail and in the style of its narration. Composing for a (possibly fictitious) ‘Mrs. L—’, Fay provides an ‘abstract’ or summary of her subsequent voyages (17 March 1784–4 September 1794 and 2 August 1795–1796), one that chronicles her establishment of the millinery business at Calcutta and her growing involvement in speculative trade between Britain, America, and India. Her own logs tally closely with historical records stretching over four continents, meticulously recording ships, ports of call, and relationships of friendship, business, and even patronage. The retrospective mode of her memoir, meanwhile, reveals a further dimension of this genuinely remarkable author and traveller. Marked by an awareness of dangers passed and problems overcome rather than current crises, the Eliza Fay of ‘Part Second’ is more reflective and sometimes philosophical, but always resourceful and forthright.

Fay was writing the memoir of her later travels to India from Blackheath in 1815. Sometime in that year or perhaps early in the next, she returned to Calcutta – her final voyage – and there began preparing her manuscripts for publication. These were in a forward enough state for the *Calcutta Gazette* (9 May 1816) to give notice of the forthcoming publication of Fay’s ‘Narrative’ and to invite subscriptions. Fay’s sudden death clearly disrupted publication plans, and it was not until the following year – largely for the benefit of her creditors – that her writings found their way into print. Featuring a four-page introductory preface and a Calcutta imprint, the edition carried the title *Original Letters from India; Containing a Narrative of a Journey Through Egypt, and the Author’s Imprisonment at Calicut by Hyder Ally* (1817). It included a frontispiece showing the author ‘Dressed in the Egyptian Costume’ that she had purchased at Cairo and carried with her to Calcutta. A rather terse ‘Advertisement’ to the *Original Letters* marks an important intervention on the part of the anonymous editor:

The work had been printed thus far when the death of the author took place. The subsequent parts of her journal, not appearing to contain any events of a nature sufficiently interesting to claim publication, no additional extracts have been deemed necessary by the administrator, who

from a view of benefiting the estate has been induced to undertake the present publication.

(p. 304)

Thus it becomes clear that, although Fay had prepared her own writing for publication, the final shape of the printed *Original Letters* was determined not by herself but by the interests and expedience of her executors. And of course, we now have no way of knowing what, from Fay's complete manuscripts, has been lost.

Like each of her voyages to India between 1779 and 1816, Fay's preparation of her India letters for publication was a carefully calculated commercial venture – a cargo as potentially valuable as the linens, muslins, and other commodities she had traded at various stages of her career. Her initial choice of subscription publication – a mode by which readers committed to purchase and partially paid the costs of the publication in advance – represents Fay's attempt to secure a market for her product and to exploit the same networks of commerce, sociability, and patronage she had relied on for nearly four decades. Her title shows her ready to marshal popular genres like the captivity narrative and Gothic romance, and to exploit the notoriety of public figures from Warren Hastings to Hyder Ali. 'At a time when fictitious representations of human life are sought for with so much avidity', she writes, the *Original Letters* will provide something even better: an 'unembellished narrative of simple facts and real sufferings', whose trials and adventures rival even the most improbable of romances (see note 1). As Fay's Preface argues, her residence at Calcutta – and her status as a woman – gave her privileged access to 'important circumstances in the lives of well known . . . individuals' (p. 153). Even as she speculates on the enormous popularity of travel narratives in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, she trusts that her book's primary value will lie in its lengthy first-hand account of the people and events surrounding Warren Hastings's controversial rule between 1773 and 1785. The *Original Letters* thus invoke several genres at once – captivity narrative, secret memoir, Gothic tale, 'romance of real life', and 'true history' – leveraging travel writing's heterodox qualities to produce a world whose richness and complexity rival the historical fiction of her two celebrated contemporaries, Maria Edgeworth and Walter Scott. In Fay's hands, the results are a shrewd mixture of horror, social critique, and intrigue, all the more powerful because true.

Despite its lively account of people and politics, the *Original Letters* raised only a modest profit of Rs. 220 for Fay's estate. Still, it was successful enough to be reprinted in 1821 at Calcutta with a reset title page but few other alterations. In 1908, Rev. W. K. Firminger oversaw a new edition, published by Thacker, Spink & Co. in conjunction with the Calcutta Historical Society. The next major edition – the first, as its editor E. M. Forster notes, to be produced outside India – was published by Virginia and Leonard Woolf's Hogarth Press in 1925. Forster had encountered Fay in Firminger's 1908 edition while researching the book that

would become *A Passage to India* (1924).⁹ Firminger had largely dismissed Fay as a stylist, silently ‘correcting’ her grammar and expression, and complaining that ‘there is something about Mrs Fay which fails to charm, something of a too conscious superiority which alienates sympathy in circumstances in which sympathy would not be grudged’.¹⁰ Later readers were more appreciative: Forster restored the work to the 1817 original, and Francis Bickley – reviewing Forster’s edition – considered Fay ‘a discovery as valuable as an unrecorded Titian’.¹¹ Despite Fay’s resistance to such an identification for her travails, the *Letters*’ status as colonial romance has been perhaps inadvertently secured by two further recent editions (both based on the Forster edition), edited and introduced by M. M. Kaye and Simon Winchester respectively.¹²

Harriet Newell

Born in Haverhill, Massachusetts in 1793, Harriet Atwood (later Newell) lived her entire life amidst religious controversy. Attending the First Parish Church at Haverhill as a child, her first pastor was the Harvard-trained Abiel Abbot (1770–1828), Unitarian in his leanings and insufficiently orthodox for many members of his congregation. Newell’s tenth birthday would have been marked by Abbot’s departure, ostentatiously over a salary dispute, as parishioners declined to increase the salary of a pastor so determinedly Unitarian. (Abbot quickly established himself with a Congregationalist parish in nearby Beverly, which became Unitarian shortly thereafter).

At home and across the river in Bradford, meanwhile, a radical and generational shift was underway: first in the form of Abraham Burnham, a self-taught farmer’s son who had joined Bradford Academy as a preceptor in 1805; and next in Joshua Dodge, who became pastor of the First Parish Church of Haverhill in 1808. Both had a profound effect on Harriet Atwood’s formative years, Dodge as her family’s ‘beloved pastor’, and Burnham as her ‘spiritual father’. Dodge was a man of active spirituality rather than theological minutiae, particularly (as one local historian put it) ‘the guidance of each student into a . . . life of Christian service’.¹³ How such ideas of ‘service’ fed the foreign missionary movement are clear enough; their profound effects on local communities and young women like Harriet Atwood, however, are worth contemplating. Consider, for example, the local dancing school that she attended at the age of eleven and that opens the ‘Diary’ portion of the *Memoirs*. Torn between her enjoyment of dancing and guilt over its ‘vanity’ and ‘foolishness’, she determines ‘that, when the school closed, I would immediately become religious’ (p. 25). It is a startling passage, and one made more poignant by the fact that the school was made possible by John Hasseltine, the father of Harriet Atwood’s close friend Ann. Hasseltine had added a large room to the second story of his house to host assemblies, and the dances that followed caused controversy. In 1805, for example, there appeared in Bradford and Haverhill an anonymous pamphlet attacking a progressive ‘parson A[llen]’ for being ‘corrupted by doctrines of Arians and Socinians’, and ‘attend[ing]

frolicings [*sic*] and dancings with his young people, not only till nine o'clock, and ten o'clock, and eleven o'clock, and twelve o'clock at night, but even till one o'clock in the morning'.¹⁴ It is hardly surprising, then, to find Harriet Atwood later in the *Memoirs* torn by the prospect of a local ball – as much for how it might divide or endanger the spiritual health of the community, as for the frivolity of its 'frolicings' (see notes 9 and 83).

Within these New England religious communities, one of the closely followed stories of 1810 was a minor sensation created by 'four young gentlemen, members of the Divinity College', who appeared that June in Bradford before the General Association of Congregationalist Ministers.¹⁵ With becoming modesty, they declared to the assembly their serious vocation to do missionary work abroad and petitioned for 'patronage and support' that they might do so.¹⁶ Their testimony had immediate effect: a Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions was created the next morning, and the four young divinity students – Adoniram Judson, Samuel Nott, Samuel J. Mills, and Samuel Newell – were celebrated within evangelical circles as fundraising began among parishes to finance their mission. *The Panoplist*, *The Advisor*, and *The Connecticut Evangelical* magazines reported that an extraordinary \$13,953.48 had been collected from local parishes to finance the missionaries, providing the full ledger of their budget, medical training, supplies, anticipated expenses, and salaries. Over a four-year period, their progress continued to be enthusiastically covered by evangelical journals, who reported on every aspect of their planning, ordination, embarkation, arrival, and progress in India.¹⁷ It was in these same publications that Harriet Newell's journal and correspondence made their first appearance in print.

Such details make clear the attractions of being part of such a movement, particularly for a seriously-minded young woman who had already resolved to dedicate her life to Christian service. Harriet Atwood's correspondence shows her a proponent of missionary work as early as August of 1809. Writing to her friend Fanny Woodbury, she asks why knowledge of the gospel is not 'given to the Heathen, who . . . are perishing for lack of knowledge?' (p. 40). By October of the same year we find her in earnest conversation with 'two servants of Jesus Christ', most likely Rev. Samuel Worcester of Salem and Rev. Joseph Emerson of Beverly, about plans originating in Andover to send missionaries abroad. Her response is among her most fervid:

Oh, that Jehovah would pour down his Spirit there! Oh, that he would . . . make not only A[ndover] a place of his power, but *Haverhill* also! Arise, blessed Jesus! plead thine own cause, and have mercy upon Zion. Now, when men are making void thy law, arise! build up thy spiritual Jerusalem, and let her no longer mourn, 'because so few come to her solemn feasts'.
(p. 44)

The *American Dictionary of National Biography* informs us that Harriet Atwood and Ann Hasseltine were 'shy and introspective', and that Atwood was not as

overtly enthusiastic about missionary service as her friend. From the evidence of her correspondence, it seems more likely that, spending much of her childhood and adolescence in poor health, Harriet Atwood had not yet imagined herself as capable of undertaking such work. Within twelve months, however, much had changed: the petition of the 'four young gentlemen' had created new institutional possibilities within the Congregationalist Church for missionary work; Atwood's friend, Ann Hasseltine, had accepted the marriage proposal of Adoniram Judson; Judson had introduced another of the four, Samuel Newell, to Harriet Atwood; and Harriet Atwood had been impressed enough by Newell's 'account of the dealings of God with his soul' to marry him and accompany him to India. 'If such a man . . . is willing to renounce his earthly happiness for the interest of religion', she argues to herself in her journal, 'what shall I say of *myself*?' (p. 53). For a woman in search of ways to put her faith into practice – who already had begun proselytizing friends – the missionary cause promised a life of meaningful purpose. In many ways, the high risks of death from disease or misadventure posed by missionary work merely strengthened Harriet Atwood's sense of commitment.¹⁸ Within two years of meeting Samuel Newell, the couple had married, landed in British Calcutta, and moved to William Carey's mission in Danish Serampore. Unwilling to return home, they elected to go to the Isle of France (Mauritius) to organize a mission there. Harriet Newell never reached their destination, giving birth prematurely during the voyage, watching her infant daughter die from exposure, and then succumbing herself, likely from complications from childbirth.

Given Newell's status as the first American missionary to die abroad, cultural commentators have generally read the *Memoirs* within the traditions of spiritual biography.¹⁹ Newell thus sits uneasily but suggestively among women travel writers of the early nineteenth century because of her youth, sheltered upbringing, and very brief time on the Indian subcontinent. As Carl Thompson's introduction to this collection notes, Newell's *Memoirs* display at best a 'myopic' view of India, which he describes as amounting to a 'fantasy projection of a benighted, heathen land' (Vol. I, p. xx). What Newell's *Memoirs* do provide, however, is a fascinating glimpse into the literary and cultural sources of such fantasies. Receiving an excellent education at Bradford Academy, Newell supplemented her deficit of lived experience with books and imagination. At the time she meets Samuel Newell, she is, suggestively, the same age as Jane Austen's Catherine Morland of *Northanger Abbey* (1818), another young woman of seventeen who transforms, and is transformed by, the places she encounters. And, like Catherine, what frames Newell's world view is her reading. Of the 212 notes we have provided to Newell's own writing, an astonishing 154 involve literary allusions. As one might expect of a future missionary coming of age during the Second Great Awakening, these bear little resemblance to the Gothic fiction burlesqued in Austen's novel and underpinning Fay's *Original Letters*. Instead, Newell's quotations are comprised largely of passages from the Bible, hymns, and sermons either read or recently heard. In Newell's letters to female friends, allusions serve sometimes as tools for

sharing intimacy, and at other times as a means for reflection or solace, as when she loses first an uncle and then her father to illness. Like most young women writing at the turn of the nineteenth century, she makes what she can of the world with the materials she has at hand.

As she gains in both religious conviction and confidence as a writer, the range and patterns of Newell's allusions deepen and change. As she imagines herself into an active role in the global missionary movement, her quotations acquire millennial and evangelical urgency. To her fondness for the hymns of Isaac Watts she adds those of other writers, most notably Susannah Harrison, Elizabeth Singer Rowe, and Anne Steele. Around this time, she begins not just to quote scripture but also periodically to alter it to suit either her situation or emotional state. Though usually compressing sacred source materials, Newell sometimes makes fairly radical alterations, as when, distraught at the seductive power of a local ball on her friend 'E', she draws on Luke 9:62 and Proverbs 29:1 to create her own composition (see note 84). Secular literary sources occasion even greater liberties, such as when Newell taps two minor tales from Ossian to capture the sadness of contemplating the ancient past. Fond of poetry, she finds recourse in Robert Blair's *The Grave* (1743), James Thomson's *The Seasons* (1730), Edward Young's *Night Thoughts* (1742–1745), and William Cowper's *The Task* (1785). Readers of William Blake will find Newell's reading and patterns of quotation particularly suggestive, since they point to a canon and to influences that strikingly resemble Blake's own. One wonders what the two might have made of one another had they met in Regency London, or what path the young Harriet Atwood's brand of radical Protestantism might have taken just twenty years earlier in that city.

We should not be surprised, then, to find Newell, on the eve of her departure to India, finding a literary soulmate in Henry Kirke White (1785–1806), the Romantic poet who had died of consumption at the age of twenty-one and whose *Remains* (1807), edited by Robert Southey, established him among a growing coterie of talented poets cut off by premature death. In Kirke White, Newell found a writer of her own generation committed to the same evangelical causes; she cites him more than any writer save Isaac Watts. Her favourite poems by him – 'The Dance of the Consumptives' from *Fragment of an Eccentric Drama* and the lyric 'Fanny! Upon thy breast I may not lie!' – suggest that she found in him a literary model for facing the possibility of an early death. For Newell's literary executors and publishers, *The Remains of Henry Kirke White* perhaps provided another model, where literary remains take on a monumentalizing function to present a life cut short in all the fullness of its promise. Like the *Remains of Henry Kirke White*, the *Memoirs of Mrs. Harriet Newell* quickly became a bestseller, and it is no accident that the first American publisher of the *Memoirs*, Samuel T. Armstrong of Boston, also brought out an edition of the *Remains* in 1815. Three years after her death, Harriet Newell would have found herself appearing with Kirke White in the same shop window, two evangelical writers who died tragically young.

Conclusion

Comparing these different but strangely complementary texts, we find in them strikingly similar portraits of British India, which functions more as a place of speculation and self-realization than one of cultural discovery or encounter. Placing them side by side also provides a timely corrective to our own ingrained habits of reading, which too often have pigeonholed Fay as colonial adventurer and Newell as dissenting martyr. Framed this way, both Fay and Newell have been strangely disconnected from the generative tradition and genre of travel writing that in fact propels their work. British India was a space of possibility for these two women, and the popular market for travels created the space of possibility for their texts. To reread these very different accounts next to one another is to return both to the powerful tradition of experience, curiosity, and self-representation that is Romantic-era travel writing.

Looking to the reputation of each text, we find both writers again dehistoricized: the *Memoirs* read as exemplary hagiography, the *Original Letters* as creditors' commodity. In the process, their experiences, as recorded in their own voices, become disconnected from the rich contexts each inhabited. These texts are also, it must be remembered, profoundly shaped by editorial intervention: Fay's executor selecting only those parts he considered most appealing to audiences in 1817, and disregarding the rest; Harriet Newell's grieving husband Samuel literally creating the fiction of the 'Memoir' out of her teenage diaries and letters. If we are frustrated by learning of the 'missing' Fay manuscripts, we are – and should be – made doubly uncomfortable about reading the private diaries of the teenage Harriet Newell. We cannot know, after all, whether she gave permission for her writing to be circulated, let alone published. As a result, we must make distinctions between the private journal entries that dominate the early section and the more public, family letters that constitute the latter part. Such considerations remind us that travel writing always comes accompanied by other movements, whether religious or imperial.

Fay and Newell never met, although they might well have in 1812 if Fay had returned a little earlier to Calcutta: Newell just nineteen, alighting for the first time on the banks of the Hooghly; Fay in her late fifties, in a city she had called home at five different periods of her life. But there are remarkable resonances between the two women's lives, and they might have recognized in each other a shared determination and strength in the way each pursued her own journey. Newell and Fay died in India within four years of each other, their letters and memoirs appearing in the same period of rapid global change. Their tales twist around one another personally and historically, both strangely shaped by the same global and regional forces at the turn of the nineteenth century: war between America, Britain, and France; the contraction of the Ottoman and Mughal Empires; the rapid growth of the British in India; and the lucrative patterns of trade that linked people and communities across the world.

Notes

- 1 D. Hopkins, *The Dangers of British India, from French Invasion and Missionary Establishments* (London: Black, Parry, and Kingsbury, 1809), p. 51.
- 2 Hopkins, *The Dangers of British India*, p. 51.
- 3 See P. D. Rasico, 'Calcutta "In These Degenerate Days": The Daniells' Visions of Life, Death and Nabobery in Late Eighteenth-Century British India', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 42:1 (2019), pp. 27–47.
- 4 Rev. W. K. Firminger, 'Introduction', in *Original Letters from India* (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink & Co, 1908), pp. vi–vii.
- 5 See K. Chancey, 'The Star in the East: The Controversy over Christian Missions to India, 1805–1813', *The Historian* 60:3 (March 1998), pp. 507–22.
- 6 Chancey, 'The Star in the East', p. 508.
- 7 See R. Said, 'George Baldwin and British Interests in Egypt 1775 to 1798', Unpublished Doctoral Thesis (University of London, June 1968).
- 8 See N. Gupta-Casale, 'Intrepid Traveller, "She-Merchant", or Colonialist Historiographer: Reading Eliza Fay's *Original Letters*', in S. Towheed (ed.), *New Readings in the Literature of British India, c. 1780–2014* (Stuttgart: Ibidem, 2007), pp. 65–91.
- 9 See M. W. Khan, 'Enlightenment Orientalism to Modernist Orientalism: The Archive of Forster's *A Passage to India*', *Modern Fiction Studies* 62 (2016), pp. 217–35.
- 10 Firminger, 'Introduction', p. 5.
- 11 F. Bickley, 'Review of [Eliza Fay's] *Original Letters from India*', *Bookman* (September 1925), p. 304.
- 12 The Kaye and Winchester editions are both based on the 1925 Forster edition, but with new introductions and additional notes. See M. M. Kaye (ed.), *Eliza Fay: Original Letters from India* (London: Hogarth Press, 1986); S. Winchester (ed.), *Eliza Fay: Original Letters from India* (New York: New York Review Books, 2010).
- 13 J. S. Pond, *Bradford: A New England Academy* (Bradford, MA: Bradford Academy Alumni Association, 1930), p. 71.
- 14 See Pond, *Bradford*, pp. 7–8.
- 15 *The Connecticut Evangelical Magazine and Religious Intelligencer* 3 (1810), p. 345.
- 16 *The Connecticut Evangelical Magazine and Religious Intelligencer* 3 (1810), p. 346.
- 17 See, among other publications, *The Connecticut Evangelical Magazine and Religious Intelligencer* 3 (1810), pp. 345–6; 4 (1811), pp. 419–27; 5 (1812), pp. 120 and 264; 5 (1812), pp. 461–71; 6 (1813), pp. 110–15, 232–9, and 350–7. See also *The Advisor, or Vermont Evangelical Magazine* 2 (1810), p. 351 and p. 353; 3 (1811), pp. 152–3, 344–5, and 374–5; 5 (1813), pp. 87–92, 147–50, 347–51; *The Evangelical Magazine and Missionary Chronicle* 22 (1814), 198–201 and 221–3; and *The Panoplist and Missionary Magazine United*, new series 4 (1812), pp. 179–83 and 425–31; 5 (1813), pp. 225–43, 372–7, and 515–25.
- 18 See J. B. Gillespie, '"The Clear Leadings of Providence": Pious Memoirs and the Problems of Self-Realization for Women in the Early Nineteenth Century', *Journal of the Early Republic* 5:2 (Summer 1985), pp. 197–221; and C. Midgley, 'Can Women Be Missionaries? Envisioning Female Agency in the Early Nineteenth-Century British Empire', *Journal of British Studies* 45:2 (2006), pp. 335–58.
- 19 See M. K. Cayton, 'Harriet Newell's Story: Women, the Evangelical Press, and the Foreign Mission Movement', in R. A. Gross and M. Kelley (eds), *A History of the Book in America, Volume 2: An Extensive Republic: Print, Culture, and Society in the New Nation, 1790–1840*

INTRODUCTION

(Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), pp. 408–16; and M. K. Cayton, ‘Canonizing Harriet Newell: Women, the Evangelical Press, and the Foreign Mission Movement in New England, 1800–1840’, in B. Reeves-Ellington, K. K. Sklar, and C. A. Shemo (eds), *Competing Kingdoms: Women, Mission, Nation, and the American Protestant Empire, 1812–1960* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), pp. 69–93.

HARRIET NEWELL, *MEMOIRS OF MRS. HARRIET NEWELL* (1815)

Born in Haverhill, Massachusetts, Harriet Atwood (1793–1812) was one of nine children of Moses Atwood and Mary Tenney. Thoughtful and well-educated by the standards of her time, she was profoundly shaped by the wave of religious feeling usually called the Second Great Awakening. In Haverhill, this spirit of religious renewal came in the form of Abraham Burnham, a Congregationalist minister appointed as a preceptor at Bradford Academy, just across the river from Haverhill, in 1805. Newell attended Bradford between 1807 and 1810, where she received an education that was not only superior to the vast majority of American women, but that also stressed the importance of religious seriousness, practice, and action.

It was through the romance of her close friend Nancy (‘Ann’) Hasseltine with a student of Andover Theological Seminary, Adoniram Judson, that Harriet Atwood first began to entertain the idea of missionary service. Judson was part of a group of students and ministers calling themselves ‘the Haystack Brethren’, several of whom (including Harriet Atwood’s future husband, Samuel Newell) appeared in 1810 before the Congregationalists’ General Association petitioning for support to do missionary work abroad. They were received enthusiastically, and their testimony contributed to the formation of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. By 1812 things had moved quickly: Adoniram Judson had convinced Ann Hasseltine to marry him and join him as a missionary in the East Indies; and Hasseltine’s decision had inspired Harriet Atwood to consider, and accept, at the age of nineteen, similar proposals to become the wife of Samuel Newell.

Harriet Atwood Newell set sail in the *Caravan* with her fellow missionaries on 19 February 1812; she sighted land 114 days later on 12 June and reached Calcutta (Kolkata) a few days later. She arrived at the last destination, however, in a particularly fraught political situation. The British East India Company was strongly opposed to missions, fearing that they would interfere with its burgeoning opium trade. There was also the prospect of imminent war between the United States and Britain, which rendered the newly arrived missionaries suspected spies and potential enemy combatants. It is hardly surprising, then, that the Newells quickly accepted an invitation to join William Carey, the official English Baptist missionary, at his home in Serampore (a Danish-controlled settlement). There

they remained until mid-July, when they were officially ordered to leave the British territories. Not wishing to return to America, Samuel Newell negotiated a passage to the Isle of France (Mauritius) to organize a mission there. In an advanced state of pregnancy, Harriet became ill during the voyage. She gave birth prematurely to a daughter, who died shortly thereafter of exposure caused by a violent storm. Harriet died two weeks later, perhaps from sepsis brought on by childbirth in difficult conditions.

The first American missionary to die overseas, Harriet Newell could not have foreseen her own posthumous fame or the popularity of her correspondence. While periodicals like *The Advisor* and *The Connecticut Evangelical Magazine and Religious Intelligencer* reported on the mission at every stage, publishing letters by Judson and other members as they were received from India, extracts from Harriet Newell's correspondence and journal did not appear until June 1813, approximately eight months after her death. Whether Harriet Newell gave her permission for the extracts to be published is unclear. Published into the same religious fervour from which she came, their popularity was instantaneous, her premature death transforming her writings into hagiography.

On her death Samuel Newell began editing and arranging her papers, which were published with a commemorative sermon as *A sermon preached at Haverhill (Mass.) in remembrance of Mrs. Harriet Newell, wife of the Rev. Samuel Newell, missionary to India . . . To which are added Memoirs of her life* (Boston: Samuel T. Armstrong, 1814). Over the next three decades at least twelve additional American printings appeared, including separate Andover, New York, Utica, Baltimore, Exeter, Lexington, and Philadelphia editions. Within a year of its initial publication, a London piracy had appeared, British copyright law allowing for any foreign work to be reprinted in the United Kingdom without permission. By 1840 there existed in Britain at least thirty additional printings of the *Memoirs*, including competing London imprints and multiple Edinburgh, Bristol, and Dublin editions.

Our edition takes its copy text from the first London edition, *Memoirs of Mrs. Harriet Newell . . . To which is added A Sermon, on Occasion of her Death, Preached at Haverhill, Massachusetts* (London: Booth and Co., 1815), which corrects several errors of typography in the American edition and reverses the order of the texts, printing the sermon as an appendix.

MEMOIRS

OF

Mrs. Harriet Newell,

WIFE OF THE

REV. SAMUEL NEWELL,

AMERICAN MISSIONARY TO INDIA.

WHO DIED AT THE ISLE OF FRANCE, Nov. 30, 1812,

AGED NINETEEN YEARS.

TO WHICH IS ADDED

A SERMON,

ON OCCASION OF HER DEATH,

PREACHED AT HAVERHILL, MASSACHUSETTS.



BY LEONARD WOODS, D. D.

Abbot Professor of Christian Theology in the Theol. Sem. Andover.



“God has permitted her to be the first Martyr to the Missionary cause, from the American world. The publication of her virtues will quicken and edify thousands; and hence-forth, every one who remembers Harriet Newell, will remember the foreign Mission from America.”—*Vide Funeral Discourse.*

LONDON:

PUBLISHED BY BOOTH AND CO.

Duke-street, Manchester-square.

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1815.

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PREFACE

TO

THE ENGLISH EDITION.

THE present Work was brought from America before the ratification of the late Treaty of Peace,¹ by a much esteemed friend now in a distant part of the kingdom, and with no view to re-publication. It is not possible, however, to read it, without feeling that it is worthy of extensive circulation; and that the sentiments and events which it narrates are such as must deeply interest every Christian heart. It has, therefore, been put to press; and as the friend to whom I advert, was already employed in writing a work for publication, which engrossed the whole of his leisure, he requested me to undertake the care of preparing it for the eye of the British public. This explanation involves all the interest I have in the present work.

When I was solicited to undertake the charge of editing it, it was under the conviction that in a work printed in America, there might possibly occur some things which would invite explanation; but on perusing the piece now offered to the public, there did not appear any strict necessity for remarks of this kind. Not a few readers will perhaps be of opinion, indeed, that there was room for abridgment; but though I myself coincide in this opinion, with regard to Mrs. Newell's Diary, before she was called to Missionary labours, and with reference to some of her letters, (in which, as she wrote to various friends, there is an occasional repetition of the same facts,) yet I concluded it would be more satisfactory on the whole, to the public at large, to have the work in its unabridged state. It is therefore to be understood, that this impression is an unvarnished transcript of that which was published in America, (with the exception, that here the Memoir takes precedence of the Sermon, which in the New York Edition occupies the *first* pages.) It was proposed to prefix some account of the Society, under whose sanction Mr. and Mrs. Newell went out, as well as any information respecting Mr. Newell, which might have been subsequently received; but the enquiries made respecting these particulars were not successful. They may probably appear in a subsequent Edition, and in the mean time, any communication connected with them will be gratefully received.

The amiable character to whose memory these pages are dedicated, will not be unwept or unlamented by British Christians: every feeling heart must be affected by the recital of her sufferings. The former part of her Diary, which was written before she was summoned to Missionary labours, has indeed little to distinguish it from the experience of believers in general; unless it be in the direction which her mind took towards Missions and the Heathen, before she became acquainted with Mr. Newell. No sooner, however, does she dedicate herself to this arduous employment, but from the affectionate associations formed in a reader's mind, the interesting situation in which we behold her placed, and the feeling and wisdom with which she speaks and acts, her Diary and Letters seem to acquire a new and affecting character. But of this narrative there is no part so deeply touching as the Letter addressed by Mr. Newell to his mother. Hard, indeed, must that heart be, that can remain unmoved when this is perused.

In the former part of this Preface, mention was made of the Friend to whom the British Public are more immediately indebted for the publication of this piece. It was the Reverend Joshua Marsden,² who brought it from America. He himself has borne the sacred appellation of *Missionary*; and with the appellation, has deeply participated of those trials and perils which check the life of a Missionary in a foreign land. For a period of *eight* years he successfully laboured in that "climate of cold" Nova Scotia. He has preached the Gospel on the Shores of the Gulph of St. Lawrence, on the Bay of Fundy, and on the rivers and lakes of New Brunswick; and when his constitution had received a shock there, and he had requested permission of the British Methodist Conference to return home; he was unexpectedly solicited by the Missionary Committee in London to undertake a very painful Mission to the Bermudas, and to succeed one who had been fined, imprisoned, and eventually banished the island for preaching the Gospel. "Mr. Marsden's prospects here were at first truly distressing; but faith, patience, and prayer, opened a glimmering of better times: a hope, which after a short season, was abundantly realized."³ He continued there nearly *four* years: when returning home to England by the way of America, he was detained prisoner in the United States, during an additional period of two years.

This statement is not made with a view merely to eulogize his character. If his labours and his sufferings are registered in the archives of Heaven, it is enough for him: he seeks no praise but that which might have "blossomed in the garden of Eden." It however affords me pleasure to add, that amid the fatigues which he endured, he was not an idle spectator of what passed around him; and he is now engaged in writing a *Narrative* of his interesting Mission, accompanied with strictures on the climate, productions, natural curiosities, &c. of those comparatively unknown regions where he laboured; subjects to which his long residence there, as well as the resources of his own mind render him so capable of doing justice. During Mr. Marsden's late stay in London, I was favoured with the perusal of part of the MS. and I feel no doubt that the work will greatly interest the attention of the Christian World.

WILLIAM JAQUES.⁴

ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE AMERICAN EDITION.



THE following Memoirs of Mrs. NEWELL, are derived almost entirely from her own writings. Nothing has been added but what seemed absolutely necessary, to give the reader a general view of her character, and to explain some particular occurrences, in which she was concerned. These memoirs contain only a part of her letters and journal.⁵ The whole would have made a large volume. The labour of the compiler has been to select, and occasionally, especially in her earlier writings, to abridge. The letters and journal of this unambitious, delicate female, would have been kept within the circle of her particular friends, had not the closing scenes of her life, and the Missionary zeal, which has recently been kindled in this country, excited in the public mind a lively interest in her character, and given the christian community a kind of property in the productions of her pen. It was thought best to arrange her writings according to the order of time; so that, in a connected series of letters, and extracts from her Diary, the reader might be under advantages to observe the progress of her mind, the developement of her moral worth, and some of the most important events of her life.

MEMOIRS

OF

MRS. HARRIET NEWELL.

THE subject of these memoirs was a daughter of Mr. MOSES ATWOOD, a merchant of HAVERHILL, MASSACHUSETTS, and was born Oct. 10, 1793. She was naturally cheerful and unreserved; possessed a lively imagination and great sensibility; and early discovered a retentive memory and a taste for reading. Long will she be remembered as a dutiful child and an affectionate sister.

She manifested no peculiar and lasting seriousness before the year 1806. In the summer of that year, while at the Academy in Bradford,⁶ a place highly favoured of the Lord, she first became the subject of those deep religious impressions, which laid the foundation of her christian life. With several of her companions in study, she was roused to attend to the one thing needful. They turned off their eyes from beholding vanity, and employed their leisure in searching the Scriptures, and listening to the instructions of those who were able to direct them in the way of life. A few extracts from letters, which she wrote to Miss L. K. of Bradford, will, in some measure, show the state of her mind at that time.

1806.

Dear L. I NEED your kind instructions now as much as ever. I should be willing to leave every thing for God; willing to be called by any name which tongue can utter, and to undergo any sufferings, if it would but make me humble, and be for his glory. Do advise me what I shall do for his glory. I care not for myself. Though he lay ever so much upon me, I would be content. Oh, could I but recal this summer!— But it is past, never to return. I have one constant companion, the BIBLE, from which I derive the greatest comfort. *This* I intend for the future shall guide me.

“—— Did you ever read Doddridge’s Sermons to Young People?⁷ They are very beautiful sermons. It appears strange to me, why I am not more interested in the cause of Christ, when he has done so much for us! But I *will* form a resolution that I will give myself up entirely to him. Pray for me, that my heart may be changed. I long for the happy hour when we shall be free from all sin, and enjoy God in heaven.

But if it would be for his glory, I should be willing to live my threescore years and ten. My heart bleeds for our companions, who are on the brink of destruction. In what manner shall I speak to them? But perhaps I am in the same way."

In another letter to the same friend, she says,—“What did Paul and Silas say to the jailor?⁸ *Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.* Let us do the same. Let us improve the accepted time, and make our peace with God. This day, my L. I have formed a resolution, that I will devote the remainder of my life entirely to the service of my God.—Write to me. Tell me my numerous *outward* faults; though you know not the faults of my heart, yet tell me all you know, that I may improve. I shall receive it as a token of love.”

THE FOLLOWING SUMMARY ACCOUNT OF HER
RELIGIOUS EXERCISES WAS FOUND AMONG
HER PRIVATE PAPERS.

DIARY.

“A REVIEW of past religious experience I have often found useful and encouraging. On this account I have written down the exercises of my mind, hoping that, by frequently reading them, I may be led to adore the riches of sovereign grace, praise the Lord for his former kindness to me, and feel encouraged to persevere in a holy life.

“The first ten years of my life were spent in vanity. I was entirely ignorant of the depravity of my heart. The summer that I entered my eleventh year, I attended a dancing school.⁹ My conscience would sometimes tell me, that my time was foolishly spent; and though I had never heard it intimated that such amusements were criminal, yet I could not rest, until I had solemnly determined that, when the school closed, I would immediately become religious. But these resolutions were not carried into effect. Although I attended every day to secret prayer, and read the Bible with greater attention than before; yet I soon became weary of these exercises, and, by degrees, omitted entirely the duties of the closet. When I entered my thirteenth year, I was sent by my parents to the Academy at Bradford. A revival of religion commenced in the neighbourhood,¹⁰ which, in a short time, spread into the school. A large number of the young ladies were anxiously inquiring, what they should do to inherit eternal life. I began to inquire, what can these things mean? My attention was solemnly called to the concerns of my immortal soul. I was a stranger to hope; and I feared the ridicule of my gay companions. My heart was opposed to the character of God; and I felt that, if I continued an enemy to his government, I must eternally perish. My convictions of sin were not so pungent and distressing, as many have had; but they were of long continuance. It was more than three months, before I was brought to cast my soul on the Saviour of sinners; and rely on him alone for salvation. The ecstasies, which many new-born souls possess, were not mine. But if I was not lost in raptures on reflecting upon what I had escaped; I was filled with a sweet peace, a heavenly calmness, which I never

can describe. The honours, applauses, and titles of this vain world, appeared like trifles light as air. The character of Jesus appeared infinitely lovely, and I could say with the Psalmist, *Whom have I in heaven but thee; and there is none on earth I desire besides thee*.¹¹ The awful gulf, I had escaped, filled me with astonishment. My gay associates were renounced, and the friends of Jesus became *my* dear friends. The destitute, broken state of the church at Haverhill¹² prevented me from openly professing my faith in Jesus; but it was a privilege, which I longed to enjoy. But, alas! these seasons so precious did not long continue. Soon was I led to exclaim,—Oh, that I were as in months past! My zeal for the cause of religion almost entirely abated; while this vain world engrossed my affections, which had been consecrated to my Redeemer. My Bible, once so lovely, was entirely neglected. Novels and romances engaged my thoughts, and hour after hour was foolishly and sinfully spent in the perusal of them. The company of Christians became, by degrees, irksome and unpleasant. I endeavoured to shun them. The voice of conscience would frequently whisper, “all is not right.” Many a sleepless night have I passed after a day of vanity and sin. But such conflicts did not bring me home to the fold, from which, like a stray lamb, I had wandered far away. A religion, which was intimately connected with the amusements of the world, and the friendship of those who are at enmity with God, would have suited well my depraved heart. But I knew that the religion of the gospel was vastly different. It exalts the Creator, while it humbles the creature in the dust.

“Such was my awful situation! I lived only to wound the cause of my ever blessed Saviour. Weep, O my soul! when contemplating and recording these sins of my youth. Be astonished at the long suffering of Jehovah!¹³—How great a God is our God! The death of a beloved parent, and uncle, had but little effect on my hard heart. Though these afflictions moved my passions, they did not lead me to the Fountain of consolation. But God, who is rich in mercy, did not leave me here. He had prepared my heart to receive his grace; and he glorified the riches of his mercy, by carrying on the work. I was providentially invited to visit a friend in Newburyport. I complied with the invitation. The evening previous to my return home, I heard the Rev. Mr. Mac F. It was the 28th of June, 1809. How did the truths, which he delivered, sink deep into my inmost soul! My past transgressions rose like great mountains before me. The most poignant anguish seized my mind; my carnal security fled; and I felt myself a guilty transgressor, naked before a holy God. Mr. B. returned with me the next day to Haverhill. Never, no never, while memory retains her seat in my breast, shall I forget the affectionate manner, in which he addressed me. His conversation had the desired effect. I then made the solemn resolution, as I trust, in the strength of Jesus, that I would make a sincere dedication of my all to my Creator, both for time and eternity. This resolution produced a calm serenity and composure, to which I had long been a stranger. How lovely the way of salvation then appeared!—Oh, how lovely was the character of the Saviour! The duty of professing publicly on which side I was, now was impressed on my mind. I came forward, and offered myself to the church; was accepted; received into communion; and commemorated, for the first time, the dying love of the blessed Jesus, August 6th, 1809. This was a

precious season, long to be remembered!—Oh, the depths of sovereign grace! Eternity will be too short to celebrate the perfections of God.

August 27th, 1809.

HARRIET ATWOOD.”

1806.

Sept. 1. A large number of my companions of both sexes, with whom I have associated this summer, are in deep distress for their immortal souls. Many, who were formerly gay and thoughtless, are now in tears, anxiously inquiring, what they shall do to be saved. Oh, how rich is the mercy of Jesus! He dispenses his favours to whom he pleases, without regard to age or sex. Surely it is a wonderful display of the sovereignty of God, to make me a subject of his kingdom, while many of my companions, far more amiable than I am, are left to grovel in the dust, or to mourn their wretched condition, without one gleam of hope.

Sept. 4. I have just parted with my companions, with whom I have spent three months at the academy. I have felt a strong attachment to many of them, particularly to those, who have been hopefully renewed the summer past. But the idea of meeting them in heaven, never more to bid them farewell, silenced every painful thought.

Sept. 10. Been indulged with the privilege of visiting a christian friend this afternoon. Sweet indeed to my heart, is the society of the friends of Immanuel. I never knew true joy until I found it in the exercise of religion.

Sept. 18. How great are the changes which take place in my mind in the course of one short day! I have felt deeply distressed for the depravity of my heart, and have been ready to despair of the mercy of God. But the light of divine truth, has this evening irradiated my soul, and I have enjoyed such composure as I never knew before.

Sept. 20. This has been a happy day to me. When conversing with a Christian friend upon the love of Jesus, I was lost in raptures. My soul rejoiced in the Lord, and joyed in the God of my salvation. A sermon preached by Mr. M. this evening has increased my happiness. This is too much for me, a sinful worm of the dust, deserving only eternal punishment. Lord, it is enough.

Oct. 6. The day on which Christ arose from the dead has again returned. How shall I spend it? Oh, how the recollection of mispent Sabbaths, embitters every present enjoyment. With pain do I remember the holy hours which were sinned away. Frequently did I repair to novels, to shorten the irksome hours as they passed. Why was I not cut off in the midst of *this* my wickedness?

Oct. 10. Oh, how much have I enjoyed of God this day! Such views of his holy character, such a desire to glorify his holy name, I never before experienced. Oh, that this frame might continue through life.

“My willing soul would stay
In such a frame as this,
And sit and sing herself away,
To everlasting bliss.”¹⁴

This is my birth day. Thirteen years of my short life have gone for ever.

Oct. 25. Permitted by my heavenly Father once more to hear the gospel's joyful sound. I have enjoyed greater happiness than tongue can describe. I have indeed been joyful in the house of prayer. Lord let me dwell in thy presence for ever.

Nov. 2. How wonderful is the superabounding grace of God!¹⁵ Called at an early age to reflect upon my lost condition, and to accept of the terms of salvation, how great are my obligations to live a holy life.

Nov. 4. Examination at the Academy. The young ladies to be separated, perhaps, for life. Oh, how affecting the scene! I have bid my companionous farewell. Though they are endeared to me by the strongest ties of affection, yet I must be separated from them, perhaps never to meet them more, till the resurrection. The season has been remarkable for religious impressions. But the harvest is past, the summer is ended, and there are numbers who can say, *we are not saved*.

Nov. 25. A dear Christian sister called on me this afternoon. Her pious conversation produced a solemn but pleasing effect upon my mind. Shall I ever be so unspeakably happy as to enjoy the society of holy beings in heaven?

“Oh, to grace how great a debtor!”¹⁶

Dec. 3. I have had great discoveries of the wickedness of my heart these three days past. But this evening, God has graciously revealed himself to me in the beauty and glory of his character. The Saviour provided for fallen man, is just such a one as I need. He is the one altogether lovely.

Dec. 7. With joy we welcome the morning of another Sabbath. Oh, let this holy day be consecrated entirely to God. My Sabbaths on earth will soon be ended; but I look forward with joy unutterable to that holy day, which will never have an end.

Dec. 8. This evening has been very pleasantly spent with my companions, H. and S. B. The attachment which commenced as it were in infancy, has been greatly strengthened since their minds have been religiously impressed. How differently are our evenings spent now, from what they formerly were! How many evenings have I spent with them in thoughtless vanity and giddy mirth. We have been united in the service of Satan; Oh, that we might now be united in the service of God!

Dec. 11. This morning has been devoted to the work of self-examination. Though I find within me an evil heart of unbelief, prone to depart from the living God, yet I have a hope, a strong, unwavering hope, which I would not renounce for worlds. Bless the Lord, Oh my soul, for this blessed assurance of eternal life.

Dec. 15. Grace, free grace is still my song. I am lost in wonder and admiration, when I reflect upon the dealings of God with me. When I meet with my associates, who are involved in nature's darkness, I am constrained to cry with the poet,

“Why was I made to hear thy voice,
And enter while there's room;
While thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?”¹⁷