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The Victim of Seduction. . . . The Life and Untimely  
Fate of Miss Harriet Wilson [ tp. vignette a woman ].  
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THE VICTIM OF SEDUCTION!  
SOME INTERESTING PARTICULARS  
OF THE  
LIFE AND UNTIMELY FATE  
OF

Miss Harriot Wilson,

Who was publicly executed in the State of Pennsylvania in the year 1802, for the Murder of her Infant Child.

—ANNEXED—

Is an account of her Penitence and becoming behaviour while under the awful sentence of Death.

"THERE IS NO KING TRUE BUT HEAVEN!"



BOSTON—Printed for J. WILKEY—Price 6 cents.

1702

**LIFE OF THE**

**HARRIOT WILSON, &c.**

**THE** retribution of virtue and vice does not always follow on this side of eternity. If the wise dispensations of omniscient Providence exceed the comprehension of human weakness, let us not impiously arraign the regulations of that Being, whose ways are as just as they are inscrutable. While we suffer from these misfortunes, to which our own imprudence, or the vicissitudes of unstable mortality subject us, let us humble ourselves to Him before whom the evanescent shadows of beauty, grandeur and power are equal, and acknowledge the truth of these assertions, while we peruse the following:

**HARRIOT WILSON** was born in 1784, in the town of Lebanon, Dauphin county, Pennsylvania, of creditable parents. She was early educated with the

utmost tenderness, and every possible care was taken to impress on her mind sentiments of virtue and religion. She was of a sprightly and affable disposition, polite in manners and engaging in conversation—in a word, she in early age exceeded most of her sex in many of those accomplishments, which are calculated to grace and dignify the female mind.

At the age of eighteen, Miss Wilson unfortunately became acquainted with a young man by the name of Smith, a native of Philadelphia, who, although there was nothing very attractive in his person, succeeded in ingratiating himself into the affections of this innocent and unsuspecting young lady. Her parents, aware of the impropriety of their daughter's forming too hastily an attachment for one who was yet to them a stranger, gave her that advice which had it been strictly adhered to, would have preserved her innocent, and prevented the commission of a crime, which brought their grey hairs in sorrow to the grave, and their daughter to a shameful death.

Not until the credulous and unsuspecting Harriet had surrendered to her vile seducer (by the repeated and solemn promises of marriage) all that could render her respectable in the eyes of the world was it discovered that the vile author of her ruin was already a married man! and that his protestations of love and promises of marriage were without a shadow of sincerity—a wicked device made use of only to enable him to effect the ruin of an innocent girl.

This poor deluded female now too late saw her

imprudences in listening to the false vows of her vile seducer—to devise means that would enable her to avoid the disgrace that her imprudent connexion was likely to produce, appears now to have been her principal object—and, shocking to relate, she finally formed the determination to put a period to the existence of one whom by the laws of nature she was bound to cherish and protect, at the very moment that it was ushered into being ! and unfortunately for her, this diabolical plan she carried into effect.

The body of her new born infant was found secreted in a neighboring grove—the unfortunate Harriot was suspected and charged with being the perpetrator of the unnatural deed—on her examination circumstances appearing against her, she was committed for trial. Such was the respectability of the unfortunate prisoner's parents and connections, and such the sensibility cherished by all with whom she had been acquainted, that on the day of her trial, the court room was early filled with more than it could conveniently contain. The trial lasted eleven hours, when the judge summed up the evidence with the utmost candour, but so strong were many circumstances against her, that the jury being fully convinced of the commission of the fact, found her guilty.

During her whole trial the unhappy prisoner exhibited an uncommon degree of fortitude, and seemed more to lament the misfortunes of her wretched parents and brother, on whom she had brought dis-

grace than her own fate. During her confinement in prison, before and after her condemnation, she was visited by many of the clergy and other respectable persons who were much interested in her behalf, in consequence of her former uniform and admirable behaviour. She exhibited many proofs of penitence, and employed almost the whole of her time after her condemnation in prayer, and in perusing the sacred scriptures. She intreated such of her young female friends who visited her while in prison, to take warning of her fate, and to be ever on their guard against the intrigues and seducing arts of the other sex.

There were very great exertions made by several of the most distinguished characters in the county to obtain a pardon for this unfortunate female—but without success. She had an only brother, whose grief for the wretched fate of his beloved sister, bordered almost on distraction—he too was unremitting in his exertions to save her from an ignominious death, and was too unsuccessful until the very day appointed for her execution—but alas, as if doomed by Heaven to suffer thus ignominiously, he did not arrive in season with the pardon to prevent the execution of the law.

The day of her execution arriving, by her request a suitable prayer was made by the Rev. D. White in her apartment, and the sacrament administered—the parting between her and her aged and afflicted parents, and many of those with whom she had been

most intimately acquainted was affecting beyond description. At half past 10 A. M. accompanied by several of the clergy, she was conveyed to the gallows, she having taken an affectionate and farewell leave of her friends, and rather appeared disposed to impart to their comfort than to repine in consequence of her own unhappy fate—when ascending the platform, and after the fatal cord had been affixed, her countenance displayed a serenity that appeared more than human, and when she gave the signal, there was a recollected gracefulness and sublimity in her manner that struck every heart, and is above words or ideas. After she had been suspended nearly a minute, her hands were twice evenly and gently raised, and gradually let to fall without the least appearance of convulsive or involuntary motion, in a manner which could hardly be mistaken, when interpreted, as designed to signify consent and resignation. At all events independently of this circumstance, which was noticed by many, her whole conduct evidently showed, from this temper of mind, a composed, and even cheerful submission to the views and will of heaven; a modest unaffected submission entirely becoming her age, her sex and situation.

In less than five minutes after the fall of the fatal drop, her brother arrived with a pardon, with the Governor's signature affixed.—To attempt to describe the horror depicted in his countenance, and his agonized feelings on discovering that he had arrived

too late to save his beloved and unfortunate sister, would be a task which we have not the ability to perform. Overcome by the shocking circumstances he swooned, and was conveyed insensibly to the habitation of his afflicted parents. A letter directed to this unfortunate brother was deposited by his wretched sister in the hands of one of the Rev. Divines who attended her, to be delivered to him as soon as he should return, of which the following is a copy :

“ My dear Brother,

“ As the awful moment has nearly arrived, in which the dreadful sentence of the law is to be executed upon me, I am confident that we shall meet no more in this world—your failure to return yesterday at the hour you appointed, satisfies me that you have again been unsuccessful in your application, for a pardon, and that you wish to be as far distant as possible from the distressing scene, which a numerous throng of un pitying spectators are already collected to witness. My dear brother, I am happy to inform you that I am prepared to meet my fate, and shall die penitent, and in peace with the world. I trust that I have made my peace with my God, in whose presence I must shortly appear. My dear brother, the most that I now suffer is from the consciousness of the disgrace and misery that I have brought on you and my dear afflicted Parents!—O, may you endeavor all in your power to comfort them, and to satisfy them that it is the will of the Almighty, and that their heavy afflictions in the decline of



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life may prove for their spiritual good. My dear brother, my last request is, that you cherish religion, and that you hereafter try in every way to promote it among your relatives and friends—it is this that will enable me to meet my fate with fortitude and resignation. I never thought, in the former part of my life, that it was possible for me to be so weaned from earth, and my dear relations, and that I could have been so content to go down to the chambers of the grave! considerations of eternity, my dear brother will restrain your fondness for the vain amusements of this life; it will satisfy you of the importance of adorning religion by a holy, exemplary and blameless walk and conversation—it is in eternity my dear brother that we must expect again to meet, and O, it is and has been my constant prayer in prison that we may all meet there in happiness—until then I must bid you an affectionate farewell

“HARRIOT WILSON.”

Thus fell an early victim to the seductive arts of a unprincipled villain, the unfortunate, and once beloved HARRIOT WILSON.

The heart not totally blunted to the sensibilities, of humanity, must be so lacerated at the recital of this “tale of woe,” as to have all other feelings extinguished, but those of abhorrence for the seducer, and pity for the unfortunate victim of his arts.—To behold a female, who as it were but yesterday, was in all the bloom of loveliness—charming as a cloudless vernal morning—lovely as youth, beauty and innocence could make her—deoted on by her parents and

brother, and idolized by all her acquaintance. Now, as an offender of the blackest cast expiring on the gibbet, to appease violated justice, and a public warning against future crimes, must call forth the tears of sensibility, and awake the pity of benevolence.

In this sublunary world, properly called "the vale of tears," calamities assail us on all sides; wherever we turn our eyes, human misery is presented to the view in all her dark and imposing attitudes, and the hideous form of vice stalks uncontrolled, in whatever clime we range. Man, who was originally created in the form of his Maker, and once lived in innocence, peace, security and happiness, is now, for having disobeyed the mandates of the Almighty, fallen from that blessed state, and is now surrounded with all the evils and dangers attendant on sin and misery. Satan like a roaring lion ranges about seeking whom he may devour, and man preys upon his fellow man: often do we see the wicked rolling in riches and honors, while poor depressed merit is too often abandoned to poverty and scorn.

But my present intention is to confine my remarks to the horrid vice of seduction, and of the dreadful consequences arising therefrom.

The tenderness and sensibility that prevails in the minds of females, subjects them to many temptations and dangers from which men are in a manner exempt. Their weakness and dependant state, places their reputation on a foundation so slender, that the smallest breath of wind will overturn, and the

slightest touch indelibly tarnish. While lordly man can sin with impunity, and his most indecent deviations from modesty and virtue, set down as trifling indiscretions, and offences, the more he sins, the more he is caressed. He can without any scandal to himself seduce the innocent virgin from the paths of virtue, while the unfortunate victim of his arts is expelled from society, and doomed either to end her days in a brothel among the most depraved, or be made a sacrifice on the altar of justice.

The family of the unfortunate subjects of these pages was a happy one until the intrusion of the vile seducer, when the unfortunate Harriot, the victim of his wicked arts was the hope and joy of her aged parents; but in an unsuspecting moment, their hopes were blasted forever—their grey hairs were brought in sorrow to the grave! a doating and only brother was thereby driven into a state of retirement, and during the remainder of his days lived a recluse from the society of man.

My fair readers— You see by the foregoing pages the gradation of evils attendant on a departure from that dignified modesty which renders you respected and loved by the good and the worthy of the other sex. A chaste and virtuous woman sits exalted on the pinnacle of excellence, giving rational happiness and pleasure to all within the circle of her acquaintance: as a sister, she possesses the warmest affections of her brothers, and the value set upon her reputation, very often prevents them from the commission of acts of folly which precede the depravity

of vice ; and as a daughter, the joy of her parents, and the sweet smoother of the path down the vale of life from time to eternity.

But mark the contrast—I am now to depict man in her state of depravity—which I do with reluctance. View the scenes of dissipation, and the closing resort upon earth of those misguided females, who, too credulous, lost all that rendered them dear to society, by not hearkening to the suggestions of the inward monitor—Turn your attention to those houses of debauchery, where Vice rules triumphant, and on whom poor mourning Virtue sheds a tear of pity—see what was once beautiful, now sunk into a state of the lowest human degradation ! Behold at last her final exit ; an ignominious death on the gallows closes the painful scene !

