

**THE PRAYING SCHOOL-
BOY: A BRIEF MEMOIR OF
ROBERT ERNEST
HOUGHTON CHURCHILL**

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The Praying School-boy: A Brief Memoir of Robert Ernest Houghton Churchill by Mrs. Churchill

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MRS. CHURCHILL

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PRAYING SCHOOL-BOY :

A BRIEF MEMOIR

OF

Robert Ernest Houghton Churchill.

b 187

BY

HIS STEPMOTHER.

LONDON :

ELLIOT STOCK, 62, PATERNOSTER ROW.

AND SOLD AT 60, PATERNOSTER ROW.

1869.



ELLIOT STOCK, PRINTER, LONDON.

TO THE

Reverend John Farrar,

(LATE GOVERNOR OF WOODHOUSE GROVE SCHOOL)

THIS LITTLE MEMOIR OF ONE OF

HIS LATE PUPILS,

IS MOST RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

BY

THE WRITER.

“THE PRAYING SCHOOL-BOY.”

SCHOOL-BOY life is never without its incidents—of trial, temptation, difficulty, and pleasure—varying according to age, temperament, disposition, and previous training and habit—mental, moral, and physical.

The title of “The Praying School-boy” has been selected for this little memorial, because the principal incidents of the Christian life of its subject were developed at Woodhouse Grove School.

Robert Ernest Houghton, the youngest son of the Rev. Charles Churchill, was born at Quebec, April 17, 1851. In the following July his father was appointed to the city of Fredericton, N.B.—and on this journey, when passing through the States, the infant was taken suddenly ill of a most violent inflammation of the lungs—so much so that the journey had to be interrupted for a week, and the beautiful village of Keene, in New Hampshire, was the scene of a struggle between life and death, the issue of which surprised all. After several nights of anxious watching, his father unwittingly fell asleep, and at midnight was summoned to witness

what was supposed to be the closing scene: with feelings more easily imagined than described he offered him to God in Baptism, and in solemn prayer his parents promised, that if the child's life was spared, he should (if the Lord willed it) be trained for and devoted to the work of the Christian ministry. Prayer was heard, God spared his life, and the result will be seen in these pages.

Special care was bestowed on his spiritual training by a devoted mother, who was in the habit of taking him into her bedroom, and there instructing him in Divine truth, after which they prayed together, and thus he was early led to Christ. On one occasion when he was in deep distress of soul, they wrestled in prayer till he was enabled by faith in Christ to claim God as his Father. He was at that time little more than seven years of age. Yet his conscious sense of the pardoning love of God shed abroad in his heart, of his adoption into the family of God, was a matter that never admitted of a doubt.

When talking over this subject, about a year before his death, I put the question, "Have you never lost your evidence since then?" I was rebuked by the shocked surprise with which he answered, "Never!" And then as his conscience brought many short-comings to his remembrance, he added with much humility, "I have very often

grieved my Heavenly Father and caused Him to withdraw the light of His countenance, and have sometimes not even been alarmed about it, for days or perhaps weeks; but those have been the exceptions not the rule. I have been made to feel that I had a justly offended Father—but—oh! I could as soon doubt that I am papa's son, as doubt that I am the child of God."

As a child, his favourite books were the Bible and the Pilgrim's Progress, the latter he knew and could repeat throughout—neither were learned by rote, but were read and explained to him; and that they were to a great extent understood and valued by him, was manifested by his life.

When taking him to the throne of grace, his mother taught him to tell his wants and ask for help, clothing his petitions in his own thoughts and words, and she trained him to feel that whatever he asked, if good for him, would be granted, if asked aright. Thus an ever-present Saviour and Father, were by him as much realized as though visibly present.

Having spent four years in Fredericton, his father removed to Halifax, Nova Scotia, and it was here that, in the year 1862, Ernest's first and perhaps only great sorrow fell upon him; his mamma was stricken down by sudden illness; he could not believe it possible that one whom he loved so fondly,