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M^{rs} Susanna Wesley.

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WOMEN OF METHODISM:

MEMOIRS OF

ITS THREE FOUNDRESSES,

SUSANNA WESLEY, THE COUNTESS OF HUNTINGDON,
AND BARBARA HECK :

WITH SKETCHES OF THEIR FEMALE ASSOCIATES AND SUCCESSORS
IN THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE DENOMINATION.

BY

ABEL STEVENS, LL.D.,

AUTHOR OF "THE HISTORY OF METHODISM."

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INTRODUCTORY PREFACE.

TO MRS. BISHOP HAMLINE AND

MISS FRANCES E. WILLARD.

LADIES: In submitting to you the volume which the "American Methodist Ladies' Centenary Association" has, through you, as their president and secretary, requested me to write, an apologetic remark is due to both the public and myself. A good authority has said that "no man can do anything thoroughly in literature or art unless he rides it as a hobby." Hobbyism in literature is, however, particularly obnoxious to criticism, to popular criticism at least, especially if it inflicts on the public a multiplication of books of substantially the same subject. If I incur this risk I cannot blame myself. In my historic writings on Methodism I have contemplated but two tasks; having concluded the first of these attempts, and issued two volumes of the second, I had hoped to complete the latter before the present

date, and then turn to quite other labours. But the command of the Centenary Committee, to prepare its "Centenary Book," could not be disobeyed. This centenary volume had hardly been published before your command also reached me, and here is my response. So important is this centenary occasion of Methodism, so capable and promising of transcendent results, not only to the Church, but to the religious welfare of the country generally, that I have felt compelled by my conscience to respond to your call.

The preparation of this small volume has deeply interested me. My previous historical studies of early Methodism have convinced me that no other modern, perhaps no ancient, section of the Church possessed richer materials for the illustration of female piety and agency in religion than Methodism. My recent revision of these materials convinces me, as I have remarked somewhere in the following pages, that there could hardly be a better revelation of the primitive and interior life of the denomination than would be a thorough account of its early "devout women," especially the female correspondents and associates of Wesley; but such a work would require elaborate research in the contemporary Methodist literature, and especially a minute

PREFACE.

study of Wesley's letters, and of the frequent but obscure allusions of his Journals, and their collation with our old and numerous biographical works. The limits imposed necessarily on the present volume by its immediate purpose have forbid any such comprehensive attempt; I have endeavoured, nevertheless, to so plan the book, and condense and group its materials, as to serve in part this object, and to prepare a record of our "elect ladies," which, after the centenary is passed, may abide a permanent part of our Christian literature, till at least a better hand shall give us such a volume as here indicated.

As in the preface to my "Centenary Book," I may express the hope that you and other readers, who may have followed me over some of the same ground in my larger works, will not find these sketches uninteresting, though they must be, in part substantially, a reproduction of data already given, and sometimes with but little variation of style. In my larger books they occur in detached fragments; here they are given in more biographic unity and detail. Of many of the present characters I have, however, heretofore had no occasion to treat; of the familiar ones I have endeavoured, with some success, to procure new materials. Several of the sketches include facts never before published in this country;