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NARRATIVE
OF
PHEBE ANN JACOBS.

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“My little house has become a *palace*.” PAGE 6.

THE subject of this narrative was a colored woman, born a slave in Morris county, New Jersey, July, 1785. At an early age she was given to Mrs. Wheelock, wife of President Wheelock of Dartmouth college, to be an attendant on her daughter, Maria Malleville, who was afterwards the wife of President Allen of Bowdoin college, Brunswick, Maine. She came to Brunswick with President Allen's family, in 1820, and remained with them until the death of Mrs. Allen, from which time she chose to live alone. She died in Brunswick, February 28, 1850.

Soon after she became a member of President Whee-

lock's family, Phebe was brought to see her lost state by nature, and to flee to the Saviour as her only hope and refuge. Her subsequent life evinces that she had *clear and happy* views of the way of salvation by Christ.

Phebe, for the last eighteen years, supported herself by washing and ironing for the students of Bowdoin college. In her little habitation all was neatness and order. All her work seemed to be sanctified by prayer and praise, and to be done cheerfully, heartily, as unto the Saviour whom she loved. However busy, she was always ready to enjoy a season of devotion with her Christian friends who called to see her. She chose to live alone—*alone with God*, where, as she expressed it, "there would be no hindrances to prayer and praise at any time; where she could converse with her Saviour all day long." So naturally would she speak to us of the presence of Christ with her, so happy was she in her testimony to the consolations she enjoyed in communion with him, that one could not but feel that Christ was with her, and that her little cottage on the plain was near to heaven.

Phebe was *contented and happy*. As a friend passed her dwelling, and it was beginning to rain, it was said to her, "I am afraid you will not get your clothes dry to-day, Phebe." "That is as the Lord pleases," she replied. All was right with her because she resigned her own will to the will of God; hence she seemed to be always peaceful and happy. Every body knew that Phebe was *happy*, and that it was *religion* that made her so. Young persons and children, as well as those of maturer years, loved to visit her. At one time a little colored girl was spending several weeks with Phebe. A gentleman meeting her, said, "Where do you live, little girl?" "With *happy Phebe*," was her quick reply. Not long since, a kind neighbor sent her daughter to read to her the little book, "A Trap to catch a Sunbeam." After hearing it, said Phebe, "That is a beautiful book, but I do n't need a trap to catch sunbeams; I *find sunbeams everywhere*." Who ever heard Phebe complain, or severely censure

any one? Fault-finding was not her way of doing good, or being useful in the church. When harsh remarks were made in her presence concerning her brethren or sisters, she would say, "We must pray more for them." And this was her custom. Not long since she was rudely spoken to, and her feelings wounded. Said Phebe, "I have a friend, to whom I can go;" and with no other reply she turned away, and on her knees before God prayed for this individual. The next morning the person came and asked her pardon. How beautifully does this illustrate the passage, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves." Again, returning home from meeting one dark evening, with her head bowed down as usual, she was accosted, "Where are you bound, old woman?" "To *Canaan's happy land*," she answered.

Phebe *loved the Scriptures*. Near by her, and always on her mind and heart, was her "precious Holy Bible," and her large-print Testament. Phebe had the same Bible that others have, but she found in it a great deal more than is commonly found, as all may observe who have seen her Bible. There the promises, and the threatenings and warnings too, are marked or underscored by her pen or pencil. Phebe's marks beneath or beside a passage, made often with a heavy stroke of her pencil, come to our minds with the force of a commentary, for she was herself a "living epistle," "known and read" by us all. Said her pastor, "If a thousand devoted Christians were requested to mark their favorite texts and expressions, it is believed they would hardly mark one not underscored by Phebe."

Phebe *loved the house of God*. She took great delight in the services of the sanctuary: hence she was never absent except from sickness or urgent necessity. She was indeed a pillar of the church; one in whom the minister found support by her constant attendance and prayers, by her cordial reception and love of the truth. She was the first to be seated in her place at church. For many years, in our former house of worship, she was

seen sitting in one corner of the gallery, on the furthest row of seats, with her head bowed in secret prayer. To look up to her as we entered the house of God was, to some of us at least, a prayer, a sermon, a hymn of praise. The last winter, her health failing, she was unable to walk to church as formerly, and remained during the intermission—a season highly prized by some of her Christian friends, who would hasten back to meet her. That glowing look of hers, that close pressure of the hand, that Sabbath-day greeting, will never be forgotten. The best, the most experienced Christians loved to be with Phebe, because she was a happy, Bible Christian, a witness to the truth of God.

Phebe loved to pray. Many times a day would she go to her bedroom, carpeted as for a little sanctuary, and kneel and pray. So much was her soul awake to the interests of Zion, it was no uncommon occurrence for her to arise at *midnight* and pray. "At midnight I will arise, and give thanks unto thee." This is a marked passage in her Bible. About four years since, her pastor was strengthened more than usual in his labors; his soul was richly fed with heavenly manna; and of this bread many of his flock partook with him. Not long after this season of refreshing, it was ascertained that Phebe had arisen *every night, month after month, at midnight*, to pray for her pastor.

Many were the *individuals* for whom she prayed. During the past winter a friend called to see her. "What is the good word?" said Phebe. "Anna—— is serious, and inquiring the way of life." She arose at once from her seat, lifted her hands, and with tears of joy praised God aloud, and said, "For her I have been praying; God is a hearer of prayer."

Phebe's faith and confidence in God were practical, and availed her in time of need. When her "mistress," Mrs. Allen, died, whom she loved more than any being on earth, and whose death was very sudden, in the dead of night, causing great distress in the family, Phebe calmly said, "Do n't we pray, 'They will be done?' and now it is done."

Phebe gave of her substance. She made a monthly contribution of fifty cents to missions, and bequeathed her little all, remaining after her decease, to the cause of Christ.

Phebe prayed for the college. The officers and students she bore on her heart to God. She always manifested a deep interest in the annual concert of prayer for colleges. At this concert, in the year 1834, a six o'clock morning prayer-meeting was appointed. When the pastor came, he found that Phebe had been there, *on the door-steps, more than an hour praying!* While it was yet dark, she found her way to the prayer-meeting, as Mary to the sepulchre. Who can tell how many souls were converted in answer to the prayers on that door-step—how much they had to do with those conversions in college which occurred at this time, and the fruits of which may be seen in the ministers scattered abroad, preaching the gospel, gathering souls into the kingdom of Christ? Those seasons of revivals in college, have they no connection with the prayers of this humble saint, who lived to pray: lived in obscurity, and yet lived for the college, lived for the church, lived for the pastor, lived for the world?

Phebe loved the church and female prayer-meeting. Through the storm and wind and bad walking she would find her way to the place of prayer. In the female prayer-meeting, all loved to kneel when Phebe prayed. She approached the throne of grace as if her mind and heart were already there, and she had only to open her lips and the prayer of the heart ascended, in humility and faith and love. The last Sabbath she spent on earth she was at church as usual, and stopped at noon, and was conversing on the value and importance of this meeting. She then alluded to a time, about four years since, when "she could not hold her peace." About this time Phebe seemed more fully than ever before to receive Christ as an all-sufficient, present Saviour. The blessings of his salvation seemed as much her own as if she alone was heir to the redemption purchased by Christ. She "knew in whom she be-

lieved" and that "he was able to make all grace abound toward her." Grace was triumphant in her soul, and so continued, by her own testimony given at her last interview with her Christian friends. From this time, as she often expressed it, "she had never let her Saviour go;" "she had held him by the hand," nay more, "he had come into her heart, and continued to abide with her." "Satan is busy with me," she would sometimes say, "but my Lord is stronger than he." "My little house," said she, "this winter has become a *palace*: while sweeping my room to-day, I thought, I must sweep softly, for He was here, my Lord and King."

Phebe was *humble*. Her humility drew all hearts toward her. All the attention she received did not cause her for a moment to step aside from her own humble path, in which she continued to walk, doing her own work, or rather the Lord's, in her own humble, quiet way. She rarely, if ever, spoke first, yet was always ready to respond heartily to the greetings of her brethren and sisters in Christ. She literally and truly sought out the *lowest seat*. Down by the door at the evening meeting sat Phebe with her head bowed, neither seeing nor wishing to be seen. Being urged to come up nearer, as she had often been before, it was said to her, "What will you do, Phebe, when you get to heaven?" "My Master will tell me where to sit," she answered. There was a peculiar lowly attitude of spirit and manner which sat on her with a natural grace and beauty, that cannot be described.

Phebe had *no fear of death*. She died as suddenly as her mistress, and now lies by her side in the Pine-grove cemetery, where lie so many of the loved and honored. She had often expressed a desire to be placed at her mistress' feet. As she was expecting to die *suddenly* and *alone*, she had given the signal to her nearest neighbor, that when she saw no smoke from her chimney in the morning, she would know that she was gone. "When you hear I am gone home," said she to the writer of this the Sabbath before she died, "praise the Lord." "I

shall go soon, very soon. If to-morrow you hear I am gone home to heaven, rejoice and give thanks, and remember, it is well with me." "Jesus, lover of my soul," she repeated at this, our last Sabbath interview; "yes, lover, lover, lover! How can I better express it? 'Jesus, lover of my soul!'"

A few hours only before she was called away, she came to look on the wife of her pastor, then sleeping her last sleep, from which she was to awake only in heaven. As Phebe was standing and looking earnestly and, as it was believed, wishfully on that near approach to heaven, she was asked, "Phebe, don't you wish you were going home so soon?" "Yes, indeed I do," was her emphatic answer. "Are you not unwilling to be there alone in your house, when you may be taken sick at any time?" She replied, with solemn earnestness, "I am not alone; my Saviour is with me: he is my keeper, my shepherd, my all—my all in all!"

The next morning Phebe's body was found in her bed, cold and lifeless; her eyes calmly closed, the mouth shut, her hands placed by her side, her candle burnt out, her Testament and spectacles by the bedside, the door of her house unbolting; no smoke ascended from her cottage, and Phebe was not—God took her.

"Who now will pray for us?" said one; "Phebe is gone." "We have lost Phebe's prayers," said another; "what a loss!" Again, "Phebe has been praying for us all these thirty years; and now we feel that God has made a great breach upon us." Said another, "Yes, we have lost, but *heaven* has gained. Who will sing the Saviour's praises louder, sweeter, than Phebe?"

The Sabbath following, at the close of the afternoon services, her remains were brought to the house of God. A large assembly were collected from all the congregations of the village. The pastor, Rev. Dr. Adams, though in deep affliction, his companion lying dead, to be buried on the morrow, could not refuse to be present: a highly valued member of his church had been taken from him;

one on whose prayers he depended, whose encouraging words had often given him new strength; one who was a living witness of the truths he preached; an example to believers: yes, the pastor, though in tears, was present to read the hymns, to offer the prayer, to read the Scriptures, to address the assembly, to bear a testimony, a full and emphatic testimony to the worth of Phebe. His trying position and touching address; the sympathy of his flock with him; the loss to us of his companion, a woman greatly respected and beloved; and the loss of Phebe, made this occasion one of peculiar tenderness and solemnity. Slowly and sweetly sounded forth the organ's notes on that day, as if a weeping angel touched the strings; there was sadness and beauty in the strains.

The wife of the pastor died the same night with Phebe, and perhaps at the same hour of the night. We may think of them as ascending together to the mansions of the blessed. To *die with Phebe* was a privilege; and the pastor remarked on this occasion, that if his wife had been permitted to choose a companion to accompany her through the "dark valley," and into the open portals of heaven, she would have chosen Phebe. She was heard to say, "I am perfectly happy; Christ is sufficient for all my necessities; I never supposed I could enjoy so much: there is no one on earth I would exchange places with but Phebe."

At the funeral of Phebe there was no relative, no kindred of the flesh. Those following nearest her remains were President Allen and daughters, who, informed by telegraph, had come nearly two hundred miles to testify their respect and affection for the deceased. Her remains were borne out from the church and accompanied to the grave by officers of the college and others, who might have been chosen for this purpose had the most honored and most beloved among us fallen. A long procession followed her remains and gathered around her grave.

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