

SOME ACCOUNT
OF
JOHN KNILL.



LONDON:
RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY,
56, *Paternoster-row* ;
SOLD ALSO BY J. NISBET, BERNERS-STREET.



SEE PAGE 10,

SOME ACCOUNT
OF
JOHN KNILL:

WHO DIED OF THE CHOLERA, AT ST. PETERS-
BURGH, JULY, 1831, AGED THREE YEARS
AND ELEVEN MONTHS.

WRITTEN BY HIS FATHER.

LONDON:

THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY;

Instituted 1799.

SOLD AT THE DEPOSITORY, 56, PATERNOSTER ROW,
AND 65, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD;
AND BY THE BOOKSELLERS.

HOME ACCOUNT

JOHN KNILL

MEMOIRS OF THE REV. JOHN KNILL, AT ST. PETERSBURG, FROM 1791 TO 1801, AND THREE YEARS AND SEVEN MONTHS.

WRITTEN BY HIS SON,

LONDON:

THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY,

LONDON: 1799

PRINTED BY T. BARNES, ST. PETERBURG: 1801

AND BY THE BOOKSELLERS,

SOME ACCOUNT

OF

JOHN KNILL.

MANY years have rolled away since the cholera begun, like a desolating scourge, to depopulate the earth. It first made its appearance near Calcutta, in the East Indies, from whence its fatal influence spread rapidly from province to province over the whole of that country. It turned nearly every house into a house of mourning, and many totally lost their inhabitants. The rich were not spared, but it raged chiefly among the poor. Foreigners as well as natives became its victims; and after it had hurried millions to the grave, it travelled westward to Persia. From

Persia it crossed the Russian frontier; and in 1824, it commenced its ravages in Astrachan. About the month of July, 1830, it broke out a second time in Astrachan, and in a few weeks carried off several thousands of its inhabitants: the chief men of the city died of it. When the disease was at its height, more than five hundred persons died in one day.

At the close of the same year, the cholera reached Moscow, and its effects produced a dreadful panic on the minds of the people. In this season of deep distress, the emperor of Russia hastened to console and aid his afflicted subjects; and after continuing with them until the malady began to abate, he returned to St. Petersburg, and was restored to his anxious and loving family in peace.

When the disease was raging in Moscow, great fears were excited respecting it in St. Petersburg, and great preparations were made to prevent its entrance, or

to stop its progress, if it came; but no symptoms of it appeared for many months. At last it came, and an awful visitation it proved to multitudes!

It broke out in St. Petersburg on the 4th of June, o. s. 1831. In the evening of that day, it was reported, that a man belonging to the barks which trade with the interior, had been attacked with cholera. This was the commencement of the malady, and it increased at a fearful rate until its ravages became tremendous. For a time, business of every kind was nearly at a stand. In some streets, scarcely any thing was seen moving but funeral processions, "man going to his long home," and a few, very few, mourners following their friends to the house appointed for all living. About the beginning of July, the number of deaths gradually diminished; and at the latter end of that month, the disease had nearly disappeared.

John Knill, whose death is here recorded, was three years and eleven months old. It will be seen that the cholera had been raging in the city for several days ; but we had no fears respecting our children being affected with it, for we had been informed that it was chiefly confined to adults : but painful experience has since taught us that it is not confined to sex nor age. The prince and the peasant have fallen beneath its fatal stroke.

On the evening preceding his death, John retired to rest in his usual health. When the cholera attacked him, it seemed to seize his heart, and to oppress the vitals with increasing violence until he expired. His hands and feet almost immediately became cold : his sparkling eyes sunk deep into their sockets ; the pulse nearly ceased, and a peculiar degree of languor seized his whole body. In this state of exhaustion, he looked around upon his affectionate mother and friends, with

indescribable tenderness; until amidst our tears and sighs, and prayers and efforts, of no common nature, he ceased to breathe.

He was attacked in the morning, died at noon, and in the evening was carried to his grave. Thus suddenly was this flower cut down. Thus quickly did death execute his commission. Thus in one short day all our earthly hopes respecting him were blasted: but we have hopes that will flourish for ever.

His bereaved parents have a thousand fond recollections of what he did and said; but there are six things which we trust will be beneficial to some who may read this short narrative.

1. His early co-operation in circulating the Holy Scriptures and tracts.

He was not quite two years old, when the following circumstance took place. A glazier was mending my window, and John, and his brother, and their nurse,

stood by looking at him. While the man was busy at his work, this little darling pulled him by the apron, and said to him, "Brother," the usual salutation among Russians, "Brother, can you read?" At first the man took no notice of the child, but finding him continue his prattle, he said to the nurse, "Does the child speak to me?"—"Yes." "What does he say?"—"Listen to him." The child then repeated the question, "Brother, can you read?"—"Yes," replied the man. "Have you a New Testament?" said John.—"No." As soon as he found that the glazier had not a Testament, he walked to the room in which they were kept, and having obtained one, carried it to him immediately. The nurse perceiving what was done, remarked, "John, you have not done this properly: you ought to have found a verse for the man to read."—"Yes, yes," said he, and in turning over the leaves, he pointed to that striking

passage, "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly," Matt. vi. 6. "Well," said the man, "this is strange indeed!"

These questions the child frequently heard addressed to persons who came to our house, but we had no idea of his adopting the same plan unsolicited. It shows us at what an early age children are capable of imitating the examples around them; and fathers and mothers may learn from it what a great responsibility is attached to the parental character.

Since the above period, many hundreds of people have come to our house, some for books, others for clothes, etc.; but I do not recollect that John ever saw any of these people without asking either his mother or myself, "May I give that

person a tract?" and sometimes without our knowledge he has supplied them.

Only the day before he died, I received a package of French and German tracts



from the Tract Society in London, and one of his last acts was to assist his brother in bringing these tracts to me to the place where I wished to put them. His

words still sound in my ears as he approached me with his arms full, and his face flushed with animation, exclaiming, "Here, papa, see how many I bring!"

Parents who read this will, we trust, be encouraged and stimulated to initiate children early into those ways which lead to usefulness, as well as happiness. Impressions made on the minds of children are generally deep and lasting. Good habits early formed are of incalculable advantage through life. The voice of Wisdom says, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it," Prov. xxii. 6. This may be considered as a general rule; and daily observation confirms it as an interesting fact. We wished to be guided by this rule in the education of our offspring. Our hearts' desire for them was, that they might always be occupied in diffusing the knowledge of God; and now

John is removed from our feeble instruction to a higher school, we are thankful that he had begun, though unconsciously, to do something for the good of mankind.

2. I notice his interesting dream.

Our little boy was just three years old when we heard him speaking in his sleep. Of course we were anxious to discover what he was speaking about, and to our astonishment, he repeated, with uncommon emphasis, those beautiful lines of Dr. Watts:—

What shall I render to my God

For all his gifts to me?

He had not been taught these lines, but his mother had been teaching them to his elder brother a few days before. when he heard them and treasured them up in his retentive memory, and now they were occupying his sleeping hours. Oh how sweet is the reflection that he never learned anything from us which we should be ashamed to hear him repeat before the

judgment seat of Christ! and how favoured is the lot of those dear children who can say—

While others early learn to swear,
And curse, and lie, and steal;
Lord, I am taught thy name to fear,
And do thy holy will!

Many dear children who will read this are blessed with pious parents, whose chief solicitude is to train them for heaven. O children, do not disappoint their fond expectations.

3. I shall state his manner of giving reproofs.

John was very playful and noisy, while his disposition was exceedingly sweet, though resolute and determined. He had two brothers, one younger and the other older. To his younger brother he would easily yield up any thing, and say, "O Joseph! he is only a baby; he must have it." But with his elder brother there was frequently an argument respecting

their playthings ; and when John thought that his brother was wrong, he would say very gravely, " O Samuel ! God does not love that, Christ does not love that."

Every morning when they came to the breakfast-table, they repeated the com-



mandment, " Honour thy father and mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth

thee;" and when they perceived any thing in each other's conduct which was contrary to this command, they would frequently remind each other, by saying, "Honour thy father and thy mother."

I hope that every young person who reads this will imitate the example of John, by cheerfully obeying this commandment. The apostle encourages children to keep this commandment by reminding them that it is the first to which there is any promise attached. But it should also be remembered that the most dreadful curses are threatened to overtake those who disobey their parents. See Prov. xxx. 17. "The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it."

It is a solemn thought, that almost every action of some men's lives is displeasing to God. Had these persons a

kind and faithful monitor near them, he would say to them a thousand times in a day, "Ah, sir! God does not love that—Ah, madam! Christ does not love that." And is it not dreadful to live a life of constant rebellion against our Creator and Redeemer! Dear reader, try yourself by this touchstone; ask yourself often, Will God be pleased with this part of my conduct? Will Christ approve this conversation? Shall I be able to give a good account of this act before the judgment-seat? and if conscience says, No; if your Bible says, No, then reject it; put it away from you; flee from it as from a serpent. The cholera morbus is dreadful—the plague is dreadful; but sinning against God is much more dreadful, for that will ruin both body and soul. Hear the words of the Saviour on this point: "I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I

will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear Him," Luke xii. 4, 5.

4. This little boy was remarkable for his tenderness to brute animals.



Two instances shall suffice. During the winter, a servant was putting the house-dog into the snow, and trying to cover it over, as a sort of cold bathing.

John looked through the window and saw it, and became quite agitated. He immediately ran to his mother, exclaiming, "Mamma, Euphemia will kill the dog; come, and prevent it." He then returned to the window, watching the process, and appeared ready to faint. His mother interposed and liberated the dog, and now the joy of the child was proportioned to his previous grief.

A few days before his death, he was walking on the quay with his brothers, when he saw a man beating his horse with great cruelty. They were near the watch-box, and John, leaving his companions, ran to the watchman, and said, "Please to look at that naughty man; seize him, and take him to the watch-house. A man that beats his horse so, ought not to have a horse." These were pleasing feelings for a child, and such as every one ought to cultivate. We have seen some young people inclined to be very hard-hearted to

animals; but we hope that henceforth it will not be so; that now they will begin to cherish a different feeling; that the example of John Knill will be a profitable lesson to them; and that tenderness to animals will make a striking feature of their remaining lives.

5. His observations respecting a departed Christian.

Mrs. Chapman died four days before this dear child. She was formerly the mistress of a Lancasterian school in Canada. She came to St. Petersburg, to take charge of a school on the same system, in which she gave great satisfaction. Her heart was much set on doing good to the children of her charge, and we hoped that she would long be spared to be a blessing in her important sphere; but on Friday, June 26, o. s. she was attacked with cholera: a fatal day in St. Petersburg; for among the hundreds of persons who were this day attacked, it

is supposed that scarcely one recovered. She struggled until four the next morning, and then entered into the joy of her Lord. She left a delightful testimony to the love and faithfulness of God. Her Saviour was very precious to her. His rod and his staff comforted her. In the evening of the same day, she was buried in the ground appointed expressly for those who died of cholera; and my dear little boy was afterwards placed with her in the same grave. I mentioned some particulars respecting this pious woman to my family. John listened, and after pausing some time, he said to me, "Papa, is Mrs. Chapman dead?"—"Yes, my dear." "Then she is gone to heaven, papa."—"Yes." "Then she is with Christ, papa."—"Yes, my dear." "Oh! that is very good." These were delightful observations for a child under four years of age; yet I have no idea that he knew any thing about the nature of religion as

a system. He frequently made remarks to his mother and to his pious nurse, and sometimes he came and clasped me round the neck, and said, "Papa, I love God, I love Christ," and then walked off singing,

"Lord in the morning thou shalt hear
My voice ascending high."

These things I consider merely as good habits—the seeds which by the grace of God would have sprung up if he had lived; but he knew nothing doctrinally of man being a sinner, and Christ being the only Saviour, and he could not comprehend this like older persons. The observations I have made are to show how far good teaching and good example will go, to form good habits and good modes of thinking in a child: and I pray that all parents who may read this, may feel a fresh stimulus to sow good seed in the minds of their offspring, before the soil is preoccupied. Parents, remember that to instil one good thought, to produce one

good desire in the heart of your child, is infinitely more important than the discovery of a gold mine. No mortal can conceive what blessings may flow from it, both in this world and in that which is to come.

The last thing I shall notice respecting this dear child is,

6. The gracious providence of God overruling the solemn event of his death, for a peculiar blessing to a young man who witnessed his agonies.

The evening before he died we had two friends with us, one from America, and a young friend from England. On retiring to rest, John came and embraced his American friend, and with a sweet smile, said, "Good night, my dearest Mr. ——:" and he shook hands with our other friend. They never saw him again until he was seized. When the alarm was given that he was attacked with cholera, we were watching around the bed of his brother

Joseph, who had been dying all the preceding night; but now the necessities of John called for every help that could be given him; therefore I was left with the dying child, to moisten his parched lips, while his mother and the servants hastened to John. Our young friend perceiving the child in great distress, sat down by his bed-side, and for some time assisted in rubbing his hands; then he ran to the apothecary's for medicine, but on his return he found that medicine could be of no service; the spasms had ceased, the sufferings were over, the heart no longer palpitated: the spirit of our darling was gone! The suddenness of his death produced amazement and alarm. The scene was truly awful; the shock which it gave to every one of us cannot be described. At this moment our young friend returned, and so deeply impressed was he with what he saw, that he entered into his closet, and shut the door, and

cried unto that God and Saviour whose redeeming love and mercy he had never truly sought before.

I repeat his own words, which he spoke to me almost the last time before he left this country : “ Ah ! sir, the day on which your John died will ever be a memorable day to me. It will form a new era in my existence. I shall look back to it as the time when I became truly in earnest about my soul. I had often seen the importance of religion before, but then I felt the absolute need of it. I have been brought up with religious people, and have read and seen and heard much on religious subjects, but I never felt it before. This was a penetrating work ; indeed, I was greatly afraid. I thought—It is not improbable I may be cut off as suddenly as Johnny, and then what will be the consequence !—Where shall I appear ?—I have no hope—I must trifle no longer. I then sought retirement ; I went into

your study, and there remained for about two hours, and I trust I was sincere in seeking mercy of the Lord, and in yielding up myself to be his servant for ever."

"Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Our child had been the subject of our constant prayers, but we never once implored riches, or honours, or earthly glory for him. Our prayer was, that, like another John, he might "be great in the sight of the Lord," and, like John the Baptist, be enabled to "turn many of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just;" and such is our conviction of the worth of souls, that we should have considered it an unspeakable privilege if, after a long life of arduous toil, he had been the instrument of bringing one sinner to Jesus. Oh then what a consolation to our wounded spirits to

be permitted to hope that this work so glorious—a sinner brought to Jesus—was in any way accelerated by his early death. To God be the glory for ever. Amen.

It is a very alarming circumstance, that vast multitudes live day after day, like the young man just mentioned, without paying any regard to their precious souls; and though conscious that this important point is neglected, yet still go on procrastinating until it is too late. Dreadful infatuation! Perhaps some persons, both young and old, may read these pages who are precisely in this state; they are not prepared to meet their Judge; they know not the blessedness of the man whose sins are pardoned; they are not justified by faith, and consequently have not obtained peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord: and can there be a case more alarming than this?

Dear reader, suppose that in this

unprepared state you should be seized with some affliction which should bring you suddenly to the grave. Oh what consequences must follow! Whenever dear little infants die, we know that they are happy, for, "of such is the kingdom of God;" but when a man or woman dies, the case is very different; for we must look for evidence of repentance and faith before we can entertain hope respecting them; and where would you appear! Ah! you would be left without a friend, without a remedy, without hope. Listen, then, O listen to the voice of friendship, delay not another moment; let the great work of religion, from this day, become the grand business of your life. Salvation you must obtain, or you will perish; salvation is offered to you freely; Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; he casts out none that come to him. O then study the character and work of Christ; behold the necessity and the

suitableness of his atonement; embrace this adorable Saviour; give up your souls to him, cleave to him, believe on him, and you shall be saved.

Finally, I beseech you do not put off the momentous concerns of eternity. You may be attacked with sudden illness of some kind; you will have no time then; therefore “let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord,—that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching,” Luke xii. 35—37.



DANGER OF DELAY.

WHY should I say, " 'Tis yet too soon
To seek for heaven, or think of death?"
A flower may fade before 'tis noon,
And I this day may lose my breath.

If this rebellious heart of mine
Despise the gracious calls of Heaven,
I may be hardened in my sin,
And never have repentance given.

What if the Lord grow wroth and swear,
While I refuse to read and pray,
That he'll refuse to lend an ear
To all my groans another day !

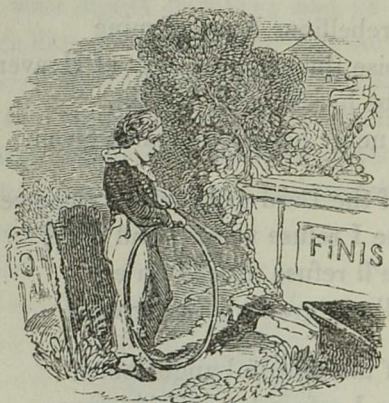
What if his dreadful anger burn,
While I refuse his offer'd grace ;
And all his love to fury turn,
And strike me dead upon the place !

'Tis dangerous to provoke a God!

His power and vengeance none can tell;
One stroke of his almighty rod
Shall send young sinners quick to hell.

Then 'twill for ever be in vain

To cry for pardon and for grace;
To wish I had my time again,
Or hope to see my Maker's face.



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THE GOLDEN RULE.

To do to others as I would
That they should do to me,
Will make me honest, kind, and good,
As children ought to be.

Whether I am at home, or school,
Or walking out abroad,
I never should forget this rule
Of Jesus Christ the Lord.