

Biography of Catharine Brown,

A Christian Indian, of the
Cherokee Nation.

No 37

There is a charm thrown around the character of the Aborigines of our western wilds which has not failed to arrest the attention of those who love to study human nature in all its various lights & shades. In them we admire the hardihood of the intrepid warrior, ardent patriotism & above all that firm & unyielding integrity which was the boast of ancient Rome. But after all they are savages. Like all other nations destitute of the light & benign influence of the gospel, although they may possess many admirable & noble qualities, still their virtues lean to vice's side. Unwavering & steady in their gratitude to their friends, their hatred to their enemies knows no bounds & their character is debased & degraded by all those vices which are the concomitants of ignorance & barbarity. To the amelioration of the situation of these children of the forest the attention of the christians of America was drawn at an early day & many are the trophies which have been won ^{from among them} to the cross of Christ & have adorned their christian profession. Such men as Elliot & Brainerd were not suffered to labour in vain. And although we have not detailed accounts of the character of their converts we have the satisfaction of knowing that they walked worthy of the high vocation wherewith they were called. In later times the labours of

The people of God have been no less signally blest & the following narrative is on record as a standing monument of the power of God & the efficacy of his word in enlightening the darkened understanding & as an encouragement to us to exert ourselves in this great cause. — Catharine Brown, the subject of this narrative, was born about the year 1800. The place of her nativity was a beautiful plain, covered with tall forest trees, in a part of the country belonging to the Cherokee Indians, which is situated within the chartered limits of the state of Alabama. The place is known amongst the natives by the name of *Yau-sath-ga-sah* or "the ruins of a great city" although no such ruins at present exist. The Indian name of Catharine's father was *Yau-nu-gung-yah-ski* i. e. "the crowned of a bear" but the whites called him John Brown; her mother's name was *Ua-uh* or Sarah. Neither of Catharine's parents understood the English. Mr Brown is represented as possessing a mind more than commonly discerning; yet as having, when the missionaries first saw him, few ideas on the subject of religion. He believed in a Supreme Being, the author of creation & that there is a state of rewards & punishments after death but knew not how the one was to be obtained or the other avoided. He had no idea of forgiveness of sin on any terms & when it was told him, said he never heard of these things before. Yet ignorant as he was he belonged to the most intelligent class of people. Till within a few years the Cherokees had scarcely begun to feel an impulse towards civilization. As a nation

They were almost entirely destitute of the means of intellectual or moral culture. In 1801 a Moravian mission was established at Spring-place, & one or two excellent men have since that period, resided there. But their means being limited, their influence could not be extensive. Exertions were also made by the Rev. Gideon Blackburn, subsequent to 1803 for the support of a school among the Cherokeees. Excepting these efforts, there was, untill the year 1816 nothing done by the Christian church, nothing by the civilized world, for the Cherokeees. They inhabited a country which is represented as susceptible of the highest cultivation. But most imperfect was their agriculture. They possessed a language, which is said to be more precise & powerful than many into which learning has poured the riches of thought, or genius breathed the enchantments of fancy & eloquence. But they had no literature. The fountains of knowledge were unopened. After these statements we can readily credit what is said respecting Catherine's intellectual condition, when she first came under the care of the missionaries. It is pleasing to know that her moral character was ever irreproachable. This is remarkable, considering the looseness of manners then prevalent among the females of her nation & the many temptations to which she was exposed, especially when, during the Creek war, the American army was stationed near her father's house. A strong sense of character influenced her resolutions even when in a state of heathenism. Early in the autumn of 1816, a missionary arrived from the Americans

Board of Com. for For. Missions & established (with the consent of the great Council of the nation) a school at Chickamauga, (since called Brainerd) Rev. Cyrus Kingsbury was the first Missionary & soon after Messrs. Moody Hall & Loring S. Williams arrived as assistants. Information of these proceedings soon spread through the nation. It came to the ears of Catherine, then living at the distance of over 100 miles, & excited in her a desire to attend the school. She brought her parents to send her & they granted her request. On the 7th of July 1817 she became a member of the missionary school at Brainerd, being then about 17 or 18 years of age. - Thus was Catherine brought for the first time within the sphere of Christian instruction. Even then she was an interesting girl; her complexion blooming; her person erect & of the middle stature; her manners easy & her whole appearance prepossessing. It was evident, however that with all her apparent modesty she had an high opinion of herself & was fond of displaying her ornaments which she had in great profusion. Some time before this when residing at the house of a Cherokee friend she had learnt to converse in English, on common subjects, & to read words of one syllable. These acquirements were of no particular use to her at the time, but are to be noticed with gratitude to God, as the probable, though remote means of her coming to a knowledge of the truth, by exciting in her wishes which could be gratified only at Brainerd. Her teachers declare, that, from her first admission to the school, she was attentive to learning, & ac-

markedly correct in her deportment. From reading words of one syllable she was able, in 60 days to read the bible intelligibly & in 80 days could read as well as most persons of common education. In a very short time too she could use the pen with neatness & accuracy. — From the testimony of various persons it appears that when she entered the school her knowledge on religious subjects was exceedingly vague & defective. She supposed God to be a great being existing some where in the sky. Her ideas as to a future state were quite undefined. She knew nothing of the Saviour supposed the Cherokees to be quite a distinct race from the whites & therefore unconcerned with their religion, & it was a long time before she could be induced to believe that Jesus died for the Indian. She observed after her conversion, that she was at first afraid to converse about religion, as she thought that Christians could have no pleasure in this world & that it would make her too unhappy. And this is indeed an error by no means peculiar to her, but is common to all the unregenerate. But how much her sentiments were changed on this subject will abundantly be seen. — Catharina had been at the school but a very few months, before divine truth began to operate on her mind; this was manifested by an increased desire to become acquainted with the Christian religion & greater tenderness of spirit. She did not seem to be greatly influenced by a fear of the punishment threatened against sin, but the chief object of her solicitude was, to know & do the will of God. She sought the kingdom of heaven with

great earnestness, spent much time in reading the scriptures, singing & prayer & was often affected to tears. In December 1817 she indulged a hope of pardon & acceptance through the Lord Jesus Christ. It is no small proof of the practical tendency of her religion that she very soon, of her own accord, began to pray with her associates & endeavour to instruct those around her. Her desires for the salvation of her people were now strong & ardent; for them she wept & prayed in secret places & in the female prayer meetings. Amongst the rest the case of her brother David was peculiarly interesting. Having retired, one morning into the woods, she became so much interested & earnest in importuning the Saviour, in his behalf, that she did not cease until near sunset. After her brother became pious, she mentioned this circumstance to a female friend & said she wished to remember it with gratitude. Nor were these ^{momentary} transports of a warm imagination, but she ever after continued to show by ^{her} life that she had been with Jesus & had learned of him. At the commencement of the year 1818 an event occurred, which tended to show how much Catharine valued the privileges which she enjoyed at Brainerd. Her father came to take her from the school, intending to remove beyond the mountains. The prospect of separating was equally painful to the young convert & to the missionaries, who regarded her as the first fruits of their labours & loved her as well on that account as for her amiable & pious conduct. "Perhaps, said her teacher

the Lord is taking her from us that she may be more useful
in some other place & this really was the consequence of her
brief separation from them. She desired to be admitted into the visi-
ble church of Christ, by the holy ordinance of baptism, & as no reason-
able doubts could be entertained of her piety, this request was cheer-
fully granted. She was the first Indian baptized by the mission-
aries of the board. This event occurred about 8 months after the
opening of the school at Brainerd, since that time about
adult Cherokees have ^{received} the same ordinance. — The month of
February was spent by Catharine at her father's house, but
circumstances preventing the removal of her parents, she was
once more permitted to revisit the consecrated ground of the
mission. She had been closely questioned while at home by
some unreligious white people, with respect to her religion. They
endeavoured, but in vain to perplex her mind, by arguments
against the scriptures. But her parents were pleased that their
daughter had learned so many good things, & expressed a desire to be
instructed themselves. On her return she & seven other Chero-
kees, partook of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, & they declare
that they then enjoyed themselves more than they had ever before
thought possible. An extract from a letter of Jeremiah Ewatts,
Esq. will give us some interesting particulars in relation to her appearance &
Christian character at this time. "If you were to see her in a religious
meeting of pious females, you would not distinguish her, unless
by her more than common simplicity & humility." It is their
unanimous opinion that she gives uncommon

evidence of piety— At meetings for social prayer & religious improvement— Catharine prays, much to the edification of her sisters in Christ. One of her own accord commenced ^{evening} social prayer with the younger girls, just as they were retiring to rest, simply observing, when questioned on the subject, that she thought it her duty so to do.— Yet this young woman, whose conduct might now reprove many a professed Christian, who have been instructed in religion from their infancies, only 10 months ago, had never heard of Jesus Christ. On hearing that pious females, have in many instances devoted her ornaments to the missionary cause she determined to devote hers also.— The time fled rapidly away & brought the long expected much dreaded separation. We describe it in the words of those, who meet to the interesting sufferer, felt most. "The parents of Catharine Brown called on us to day. The old man, with tears in his eyes said, he must go over the ^{Mississippi} to pi. He expected to return from the agency in about 60 days & should then expect Catharine to go home & prepare to go with him to the Arkansas.— We requested him to leave his daughter with us a while,—to this he would not consent.— It is a great trial to think of sending our sister away with only one year's tuition; but we fear she must go."— The missionaries thus describe her removal. "We had a very affecting scene in the departure of our sister Catharine. Her father & mother stopped, for the purpose of taking her with them to the Arkansas. She knew that she needed more information to be prepared to go alone into the wilderness & entreated them to leave her with us a little longer. The

would not consent on any terms. The struggle was very severe. Never before had this precious convert had so severe a trial; & never, perhaps, did her graces shine so bright. She sought for nothing but to know her duty, & asked for a few minutes to be by herself undisturbed. She returned & said she would go. — a parting hymn was sung & a prayer offered up. With mingled emotions of joy & grief we commended her to the grace of God & they departed. — Precious babe in Christ! exclaimed the Missionary, a few months ago brought out of the dark wilderness; here illuminated by the word & Spirit of God & now to be sent back into the dark & chilling shades of the forest, without one fellow traveller with whom she can say "Our Father"! — Thus was she removed from a place endeared to her by some of the tenderest & most pleasing associations of her life; & she departed expecting to return no more. The Rev. Hoyt one of the missionaries, visited that part of the country & called at the house of Mr. Brown. He was received with the greatest cordiality by the whole family. Batharine said it had been very dark times with her since she left Brainerd. All around her were engaged for the riches & pleasures of the world & because she could not unite with them as formerly, they were telling her, they supposed she thought herself very good now &c. Her greatest fear was that she should be drawn away from the right path & be left to do like those around her. But our greatest blessings may spring from our severest trials, & so it was in this instance. Doubtless Batharine's faith & patience were strengthened by this. It led to the establishment of schools & preaching at breakpaths & to the conversion of all most

all
of her father's family. In May 1819, her father returned her to the mis-
sionaries, to remain with them until her education was completed. This
was quite unexpected & Catharine attributed it to the special in-
fluence of him who heareth prayer. In ^{Nov. of} the year 1819, we find David her
brother at the mission school, together with an other young Indian, J. ~~John~~
assisting the Rev. D. S. Buttrick in preparing a Cherokee spelling book.
He was soon brought under conviction, through her instrumentality in con-
nexion with that of the missionaries & early in the year 1820 pro-
fessed faith in Christ & has ever since been regarded as really pious.
Soon after this hearing that their father was ill, these young converts for-
saw their journey went to see him. Catharine says, "David seized his bible &
soon as he reached home, began to interpret to his father & mother
exhorting them to forsake their sins which were great & turn to the
Lord." The effects of this visit were great, on their return, the Chief men
in that part of the country sent a letter requesting the establishment
of a school amongst them, which was accordingly done. Mr. Buttrick to
charge of it. In a short time the number of scholars was so great
that the natives desired another. They said if a female would come to
instruct their daughters they would build a schoolhouse for her, &
the same time a spirit of deep seriousness & anxious inquiry be-
gan to prevail amongst them. These facts being known, Catha-
rine was advised to take charge of it, which she did, though not
without a painful diffidence of her disqualifications for the work.
When it was known at Creekpath, that she was to take charge of the school,
the most enthusiastic joy was occasioned among the people & in less than 20 days
the house was nearly completed according to their stipulation.

She spent the school with about 200 scholars, but the number soon increased, both mothers & daughters manifesting the greatest anxiety to learn. Whilst she continued there, ^(about 3/4 of a year) the spirit of inquiry on religion still spread & in a short time she had the pleasure of seeing a father, mother, brother & two or three sisters unitedly seeking Christ. All these have heretofore maintained their Christian character in an exemplary manner. On the arrival of Mr & Mrs Potter she surrendered her charge & commenced prosecuting higher studies, with a view to greater usefulness among her people. ^{which place they visited in February 1823.} After Batharine returned from Brainerd, she seems generally to have considered her removal from the world as not very distant, & to have spent much time in reflecting on death & its consequences. These subjects she not unfrequently made the topics of conversation. An instance of this kind is described by Mrs Potter. — Entering her room one evening at an early hour, I found she had retired with unusual debility. She requested me to read from some medical author, the symptoms of consumption. — She expressed a belief that she had that disease. I inquired what were her feelings in view of this conclusion. She replied with tears "I am not prepared to die." "You have a hope of happiness beyond the grave? Yes I have a hope resting on the promises of the Saviour: but I have been unfaithful!" We remained for some time silent. At length Batharine ~~scarcely~~ ^{scarcely} raised her voice & said "Sister P. how beautiful is this hymn; "Why should we start & fear to die" I inquired if she could adopt this as the language of her heart & she said with great meekness, that she hoped she could. It does not appear that after this her mind was again disturbed by apprehensions respecting her own future well being, yet for her

a friends she always evinced the tenderest solicitude. As she approach-
ed nearer to eternity, her faith evidently grew stronger, & she became more
& more able, cheerfully to resign not only herself, but her parents,
her friends, her people, her all into the disposal of the Lord. May,
the 10th she was reduced very low by an hemorrhage upon the lungs &
for a few days was viewed as upon the borders of the grave. She is
thus spoken of by Dr. Campbell, the physician who attended her;
"Religious confidence & tranquillity were at this time her sweet com-
panions. How happy she seemed in my view, so near the confines
of the eternal world, about to relinquish all earthly cares & sor-
rows, for the enjoyment of her Redeemer's presence". In order that
she might have regular medical attendance, she was removed to
the house of the friend just mentioned. Here she partially recov-
ered, but in a few months again relapsed. Early in June she was visi-
ted by her dear friend Mrs. P. This lady says "She then seemed to think she
might recover, but manifested no wish to recover, unless it might be
for the glory of God. She said, 'When I enjoy the presence of the Div-
ine I long to be gone'". While at Dr. C.'s I went to her bedside & said "Cath-
arine what shall I say to your brother for you?" After a short pause she
replied "if you will write, I will dictate a short letter". Then raising
herself in the bed, & wiping a tear that was falling from her eye, she
began to relate what God had done for her ^{while in} that sick bed. To my
partial eye, she was, at that time a most interesting spectacle.
Her countenance was softened by the affectionate remembrance of an
endeared brother, her cheek was a little flushed with the recollection of

speaking, her eye beamed with spiritual joy & an heavenly smile announced the whole scene." But the day of her departure was at hand, "Though every attention, ^{with} an unwearied kindness could bestow, was given her, & prayer was offered continually on her behalf, her Lord & Master was pleased to hasten her departure. ^{After P.} She had entered the last six weeks of her life, her descent towards the grave, was regular & unremitting. Dr. C. now thought it his duty to inform her parents & herself that her hopes, even of her partial recovery, were gone. Her father, after a silence of several minutes observed; "The Lord has been good to give me such a child & he has a right to take her when he thinks best. But though it is my duty to give her up, it is hard to part with her".

C. received the notice without manifesting any alarm & only requested the ^{to inform} Doctor how long she might probably live. As death advanced & the powers of nature gave way, she frequently offered her hand to the friends around her bed. Her mother & sister were weeping ^{over} ~~around~~ her, she looked steadily at the former, for a short time, filial love beaming from her eyes; & then, — she closed them in the sleep of death. She expired without a groan or a struggle. Those around scarcely knew that the vital spark had fled. Her age was about 23. Six years had elapsed since her first entering the school at Brainerd. She was then a heathen. But she became enlightened & sanctified through the instrumentality of the gospel, & her end was glorious. A neat monument of wood covers the grave where her mortal remains were deposited. A few more years & this will cease to mark the spot where she slumbers, yet shall her dust be precious in the eyes of the Lord & her virtues shall be told for a memorial of her. Much might be said of the attainments of this child of the forest, which could not fail to interest us even though she had known

of nothing of Christianity & were to serve only as a monument of the cap-
acity of the human mind for improvement; but we omit this & make
of a few remarks upon her christian character, in which she may
serve as an example to us. She never was immoral. Yet until she
came to Braintree she was not religious. But after that a revolution took
place in the general course & tenor of her life. In her habits of
the motion she was exemplary. Not only did she delight to be present
at the public assembly, not only did she delight to gather little
societies of her Cherokee friends for prayer, but she was constant
of earnest in her more private approaches to her Saviour. The law
of God was her delight & meditation all the day; the bible was
her constant companion. She not unfrequently spent whole days
in fasting & prayer. Her zeal was not an irregular wanescent
fire flame. It was permanent & always active. We have noticed how
faithful she was with respect to her own family. Nor was she
unmindful of the duties she owed to her people. Indeed their con-
version to God was her favourite object, to which she clung
with unyielding tenacity, down to the hour of her dissolution.

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The Spirit in her heart hath wrought
A holy work. — Patient she strives
By prayers, & by instructions, to arouse
Reflection in the hearts of those she styles
Her wretched people. Modest, tender, kind,
Her words & actions; every vain desire
Is laid obedient at the feet of Christ.

And now no more the gaiety she seeks
Of proud apparel; ornaments of gold
She gladly bars for the plain attire
Of meek & lowly spirits. —

Such was Catharine Brown. Such too were the changes wrought in
her heart, through the blessing of Almighty God on the labours of the
missionaries. Her expansion of mind, enlargement of views & unfeigned
benevolence are all to be traced, under God, to her intercourse with them.
Such are the fruits of the word of God when faithfully & perseveringly
administered. We have every reason to believe that the same effects
may through our feeble instrumentality, be produced in others, let us
then take courage & give ourselves to the work of them —

— "Shall the Indian & the negro,
And the rude barbarian see,
That divine & glorious conquest
Once obtained on Calvary;
Then the gospel
Shall rebound from pole to pole."