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Eulogy for Mary Marshall

December 25th. 1832

This day of joy and festivity to the whole Christian world is, to my sad heart, the anniversary of the keenest affliction which humanity can sustain. While all around is gladness, my mind dwells on the silent tomb, and cherishes the remembrance of the beloved object it contains.

On the 25th. of December 1831, it was the will of Heaven to take to itself the companion who had sweetened the choicest part of my life, had rendered toil a pleasure, had partaken of all my feelings, and was enthroned in the inmost recess of my heart. Never can I cease to feel the loss and to deplore it. Grief for her is too sacred ever to be profaned on this day which shall be during my existence, devoted to her memory.

On the 3d. of January 1783 I was united by the holiest bands to the woman I adored. From the hour of our union to that of our separation, I never ceased to thank heaven for this its best gift. Not a moment passed in which I did not consider her as a blessing from which the chief happiness of my life was derived. This never dying sentiment, originating in love, was cherished by a long and close observation of as amiable and estimable qualities as ever adorned the female bosom.

To a person which, in youth, was very attractive; to manners uncommonly pleasing, she added a fine understanding, and the sweetest temper which can accompany a just and modest sense of was due to herself.

I saw her first the week she attained the age of fourteen, and was greatly pleased with her. Girls then came into company much earlier than at present. As my attentions though without any avowed purpose, nor so open or direct as to alarm, soon

became ardent and assiduous, her heart received an impression which could never be effaced.

Having felt no prior attachment, she became, at sixteen, a most devoted wife. All my faults, and they were too many, could never weaken this sentiment. It formed a part of her existence.

Her judgement was so sound and so safe, that I have often relied upon it in situations of some perplexity. I do not recollect ever to have regretted the adoption of her opinion. I have sometimes regretted its rejection. From native timidity, she was opposed to every thing adventurous; yet few females possessed more real firmness. That timidity so influenced her manners, that I could rarely prevail on her to display in company the talents I knew her to possess. They were reserved for her husband and her select friends. Though serious as well as gentle in her deportment, she possessed a good deal of chaste delicate and playful wit; and if she permitted herself to indulge this talent, told her little story with grace, and could mimic very successfully the peculiarities of the person who was its subject. She had a fine taste for belle lettre reading, which was judiciously applied in the selection of pieces she admired.

This quality by improving her talents for conversation, contributed, not inconsiderably, to make her a most desirable and agreeable companion. It beguiled many of those winter evenings during which her protracted ill health, and her feeble nervous system, confined us entirely to each other. I can never cease to look back on them with deep interest and regret. Time has not diminished; and will not diminish this interest or this regret.

In all the relations of life she was a model which those to whom it was given, cannot imitate too closely. As the wife, the mother, the mistress of a family, and the friend, her life furnished an example to those who could observe it intimately which will not be forgotten. She felt deeply the distress of others, and indulged the feeling liberally on objects she believed to be meritorious.

She was educated with a profound reverence for religion, which she preserved to her last moment. This sentiment, among her earliest and deepest impressions, gave a colour to her whole life. Hers was the religion taught by the Saviour of man.

Cheerful, mild, benevolent, serious, humane, intent on self improvement, and on the improvement of those who looked to her for precept or example. She was a firm believer in the faith inculcated by the church in which she was bred; but her soft and gentle temper was incapable of adopting the gloomy and austere dogmas which some of its professors have sought to engraft on it.

I have lost her! And with her I have lost the solace of my life! Yet she remains still the companion of my retired hours;— still occupies my inmost bosom.

When alone and unemployed, my mind unceasingly recurs to her. More than a thousand times since the 25th of December 1831, have I repeated to myself the beautiful lines written by General Burgoyne under a similar affliction, substituting Mary for Anna.

Encompassed in an Angels frame
An angels virtues lay;
Too soon did Heaven assert its claim,
And take its own away.

My Mary's worth my Mary's charms
Can never more return,
What now shall fill these widowed arms?
Ah me! my Mary's Urn;
Ah me! Ah me! my Mary's Urn!!!