

MISS SARAH WESLEY OF BRISTOL: A METHODIST BLUESTOCKING

Frank Baker¹

The Rev. Charles and Sarah Wesley, of 4 Charles Street, Bristol, had eight children born to them. Only three reached maturity however: Charles (1757–1834), Sarah (1759–1828), and Samuel (1766–1837). The only one to marry was Samuel. Sarah was the fourth child, born on April 1, 1759. Charles Wesley [Sr.] wrote to his sister Martha on April 11, “You have heard, I presume, of the increase of my family. Sally and her daughter, as well as son [Charles Jr.], is in a very hopeful way. She had a wonderfully good time, and sends her kindest love to you.”² Sarah [Jr.] was baptized at St. James’s parish church, Bristol, on April 28.

Little Sarah knew most of the childish ailments, and got into the usual mischief, including prowling around in the garden at the back of the house and gorging herself on raw fruit, so that Charles wrote home to his wife: “If you cannot keep Sally from eating poison, I must grub up all the trees in the garden, or take another house without one.”³ This was when she was five. She had measles at seven, and Charles wrote home from London: “Sister Boulton bids you take the utmost care that Sally does not catch cold after the measles. The best way to prevent it is to let her live in the air.”⁴

From the age of six Sarah devoured not only raw fruit but books, being both eager and omnivorous in this pursuit. On one occasion the dinner-bell had been rung at home (Charles being prompt on meals), her father searched for her, then started thinking she was at Miss Temple’s School (in the Barton)—reputed to be the best school in Bristol. Actually she was found later on in an upper room, seated behind a box, finishing a book, and preferring to miss her dinner rather than leave her reading.⁵ She had quite a good ear for music, and a fair singing

¹This essay is undated. The paper on which it appears and the style of type suggest it was an early work, perhaps around 1960. It remained unpublished at Baker’s death, and is found in Box 211 of The Frank Baker Papers, in the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library of Duke University, Durham, NC. Baker noted sources mainly within the text, and his footnotes were very terse. The notes that appear in this published version have been expanded (or created) to aid the reader.

²CW to Martha (Wesley) Hall, Apr. 11, 1759; holograph in The Methodist Archive and Research Centre of the John Rylands Library (MARC), DDWes 4/88.

³CW to Sarah (Gwynne) Wesley, July 10, 1764; MARC, DDWes 4/5.

⁴CW to Sarah (Gwynne) Wesley, July 15, 1766; MARC, DDCW 7/20.

⁵One of the stories shared by Charles Wesley Jr. in a letter to Adam Clarke, Feb. 15, 1822, reproduced in George J. Stevenson, *Memorials of the Wesley Family* (London: S. W. Partridge, 1876), 474–75.

voice, but rather than practice for two hours a day as her father suggested, she gave up music for books.

Her brothers, of course, were amongst the most brilliant musicians of the age, and it was largely for their sakes that in 1771 the family removed from Bristol to London, when Sally was eleven or twelve. She had already blossomed forth as authoress, with an ambitious oratorio called “Isaac” founded on the Genesis story, one of its recitations being as follows:

Behold those mountains gilded by the sun,
How sweetly glides that murmuring stream below;
See, Abram, see that lovely feathered choir!
Hark how they raise their tuneful notes on high,
Praising the Author of their frail existence.⁶

Her elder brother Charles set some of the poems to music.

Plays

When from childish verses and oratorios she turned to plays, Charles Wesley Sr. stepped in, by taking away the manuscript⁷—we remember how the early Methodists thought of the theatre as the devil’s sanctuary. When she was twenty-four, however, she was still not thoroughly cured of her love of plays, though she had given way to her father’s prejudices. In July 1783 he wrote: “I never, that I remember, forbade your going to a play. Probably you left off going because you knew it so contrary to my mind. And I took it kindly of you.”⁸ Many years later she looked back on this period with gratitude:

How much do I owe to my dear father for checking my theatrical taste when I was a child, and evincing to me his heart’s sorrow, on seeing my desire to go to such exhibitions! This is the chief part of my youth which I recollect with delight; for I obeyed him, without conceiving the evils of a play-house, and left my drama unfinished, which I began to write at eleven years of age.⁹

Reading

Both Charles and John Wesley tried to take in hand her reading. One of her main troubles was that she was too discursive; another that she was too reserved. The first extant letter of

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

⁸CW to Sarah Wesley Jr., c. July 7–10, 1783; MARC, DDWes 4/80.

⁹Sarah Wesley Jr. to Mrs. Elizabeth (Ritchie) Mortimer, Apr. 18 (no year); in Agnes Collinson Bulmer, *Memoirs of Mrs. Elizabeth [Ritchie] Mortimer, with Selections from Her Correspondence* (2nd edn.; London: John Mason, 1836), 210–11.

Charles Wesley to his daughter, in the spring of 1773, when she was nearly 14, besides giving her religious advice (for she was already meeting in band), and asking after her arithmetic (for he wanted her to keep the household accounts), also set her reading Young's *Night Thoughts*, and asked her to memorise the Fourth Night—842 lines!¹⁰ He continued to offer help, but sometimes in a rather heavy-handed way, so that she seems to have fought shy of him. He was probably right in insisting (in 1777) that “a plan or order of study is absolutely necessary. Without that, the more you read, the more you are confused, and never rise above a smatterer in learning.” He added, for Sally was then staying with the well-known painter, John Russell, at Guildford: “Take care you don't devour all Mr. Russell's library. If you do, you will never be able to digest it.”¹¹ It was Russell (later a member of the Royal Academy) who painted her portrait about this time. It shows her with a high, intellectual forehead, accentuated by piled up hair; with a slender oval face, and the long prominent Wesley nose. Like her father and brothers she was very short in stature, less than 5 feet in height. As age came on she became really dumpy. She was a very beautiful child until she was marked with small pox.¹² In 1780 her uncle John was also trying to get her to discipline herself to a course of study—she was already becoming more religious.¹³ And in 1781, having cured her of “intemperance in sleep,” he set out a reading course, including: “For poetry you may read Spenser's *Fairy Queen*, select parts of Shakespeare, Fairfax's or Hoole's *Godfrey of Bouillon*, *Paradise Lost*, the *Night Thoughts*, and Young's *Moral and Sacred Poems*.”¹⁴ But in 1784 he was saying, “I doubt you ... read too much.”¹⁵

Poetry

She was not only reading avidly, but also composing verse. She kept this mostly to herself, however, being reserved with her father as with other people. In October 1777 he wrote:

I am not yet too old to assist you a little in your reading, and perhaps improve your taste in versifying. You need not dread my severity. I have a laudable partiality for my own children. Witness your brothers; whom I do not love a jot better than you. Only be you as ready to show me your verses, as they their music.¹⁶

Later he wrote:

¹⁰CW to Sarah Wesley Jr., Apr. 8, 1773; MARC, DDCW 7/39.

¹¹CW to Sarah Wesley Jr., Oct. 11, 1777; MARC, DDCW 7/40.

¹²CW Jr. to Adam Clarke, Feb. 15, 1822, in Stevenson, *Memorials*, 474.

¹³See JW to Sarah Wesley Jr., Nov. 15, 1780; MARC, DDWes 5/6.

¹⁴JW to Sarah Wesley Jr., Sept. 8, 1781; MARC, DDWes 5/13.

¹⁵JW to Sarah Wesley Jr., Sept. 8, 1784; MARC, DDWes 5/15.

¹⁶CW to Sarah Wesley Jr., Oct. 11, 1777; MARC, DDCW 7/40.

Your Ode on Peace I have corrected, at least, if not amended. You must begin immediately to be regular, to be diligent, to be tightly. . . . It might be of great use to you if I read the *Night Thoughts* with you, and pointed out the passages best worth your getting by heart.¹⁷

He also suggests, apparently as some deterrent to her wide tastes in reading, that she commits to memory the following:

Voracious learning, often over-fed
Digests not into sense its motley meal;
This forager on others' wisdom, leaves
His native farm, his reason, quite untilled,
With mix'd manure he surfeits the rank soil,
Dung'd, but not dress'd, and rich to beggarly:
A pomp untameable of weeds prevails:
Her servant's wealth encumber'd wisdom mourns.¹⁸

And on October 1, 1778, Charles added, "We may also read your verses together. They want perspicuity—which should be the first point, but they are worth correcting."¹⁹

Strangely enough, Sarah Jr. got more encouragement from the greatest critic of the age, Dr. Samuel Johnson. Her aunt Martha (Wesley) Hall (known in the family as 'Patty') was one of Johnson's great friends, and he had invited her to come and live at his house. Sally and her aunt Patty were great friends. Indeed both John Wesley and his sister Patty were important influences in the life of young Sally Wesley before they died in 1791, when she was just turned 30. Sally used to go along with her aunt to Bolt Court and listen in to the famous pronouncements of the literary dictator of his day. When first this began we cannot say, but at least as early as 1777, when she was 18. It was probably some years earlier, for Charles Wesley junior recounts how:

Dr. Johnson much distinguished my sister in her youth. She was not, like many others, afraid of him; indeed, the doctor was always gentle to children; and no doubt my aunt Hall had spoken kindly to him of her. She used to show him her verses, and he would pat her head, and say to my aunt, "Madam, she will do."²⁰

Two notes from Johnson are still preserved—the first to Charles Wesley Sr., inviting him, his wife, Sarah Jr., John Wesley, and Martha (Wesley) Hall to dine with him;²¹ the second to young Sally and her aunt:

¹⁷CW to Sarah Wesley Jr., Sept. 16, 1778; MARC, DDWes 4/26.

¹⁸Ibid.; quoting Edward Young, *Night Thoughts*, Night the Fifth, ll. 255–63.

¹⁹CW to Sarah Wesley Jr., Oct. 1, 1778; MARC, DDCW 7/41.

²⁰[CW Jr. to Adam Clarke, Feb. 15, 1822; in Stevenson, *Memorials*, 475.

²¹Harvard University, Houghton Library, MS Hyde 1, Series 1, no. 116.

Oct. 28th, 1783

Madam,

I will have the first day you mention. Come, my dear, on Saturday next;
and, if you can, bring your aunt with you, to

Your most humble servant,

Sam. Johnson²²

Johnson's copies of the *Idler*, given by him to Mrs. Hall, were bequeathed to Sally, as were John Wesley's copies of Johnson's *Poets*, also presented by the author. This was fitting, as Johnson and Sally obviously had some kind of affinity. Not that her poems are likely to have been really impressive, though they undoubtedly showed some talent. Most of them seem to have disappeared, but one or two are still preserved, which show that she was on the whole probably just a conventional versifier.²³ Among poems written in 1775, when she was 15 or 16, is one titled "Aurelia," on the conventional theme of an innocent maiden betrayed by "Man" (with a capital M), so that "her last sad refuge was th' untimely grave." A typical verse is the description of this grave:

A green grass sod scarce rising to the view
A gloomy shade where sunbeams never rise,
Two spreading oaks and one tall fun'ral yew
Mark the lorn spot where soft Aurelia lies.²⁴

Apparently her poems were collected together, probably into a manuscript volume, for one of the treasures of the New Room (in the Watkinson collection)—in addition to a poem "To Master [Thomas] Waller on His Birthday" (noted as "written at fifteen") is a poem "To the Reader," asking for kind treatment, and suggesting that only after death would these poems be seen:

When the warm heart that dictates to my lay
Shall join and moulder in its kindred earth;
When my lov'd muse no more her wreath can pay
No more lament a death or hail a birth:

Then—should the harsh, th' unfeeling critic view
These simple products of a youthful pen

²²Harvard University, Houghton Library, MS Hyde 1, Series 1, no. 117.

²³Actually over 50 poems survive in manuscript, found in the British Library; The New Room in Bristol; MARC; the Wesley Family Papers of the Pitts Library, Emory University; and the Frank Baker Collection of Wesleyana at Duke.

²⁴Holograph held at Duke University, Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Frank Baker Collection of Wesleyana, Box WF 4.

Tell him all kind, the artless hand which drew
Borrow'd the tints from nature—not from men.

As nature guided she obey'd her laws,
Fashion ne're curb'd the sympathising tear
She paid no flattery, wished for no applause
But that sweet memory yields to hearts sincere.

Reader, if conscious thou canst own the same
The unsuspecting child of genuine truth,
Thou wilt disdain to assume the critic name,
And act a milder part; the friend of youth.

Not that my youth will then thy friendship need,
Fixed far beyond this low terrestrial sphere;
But gently thou mayst touch thy simple reed
Set it to love and bid it warble there.

And if the sweet, the gentle well-known string
Can rise from earth to greet a spirit's ear,
From heaven a moment mine shall take its wing
Catch the soft note—and waft it thro' the air.²⁵

This poem is dated “March 1776” (when she was still only 16), and is followed by the word “Finis,” as though this were the end of a little collection, which appears to have been scattered.

Anonymity

There is no doubt that much literary activity followed these early attempts, and practically all of it anonymous. Only one poem appears to have been published over her name, the well-known one “To the Memory of the First Methodist Preachers,” of which she made several copies, varying in slight details.²⁶ There are also at least two versions of an extempore effort which she wrote at an evening party, where some uncourteous and rather misshapen gentleman had remarked in her hearing “that she would have been a bewitching creature if she had not been so horribly ugly.” She wrote on a slip of paper:

²⁵Bristol, New Room, Vol. 1 of Watkinson album, NR2002.6.1.837.1.

²⁶See Sarah Wesley, “To the Memory of the First Methodist Preachers,” *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine* 5 (1826): 648; and the revised version, *Lines to the Memory of the First Methodist Preachers* (London: John Mason, 1828). There are also manuscript versions at MARC, DDWes 1/62; and in the World Methodist Museum (Clark Volume) at Lake Junaluska.

Malice and envy in one point agree,
That the outside is the worst part of me:
Small is the censure, as it stands confest,
Bad as it is—thy outside is the best.²⁷

This literary activity covered not only poems, but many essays and articles, and even novels. She did much literary work for Dr. George Gregory (1754–1808), who had given up a small business to become a clergyman. Gregory ran a private theatre in Liverpool, from where he settled in London in 1782, being presented to the living of West Ham in 1802, and becoming Prebendary of St. Paul's in 1806. For the most part he was self-educated, but was a very prolific writer, and the editor for some years of the *New Annual Register*. It was the latter publication Sally Wesley seems to have helped him with by translating news out of foreign languages. On the death of Dr. Kippis in 1795, Gregory was appointed editor of the *Biographia Britannica*. Again it seems likely that Sally Wesley helped him. In 1789 he had written a *Life of Thomas Chatterton*, in which Sally as a Bristolian would certainly be interested. In 1804 he was preparing the third edition of *The Economy of Nature Explained and Illustrated on the Principles of Modern Philosophy*, and in the same year he was writing to her:

Dearest Wesley,
... The history of knowledge I shall be glad of as soon as you can, as the publication must come out the latter end of August this year. ...
Believe me, Dearest Wesley,
Ever thine,

G. Gregory²⁸

It seems likely that Sally also helped in Gregory's *Letters on Literature, Taste, and Composition*, 1808, and *A Dictionary of the Arts and Sciences*, also 1808. Definite proof, apart from strong tradition, seems hard to arrive at. Tradition has it also that Sally contributed frequently to the *Edinburgh Review*, though here again an examination of the indexes to that periodical does not help us. That much of her writing was published seems almost certain, but so far we have not been able to lay hands on anything for certain. She hid secrets well. In 1809, for instance, she writes to Mrs. Fordyce of Bath, whilst speaking about household economy, and economy generally, "It is so favourable a virtue of mine, that I have lately written an essay to prove, that avarice is a less mischievous vice than prodigality. It will some time be printed, and you shall see it."²⁹

In this instance she was ready to let her friends into the secret of the authorship of her articles. It was not always so easy to discover, however. The family of Philip Doddridge were

²⁷One of these is held at Duke University, Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Frank Baker Collection of Wesleyana, Box WF 4.

²⁸George Gregory to Sarah Wesley Jr., June 23, 1804; MARC, MA 1977/428/1/165.

²⁹Sarah Wesley Jr. to Henrietta Fordyce, Sept. 2, 1809; Duke, Rubenstein, Frank Baker Collection of Wesleyana, Box WF 4.

very friendly with Sally, and his daughter Mercy was very intimate (1734–1805) although nearly 20 years her senior. Yet Mercy Doddridge felt very flattered when in 1800 Sally confessed to her authorship of some unnamed work, “I thank you my beloved friend, for withdrawing the literary veil in which you have been so long concealed, ... Being bound by you to secrecy, I will be as circumspect as you can wish.” Mercy Doddridge was very proud to remind Sally how she had inserted in her commonplace book “with your own dear hand your elegant lines on Miss Burney’s marriage, with which Miss Rose was so much pleased as to solicit a copy.”³⁰

Sally seems to have had some scruples about thus hiding her light under a bushel, and felt that she would like to know that some of her writings still held in reserve would be published after her death at any rate. She therefore seems to have asked another woman writer (Miss Elizabeth Hamilton, 1758–1816), an important and influential writer in those days, who secures quite a long notice in *Dictionary of National Biography*, to be her literary executor. Miss Hamilton was apparently quite flattered by the friendship of her little-known contemporary. In 1801 Mercy Doddridge had written, Miss Hamilton “talked of you with enthusiasm and drew a parallel between you and a certain celebrated Authoress, that was decidedly in your favour.”³¹ She wrote to Sally in 1811 (when her own high reputation was assured):

I do not wonder that my dear Miss Wesley ... should provide against the possibility of her leaving her offspring to make their own way into the world, by choosing for them a guardian who would consider it as an incumbent duty properly to introduce them. But little is the probability that she should be survived by her whom she has honoured with the sacred trust. [Actually Elizabeth Hamilton died 12 years before Sally.] Would it not then be better, instead of putting off the appearance of these precious creatures till they are in an orphan state, to bring them forward under her own auspices? Why will dear Miss Wesley so long deprive the world of the benefit to be derived from her instructions? Who of all the female writers of this writing age, is half so well qualified to write as herself? And if good has been done even by those who are confessedly her inferiors (of which I have no doubt) how much more might she be expected to effect? Pray think seriously of this, and do not leave till tomorrow what may be done today.³²

Sally Wesley had many such loyal friends amongst the many earnest female writers of the day, few of whom were so extremely reserved as herself. The list of her literary friends is a long one, and most of the names are in *Dictionary of National Biography*, albeit in some minor capacity and largely forgotten today. These include Miss Elizabeth Bengier (1778–1827), biographer of Miss Hamilton; Miss Lucy Aikin (1781–1864), and her aunt Mrs. Barbauld (1748–1825); the novelist Miss Jane Porter (1776–1850); Hannah More (1745–1833); and Maria

³⁰Mercy Doddridge to Sarah Wesley Jr., Apr. 26, 1800; MARC, DDWes 1/118.

³¹Mercy Doddridge to Sarah Wesley Jr., Jan. 31, 1801; Duke, Rubenstein, Frank Baker Collection of Wesleyana, Box WF 4.

³²Elizabeth Hamilton to Sarah Wesley Jr., June 15, 1811; MARC, DDWes 1/122.

Edgeworth (1767–1849)—all celebrities in their day. Sarah Wesley was friendly also with the poet Thomas Campbell (1777–1844), best remembered today as the author of “Ye Mariners of England.” She was in close touch with Robert Southey when he wrote his *Life of Wesley*. She was friendly with the Cottles of Bristol—Joseph being the befriender of Coleridge and Wordsworth, and publishing their *Lyrical Ballads*. She had acted as governess to Thomas De Quincy’s sister (1785–1859). In other words, she was an accepted habitu  of the second rank of writers, and had some contacts with the first rank.

Her aspirations in this direction did not always meet with success. For instance, she knew Charles and Mary Lamb, and through them got an introduction to Coleridge, who was not too pleased about it. To Coleridge’s letter of complaint Lamb wrote in his inimitable way (in 1800):

You blame us for giving your directions to Miss Wesley. The woman has been ten times after us about it, and we gave it her at last, under the idea that no further harm would ensue but she would *once* write to you and you would bite your lips and forget to answer it, and so it would end. You read us a dismal homily upon “Realities.” We know, quite as well as you do, what are shadows and what are realities. You, for instance, when you are over your fourth or fifth jorum, chirping about old school occurrences, are the best of realities. Shadows are cold, thin things, that have no warmth or grasp in them. Miss Wesley and her friend, and a tribe of authoresses that come after you here daily and, in defect of you, hive and cluster upon us, are the shadows. You encouraged that mopsey Miss Wesley to dance after you, in the hope of having her nonsense put into a nonsensical anthology. We have pretty well shaken her off, by that simple expedient of referring her to you. But there are more burrs in the wind. I came home the other day from business, hungry as a hunter, to dinner, with nothing I am sure of the *author but hunger* about me, and whom found I closeted with Mary but a friend of this Miss Wesley, one Miss Benje, or Benje—I don’t know how she spells her name [Benger]. I just came in time enough, I believe, luckily to prevent them from exchanging vows of eternal friendship.³³

Some years later another celebrity of the day, and a wise critic, Henry Crabb Robinson, spoke rather more kindly of Sally in his well-known *Diary*. This was in 1812, when Sally was 53, and obviously something of a character:

Went to Miss Benger’s in the evening, where I found a large party. ... I was introduced to a character—Miss Wesley, a niece of the celebrated John. ... She is said to be a devout and most actively benevolent woman. Eccentric in her habits, but most estimable in all the great points of character. A very lively little body, with a round short person, in a constant fidget of good-nature, and harmless vanity. She has written novels, which do not sell; and is reported to have said,

³³Alfred Ainger, *The Letters of Charles Lamb: Newly Arranged, with Additions* (New York: A. C. Armstrong, 1896), 1:159.

when she was introduced to Miss Edgeworth, “We sisters of the quill ought to know each other.” She said she had friends of all sects of religion, and was glad she had, as she could not possibly become uncharitable. She had been in Italy, and loved the Italians for their warmth in friendship.³⁴

Religion

It was true that Sally had friends in all sects of religion. As a child she had attended both Quaker and Moravian services at Bristol, being especially fond of the Moravians. She also came under the influence of Swedenborgianism. Indeed her deep friendship with the Anglican Swedenborgian minister, Rev. Joseph Clowes of Manchester, so ripened that he tried unsuccessfully to persuade her to marry him. Dissenters she generally considered rather common, writing to the mother of Thomas De Quincey:

Often have I been pained by the hospitality you displayed towards my Methodist acquaintance. ... Where there is no circumstance (as in my own case there is) to endear a set of people destitute of the elegancies, and of all the appearances of life, their company cannot be acceptable.³⁵

Yet she remained both a loyal Churchwoman and a loyal Methodist all her life, and was a member of the City Road Ladies Sewing Meeting (1817–21), often leading intellectual discussions and on one occasion giving an evening of readings from Wesley letters. She was by no means a typical Methodist however, and when in 1790 Mr. John Freeman came over from Dublin to London he wrote back home: “She indeed appears to be a conversible, accomplished and perfectly well bred young lady; she does not dress anyway like a Methodist, but quite fashionable.” Her love of fashionable clothes, indeed, rather scandalised the Bristol Methodists, as may be seen from a letter of hers written apparently when she was on a visit with her father about 1776. With her letter to her brother Charles (“Carlo”) was a rough sketch of her father meeting various Methodists after a service in Bristol, with her explanations underneath, such as:

- No. 1. The Rev. Mr. CW coming from square preaching. The painter had not time to take a stronger likeness. ...
- No. 5. The Rev. CW[’s] daughter; she has a sweet smile upon her face, and knowing but she must do so too. A perfect pattern. *Dear lady!*
- No. 6. A Methodist sister, lamenting the vanity of dress in Miss W.
- No. 7. Another, who agrees in the lamentation most outrageously. ...”³⁶

³⁴*Diary, Reminiscences, and Correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson* (Boston: Fields, Osgood, and Co., 1870), 248–49 (entry for May 27, 1812).

³⁵Sarah Wesley Jr. to Mrs. Quincy, undated letter; Duke, Rubenstein, Frank Baker Collection of Wesleyana, Box WF 4.

³⁶MARC, DDWes 1/62.

Yet Sally Wesley maintained her love for Methodism and for Bristol to the end. At her death her last class-ticket, for June 1828, was found in her pocket.³⁷ It had been issued in London—but she died in Bristol. In 1783 her father had written to her:

I don't wonder at your partiality for Bristol. Had Thomas Lewis lived, I should have passed my last days, and laid my bones there. And still I hanker after it. But your brothers forbid, and your mother must look after them in London.³⁸

Sarah too had expressed a desire to die in Bristol, and strangely was drawn on her last visit there just before she died. She passed away at No. 2 Paul Street, on 19th September, 1828, being buried in St. James's churchyard, along with her infant sisters and brothers, aged 69. She had left little identifiable literary work behind her. Her brother Samuel had written around 1791, "I regret the sight of a rich freight of talents wrecked on the sands."³⁹ Yet her influence had been sweet and saintly, and at least some traces of her literary reputation remain. We may close with a poem written to Thomas Campbell on the death of one of his children:

On the Death of an Infant.

For thee no treacherous world prepares
A youth of complicated snares,
No wild ambition's raging flame,
Shall tempt thy ripened years with fame;
No avarice shall thine age decoy
Far-off from sweet, diffusive joy;
Happy beyond the happiest fate,
Snatched from the ills that vex the great,
From anxious toils, entangling strife,
And every care of meaner life.
Happy, though thou hast hardly trod,
The thorny path that leads to God,
Where friendless virtue weeps and prays,
Oft 'wildered in the doubtful maze,
Nor knew that virtue wept in vain—
Nor felt a greater ill than pain,
Already sainted in the sky,
Sweet babe! that did but weep and die!⁴⁰

³⁷See *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine* 7 (1828): 719.

³⁸CW to Sarah Wesley Jr., July 17, 1783; MARC, DDCW 7/43.

³⁹Samuel Wesley to Sarah Wesley Jr, undated; Pitts Library (Emory), Charles Wesley Family Papers (MSS 159), 4/57.

⁴⁰MARC, WCB, D6/1/404b.