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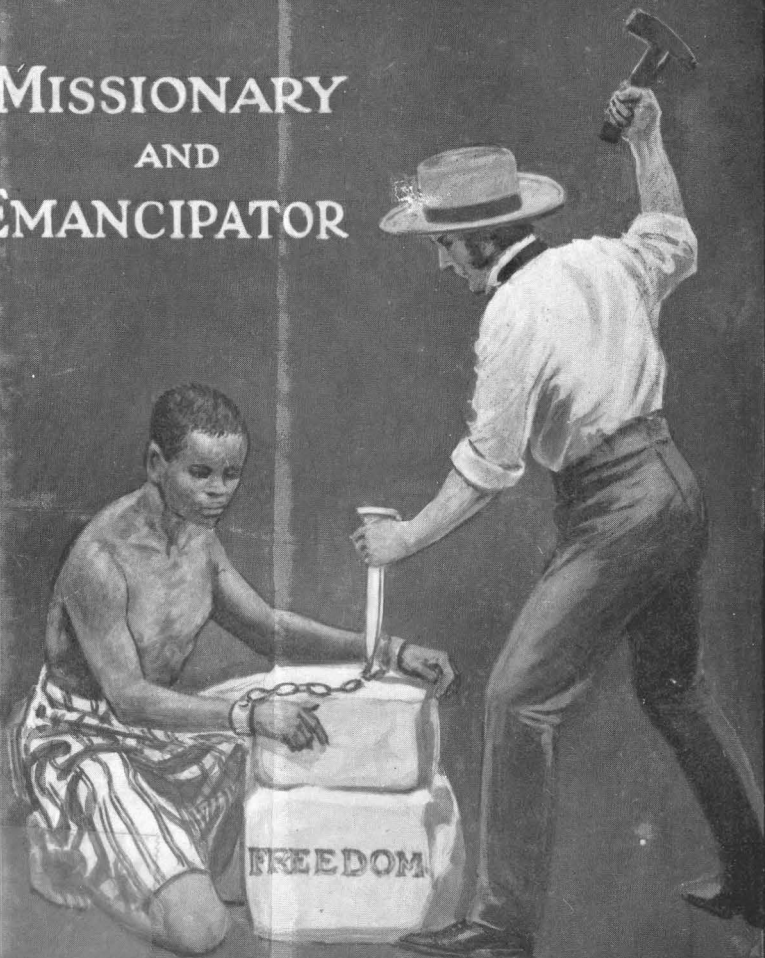
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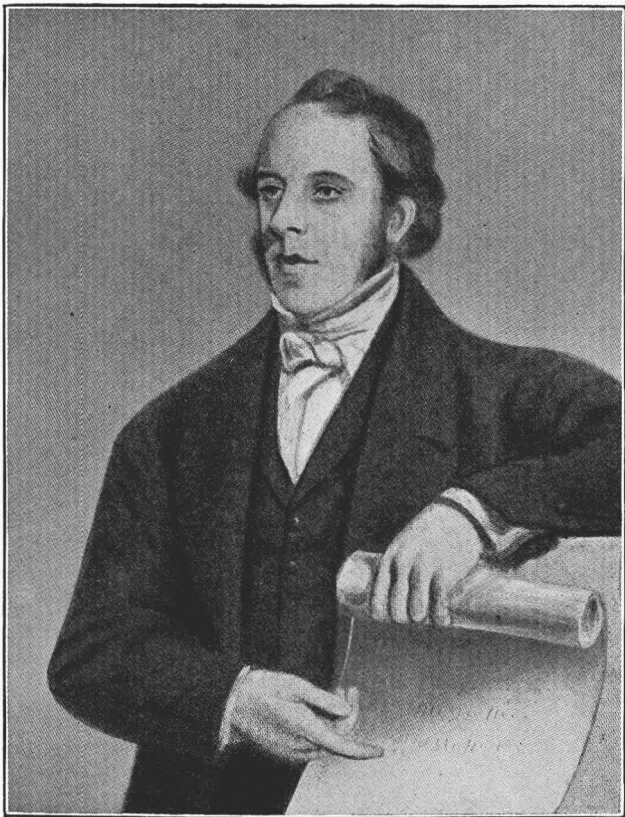
WILLIAM KNIBB

MISSIONARY AND EMANCIPATOR



By R. A. L. KNIGHT, M.A., B.D.
FALMOUTH, JAMAICA.

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William Knibb.

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BY

R. A. L. KNIGHT, M.A., B.D.,

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LONDON:
THE CAREY PRESS,
19, FURNIVAL STREET, E.C. 4.

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FOREWORD.

THE history of the Christian Church, like all other history, tends to become the story of great personalities.

No one can appreciate the actual progress of the negroes of Jamaica and the West Indies without knowing the thrilling narrative which is retold here by a Jamaican writer.

It is fitting that it should be recorded afresh while there are still living those who have personal memories of the dark days of slavery and the heroes of emancipation. To visit the scenes of the life and ministry of William Knibb was a memorable experience and a great inspiration to me, some years ago. Aged coloured men and women delighted to speak of "Massa Knibb," whose intrepid spirit was proclaimed by the very movement of his coat-tails as he walked, for they seemed to say: "Don't care! Don't care! Don't care!" It was the man inside such a coat that was needed as a leader in those great days. God raised him up and fitted him for his task. And the negro Christian Church needs leaders to-day, and from their own race they are being raised up.

To show them true sympathy, to give them fullest scope for the development of their own racial characteristics in the spirit of Christ, and to put within their grasp the best possible equipment for the service of their fellows, is the duty and privilege of all who desire to perpetuate the memory of heroes and who pray for the coming of the Kingdom of God among all races.

C. E. WILSON.

Baptist Mission House, London.

September, 1924.

CHAPTER I.

HIS YOUTH AND APPOINTMENT.

WILLIAM KNIBB, the fifth child of Thomas and Mary Knibb, was born on the 7th of September, 1803, at Kettering, in Northamptonshire. Like other men of fame, he was blessed with a mother of deep religious piety, from whom he received those splendid qualities of character—energy, endurance, cheerfulness, courage—which distinguished his later life.

He was sent at an early age to school, where, though not brilliant, he was quick at his lessons and very popular, very vivacious and good at games, excelling in marbles. He went to the Sunday School in connection with the church which his mother attended, and there received the religious training which laid the foundation for future service. It is interesting to note that his teacher, Mr. Gill, describes him “as a good boy, but somewhat volatile, and very difficult to manage until his affections had been gained. He quickly took the part of any boy he thought injured, and maintained these generous quarrels with great resolution—it may be said with pugnacity.” In him the boy was father of the man.

When he was about twelve years of age he entered the printing establishment of Mr. J. G. Fuller, son of the Rev. Andrew Fuller, at that time pastor of the Baptist Church in Kettering and Secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society. His elder brother, Thomas, to whom he was passionately attached, was an apprentice in the same office. The brothers went with Mr. Fuller

in 1816 when he removed his business to Bristol. There they attended the Broadmead Baptist Church and taught in the Sunday School. Realizing that an open confession of Jesus was essential if he hoped to influence his scholars, William was baptized by Dr. Ryland in March, 1822. He then threw himself heartily into religious work, visiting the slums of the city and preaching Christ. One such place was called "The Beggars' Opera, or the Beggars' Uproars," where he would find sometimes a room full of such people carousing together. The moment he began to speak they would become quiet and listen attentively. The people of these districts were always glad to see and hear him, for they knew they had a sympathetic friend in him.

For many years Thomas and William had thought and spoken of going as missionaries to the heathen. As they printed the Annual Missionary Accounts for Mr. Fuller, and read the story of the work of Carey in India, their enthusiasm for missionary work was fired, and they longed to go. Thomas used to be troubled lest the number of missionaries should be completed before he grew up, but William would comfort him with the thought that even if they did not go as missionaries, they might go as printers, since the Society could not do without printers.

Whilst the lads were dreaming of Missions, probably in India, a field was being prepared for them in Jamaica. During the Spanish occupation of the island, the Arawak Indians, who were the natives, had been practically exterminated through the cruel treatment of their masters. To supply their places and to carry on the cultivation of the land, especially the cane fields, the people of Africa were kidnapped and transported to Jamaica. This practice the English con-

tinued when they wrested the country from Spain in 1655. Although there was religious instruction for the masters, yet the slaves received very little, as it was believed that religion would unfit them for their work. However, in the last quarter of the eighteenth century the Moravians and Methodists began work among them. In 1814 the Baptist Missionary Society began its mission at the invitation of a certain Moses Baker, a converted coloured American ex-slave who had come over to Jamaica and had been employed by the owner of Adelphi Estate in the western part of the island to minister to his slaves, some of whom had already heard the Gospel. Mr. Moses Baker, becoming old and desiring to obtain a pastor for his flock, "who could instruct them in the way of God more perfectly," had for several years written to Dr. Ryland, President of the Baptist College of Bristol, one of the founders of the Baptist Missionary Society. This help was given in 1814, when Mr. John Rowe, one of Dr. Ryland's students, was sent out to begin the Mission.

In connection with the East Queen Street Church founded at Kingston in 1816, a free school had been established for which a teacher was required. Thomas Knibb, who had the necessary qualifications, applied to the Committee and was accepted. In October, 1822, he sailed for Jamaica. Thomas' departure affected William, who was fond of his brother, and made him long for the day when he could go out to join him. In a letter written in reply to one from Thomas, he says: "I fully join with you in wishing that the next time the *Ocean* leaves the British shores, after it has wafted you in safety to your desired haven, I may be permitted to form a part of the cargo." A few months later he wrote: "For some time before

you left Bristol, or I had any thought you would go to Jamaica, I felt an earnest desire to be employed in teaching the poor children of the negroes. This desire has been considerably strengthened since your leaving England, and I do feel that no earthly tie could keep me from offering to go, did a situation offer, and did it appear to be the path of Providence. . . . Should it be the will of God that I should go, I think it will be as a schoolmaster. Here I feel in my element, and I should love to engage in it."

These desires were soon to be fulfilled, but in an unexpected and unpleasant manner. Three months after Thomas had begun his work in Kingston he died. On being told of his brother's untimely death by Mr. Fuller, William broke down. He soon recovered himself and said: "Then if the Society will accept me, I'll go and take his place." Strange to say, he made no application, nor was his offer communicated to the Society. The Secretary, however, Mr. Dyer, had been corresponding with Dr. Ryland, relative to his going to the East. "He is a good printer. I rather question his capacity for learning a language. More suitable for the West Indies." This opinion given by Dr. Ryland probably weighed with the committee, who appointed Knibb, in August, 1824, to go out to Jamaica to take his brother's place. He proceeded to take farewell of his mother, who was giving her second son to Jamaica, a remarkable woman whose name should be highly honoured by Jamaica Baptists. Commending him to God she said: "Remember, I would rather hear you have perished in the sea than that you have disgraced the Cause you go to serve."

On the first of October he married Miss Mary Watkins, a member of the Broadmead Church, whose devotion and counsel were to be of inestimable value to him

in the years to come. A month later they both sailed for Jamaica in the *Ocean* (the same boat in which his brother had travelled two years before) arriving about the 12th of February, 1825. "As soon as we passed Port Royal," wrote Knibb to a friend in Bristol, "a canoe came to us, which we had no sooner entered than: 'Please, massa, you Massa Knibb?' 'Yes.' 'Me thought so—so like your broder; me be glad to see you; we thought you drowned; we had been looking for you this month.' On landing, another hailed us, "O massa preacher come! Me must carry something, me be so glad!" We procured a wherry, and reached Kingston in less than an hour, where we met with a hearty reception."

CHAPTER II.

FIRST YEARS IN JAMAICA.

KNIBB had gone to Jamaica to take charge of the school at East Queen Street, Kingston, which had been started by his brother Thomas. On the day after his arrival he visited the school, where the children welcomed him with enthusiasm. He wrote to his friend, Mr. Fuller: "The children leaped for joy—indeed, they could not refrain from dancing, for a negro must express his joy. Their writing is excellent, and they appear to improve greatly. Could you visit the school, you would say my dear brother has not run in vain neither laboured in vain." He threw himself into the work of the school, with the result that in a few months the building was too small to house the children. A new building to accommodate 250 children was begun in August and opened in the following January. There were soon 212 children in attendance. He also organized a Sunday School for children and adults who, including many aged people, came to learn to read the Bible. He took a keen pleasure in teaching this class, and it always grieved him when he had to send them away for want of books.

Knibb had now been in the Island for two years, and had come in contact with the pernicious system of slavery. His intense love for the "poor blacks," as he termed them, fired his hatred of the monster. The more he loved them the greater became his hatred of the system that oppressed and demoralized them. In a letter to his mother, written shortly after his arrival, he said: "The cursed blast of slavery has,

like a pestilence, withered almost every moral bloom. I know not how any person can feel a union with such a monster, such a child of hell. For myself, I feel a burning hatred against it, and look upon it as one of the most odious monsters that ever disgraced the earth. The slaves have temporal comforts in profusion, but their morals are sunk below the brute. . . . It is in the immorality of slavery that the evil chiefly consists. . . . To proclaim liberty to the captive and the opening of the prison to them that are bound is a delightful employment, and here would I dwell, that I may be thus employed; with my present views, however, nothing else on earth should tempt me to remain." Later, to his brother: "The more I see of slavery the more I hate and abhor it. It appears to me to be the foulest blot under heaven, and to spread a withering and pestilential influence over every land which is infested with it. Never, my beloved brother, argue in support of a system so corrupt, so repugnant to every feeling of right and justice, and which must be viewed by God with manifest abhorrence." This impression deepened itself on the mind of the young missionary with the passing of the years. The time was to come when he would victoriously grapple with the monster in a mighty contest.

He had been sent out to Jamaica to teach, but so urgent was the demand for the Gospel and so few were the labourers that he was compelled to take his share of preaching. This he did at East Queen Street, Mount Charles, and Port Royal. He took charge of the last-named church in 1825, as he had to take up temporary residence there because Mrs. Knibb's health had been seriously affected by the intense heat of Kingston. The chapel had been closed ever since Thomas Knibb's death in 1823. He started the work

again and the congregations speedily increased. In 1828 the chapel was enlarged at a cost of £400.

The combined work of teaching and preaching caused a breakdown in health in the summer of 1828. On the invitation of Rev. and Mrs. Burchell, of Montego Bay, he travelled by sea to the western part of the Island, where he spent several weeks with them. Here he had an opportunity of seeing something of the extensive work being done on the northern side of the Island, Mr. Burchell alone having a sphere extending seventy miles. The desire to give up teaching and to engage wholly in the ministry possessed him. With this idea in mind he wrote the Committee asking them to send out someone to superintend the school and to appoint him to some other station. In the letter he mentioned his preference for Falmouth, where the work had been started the previous year (1827). "The congregation at Falmouth is delightful. I should wish that station, but as Brother Mann has a desire for it, I hope that my remarks will not in the least influence any decision the Committee may come to." As the Committee did not grant his request, and as he felt much restored in health, he returned to his work in Kingston and Port Royal. But not for long, since his health failed again, and he had to resign in July, 1829, with much regret, for he loved the children and the people. But the Lord was thrusting him out into the field where he was to use him mightily.

So in June, 1829, he moved from Kingston to Savanna-la-Mar, a seaport town, situated on the south-western side of the Island. His family had now increased, and he took with him his wife and two children—a boy, William, a girl, Catherine Mary, four years and two years old respectively. He did not remain long in the sphere, as he received a call the

following year from the Church at Falmouth, with which he had fallen in love two years before.

On the death of Mr. Mann, in February, 1830, Mr. Burchell, who had founded the church, called a church meeting to discuss with the members the selection of a pastor. Having addressed them on the solemn occasion, he proposed the name of Mr. Knibb and requested a show of hands. The approbation of the church was so unanimous that Mr. Burchell afterwards remarked: "I never saw such a scene: the whole church rose up and held up both hands, and then burst into tears. My feelings were overcome and I wept with them." Knibb accepted the call, and with much regret left Savanna-la-Mar in March, 1830, to begin his work at Falmouth and the associated churches, Rio Bueno and Stewart Town.

It may not be out of place—and the reader will pardon the digression—to give a short history of the founding of this church, which was to be made famous by Knibb and which has been described as the Baptist Cathedral of Jamaica.

When John Rowe, the first Baptist Missionary, came to Jamaica in February, 1814, he began work in Falmouth. He opened a day school and preached in his house. He did not meet with much success at first, as there was a strong prejudice against Baptists. "In my own little circle here at Falmouth," he wrote, "prospects are not very promising, though not altogether discouraging. But I feel confident that after a few years they will be better." Mr. Rowe died in June, 1816. From then until 1826 this town of 4,000 inhabitants was neglected by the Baptists. Many people had gone to Mr. Burchell, who was stationed at Montego Bay, twenty-two miles distant, and begged him to write home for a missionary. The members of

a deputation, having arrived at his house at the very time he was writing to England, clasped their hands, and, dropping on their knees, addressed him thus in the most impassioned tones : " Write hard, massa. Write hard, massa." On another occasion one of them, a freeman and possessed of a little property, sadly said : " Come yourself, massa." " I cannot," was the reply." " It shall be no expense to you, massa." " I did not refer to expense, my friend, I cannot preach to my own people with sufficient frequency. But what did you mean by saying it should be no expense ? " " I have a house, massa, worth £300 or £400, gained by the savings of my past life ; and I will sell it to support the cause." He continued to write hard, but no missionary came.

In April, 1827, Mr. Burchell visited Falmouth, and the house which he occupied was crowded out. Many of them exclaimed : " Now we heart too glad, massa come at last for true." In May the Church was formed, consisting of fifty members, chiefly dismissed from Crooked Spring. Rev. James Mann, who had been assisting Mr. Burchell, became pastor. In July he wrote the Committee : " It will be gratifying to you to learn that, after the number of years which have elapsed since this station was partially commenced by our lamented brother, Mr. Rowe, we were still able to trace the effects of his instructions." He died in February, 1830, and Knibb succeeded him to pilot the Church through the storms that were soon to rage.

CHAPTER III.

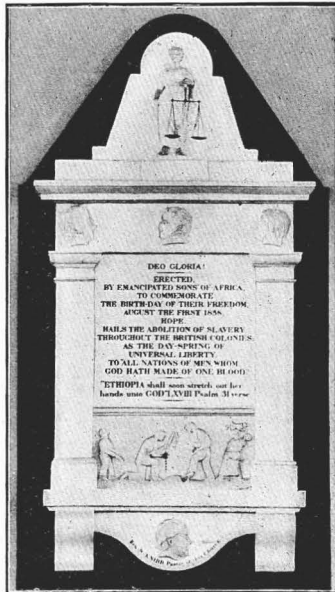
THE GROWING HOSTILITY OF THE SLAVE-OWNERS.

AT the time of Knibb's arrival in Jamaica, the authorities and planters were not very hostile to the ministry of dissenting ministers and to the holding of prayer meetings by slaves. Licences for preaching were issued by the magistrates to Non-conformist ministers on presentation of a certificate bearing official appointment as a preacher under some society in England. Soon after, however, active opposition revived. The Planters became alarmed at the spread of religion among the slaves, and endeavoured to check the influence of the dissenting missionaries, who were being used mightily among the people. The transforming influence of the work was evidenced by the smaller attendance at the nightly carousals and Sunday markets. Evil habits were being abandoned and attendance at the chapels increased. Those who were converted went among their fellows on the estates proclaiming the glad tidings of salvation. In this way the Word prevailed and a marked change of life manifest among the slaves. The following incident will illustrate the transformation that was going on among them.

Sam was a servant in a gentleman's family. Though a slave, he had a comfortable situation, and little to do except to wait upon his master. He excelled in the use of the violin, so his services were in frequent requisition at the merry-makings of the slaves and the

balls of the Europeans. He became a Christian, and the prayer meeting superseded the dance-halls. Fearing lest his musical instrument, which had hitherto been his delight, might now prove a snare, he broke it, knowing that if he sold it he might be tempted to buy another with the money. One day his master told him that he would soon be wanted to play his part as usual. Without any attempt at concealment he replied: "Fiddle broke, massa." "It must be mended, Sam." "Broke all to pieces, massa." "Well, we must get a new one, Sam." "Me tink dat no good, massa; be soon broke." The master began to suspect that this destruction of fiddles must have something to do with religion; and therefore added in an altered tone and with a lowering countenance, "I hope you do not go to pray, and go after those mad-headed folks, Sam?" "To tell the truth, me gone, massa." He was now threatened with punishment and told that he should be flogged. With firmness he replied: "Dat no good, massa; whip no flogge de word out." He was informed that he should leave his present easy situation and be sent to work on the plantation. But he had counted the cost, and remained immovable.

Dismissed from his place in the family to work in the field, he felt somewhat dejected at first, but soon perceived that an opportunity for doing good was set before him. In his situation in town he had mingled with a few domestics; now he was in the midst of three hundred slaves. He began, therefore, to tell them about his great and precious Saviour, and to invite them to go and hear his minister. Many of them yielded to his invitations, and in a little while, of these three hundred, about one hundred and fifty became regular hearers of the everlasting Gospel.



I. Falmouth Chapel. II. Commemorative Tablet in the Chapel.

His master heard of this and felt still more incensed. Having called for Sam, he addressed him with severity. "How dare you trouble my negroes? I will have no praying negroes." "Me no tink they be troubled, massa; they do not seem much troubled, massa. Do they work much worse, or are they much saucy, massa?" "That is nothing to you; how dare you trouble my negroes?" "To tell the truth, massa, me tink dat de bread dat is good for my soul is good for broder neger; and me tink dat if it be a good ting for me to escape hell, it is good for broder neger; and if heaven is a good place for me, it is a good place for broder neger; and me pray, and me pray for my rich massa, and me tink dat if my rich massa would once go and hear the missionary, he would always go afterwards." This was too much for the master's patience; he called the negro "Parson Sam," banged the door, and sent him away. "Parson Sam," very thankful to escape so easily, only thought what more he could do for God's glory.

The successful ministry of the missionaries among the slaves did not please the planters, who feared that religion would unfit them for their work and make them dissatisfied with their condition. Accordingly, on the 22nd of December, 1826, an Act, called "The Consolidated Slave Law," containing several clauses injurious to missionary work among the slaves, passed the House of Assembly. Among its provisions were the following: "That slaves found guilty of preaching and teaching as Anabaptists or otherwise, without a permission from their owner and the Quarter Sessions for the parish, shall be punished by whipping or imprisonment in the workhouse with hard labour": "that no sectarian minister or other teacher of religion is to keep open his place of meeting between sunset and

sunrise": "that religious teachers taking money from slaves are to pay a penalty of twenty pounds for each offence, and, in default of payment, to be committed to the common jail for a month."

This Act was aimed principally against the Baptist slaves and missionaries who were most zealous in their ministry among the slave population. One of the members of the House of Assembly, meeting Mr. Burchell, the missionary at Montego Bay, said: "Sir, you missionaries are a body of persons whom we (the Legislature) do not acknowledge. You have intruded yourselves on the Island unsolicited and unwelcomed. So long as you proceed on your own resources you are licensed on the principle of toleration; but we have passed this law that you may not raise an income here for carrying on your purposes, and to prevent your further increase among us." His Majesty's Government, who had been appealed to by the committee of the Baptist Missionary Society of England on the subject, advised the King to disallow the law, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Mr. Huskisson, affirming in his despatch to the Governor the determination of the Government to maintain the great principle of religious liberty. The disallowance of this Act, which had been passed three times by the local legislature and rejected as often by the Home Government, greatly incensed the Planters. Everything was done to hinder the preaching of the Gospel, and the slaves were forbidden to attend prayer-meetings or to contribute to the upkeep of their places of worship.

In spite of these injunctions and threats the missionaries went on preaching and the slaves attending their prayer-meetings. In many instances the latter suffered unmercifully because they sought to give vent to the feelings which were stirring within them. The

missionaries, though convinced that Christianity and Slavery were incompatible, went on with their work, refraining from any denunciation of it, for they had received strict orders from the Missionary Society that they were on no account to interfere with the political life of the Island. But the Gospel is a marvellous power, silent yet effective; and it was impossible that the present state of affairs could continue long where the truth which makes men free was being faithfully proclaimed.

CHAPTER IV.

THE RISING OF THE SLAVES.

THROUGH the efforts of the Anti-Slavery Society—Wilberforce and Buxton being the principal spirits—the condition of the slaves was being brought before the people of England. In the House of Commons, on the 15th of April, 1831, Mr. Buxton proposed a motion looking to the amelioration of the condition of the slaves in the British West Indies. The Government promised to consider the subject and to redeem the pledges which had been given by Parliament in former years. The Planters were exceedingly annoyed at the promise made by the Government, and worked themselves up to a high pitch of excitement. Everyone everywhere, in the presence of slaves, in stores, and other public places, was talking of the proceedings of Parliament and saying that the King was going to give freedom to the slaves. This the latter heard and considered.

Samuel Sharp, a man of considerable intelligence and a deacon of the Montego Bay Baptist Church, St. James, had read in English papers and the *Jamaica Watchman* accounts of the debates in Parliament on the subject of slavery, and of the proceedings of the Anti-Slavery Societies in England. This set him thinking as to the means by which he and his brethren might best shake off the yoke of bondage. He called a meeting of slaves, who formed a secret association and agreed not to return to work after the Christmas holidays unless they received wages; but that on no account should injury be done to property or human

life taken. There were some, however, who said that if they refused to work their masters would use force to compel them to do so, and that they must fight if they wanted freedom. The war party prevailed, and preparations were made in secret.

Mr. Knibb was first made aware of the intention of the slaves by Stephen James, a slave on Chatham Estate, who informed him that the people were saying: "Free paper is come out and we no work after Christmas." He convinced James that the report was not true, and told him to inform the people that they should return to their work after the holidays, or else they would be excluded from the church. On Sunday, 25th December, he addressed the members of the church, contradicting the report that "Free paper" had arrived, and strenuously exhorted them to return quietly to their work after Christmas, and to influence others to do the same, urging on them Christian motives to obedience.

Nothing that the missionaries did or said at the time could disabuse the slaves' minds of the idea that "Free Paper" had come, but that their masters had determined to keep them in slavery. The opening of a new chapel at Salter's Hill, in St. James, on the 27th of December, gave the missionaries, including Knibb, an opportunity of going among the people and beseeching them to return to work, as no Free Paper had come. This only infuriated them, so that they openly accused the missionaries of conspiring with their owners to keep them in slavery. That same night the setting of fire to properties in St. James was the signal that the rising of the slaves had begun.

During those days of confusion every effort was made to implicate Mr. Knibb and the other missionaries, the prisoners being closely questioned as to

whether their minister had not told them that they were to be free at Christmas. On Saturday, December 31st, martial law was declared in Falmouth. On Monday, January 2nd, Messrs. Knibb, Nicholls, Whitehorne, and Abbot were ordered to join the militia. While on guard the following day they were arrested.

CHAPTER V.

DEEP WATERS.

I SHALL let Knibb tell the story of those fearful days.

Tuesday 3rd. "Not knowing what might befall me this day, I took a solemn farewell of my dear wife and children, earnestly commending them to the care of that God who hath hitherto never failed to be our help. With a calm reliance upon my Heavenly Father, I went to perform my duties as a soldier, though rather anxious from the conviction that my life would be attempted by the infuriated whites whenever I left the town. Soon, however, God released me from one trouble by permitting another to overtake me. While exhorting one of my deacons, Lewis Williams, to live near to God, I was arrested in the most brutal manner by a man named Paul Doeg. Commanding two black men to take me prisoner, he paraded before me in all the pomp of petty power, with a drawn sword, and had me conveyed to the guard-room. Soon afterwards I was removed to the barracks, where I found brethren Whitehorne and Abbott, who, like myself, were under arrest, none of us knowing why or wherefore.

"In about half an hour Captain Christie came, and informed us that Colonel Cadien had sent him to tell us that we were to be sent to headquarters at Montego Bay, and that a conveyance would be ready in half-an-hour. I asked permission to see my wife and children, but was denied this pleasure. I then requested to write to them, but this small gratification

was refused. Soon afterwards we were searched. When all was ready we were paraded through the streets to the seaside, guarded by four soldiers with a sergeant, and put into an open canoe. After a long and tedious voyage of seven hours, we were landed at Montego Bay about seven in the evening. The canoe being leaky, my feet were completely soaked; and this, as I had taken medicine, tended to increase the indisposition under which I was labouring.

“ On landing, we marched to the court-house, then to headquarters to Sir William Cotton’s, back to the court-house, then up a steep hill to his honour, the custos, and then back to the court-house (which was made a barracks), where we were placed in the jury-box, under a guard of four soldiers, militiamen. Every epithet of abuse that infuriated malice could invent was heaped upon me. The most horrid oaths that men or devils could conceive were poured upon us, with the most vulgar allusions that depraved nature could imagine. Twice was the bayonet pointed at my breast; and when I requested permission to lie down on the floor, being ill and fatigued (having been harassed since the morning), I was damned and blasted, and told that if I moved I should be instantly shot. When I stumbled on a bed in the court-house, in approaching the jury-box where they said we were to sleep, the sentry lifted up his gun with the bayonet on, and told me, that if I did not get up that moment he would stab me.

“ When I arrived in the jury-box, I asked permission, very civilly, to lie down on the boards, and said I was tired; and he said, ‘ You damned villain, if you stir one inch, or speak one word, I will stab you to the heart. You are to be shot at ten o’clock in the

morning, and I am very glad of it.' Hell could scarcely be worse. Value your privileges, ye Britons, and feel and pray for those poor Christian slaves who are entirely under the control of such beings. No Algerine pirate or savage Moor would have treated me worse than I was treated by Englishmen. No fault had I committed, with none was I charged; but I was a missionary, and that was enough. I was calm and happy, and thankful that I felt a disposition to pray for my enemies, who were taunting me that I should be shot on the morrow, and pleasing themselves with the sport.

“ In the midst of this, and when all seemed against us, God raised us up a friend in Mr. Roby, who, after much trouble and fatigue, succeeded in delivering us from our foes, and provided for us a bed at his own office. About twelve at night we had the pleasure of praying unmolested, of thanking God for His great kindness in not permitting us to be murdered, and of laying our weary limbs to rest. On Wednesday morning the same kind friend procured our liberation on bail, J. Manderson, Esq., Member of Assembly, standing bail for me. Our good wives had arrived by land, and again we joined in grateful thanksgivings to that God Who was better to us than all our fears. The same day I was attacked with fever, brought on by exposure, wet feet, and anxiety. God mercifully restored me, and enabled me to cast my cares upon Him.”

During this time Baptist property was being destroyed by organized mobs. The chapels at Falmouth, Montego Bay, St. Ann's Bay, and other places were demolished and burnt.

On the 14th of February, after having spent seven weeks in confinement, and with the prospect of death

at any moment, Knibb received his discharge. Below is a copy.

MONTEGO BAY,

February 14, 1832.

Having examined the evidence of Samuel Stennett, Adam, and Paris against — Knibb, Baptist Missionary, and finding nothing therein to support a Criminal prosecution, I declare the said — Knibb discharged, with his sureties, from their recognizances.

RICHARD BARRETT, Custos.

On the following day he returned to Falmouth, where he found that his own chapel, which had been used as barracks for the St. Ann's Regiment of Militia, had been completely destroyed by them. So strong was the feeling of the whites against him that his landlord begged him not to return to his house. He went to the home of one of his members, Elizabeth Dunn, where he had to remain indoors for many days, as a plot had been made to tar and feather and murder him. Since he could not be caught on the streets, an attack was made on the house for three successive nights. His hostess then begged him to leave the house, which he did, making his escape under cover of night between two women.

What passed through Knibb's mind as he went through those devilish experiences can be better imagined than expressed. He had barely escaped with his life, his church had been destroyed, and his people scattered. What was to be the end of this? Still, he was encouraged to find that his own people, with the exception of three, had been quite quiet during the disturbance. Some of them, in places of trust as foremen or stewards, had saved the estates on which they served.

As it was now found impossible to carry on the work in the disturbed state of the district, and as he had been warned by two friends that his life was still in jeopardy, he left with his wife and children for Kingston.

At a special meeting of missionaries held in the city to thank God for His protecting and preserving care, it was agreed that Knibb should visit England, and together with Mr. Burchell, who was sailing thither via America, place before the Committee the condition of the work. With his family he sailed from Kingston on the 26th of April, 1832.

CHAPTER VI.

“ I WILL SPEAK.”

WHEN, in the English Channel, the pilot came on board the ship on which Knibb was, he brought the news that the Reform Bill had passed. “ Thank God,” exclaimed Mr. Knibb, “ now I will have slavery down. I will never rest day or night till I see it destroyed, root and branch.” Anxious to know how far the Committee would co-operate in rebuilding the Mission and effecting the overthrow of slavery, he sought an interview soon after his arrival, in June, at which he gave a detailed account of the sufferings of himself and his brethren. The story was received with profound sympathy. Mr. Dyer, the secretary, then spoke a few words, exhorting the brethren to adopt a prudent and temperate policy. At length Knibb stood up and said : “ Myself, my wife, and my children are entirely dependent on the Baptist Mission. We have landed without a shilling, and may at once be reduced to penury ; but if it is necessary, I will take them by the hand and walk barefoot through the kingdom ; I will make known to the Christians of England what their brethren in Jamaica are suffering.”

On the 21st of the month, he appeared on the platform of Spafields Chapel at the annual meeting of the Baptist Missionary Society, and thrilled the vast audience with the story of the persecutions which he and his brethren had endured, and the more terrible sufferings of the Christian slaves. He said in part that he was entirely willing to forgive those who

would have killed him, and felt unwilling to make the exposures which must be made ; but he must fully and boldly declare that the Society’s missionary stations could no longer exist in Jamaica without the entire and immediate abolition of slavery. He had been requested to be moderate, but he could not restrain himself from speaking the truth. The Christians in that island had always been quiet, and never had he there expressed an opinion on slavery, nor would he now have spoken, but that their persecutors had taken from them their religious privileges. He had for nearly eight years trod the burning soil of that island, and often had the brethren been gratified with the tidings of success ; but all this had now passed away, and they had hung their harps upon the willows, axes and hammers had demolished their chapels, a Church Colonial Society had been formed, the ministers were threatened with destruction, and infidels, clergymen, and magistrates had combined to banish Christianity from the Island. He could assure the meeting that slaves would never be permitted to worship God till slavery had been abolished. At that instant the secretary pulled the speaker by the coat. It was a solemn moment, the hour for the death-knell of slavery had come, and the man to sound it was there. Knibb paused, gave a lightning glance at the awful atrocities of the past, the glorious possibilities of the future for a down-trodden people ; then, concentrating all his energies of thought, feeling, and voice, he exclaimed : “ Whatever may be the consequences, I will speak. At the risk of my connection with the Society and all I love dear, I will vow this, and if the friends of Missions will not hear me I will turn and tell it to my God ; nor will I desist till this, the greatest of curses—slavery—is removed, and “ Glory to God in

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the highest" is inscribed on the British flag." The battle was won. Slavery was doomed. An electric shock had passed through the audience, through the Christian Church, through the nation. The Rev. John Campbell, of the Tabernacle, who spoke afterwards, said that that meeting would be celebrated for hundreds of years to come, as a commencement of a new era in the moral history of the world.

In September, Mr. Burchell arrived in England from America. Knibb and he at once began a tour of Great Britain, thrilling the hearts of their hearers by the recital of the recent outrages, and calling upon the Christian conscience of the nation to do away with slavery once and for all. Soon there was running a strong tide of public feeling in favour of emancipation. Parliament was flooded with petitions from all parts and all classes of the country praying for the total and immediate abolition of slavery. Accordingly, in August, 1833, the Secretary of State for the Colonies introduced into the House of Commons "An Act for the Abolition of Slavery throughout the British Colonies, for promoting the industry of emancipated slaves, and for compensating the persons entitled to their services." Children born after the passing of the Act and all those under six years of age at that time were declared free. Others should be registered as apprentices and should work for their former owners for six years. The apprentices were to have the full use of the Sabbath and liberty to attend any place of worship they chose. A grant of twenty million pounds was made to the Planters. The act was to come in force on August 1st, 1834. Thus did the Lord work mightily through His servants, especially Knibb, to deliver His people. Bitter had been the conflict, sweet was the victory.

The question of slavery having been settled, Knibb was eager to return to his people ; but what of the chapels that had been demolished? The slave owners were to receive twenty million pounds for the loss of their slaves ; what compensation were the missionaries to get for the loss of their chapels, which had been fixed at £17,900 ? An appeal was made to the Government, who promised to give £5,510, the amount of unpaid debt on the property destroyed. On further application they granted £6,195, being one-half of the remaining loss sustained, on condition that the other half was raised by the Society. Immediately an appeal for £6,000 was made to the denomination. The proposition was received with enthusiasm, and within two months £13,000 was brought in to restore the ruined chapels. Such Christian liberality had not been known before.

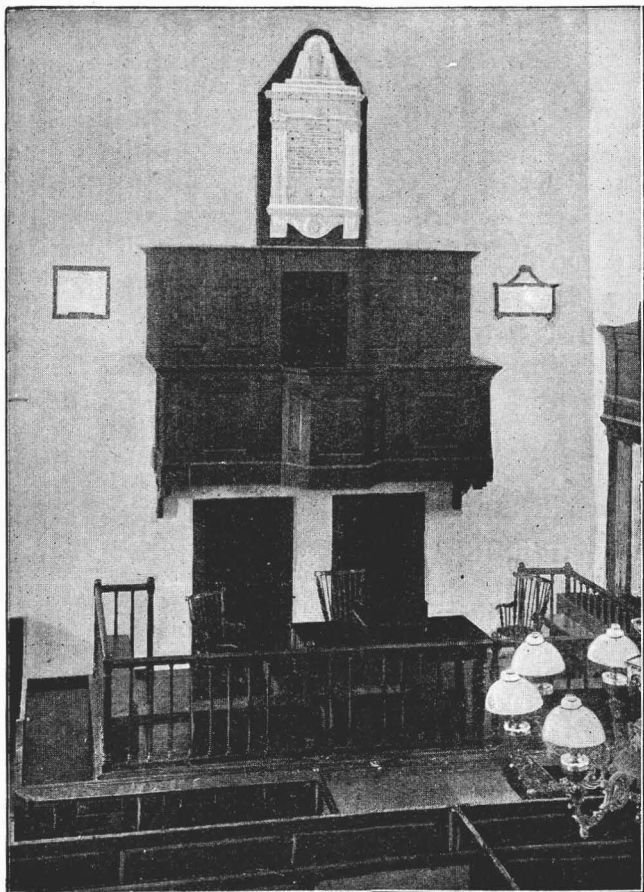
Having now fully obtained his desires—the abolition of slavery and the funds with which to restore the ruined chapels—Knibb and his family left London for Jamaica on the 27th of August, 1834, having been in England a little over two years.

CHAPTER VII.

LEADING HIS PEOPLE.

DURING Knibb's absence in England his scattered flock had been gathered together and shepherded by Messrs. Nicholls and Abbott. They were without a building, but the people came and the congregations increased. As a house could not be obtained in which to hold services a large room was built on the chapel premises.

The long-looked for first of August was approaching, and every precaution was taken to suppress any outbreak that might occur. The Governor had, however, written significant words: "Let not the expression of their joy be mistaken for a disposition to rebel; let not those under you so mistake their feelings and misuse authority." It fell on a Friday. It was announced that a holiday lasting till Monday would commence on Thursday night. On Friday every chapel was opened for divine service and was thronged by thankful and devout worshippers. At Falmouth, about 1,600 people attended, and a collection of £60 was taken towards the erection of the new chapel. The day passed quietly, without any riot. The following Sabbath was even more remarkable. Sunday markets had been abolished with slavery, so no groups of people with baskets on their heads were seen crowding the roads as before. All shops were closed, and thousands of cleanly-dressed and happy-looking peasantry thronged the roads, flocking to their respective places of worship. It was



Knibb's Pulpit in the Falmouth Chapel.

a high day, a Sabbath long to be remembered, a foretaste of better things to come. They were leaving Egypt for Canaan.

Knibb was in England when the first of August was being celebrated. Late in the month he left, and landed in Jamaica on the 27th of October. Two years before he had left it hounded, persecuted, threatened with death by his fellow-countrymen. Now he returned victorious; he had accepted the challenge of the slave-owners and had beaten them. His return, therefore, was a source of joy and triumph to the slaves, but of intense mortification to the Planters.

He lost no time in getting back into work. His first concern was the rebuilding of his chapel at Falmouth, towards which the committee had made him a grant of £3,000. The chapel was to be 75 feet by 55 feet, with deep galleries. It was to seat 2,000 people, and would cost £6,000. The foundation-stone was laid on the 14th of February, 1835, and the chapel was completed and opened early in April, 1837. The services began at six o'clock in the morning. At nine o'clock came the children belonging to the congregation, to the number of two thousand, who were addressed outside, as there was no room within the church. So vast was the concourse of people that the Suffield Schoolroom was thrown open. This being too small, the use of the Court-house was granted, and even then an overflowing meeting was held at "Old Father Brooks," who had rigged up a tent for the occasion. Nearly 6,000 people attended the services, and the collection amounted to £600 sterling. The opening of this substantial building, grander in every way than the one destroyed in 1832, was a season of rejoicing and thanksgiving. Truly, the Lord had

done great things for them whereof they were glad.

Many of the members of the church often came from ten to twelve miles to attend divine service. They would either come into town on Saturday and stop with friends, returning on Monday; or they would leave home early on Sunday morning, returning in the afternoon in the cool of the day. Desiring to facilitate them and to satisfy fully the spiritual needs of the populous districts from which they came, he began to establish churches in these places. The first was at Refuge, nine miles from Falmouth, formed in November, 1834. Another was organized at Waldensia in 1835. Both churches are now strong and flourishing.

Alongside the formation of churches he was anxious to establish schools. He realized that education is the handmaid of religion, and that where there is no education, religion is likely to degenerate into fanaticism. He fretted because he had not the money to build the schools which were necessary. Writing on November the 24th, 1834, to Mr. Dyer, the Secretary of the Missionary Society, he says: "I hope by the time this reaches you the friends will have done something definite for the schools." And again: "Are we to have anything for schools from the Government? 2,500 apprentices in this parish, and not one public school yet. This is deplorable. I have bought a piece of ground in Falmouth for a school, and shall put on it a schoolroom." The building was begun on September 26th, 1835, and completed in March of the following year. It was named the Suffield School in honour of Lord Suffield, a large proprietor, who had promoted beneficial measures on his estates. Other schools were erected at Wilberforce, Waldensia, and Silver Grove.

For some time he had been exercised in mind as to the propriety of Christians keeping slaves. He, therefore, brought the matter before his church, expressing his conviction that it was sinful for Christians to have slaves. As a result, all his members—and many of the members of the other denominations of the town—released their apprentices, several of them blaming him for not having brought it to their attention earlier.

Just at the moment when his heart was filled with joy at the step his church had taken, a heavy blow fell upon him. His eldest boy of twelve, William, who shared his love for the slaves and entered into his passion for the abolition of slavery, fell ill through sheer joy of the news that his father's members would release their apprentices, and died soon after. It was a severe blow to the father, who saw in young William his second self. The little lad was a great favourite with the members of his father's church, who deeply mourned his loss. To perpetuate the memory of this remarkable youth, a tablet was erected in the chapel with the following inscription :

IN MEMORY OF

WILLIAM KNIBB,

SON OF THE REV. WILLIAM KNIBB AND MARY, HIS WIFE,
WHO DIED JULY 25TH, 1837. AGED 12.

ENDEARED TO THE SONS OF AFRICA
BY EARLY DEVOTEDNESS TO THEIR IMPROVEMENT,

HE WAS

A RARE EXAMPLE OF
HATRED TO OPPRESSION AND LOVE OF LIBERTY.

WILLIAM KNIBB

HIS DEATH WAS OCCASIONED BY
 FEVER FROM EXCESS OF JOY
 AT THE
 VOLUNTARY MANUMISSION OF THEIR SLAVES
 BY THE MEMBERS OF THIS CHURCH,
 WHO THUS DECLARED THAT
 SLAVERY IS INCOMPATIBLE WITH CHRISTIANITY.

THEY ERECT THIS TABLET
 WHO, THOUGH HE WAS A YOUTH,
 THEY LOVED AS A BENEFACTOR AND FRIEND, AND
 A BELIEVER IN
 "THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF CHRIST."

During those years, the work had rapidly increased. At Falmouth there were 1,209 members, and about 500 at the other two churches. There were four schools with about 600 children. The erection of the chapels and school buildings had cost a great deal, and left him a large debt. Let him tell you of the work done since his return in 1834. Writing on 2nd October, 1837: "Less than three years ago, I returned to this parish. There was not a chapel in connexion with the Society commenced, and the scattered congregations were just reorganizing after the bloody scenes of martial law. Since then I have had actually to superintend the erection of four chapels, three school-rooms and three mission houses, at an expense of full £13,500, the burden of which has pressed and still presses heavily, but they are all completed. The church has increased full 400 members. . . . Thus three stations, in a population of 16,000 persons, are open every Lord's day, and four male and four female teachers are regularly employed; add to this we have

full seventy persons who conduct prayer meetings on seventy different estates; thirty deacons who in the several districts superintend, and many of them exhort, and about twenty Sabbath School teachers."

CHAPTER VIII.

GLORIOUS FREEDOM.

THE manifest failure of the Apprentice System and an agitation aroused in England by a report of Messrs. Sturge and Harvey, who had visited Jamaica on behalf of the Anti-Slavery Society, compelled Parliament to shorten the term of apprenticeship by two years, and to declare the abolition of slavery on August 1st, 1838. It was a time of unparalleled and unbounded rejoicing. Knibb was in Jamaica on this occasion, and being a master of ceremonies a meeting worthy of the occasion was certain to be held. Here is a report of the meeting held in Falmouth on that occasion :

“ The birthday of negro liberty at length arrived. The ever memorable 1st of August brought the long earned reward of philanthropic toil. On the evening previous the various places of worship were thrown open that the boon of Liberty might be welcomed in the attitude of devotional thankfulness. Over the front gate of the Baptist Chapel was raised a transparency, bearing the inscription, ‘ Freedom,’ brilliantly illuminated, and at 11 o’clock the service commenced by singing :

“ ‘ The death-blow is struck—see the Monster is dying,
He cannot survive till the dawn streak the sky ;
In one single hour he will prostrate be lying,
Come shout o’er the grave where soon he will be.’

“ Prayers were then offered by the slaves, so

soon-to-be free. The last moment of the eventful hour—12 o'clock—was spent in profound and expectant silence. The first moment of the year of liberty was hailed by thousands of unfettered tongues, and the burden of their rejoicing hearts was poured forth in three cheers for Britain's Queen. After the burst of acclamation had subsided, the meeting was concluded by singing the hymn :

“ ‘ Restored the Negro's long lost rights,
How softened is his lot,
Now sacred heart-born dear delights
Shall bless his humble cot.’

About half-past five in the morning a large assemblage of persons collected near the Suffield schoolroom, when a coffin, containing a chain, hand-cuffs, iron collars, etc.—the hateful ensigns of usurped command—was produced and lowered into a hole dug for the purpose, whilst the following verse was sung :

“ ‘ Now slavery we lay thy vile form in the dust,
And buried forever there let it remain,
And rotted—and covered with infamy's rust,
Be every man-whip, and fether and chain.’

At this ceremony, the flag of Freedom, with the British Union Jack attached, was hoisted to the top of a mast, and the people gave three hearty cheers. A thanksgiving service was then held, and afterward a public meeting, at which Mr. Knibb presided, and many interesting addresses were given—all the speakers being descendants of Africa. At the close of the meeting, a vote of thanks to Sir Lionel Smith was cordially

carried and the proceedings were concluded by singing the doxology : " Praise God from Whom all blessings flow."

On Thursday, August 2nd, the children composing the various schools, numbering upwards of a thousand, met at the Suffield schoolroom, where they formed in procession, each company bearing appropriate banners, then marched to the chapel, where they were affectionately addressed by Rev. William Knibb. After the service, they returned in procession to the schoolroom, the whole playground of which was covered with boards adorned with boughs and a variety of ornaments, the proud flag of Freedom floating in the breeze. Here tables were provided for 1,000 children, who sat down to an ample banquet, after which they were addressed briefly by E. B. Lyon, Esq. They then retired joyfully singing in commemoration of the auspicious event."

Later, a tablet " to perpetuate the liveliest gratitude to God for His abundant mercies " was erected. It can be seen to-day over the pulpit in the chapel where Knibb preached. It is surmounted with the figure of Justice, holding in her left hand the balances of equity, whilst her right hand rests upon the sword which is placed at her side. Beneath this figure the likeness of Granville Sharpe, Sturge and Wilberforce are arranged in bas-relief, and that of Knibb appears at the base. It bears the following inscription :

DEO GLORIA.

ERECTED

BY EMANCIPATED SONS OF AFRICA
TO COMMEMORATE
THE BIRTHDAY OF THEIR FREEDOM,
AUGUST THE FIRST, 1838.

HOPE

HAILS THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY
THROUGHOUT THE BRITISH COLONIES,
AS THE DAY-SPRING OF
UNIVERSAL LIBERTY
TO ALL NATIONS OF MEN WHOM
"GOD 'HATH MADE OF ONE BLOOD.'

ETHIOPIA SHALL NOW STRETCH OUT HER HANDS TO GOD."

With the dawning of Freedom there arose many pressing problems. Of these the most pressing was the wage problem. There was a new commodity on the market for sale; and until there was the will on both sides to be just and reasonable, misunderstanding and bad feeling would prevail. The emancipated were like children who had something to sell and knew not its value. The planters on the other hand knew the worth of this labour, for they had often hired it out in the days of slavery and apprenticeship. The offer of a fair and honest wage would have met the situation and established cordial relations between the late masters and the freed men. But this they were not willing to do. They combined to offer sixpence per day with the use of the cottages and grounds occupied by the labourers. This unjust offer was rejected by the newly freed, and rightly so, when it is considered that their day's work in the time of slavery and apprenticeship had been valued at three shillings.

Knibb, whom they regarded as father and to whom they looked, had clearly foreseen this move on the part of the late owners and had planned a counter-move. "The people cannot live," said he, "on sixpence a day. . . . This system will reduce the whole labouring population to pauperism. They shall not accept of it." He summoned public meetings

of apprentices and advised them to combine not to accept less than one shilling per day with houses and grounds. "Take time and consider the subject. If you demand too high a rate of wages, the proprietor will be ruined; if you consent to take too low a sum, you will not be able to provide for the wants of yourselves and families." The proprietor of Oxford offered one shilling sterling in defiance of the sixpence agreement, and requested Knibb to use his influence with the labourers to accept it. This he gladly did, and exhorted the people to turn to work and do their best.

Many of the Planters, desiring to coerce the people to accept the sixpence per day, began to eject them from their houses and grounds, which were the property of the estates. Knibb had scented the game and had been preparing. He established Village Settlements which would make the people independent of the estate houses and grounds. In November he purchased Birmingham—500 acres for £1,000—which he sold to many who had been evicted. From time to time other properties were bought and sold, two of them being Kettering, nine miles, and Granville, three miles, from Falmouth. This policy was pursued by other missionaries in other parts of the island. Wherever to-day the people are found comfortably settled on their own homesteads, some early missionary is responsible for this blessing.

As we have seen before, free education of the people claimed a large part of his time and attention. A few weeks before emancipation, he wrote: "I must establish more schools and increase my native agency. I need and must have five or six more schools immediately. "Again: "I look upon our schools as the grand lever by which we shall raise the people in

intelligence." "I am grieved at the want of schools and at the unwillingness of too many to pay for the education of their children." The missionaries never laid a better or a more lasting foundation for the progress of the country than when they insisted on the education of the people.

Closely associated with this passion for the education of the masses was his desire for the training of a native ministry. He seemed to see already a body of men, the firstfruits of Ethiopia's harvest, sowing the seed in turn and bringing in sheaves for their Master. Within a month of the arrival of freedom he invited the attention of the Committee to the consideration of the matter. "God, in His infinite mercy, appears now to give me time to extend the Gospel, and I long to embrace the opportunity. Two or three of my schoolmasters, natives, are daily increasing in piety, whilst I have others who, I am confident, under judicious training, might be made efficient in the Redeemer's cause. Now, if some of the wealthy disciples of Jesus would for a year or two take such persons, I mean by paying for their education, which could be easily attended to here, an immense blessing, at a comparatively trifling expense, would be conferred on the Church of Christ in Jamaica, and a native agency prepared, fitted to carry out that extension of the Gospel which is so much needed. Would not the Society patronize such a plan? My decided conviction is that the time is come for this to be tried, and my soul rejoices in it, and I write to you under the full impression that you will prayerfully take up the mighty subject, and have the happiness of laying the foundation of a permanent ministry in Jamaica. For some time I think it will be necessary for the ministers from England to have the principal stations,

as fathers to the Church ; and may God, in His infinite mercy, spare those who are here, that the country stations may be thus supplied under their superintendency. But happy shall I be when even that can be with propriety withdrawn."

About this time he was greatly concerned with sending the Gospel to Africa. His passionate love for the negro made him eager for his salvation. In April, 1839, he wrote to Dr. Hoby : " We have had some very interesting meetings in Kingston and St. Thomas-in-the-Vale respecting Africa, which have rejoiced my heart, and which will, I hope, lead to some triumphant results. But what will my brother say, how will his heart expand, how will he bless the Lord, when I tell him that the first missionary is now in Africa, proclaiming salvation through the blood of Christ ? O, it is glorious ! It is glorious. Yes, my dear brother, while we have been talking, a beloved brother, one of the despised, traduced, black Christians, an African by birth, has left this island, taking with him only a letter of recommendation from his late pastor, brother Gardner, has worked his passage to Africa, and without any support or countenance except from God, is now on the spot from whence he was stolen when a boy, telling his fellow-country-men the name of Jesus, at one of those mighty rivers where that Name is unknown. O, my soul, bless thou the Lord ! My heart is too full. I can scarcely write for tears of joy. May God bless Thomas Keith. For that is the honoured man's name. He has written one letter, which I have seen. He does not know Greek or Latin, but he knows and feels that Jesus died to save sinners, and in the spirit of an apostle he has gone to proclaim his precious Name. And now, my dear brother, I implore you, with all the affection of a brother, to

undertake this mighty work at home. God has given you the ability. You can plead for Africa, and I do most earnestly beg of you not to let this subject drop."

At this time there was no man in Jamaica more hated than Knibb. He had taken up the negro's fight and won. He had stood by the ignorant, down-trodden masses who, thrust suddenly into freedom, knew not which way to turn, had solved their problems and had guided them. At every step he had been a father to them. No wonder he was abused, hated, and threatened. He was called "King Knibb," "The Monster," "The Dan O'Connell of Jamaica." A week after the abolition of slavery an attempt was made to hang him in effigy in front of his chapel. When all these things failed to move him, a most scurrilous slander about his former life in England was broadcasted throughout the Island. This attempted slur on his character stung him to the quick, and when he sought justice in the Courts it was denied him. Yet in the midst of all these things he was more than conqueror.

For some time his health had been failing as a result of his many-sided activities, and he had been advised to take a holiday. Just then his brethren requested him to attend the Anti-Slavery Convention to be held in London in June, 1840, and to press forward the projected mission to Africa. In February, 1840, he sailed for England, accompanied by his two eldest daughters, his relative, Mrs. Dendy, and her son, and two coloured brethren, Messrs. Barrett and Beckford.

CHAPTER IX.

SECOND AND THIRD VISITS TO ENGLAND.

KNIBB arrived in England too late to attend the Annual Meeting of the Society; but a public meeting was convened at Exeter Hall on May 22nd to give him a public welcome. The hall was crowded on the occasion, and he received a tremendous ovation when he rose to speak. He told of the immense good that was resulting from the abolition of slavery. Crime had been diminishing. In Trelawny, with 30,000 freedmen, only one person had been tried at the last Assizes. There were 5,203 children in the day schools, 645 in the evening schools, 9,159 in the Sabbath schools. It had been said that the negroes were idle and did not wish to work. In refutation of this charge he quoted a statement made by a missionary with whom he had been at variance on the subject of slavery. "Instead of accusing the labourers of indolence, I am rather disposed to blame them for being too anxious to make money. I do not know a healthy person in the congregation who can justly be called idle." He next appealed for more workers, showing that the field, with a present membership of 24,000, had exactly the same number of missionaries as when there were 5,000 members.

Part of the speech dealt with the subject which was nearest his heart at the time—the Mission to Africa. He told of the intense feeling of 50,000 Baptists on this matter. "I called together the Africans of the churches of Kingston who felt interested in Africa. Between twenty and thirty assembled,

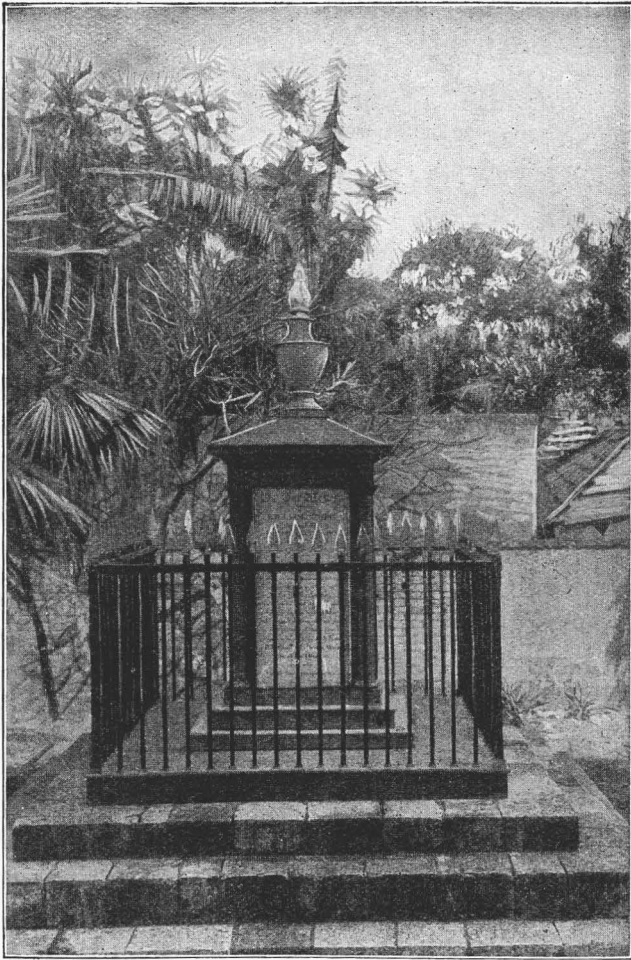
and mentioning the objects I had in view, one of them said, 'I will go as your shoe-black if you will take me.' I asked him when he would be ready to go. 'To-morrow,' was his reply. I said to them: 'Perhaps you would be made slaves if you were to go.' What was their answer? 'We have been made slaves for men, we can be made slaves for Christ.'" So urgently did he plead for the beginning of the work in Africa that he carried his audience with him. A week later he met the Committee, who granted both his petitions—the sending of workers to Jamaica and the opening up of work in Africa. Here is their resolution on the African question. "That in compliance with the representations of our brethren in Jamaica, and following what we apprehend to be the clear indications of Providence, we determine, in reliance on the Divine blessing, to commence a mission to Western Africa." To raise the necessary funds for both objects, Knibb, with others, made a tour of the churches appealing to the friends of the Society. In six months he attended 154 public services, travelled about 6,000 miles, and addressed nearly 200,000 people.

After a farewell service at Finsbury Chapel, he set sail on November 10th, on the *Reserve*, with a band of fifteen consecrated young men and women, for Jamaica, where they arrived safely in January of the following year. A public meeting to welcome him and his companions was held on the 12th of January, which was followed a month later by an overflowing missionary meeting on behalf of Africa.

About this time an unpleasant situation was created by missionaries of other societies, who brought several charges against the Baptist missionaries and churches. They were: (1) That sufficient care was not taken in admitting members. To substantiate this they

pointed to the largeness of the churches. (2) That the leaders of the classes were often unfit persons—ignorant, loving rule and authority, and fond of rum. (3) That the missionaries lived in luxury and dared not publish annual church accounts. So serious did the matter become, and so troubled was the Committee in England about it, that the brethren in Jamaica asked Knibb to proceed to England and to defend them and the churches. After having been back a little over a year he started again on the 21st of March, 1842, for England. He arrived in time to meet the Committee on April 26th, and before them defended his brethren and the churches. The following resolution was then passed: "That this meeting unites in heartfelt thanksgiving to the Father of mercies for having again permitted their beloved brother, William Knibb, to revisit his native shores, receives him among them with affectionate congratulations, and renews the expression of their unreserved confidence in him and in the band of missionary brethren in Jamaica in whose name he has now addressed them." Two days later he spoke at the annual meeting of the Society, going more fully into the charges laid against him and his brethren. The meeting was satisfied with his explanation of all the points involved; and a resolution was unanimously passed, expressing unabated confidence in the Christian character and fidelity of the missionaries in Jamaica, and cheering them amidst their new trials and continued toils with their sympathy and unfaltering support.

On the day following the annual meeting he met the Committee, when they agreed to send out five more missionaries to Jamaica on the understanding that they should be supported there. They also agreed to purchase and fit up premises at Calabar, in



The Monument Outside the Church at Falmouth.

Trelawny, for a theological institution for the training of native men for the Jamaican and African ministry. For some years Knibb had been advocating the establishment of such an institution, and great was his joy when it was decided to proceed with the scheme. Calabar is the first institution of its kind in the world where native men are trained to be ministers of the Gospel. The venture has proved a wonderful success, for the present strength of the Baptists is due to the college which has been sending out year by year well-qualified men. Calabar also serves as the one point of contact between the English and Jamaica Baptists. But for this, every trace of Baptist connection with England would have been effaced long ago.

At the meeting in January, 1842, at which Knibb was asked to proceed to England and defend the churches, a decision of far-reaching importance to the Mission was arrived at. For many years the Committee had been impressing on the missionaries the necessity of curtailing expenditure owing to the financial pressure on the Society at home. Knibb had readily fallen in with the suggestion, and had decided to cease taking aid from the Society as soon as the debts incurred in building the chapels and schools on his stations had been paid. Writing on September 14th, 1838, he says: "I sincerely hope and trust that most of the churches in Jamaica will soon support their pastors; if mine will not, I will not remain with them. I hope that next year I shall be completely out of debt, and that £100 sterling will be all that I require during the year to meet every expense. If I can do without this, you may depend upon it I will." At this meeting of the association the subject of relieving the parent Society of the burden

of the support of the ministry in Jamaica was discussed. Many doubted the wisdom of the step, inasmuch as the churches were young and not well-established. They counselled waiting a few years more. Knibb, with his usual optimism, argued in favour of the resolution, producing figures to show that the churches could be self-supporting. He also contended that if the Society were relieved of the support of the Jamaica Ministry it would more quickly undertake work in Africa, a project that was dear to the Mission. It was finally decided that, after 1st of August, 1842 (subject to special exceptions), the brethren would relieve the Society altogether of the burden of their support. It was a noble but inopportune act, from which the Mission has never recovered. Even though pecuniary assistance had been withdrawn at the request of the missionaries, the Society should have continued to direct the affairs of the Mission.

Before returning to Jamaica, Knibb had the privilege of participating in the Jubilee celebration of the Baptist Missionary Society. The most important service was held at Kettering, Northamptonshire, where the Society was founded in 1792, and where he first saw the light of day. He was the centre of attraction at the meetings and was always in demand as a speaker. On the first of July he attended a farewell meeting at Finsbury Chapel, and sailed for home.

CHAPTER X.

THE CLOSING YEARS.

THE Western Association of Baptist Churches, of which Knibb was a member, had decided to celebrate the Jubilee of the Baptist Missionary Society at Kettering on the 5th and 6th of October. Kettering was the name given to a property nine miles from Falmouth, which Knibb had bought and sold to the people to form a township. On the hill-top overlooking this township was a splendid residence, which the church at Falmouth had told him to build for his wife at their own expense, where she could live if anything should happen to him. As he had recently attended the Jubilee meetings in England, and as he was a master of ceremonies, his brethren asked him to make the necessary arrangements. The magnitude of the task can be realized when it is learnt that accommodation was made for 12,000 people and 2,000 horses. Very happy and inspiring meetings were held, and it was a season of deep joy and thankfulness to God.

About this time he received an invitation from Boston to attend the Baptist Anti-Slavery Convention to be held in May, 1844. He had long wanted to visit the United States of America to recount the wonderful results of Freedom in Jamaica and to help strike a blow at slavery. In 1840, when he made his famous speech at Exeter Hall, setting forth the blessings of freedom which Jamaica was experiencing, he concluded as follows: "And since that object has been effected

(the Freedom of the Slaves), in the strength of the Divine Being, I have made another resolve, that if you will aid us by your sympathies and your prayers and your exertions, we will never rest until America is freed from her foulest stain." In a letter written at the time he received the invitation he said: "Should I go to America, I shall not remain away long; if I can strike a blow at the monster in that land I shall rejoice. I have long desired it, and if I am able to effect any good for the miserable victims of that hellish system, to God be all the glory." He never went; and one wonders what might have happened had he gone.

It will be remembered that when the churches in Jamaica declared their independence of the Missionary Society, the latter agreed to open a Mission in Africa. For this purpose Rev. John Clarke, of Jericho, who happened to be in England, and Dr. G. K. Prince, who had practised medicine in Jamaica, were sent to explore the western coast of Africa near and on the banks of the Niger. The deputation returned and recommended Fernando Po as the base of operations. The *Chilmark* was fitted out for the voyage, and on July 19th, 1843, left Portsmouth with a few missionaries on board for Jamaica, where several teachers were to embark for Africa. On the first of December the boat, with a noble band of missionaries, sailed out of Falmouth Harbour with Knibb at the wheel. It was a grand sight. Here were men just freed from physical and spiritual slavery, set on fire by a passionate love for their Saviour and country, returning to give their people the Gospel which had saved them. Thus began the Baptist Missionary work in Africa.

The island was now passing through a period of

severe financial depression brought about by a long drought and a fall in the price of sugar. The churches were the first to feel the depression, and Falmouth was no exception. The church had suffered a marked decline in membership of eight hundred in two years, all of whom had migrated to the uplands, where lands were being sold. Further, the banks, which had loaned money to the Mission for the building of chapels, mission-houses, etc., and had been contented with receiving interest, were now calling for the principal. Knibb had stood surety for most of this money, thinking that his brethren would have repaid it in a few years. He was being pressed for a settlement. On July 19th, 1844, he wrote: "What with the severe drought, the heavy taxation, and the want of labour, I do not know what will result. I never was so disheartened by oppression in my whole missionary life. Our poor people cannot give. I must close my schools—and this will break my heart, for they are the life of the mission . . . If I could deem it my duty to leave Jamaica, I would." Six months later he wrote: "My spirits at times are completely broken. The cold-heartedness of the Committee on the one hand, and my heavy responsibilities for the Mission on the other, rob me of my peace." So serious did the situation become in 1845 that his brethren requested him to visit England in order to lay before the Committee their financial difficulties and to appeal for aid. For the third time within four years he started again for England to plead for the cause that lay so near to his heart. He arrived in London in April, and met the Committee on the twenty-sixth of that month. They received him cordially, listened with sympathy to his story, and proposed a grant of £6,000 towards reducing the debt of the Mission. It was a very

generous contribution, and was an index of his personal popularity with the Committee. He then visited several important cities and addressed large gatherings. I quote from one of these addresses which gives an admirable summary of his work in Trelawny : " When I went to Falmouth in 1830 (succeeding Mr. Mann), I found the station without a house, without a school, and without a schoolroom. The first house I lived in had but one room in it, ten feet square, for six of us. I had been there but a year before down came all the wrath of the slave-owners upon us. Chapels were destroyed. . . . Since that time there have been erected the following chapels : Falmouth chapel, which seats 2,500 people ; Refuge chapel I built next, which seats 1,500 people ; Rio Bueno, seating 1,000 persons ; and Waldensia, 1,200 persons. Unity and Stewart Town chapels have been built by the brethren, one holding 600 and the other 1,200 people. Last year I repaired and made comfortable a chapel at Kettering (one of the free villages) ; it holds 400 persons. At the time of which I speak, there was no schoolroom at all in Trelawny to which a black child could be admitted ; there stand now in connection with our own mission, seven or eight. Then I had 650 members. From that time down to the present I have by baptism, assisted sometimes by other brethren, received into the church 3,000 persons. I have dismissed to form other churches 2,050 ; there have died in the faith 320. I will tell you how the numbers now stand : Falmouth, the mother church, is mine with 1280 ; Refuge our oldest child has 780 ; Rio Bueno 315 ; Waldensia 746 ; Stewart Town 814 ; Unity 340 ; and Kettering, the newest, has 200 members."

He left England in July and arrived in Jamaica in August, where he was welcomed by his flock and

brethren, who rejoiced at the success of his mission. Encouraged by the liberal grant of the Society and refreshed by the time of spiritual fellowship he had enjoyed with his brethren in England, he threw himself with his wonted fervour and energy into his work. But signs began to appear that his strength was failing. He had a severe bilious attack in August, and several periods of indisposition during September and October. This, however, did not prevent him from helping his brethren. On the 30th of October he was at a missionary meeting at Beththephil; on the 31st he attended a public meeting at Salter's Hill; on the following Tuesday he was speaking at a missionary meeting at Mount Carey; and from that time till Friday, November 7th, he was closely engaged in consultation with his brethren on the affairs of their churches.

We now come to the last week of his life, the events of which are related in a letter written by his successor at Falmouth, Mr. Abbott, to a friend in England: "We travelled together from Falmouth to Mount Carey on the 4th of November, and returned to Falmouth on the 7th, when he appeared to be in the enjoyment of good health. On the following day I accompanied him to Granville, a township formed under his auspices, and assisted him in laying the corner-stone of a dwelling-house of one of the villagers. . . . The next morning, the Sabbath, we walked together to the house of God at 6 o'clock, and both engaged at the prayer-meeting. At 11 o'clock he baptized 42 persons, and was unusually touching and solemn in his remarks to each. At the close of the baptizing I preached from John vi. 29, and a short time after we unitedly administered the Supper of our Lord. He had published that I would preach in the evening also, but

having recently suffered from an attack of influenza, I begged to be excused, with which he kindly complied and preached himself—his last sermon—from I. Tim. i. 11: 'The glorious Gospel of the blessed God,' or as he delighted to say, 'The glorious Gospel of the happy God.' On his return from chapel he appeared highly elated, and we sat together for about an hour, when at my request he recapitulated the leading points of his sermon. I have spent many days with our now sainted brother during fifteen years, in scenes of prosperity and adversity, of sorrow and joy, but I do not remember ever to have spent one with him more happily.

"I must now come to the sad part of my tale. Our brother had what some have not inaptly termed an iron constitution, and he depended so much upon his non-liability to colds and other ailments, against which most persons have carefully to guard, as to expose himself greatly, and, occasionally, unnecessarily. Thus, on the night of his last Sabbath, though much exhausted after preaching, and in a state of profuse perspiration, he walked home through a shower of rain without cloak or umbrella, and on the following morning he dressed, came downstairs, and remained until he complained to me of a chilliness, and pain in the back. He went to Kettering the same day, and was very unwell on Tuesday; on Wednesday low typhoid fever came on, and continued until Friday, when yellow fever of the most malignant character supervened, and in a few short hours terminated his sufferings. He continued sensible until one o'clock in the morning of Saturday, just nine hours before his departure, when delirium came on—then black vomit, the certain harbinger of death."

During his illness there were present several of his brethren, who helped to cheer and prepare him for the end. "I am not afraid to die," he said to one of them; "the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin, both of omission and commission, and that blood is my only trust." "O that I might reach the port, how happy should I then be," he said to another. In one clear moment of consciousness just before his death he stretched out his hand to his wife and said: "Mary, it is all right." Not long after, the end came, on Saturday, November 15th, 1845. Soon the news passed from mouth to mouth. "Massa Knibb dead." And they lifted up their voices and wept for the loss of their Moses.

I quote from the *Falmouth Post*, a paper that had opposed his active exertions on behalf of the slaves and freedmen.

"At seven o'clock on Saturday evening, the body, accompanied by hundreds of the members and followers of the Baptist Church, was brought to the mission-house in Falmouth. On its entrance into the town persons of all classes joined the mournful procession, and the cry of lamentation that was raised afforded a convincing proof of the estimation in which the deceased was held, even by those who were strongly opposed to his political movements. The necessary preparations were made for the interment of the body on Sunday morning at eleven o'clock. By daylight the streets were crowded with persons from all parts of this and the adjoining parishes. Sorrow was visibly depicted on the countenance of each individual. Magistrates, merchants, and other respectable inhabitants attended the funeral; and the Baptist chapel and adjoining yard were filled with thousands of human beings, among whom were members of the

established church, the Presbyterian Kirk, and Wesleyan Chapel. There were present on the awful occasion between seven and eight thousand individuals. The coffin having been placed in the vestry room, the Rev. Walter Dendy commenced the services of the day with an appropriate prayer. The Rev. Mr. Burchell then preached a short sermon, which did credit to his head and heart, taking as his text Revelation, chap. 21 verse 4. The reverend gentleman and the greater part of his hearers were deeply affected during the delivery of his discourse. At one o'clock precisely, the body was removed to the grave, where the Rev. Mr. Kerr, Wesleyan missionary, addressed the assembled people on the shortness and uncertainty of human life, and the necessity of preparing for eternity. He was followed by the Rev. Walter Thorburn, Presbyterian minister, who with great feeling invoked the Divine blessing on the congregation, family and missionary brethren of the deceased. The apostolic benediction was delivered by the Rev. Mr. Edmondson, Wesleyan missionary, and with this the religious services of the day concluded.

“ We have thus sketched a brief outline of the death and burial of the Rev. William Knibb—a man of extraordinary character, who was certainly the ‘ first ’ of his sect in Jamaica. It is not our intention to offer a single word of comment on his political career, to which we have for the last four years been conscientiously opposed. Whatever may have been his errors, let them rest forever with him in the tomb. . . . As a private individual, Mr. Knibb will long be remembered by the parishioners of Trelawny. As a husband and a father he was all that could be desired—as a friend, he was warm-hearted, generous, and sincere ; to the

poor he was ever a cheerful giver—and in his general dealings, he was truly the character described by the poet: ‘An honest man—the noblest work of God.’”

Knibb was a giant among giants. He had an iron constitution which enabled him to do and suffer much. His spiritual life was deep and intense. He was not a great preacher, but a strong believer. He had a childlike trust in his Saviour, and believed He died for all, white and black alike. He was convinced that the blacks could be saved; and that if the Gospel had free course among them, they could be lifted from the depths of slavery to the heights of freedom. Because this free course was checked, he vowed never to rest until slavery was destroyed. His brethren were never jealous of him and his influence, but loved and trusted him implicitly. His foes respected and admired him even when they abused and persecuted.

As we think of his wonderful life with its twenty-one years of loving active service in the cause of Christ and for the people of Jamaica, we find three cardinal principles at work: 1. *Entire surrender to Christ.* From the day he decided to go to the mission field until the day of his death he was under the complete control of his Master. His glory and His cause were his supreme delight. 2. *Profound hatred of slavery and oppression.* “I am one of those who believe that it is my duty by every means in my power to protect the injured man, let him be found wherever he may, or whatever be the circumstances in which he is placed.” 3. *Whole-hearted devotion to the work in hand.* He did everything heartily, one thing at a time, and threw his whole soul into what he was doing. Like Livingstone, he loved the negroes and

died for them. No wonder his name is still loved and adored, and his memory still fresh in the hearts of thousands of Jamaica Baptists.

AFTERWORD.

THIS short life has been written to give the young Baptists of our land an idea of the early history and struggles of our denomination, and to make them humbly proud and thankful that they belong to such a body. It can be confidently affirmed, and that without any boasting, that Freedom would never have been granted to Jamaica at the time it was given, had not Knibb and Burchell, men who had been persecuted and almost done to death by their fellow-Englishmen, stirred the hearts of English Christians in 1832 and 1833 by the recital of the horrible sufferings the missionaries and slaves had undergone in 1831, and convinced them of the utter impossibility of Christianity being established so long as slavery existed. Jamaica must never forget the debt of gratitude she owes to those early Baptist missionaries who suffered that her sons might be free.

It might not be out of place to quote a paragraph written by Mr. Frank Cundall, F.S.A., Secretary and Librarian of the Institute of Jamaica, in his *Jamaica in 1924*: "Four Baptist ministers stand out prominently in the work of the abolition of slavery in Jamaica—Thomas Burchell, Walter Dendy, William Knibb and James Murrell Phillippo. These four men were indefatigable in their endeavours to obtain fair treatment, both in matters of religion and civic life, for the negro race, putting up with insults and hardships innumerable."

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But what have Baptists done to perpetuate the memory of those men who founded and established their denomination? What have we done for Knibb, the greatest missionary who ever came to Jamaica? Absolutely nothing. On the first of August, 1925, the centenary of his arrival in Jamaica will be celebrated at Falmouth. The church is endeavouring to carry out improvements on the building which he erected in 1837 and to do something to perpetuate his memory. The present Pastor, Rev. R. A. L. Knight, will be glad to receive a donation from every Jamaican—be he Baptist or not—who feels grateful to the man that hazarded so much for him and his country.

*Printed in Great Britain by
Alexander & Shepherd, Rolls Buildings, Fetter Lane, London, E.C. 4.*