

MS Death of Melusina Hotham¹

Lady Gertrude (Stanhope) Hotham (1696–1775), widow of Sir Charles Hotham (1693–1738), 5th Baronet of Scarborough, was a Methodist sympathizer and friend of Charles Wesley’s family, including Charles in her will. He in turn marked her death with an epitaph.²

On December 17, 1764, Lady Hotham lost her youngest surviving daughter, Melusina Hotham (1734–64).³ Wesley always referred to Melusina “Miss Melly.”⁴ Among his surviving manuscripts is a single sheet of paper that Wesley labeled “Miss Melly’s last words / Dec. 1764” (MARC, DDCW 6/79b). On one side of this sheet Wesley transcribed her words:

Oh how precious is his blood in my sight. Whom the Son maketh free shall be free indeed.
Nothing but sin I thee can give, but ’tis thy way free to forgive.
I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ.

On the reverse side of the sheet Wesley recorded in shorthand a hymn based on this dying testimony. Sometime later he wrote out a somewhat revised longhand version of this hymn which came into the hands of Frank Baker; was gifted to the World Methodist Museum at Lake Junaluska, North Carolina; and now is held at the Bridwell Library, Southern Methodist University.⁵

The first transcription below is an expansion of the shorthand original, with permission of the Librarian and Director, The John Rylands Library, The University of Manchester. It is followed by a transcription of the longhand version held by Bridwell, presented with permission.

¹This document was produced by the Duke Center for Studies in the Wesleyan Tradition under the editorial direction of Randy L. Maddox, with the diligent assistance of Aileen F. Maddox. Last updated: January 10, 2025.

²See CW’s epitaph for her in *AM* 2 (1779): 545; and MS Funeral Hymns (1756–87), 78.

³The date of Melusina’s death was listed when her will was proved in early Jan. 1765.

⁴See, for example CW to Sarah (Gwynne) Wesley, Feb. 15, 1759.

⁵The longhand version was published posthumously in *Unpublished Poetry*, 3:363–65.

[Shorthand Original]

1. [[Worthy is the slaughter'd Lamb
Praise and glory to receive!¹
Who for us the world o'recame,
Doth to us the victory give.
Grace and goodness infinite
He hath to a sinner shown,
Numb'red with the saints in light,
Caught her up to share his throne.]]
2. [[Yielding to an early call,
Him she oft on earth pursued,
Willing made to give up all,
Sighed² to feel th' atoning blood,
Tasted sure the word of grace,
Earnest of celestial joys,
{ltn?} sat in Mary's place,
Longed to hear the Bridegroom's voice.]]
3. [[But she soon unfaithful proved,
Forfeited her joy and peace,
Far from Jesu's feet removed
Wand'ring o're the wilderness
To the toys of earth inclined,
To the world, her Saviour's foe:
Yet, unb[elievabl?]ly kind
Love refus'd to let her go.]]
4. [[Jesus sent his messenger,
(Bent his purchase to regain,)
Kindest when he seemed severe,
Hedg'd her round with sacred pain:³
Then her troubled soul awoke,
Then she heard th' appointed rod,
Sunk beneath his mercy's stroke,
All renounc'd, to find her God.]]
5. [[All her h[appiness] below,
Pleasure, wealth, and power, and praise,
Willingly she let them go
All her works and righteousness.
Stripp'd of all and truly poor,

¹There is very little punctuation in the shorthand original. We adapt the punctuation of the longhand version. We also adopt CW's typical elision of letters to insure the proper meter for the hymn.

²The shorthand is {sd + ed} by CW rendered it "sighed" in the longhand version

³CW placed a mark at the end of this line, replicated at the beginning of stanza 7, indicating the move of the opening of stanza 7 up to the end of stanza 4 (as in the longhand version).

Only sin she called her own,
Weeping lay at mercy's door,
Languishing for Christ alone.]]

6. [[Of the dreadful king was seen,
Justly by the guilty fear'd,
But the friend of sinful men
Always with his foe appear'd:
Both she saw approaching fast,
Ready to resign her breath,
But she gladly own'd at last
Love had quicker wings than death!]]⁴

7 While she frowardly went on
He her b[roken] r[eeds] remov'd
Brought by pining sickness down
Chasten'd whom he dearly lov'd.
Shaking the weak house of clay,
Blasting every earthly hope,
Sickness tore her strength away,
Forc'd the fugitive to stop.]]

8. [[O how precious is his blood
In a dying sinner's eyes!
Purchas'd by the Son of God
Free indeed in Christ I rise.
I was all as sin(?) alone
Know thou freely dost forgive.
Take me then thine purchas'd ward,
Let me die with thee to live.]]⁵

[a revised version of st. 8 appears on other side of page]

8. [[O how precious is his blood
In a dying sinner's eyes!
Ransom'd by the Son of God
Free indeed in Christ I rise
Only sin I call my own
But thou freely dost forgive.
Take me then thy ransomed one,
Let me die with Christ to live.]]

⁴This line is shown as a quotation in the longhand version; cf. st. 3 of CW's second hymn "For a Sick Friend in Darkness," *HSP* (1749), 67.

⁵Stanza 8 is presented as a quotation in the longhand version—i.e., as CW's poetic rendering of Melusina's last words.

[Longhand Version]

1. ⟨Worthy i⟩s the slaughter'd Lamb¹
 ⟨Prais⟩e and blessing to receive!
 ⟨Who for⟩ us the world o'recame,
 Doth the grace victorious give:²
 Grace and goodness infinite
 He hath to a sinner shown,
 Numb'red with the saints in light,
 Caught her up to share his throne.

2. Yielding to an early call,
 Him she oft on earth pursued,
 Willing made to give up all,
 Sigh'd to feel th' atoning blood,
 Tasted the good word of grace,
 Earnest of celestial joys,
 Sat in humble Mary's place,
 Long'd to hear the Bridegroom's voice.

3. But she soon unfaithful prov'd,
 Forfeited her joy and peace,
 Far from her Redeemer rov'd³
 O're the barren wilderness;⁴
 To the things⁵ of earth inclin'd,
 To the world, her Saviour's foe:
 Yet, unconquerably kind
 LOVE refus'd to let her go.

4. Jesus sent a⁶ messenger,
 (Bent his purchase to regain,)
 Kindest when he seem'd severe,
 Hedg'd her round with sacred pain:

¹The top left corner of the sheet is torn away, affecting three lines on each side of the sheet. The missing text is supplied from the shorthand original.

²Ori., "to us the victory" [as in shorthand] changed to "the grace victorious."

³Ori., "Jesus feet remov'd" [as in shorthand] changed to "her Redeemer rov'd."

⁴Ori., "Wandering o're the wilderness" [as in shorthand] changed to "O're the barren wilderness."

⁵Ori., "toys." [as in shorthand]

⁶Ori., "his." [as in shorthand]

While she frowardly r(ov'd on)
He her broken reeds r(emov'd)
Brought by pining⁷ sickness <down>
Chasten'd whom he dearly lo(v'd).⁸

5. Shaking the weak house of clay,
Blasting every earthly hope,
Sickness tore her strength away,
Forc'd the fugitive to stop:⁹
Then her troubled soul awoke,
Then she heard th' appointed rod,
Sunk beneath his mercy's stroke,
All renounc'd, to find her God.¹⁰
- 6.¹¹ All her happiness below,
Pleasure, wealth, and power, and praise,
Now she doth for Christ forego;
All her works, and righteousness:
Stript and blind¹² and truly poor,
Only sin she calls her own,
Weeping lies at Mercy's door,
Languishing for Christ alone.
- 7.¹³ Oft the dreadful king was seen,
Justly by the guilty fear'd,
But the Friend of sinful men
Always with his foe appear'd:
Both she saw approaching fast,
Ready to resign her breath,
But she gladly own'd at last
"LOVE has quicker wings than Death!"¹⁴
- 8.¹⁵ "O how pretious is his blood
"In a dying sinner's eyes!
Ransom'd [...]."¹⁶

⁷Ori., "~~her strength by~~" changed to "by pining" [as in shorthand]

⁸These four lines were the opening of st. 7 in the shorthand original.

⁹These four lines appeared at the end of st. 7 in the shorthand original.

¹⁰The closing four lines of this stanza appeared at the end of st. 4 in the shorthand original.

¹¹This was st. 5 in the shorthand original.

¹²Ori., "~~of all~~," [as in shorthand] changed to "and blind."

¹³This was st. 6 in the shorthand original.

¹⁴CW is quoting his second hymn "For a Sick Friend in Darkness," st. 3, *HSP* (1749), 67.

¹⁵Stanza 8 is presented as a quotation—i.e., as CW's poetic rendering of Melusina's last words.

¹⁶"Ransom'd" appears in the bottom right-hand corner of the page, indicating the first word of the continuing stanza on the (missing) next page. See the revised shorthand version of st. 8 above.