

**WILLIAM KNIBB:  
MISSIONARY IN  
JAMAICA. A MEMOIR**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649535750

William Knibb: Missionary in Jamaica. A Memoir by Mrs. John James Smith & J. G. Greenhough

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

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**MRS. JOHN JAMES SMITH & J. G. GREENHOUGH**

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A MEMOIR

BY  
MRS. JOHN JAMES SMITH.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY  
REV. J. G. GREENHOUGH, M.A.

"Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo  
the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break  
every yoke?"

London:  
ALEXANDER & SHEPHEARD, FURNIVAL STREET, E.C.

1896.

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PREFACE.

SINCE the proof sheets of this little book have come from the printer the writer's attention has been called to the funeral sermon preached by the Rev. John Aldis in Maze Pond Chapel on the occasion of Mr. Knibb's death (November, 1845). A few sentences quoted from it will, perhaps, form a better preface than any other.

*Knibb's 1845*

"A little more than one-and-twenty years ago you might have seen a young man, accompanied by his wife, going on board a ship. He leaves for a distant island, to be a schoolmaster, perhaps an assistant preacher of the Gospel, to ignorant and wretched slaves. A few friends attend him, who regret his departure, and hope he may be useful in the humblest rank of missionary labourers. At home, a widowed mother commends him to God, saying in spirit, 'I had rather he died on his passage than disgrace religion.' To his countrymen his enterprise is unknown or contemptible. Of his own denomination but few have ever heard his name. Unknown, uncared for, he departs unnoticed, as the single leaf falls in the forest. A few weeks ago he was carried to his grave. Wise and good men, from the distance of many miles, were gathered to that solemnity. Ministers of different denominations officiated at it. Magistrates, men of wealth and station, were there as mourning a public calamity. Eight thousand of the grateful poor hung about that procession. A deep, unutterable grief

saddened every countenance and swelled every heart. The proud were humble, the noisy quiet, the malignant kind. One spell-word bound them all: 'He is dead!' There is much in the interval between that voyage and that funeral.

"The true leader not only has an intuitive sagacity to discover the right way, and the promptitude and courage to advance in it, but the strange power of fascination, which draws others after him.

"This is the honour we claim for our departed friend; or, rather, this is the grace which we conceive our God conferred upon him. He was a leader, and a great one."

Not that Mr. Knibb was alone in the work. Among his brother missionaries he worked shoulder to shoulder, but here in England he was often their spokesman, and had the power to make his story tell. So he was the most widely-known and the recognised leader of the movement.

William Knibb "had good tidings of great joy" for those who walked in darkness—"the glorious Gospel of the blessed God."

The poor people of Jamaica received the message, many of them, with joy, but as children needing constant guidance, and very dependent on the missionary. It was his earnest desire and constant effort that these babes in Christ should grow to the stature of a "perfect man in Christ Jesus;" and that for all the coloured peasantry a good primary education should be provided, such as would help them to gain an honest livelihood, not only as labourers earning fair wages, but with opportunity, such as had it in



them, to rise, and there were many capable of this. And if they maintained themselves they were also to feel the responsibility of maintaining their pastors, educated pastors, and of contributing towards sending to others the Gospel they valued themselves.

The struggle was hard, both to obtain freedom and to live through troublous years following, when, from various circumstances, the times, in our West Indian colonies, were so bad that some people began to doubt the expediency of emancipation, but the good fruit has ripened now, and the desires of William Knibb have largely come to pass. Nor his desires alone. William Carey, the wonderful leader of the modern missionary movement, prayed as well "for the slaves as for the heathen." Carey went, that being the path opened to him, to the heathen, but God answered *both* his prayers.

The first thought of writing another account of William Knibb had its birth in the centenary year of the Baptist Mission. Not a word too much was said about Carey, but some of those who remember the Jubilee meetings at Kettering knew that Mr. Knibb, a Kettering man, had been on that occasion the centre of interest. It seemed a sad thing that one who had done so much for the sons of Africa should pass in any degree out of memory.

It has been difficult not to say more of coadjutors, but it has been thought wise to kee

this effort in so small a compass as to concentrate the attention on Mr. Knibb, who went through, and led others through, all the struggle.

Thanks are due and heartily given to the Rev. John Brown Myers for much valuable assistance; to the Rev. Ellis Fray for the loan of his grandfather's letters; and to the Rev. D. J. East for allowing the use of original documents about the troubled times of 1832, notably the MS. journal of the Rev. W. Dendy, who arrived just in the worst of the disturbance. It may be stated that the form admitting the missionaries to bail and the subsequent letter setting them free, no charges having been found against them, are both in Mr. East's possession.

M. E. S.

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