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A Paper Read at a Memorial Service¹
at Hampton Institute

[Hampton, Va., Aug. 1, 1880]

So far the death rate of the class of '75 has kept pace with the years. Five years have passed since the class graduated, and five of its members have passed away. First was John W. Collins, probably the most mature mind that ever left this Institution, then Mrs. Weaver² and D. Y. Turner,³ and now J. B. Towe and Geo. M. Harrison.⁴

I best knew Mr. Harrison as a janitor here, he and I being janitors together for three years, working out our expenses in that way. As a scholar he was not bright in everything, but earnest in all his studies. In mathematics he was excellent. In some respects he was a model scholar. In all the records of the Institution I don't think there could be found any thing against the character of Geo. M. Harrison. No teacher I suppose, ever thought of marking him in deportment or promptness. He was not one of the shirky kind, wherever his duty called he was always to be found. He cared little for games and social entertainments and seldom attended them. I think no one ever saw him spend ten minutes in foolish or idle talk. He came here for an education, and he thoroughly devoted himself to his books. All his actions were characterized by a deep sense of honesty; he scorned all ideas of dishonesty in work or study. He had no taste for mere outward show. His highest ambition was to fit himself to do his people good; he often talked of the good that he hoped to do when he left here. The reports that we hear from his field of labor justify us in saying that he carried out his ambition so far as he was able.

From his short life we may all glean a lesson, always remembering that "We live in deeds not in years. . . ."⁵ He most lives who thinks most, feels noblest, acts best." We all should so shape our lives that when we shall have passed away it can be said of us as we can truly say of him, "He hath done what he could."

B. T. W.

Southern Workman, 9 (Sept. 1880), 90.

¹ For Joseph B. Towe, George M. Harrison, and Maria Alvis Mallette, in the Virginia Hall chapel.

² Matilda Jane Brown Weaver, taken to the Pennsylvania State School of Soldiers' Orphans in Bridgewater, Pa., at the age of twelve, completed a four-