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THE PROFLIGATE SOLDIER,

AWFULLY YET MERCIFULLY RECLAIMED.

AN AUTHENTIC ACCOUNT OF

PRIVATE JOHN JENNY,

OF HIS MAJESTY'S 73rd REGIMENT OF FOOT,

WHO WAS SHOT FOR MUTINOUS CONDUCT, PURSUANT TO THE SENTENCE OF A GENERAL COURT MARTIAL,

At Colombo, in the Island of Ceylon, October 27, 1817.

BY W. M. HARVARD,

WHO ATTENDED HIM IN HIS IMPRISONMENT, AND ALSO AT HIS EXECUTION.

MONTREAL:

SOLD BY H. C. M'LEOD, 63, NOTRE DAME STREET, AND C. BRYSON, ST. FRANÇOIS XAVIER STREET.

Price Two-pence each, or 20 for Half a Dollar.
TO THE READER.

The ensuing account was given at the conclusion of a sermon preached in the Garrison of Colombo, shortly after the death of the young man to whom it relates. The discourse was founded on the following words; in Ezekiel xxxiii. 5, "But he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul;" in the application of which, and in humble dependance on the Divine blessing, the preacher endeavoured to interest both the fears and the hopes of his military auditors in the momentous concerns of their own everlasting salvation. He then proceeded to read the accompanying narrative.
THE PROFLIGATE SOLDIER,
AWFULLY YET MERCIFULLY RECLAIMED.

The truth of this encouraging portion of Scripture was abundantly exemplified in the case of the once unhappy man, of whom it now remains for me to give you a short account.

John Jenny was born at Nottingham, on the 9th of January, 1799. His father dying at an early period of his life, he became solely dependant on his mother; and from a letter of hers, which he showed to me in his confinement, it is evident that she had taken some considerable pains to lead him to a due attention to religion and propriety of conduct. She there charges him to remember the many instructions he had received, and the early vows he had made “before the sacred altar of God.”

When in his native land, however, notwithstanding his mother’s admonitions, he was led astray by loose company and intoxication; which so unsettled his mind from the business to which she had apprenticed him, that he resolved to enter upon a Soldier’s life; and, though only sixteen years of age, enlisted into the 2d Battalion of H. M. 73d Regiment, and was transferred into the 1st Battalion, in 1811.

The same causes which operated to bring him into the army, continued to influence him afterwards, and procured him the merited character of an unsteady, dissolute, bad man. The foundation of all this was his inclination for evil company and intoxication; as he himself assured me; and added, “Oh, Sir, warn my comrades against bad company and drunkenness. It was that which began my ruin.” His evil propensities often involved him in trouble; at which times of distress he was not without serious thoughts of his awful condition, and resolutions to amend his life. But these salutary impressions wore off from forgetfulness; and the influence of temptation led him to break his resolutions as often as he had made them.

At last, it pleased God, who had, as it were, tried every other means with him, to stop him short in his mad career, by leaving him to himself; and to the commission of a crime, which brought upon him the heaviest punishment, which human laws can inflict. He afterwards acknowledged the justice of God in thus abandoning him to his own evil heart; and confessed that it was right that he should be dealt with according to justice, who had so long disregarded so much mercy.

The circumstances which led to his last crime were as follows. Having dishonestly come into the possession of money,
he had spent some days in incessant intemperance; and was detected in selling part of his necessaries, when his money was expended, in order to continue his vices still longer. In consequence of this, he was ordered by his Captain to be confined in the guard-house. Enraged at his detection, and stupified by the effects of intoxication, he had the temerity to draw back his hand upon his Captain, and to strike him a violent blow on the face. This was on the 26th of September.

So outrageous a defiance of discipline could not be passed over in silence. The criminal was ordered into confinement; and a general Court Martial having been summoned, examined into the affair, and transmitted their verdict to His Excellency the Governor, the late Sir Robert Brownrigg. It was generally expected that the sentence of death would be executed upon him. With this expectation, he remained a prisoner in the stocks; and, abandoned by man, he began to think it was now high time to seek the Lord.

Actuated by the most commendable impulse, two pious Wesleyan comrades, a Serjeant and a Corporal in the same Regiment, paid him an unsolicited visit in his solitary room. "Blessed is he that considereth the poor." Their conduct is worthy of high commendation; as they had never any previous acquaintance with the unfortunate man. His trouble was the foundation of their friendship, and, as the event will prove, the means, in the hands of God, of his salvation. "Go thou and do likewise." They found him rather desirous than otherwise of religious conversation; and the former sent us out a short note, requesting that the Rev. B. Clough, my Missionary fellow-labourer, and myself, would see the prisoner; which we regularly continued to do, until the moment of his execution. The manner in which he received the visits of his religious comrades, cannot be better described than in the language of one of them:

"Soon after his trial, I was informed that he began to have serious thoughts about his future state; and being desired by one of my friends, I accompanied him to see him. On enquiring of him, if he knew how the pardon of his sins was to be obtained, his answer was, that he was very ignorant. I found him, however, willing to be taught; of which the acknowledgment of his ignorance I considered to be a proof. In the best manner that I could, I therefore endeavoured to impress upon his mind a sense of his great ingratitude to God, by laying before him the wickedness of his past life; and then comparing it with the goodness of God to him, in creating and redeeming him; and in continuing to preserve him, while, at the same time, he was persevering in sinning and rebelling against His Divine authority and goodness. I further exhorted him to repent of his sins, and turn to God with all his heart, by faith in a crucified Saviour; and that without any delay; urging that, in all probability, the sentence of the Court Martial would be death, and that his time in the world would likely be very short. I was greatly encouraged in thus speaking to him, as he listened to all with the greatest attention."

When Mr. Clough and I first visited him, we felt it a painful duty to assure him there was not the least reason to hope for a pardon from his earthly superiors; of which we were glad to observe him fully sensible; as it left him to pursue the principal
The condition then described of the scene depicted in the explosion of this oil well caused me to reflect on the business of the scene. The spirit of God and the power of religion rapidly movero, and the feelings of the people. The view of the place, the manner of the people, the spirit of God, and the power of religion were more powerful upon the scene. It was understood that the scene was not different from what we observed in the explosion. On this being said, the oil well began to send out the smoke. The time of the explosion was accordingly determined, and it was accordingly removed to a considerable cell. The time of the explosion was accordingly determined. He was to suffer the dreadful consequence of the judgment. At the expected time, the scene was the result of his mind and by the force of the scene. The time of the explosion was accordingly determined. He was to suffer the dreadful consequence of the judgment. At the expected time, the scene was the result of his mind and by the force of the scene. The time of the explosion was accordingly determined. He was to suffer the dreadful consequence of the judgment. At the expected time, the scene was the result of his mind and by the force of the scene. The time of the explosion was accordingly determined. He was to suffer the dreadful consequence of the judgment.
The letter referred to was one to his mother, which Jenny had expressed a desire to write. And the Commandant of the Garrison, Colonel Young, of the Royal Artillery, having humbly sent him paper and pens and ink; for that purpose, I made it my business to be present with him, while he performed this last act of filial duty. When all things were ready, and I had mended his pen for him, the poor man remained silent and thoughtful for some time; at last, bursting out into a flood of tears, he told me that he felt unable to write, at the same time requesting I would do it for him. I freely confess, this was the most pathetic and moving circumstance, of the kind, I ever had to encounter, and I am persuaded I shall never forget my feelings on that occasion while I live.

When we had both sufficiently recovered our firmness, I conversed with him most particularly, in order to become intimately acquainted with the sentiments he wished to communicate; and, taking up the pen, wrote what I conceived a faithful expression of his feelings; suggesting to him, sentence by sentence, as it was written, to which he assented. And, after reading the whole over, with many tears, and, falling back on his bed, and crying very bitterly, he summoned up his courage, and signed it with his own hand.

It appears that this letter gave utterance to the newly-formed emotions of his heart, and was instrumental in improving his views of the way of salvation; for he always named the period of writing it, as the memorable time when his gloomy fears of futurity were removed, and he was first enabled to look upwards to God, with humble, penitent, believing, confidence in his mercy, through Jesus Christ. Under the Divine blessing, there is every reason to believe, that it was, made a means of grace to his repentant soul. To the Lord be all the praise!

As it was thus so essentially his own language, an extract of the letter shall be given; only omitting those parts which were purely of a domestic and private nature.

Colombo, October 22, 1817.

My dear and affectionate Mother,

Mr. —— one of the Missionaries in this place, has promised me he will give you every particular of my present situation. When I think how you will feel at hearing of my awful case, my heart grieves; and I wish, with all my heart, to make you acquainted with what has been the case of late. I have had several aches and pains, which made particularly useful to Jenny. One day, he mentioned to me the following anecdote, which in this tract, which had been pointed out to him by Mr. —— and which had made a very powerful impression on his mind. — A lady, she had been at a gathering at night, and in a gay company, returning at night, found her servant maid reading a religious book. She looked over her shoulders and said, Poor melancholy soul! what pleasures canst thou find in giving up so long over that book? That night, the lady could not sleep, but listening and weeping after service repeatedly asked what was the matter? At length, the hour into a flood of tears, and said, Oh! it was one word, I saw in your book that troubling me, there I saw that word — Eternity! — O, how happy should I be, if I were prepared for Eternity! —
that I had paid more attention to your good advice, and prayers for me, and hope that God will support your mind and comfort you with the assurance that shall meet in a better world. I can say, with truth, "It is good for me that they have been in trouble," for, before I was in trouble, I went astray; but, I trust, I am now brought back to God.

When I was put into confinement, the Missionaries visited me; and by their instructions, and reading the Word of God, I have been led to see and feel myself a wretched sinner; and, indeed, this I have been, especially since I saw you. But I repent of my sins before God, with all my heart; I can say I hate them and would sooner die than live to sin against God, as I have done. I have opened all my feelings to Mr. — , who writes this letter. He will tell you all about me.

I am a sinner—a great sinner—but, by the grace and mercy of God. In Jesus Christ, I have a comfortable hope of heaven; and, on that account, I do not fear to die. I am at peace with all the world. My confession is the same as ever: it was to you, my dear mother, and my brother. I have begged Mr. — to write him some good advice, which I hope he will follow. Farewell, my dear mother. Meet me in heaven by the merits of Christ, there to sing his praises for ever, with your affectionate son.

John Jenny.
of me, and who came to God, only because I had no where else to go to? - I have
hopes! - Christ died for the want of sinners. I think God had thoughts of mercy
towards me; else why did he bring me here? Why has he given me so long time
to think of my state? What brought me to my Captain's place? I cannot tell.
I had no business there. It was that I might be brought hither, to be taught the
way of salvation. I bless God, night and day, that I ever entered the walls of this
prison. This little hope I feel, that I shall obtain mercy, it gives an happiness to
which none of the pleasures of sin can ever be compared. I NEVER KNOW ANY
THING OF HAPPINESS TILL NOW! O that I may but be saved at the last! I
confess the justice of my sentence; and I warn all my comrades against evil com-
pany and drunkenness, by which I brought myself to this unhappy end; which I
now must suffer. I had rather die this death, than be set at my liberty, and left
to myself, and my own wicked heart, to run into the temptations of the wicked
world again! - God, who knows the secret thoughts of my heart, knows that this is
the truth; and I hope God will give me true repentance and forgiveness, through
Jesus Christ! I beg you will, with me unite in prayer to God Almighty. I die
in peace with God and all the world.

Colombo, 24th day of October, 1817.

Given under my hand, far from my home,

JOHN JENNY.

(Signed)

44 I confess, to God and men, that I was guilty of taking Sergeant ------ box,
for which Sergeant ------ was charged; and all I got of it was two rix dollars,
and two fanams. Me and ------ were the men. And I likewise confess that I
took seventy-six rix dollars out of Esau Nares' desk, on the South Gate Guard;
two twenty-five and two ten dollar bills. And I likewise knew of the affair of
Kandy, but the man that came to prosecute me knew nothing about it. And
the man ------ that was with me, was not guilty: for I was sent myself
when it was done ------ and ------ were the men.

(Signed)

JOHN JENNY.

On perusing the paper, I commended him for his openness
and honesty of confession; and we had some interesting conver-
sation together about the things of God, and of salvation.
As his end approached, his spiritual improvement daily be-
came more and more evident. He was truly a wonder to all
who came to see him. When some superior Staff Officers vi-
isted him, and supposing, from his serenity, that he was buoying
himself up with the hopes of pardon, he assured them, in the
most modest manner, that that was not the case; and added,
"Gentlemen, this cell has been more than a palace to me. I
bless God that ever I was brought in here! - I would rather
take my sentence tomorrow, with the humble hopes I have, than
have a pardon, and live to sin against God, as I have done in
my past life.

The day before his death, the late Hon. and Venerable Doc-
tor Twisleton, Archdeacon of Colombo, visited him, as he ex-
pressed himself, "to behold a man, who, at the close of a wicked
life, has repentant feelings, and to congratulate him." and was
much struck with admiration at his case. He was not a man of
many words; but what he said clearly displayed the state of
his mind.

Feeling a holy jealousy for him, we were careful to examine
him in the most scrutinizing manner, setting before him the aw-
ning truths of the Gospel. He showed a deep interest in the in-
mortal state, and expressed the wish that he might be able
to obtain mercy, and to appear before God with a bare
soul.

A robbery that had been attempted on the Treasury in Kandy, for which en-
emy was tried by a Court Martial; but was acquitted, from the notoriously bad
character of a principal evidence.
ful danger of a miscarriage, in a work which, in his situation, could be done but once. He always answered our enquiries, at to his real feelings of heart, with the most child-like openness; and we are satisfied that he found peace with God, and experienced the renewing influences of the Holy Spirit.

The testimony of his pious friend, already spoken of, is likewise satisfactory on this head. He observes:

"I had still some fears on my mind, lest he should be taken up with a false peace; and one day I asked him, in a very solemn manner, on what grounds he built his hopes of heaven. He paused for a little, and then said, "I have been a great sinner; and my hope and trust is in the mercy of God, through Jesus Christ." This was a satisfactory answer; and I think I could not desire a plainer. He was with him a considerable part of the day before his death; when we joined in prayer several times; and once I pressed on him to pray himself. He was rather unwilling to begin, being afraid lest he could not express himself in a proper manner; but I told him that God did not look for fine words, but there was sincerity of the heart. Then he began to confess that we had done many things in which we ought not to have done, and that we had left undone those things which we ought to have done; and went on to pray that the Lord would have mercy on us, and that he might strengthen and support him in his hour of trial; and so concluded. During the evening, when I was with him, I asked him if there was any part of the Word of God, that he could apply to himself. "Yes," said he; "Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." At another time, I enquired whether he would be willing to accept of his pardon, and live the life he had done, or whether he would rather suffer. His answer was, that he would rather suffer."

On the evening before his execution, being the Lord's Day, we administered the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper to him, and a few religious friends, who felt a satisfaction in communicating with him. That cell never saw such a scene before! It was an awfully pleasing service! The poor man appeared greatly refreshed; nor, I believe, will the season ever be forgotten by those who survive. Surely Jesus is present "wherever two or three are met together" in his name! After the Sacrament, we sat a short time in religious conversation, each telling something of the goodness of God towards himself; and about twelve o'clock, we left poor Jenny, with his two Christian friends, to take a little sleep, and thus be the better prepared for the solemn transactions of the approaching morning. On going again, between four and five o'clock, we were glad to find he had slept almost the whole of the time; not appearing in the least agitated or discomposed; excepting one sudden start during his short sleep, perhaps an involuntary effort of lingering humanity, against the dreadful moment which was drawing so near.

Doctor Twisleton kindly went with us to the cell, in the morning, and prayed with us. The prisoner had no fears; and when the gun fired, as a signal for the troops in the garrison to assemble, he requested the Provost Marshal to be informed that he was ready, and did not wish any delay on his account. The Commandant, Colonel Young, displayed much compassionate interest in the case of the condemned penitent, and generously acceded to any request which was made in his behalf. By his express permission, his two religious comrades supported him to
the awful spot, and performed the last offices for him after his execution!" Colonel O'Connell, likewise, considerably set
them free from regimental duty, for the same purpose.

Doctor Twisleton accompanied the solemn procession along
with us, and was greatly gratified with his continued peace and
serenity of mind. Under the South Gate, I observed to him
that I hoped he was going out of an earthly gate, in order to
enter into an heavenly one. He replied, "Yes: glory be to
God, I hope I am." After we had proceeded a few paces far-
ter, he lifted his eyes to heaven, and exclaimed, "I shall soon
see him, whom I love." When he had got outside of the Fort,
in view of the parade on which he was to suffer death, he com-
menced, quite unexpectedly to us, repeating the 43d hymn:
"And am I born to die," &c, which he went completely through
without any mistake, repeating the last verse with the sweetest
expression and emphasis imaginable:

"So shall I love my God
Because he first loved me,
And praise thee in thy bright abode
To all eternity."

Casting his eyes upward, with humble confidence, he added,
"Yes, glory be to God, I shall."

At Doctor Twisleton's request, he repeated the whole hymn
again in the same manner. It had been pointed out to him by
Corporal ———, at the commencement of his confinement,
and had been rendered so useful to him, that he had committed
the whole to memory, most correctly.†

When the procession approached the line, down which we
were slowly to move, it was observed by some in the ranks that
his countenance appeared to glisten with joy and composure;
He retained his firmness: while we continued, on each side, to
assist his remembrance, by repeating portions of Scripture
adapted to his circumstances; to which he, two or three times,
returned the most pleasing and satisfactory replies. On reach-
ing the end of the line, we marched to the centre of the army,
when his coffin was placed upon the ground. We kneeled
round it, and commended him to God, in solemn prayer; and
he was almost immediately dismissed from the body, into an
eternal world. His last words were, "Farewell! glory be to
God! I am a happy man."

So died John Jenny, October 27, 1817, aged nearly 25 years.
"Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?"—Zech. iii. 2.

† One of these friends, with true Christian simplicity, afterwards relating to us
the circumstances of his interment, observed: "Notwithstanding his crime de-
prived him of the common religious ceremony of a Christian burial, I trust I did
not do wrong, but while the grave was filling up, I felt myself involuntarily say-
ing, "In sure and certain hope of a joyful resurrection to eternal life," I was as-
much consoled with his end, and as assured of his happiness."
The Hymn which John Jenny repeated, from memory, on his way to the Place of Execution.

**Hymn 43. S. M.**

1. **Are you born to die?**
   To lay this body down?
   And must my trembling spirit fly
   Into a world unknown?
   A land of deepest shade,
   Unpierced by human thought!
   The dreary regions of the dead,
   Where all things are forgot!

2. **Soon as from earth I go,**
   What will become of me!
   Eternal happiness or woe?
   Must then my portion be.
   Walk’d by the trumpet’s sound,
   I from my grave shall rise,
   And see the Judge with glory crown’d,
   And see the flaming skies!

3. **How shall I leave my tomb?**
   With triumph or regret?
   A fearful, or a joyful doom,
   A curse or blessing meet?
   Will angel-hands convey
   Their brother to the bar?
   Or devils drag my soul away,
   To meet its sentence there?

4. **Who can resolve the doubt?**
   That tears my anxious breast?
   Shall I be with the damns’d cast out,
   Or number’d with the lost?
   I must from God be driven,
   Or with my Saviour dwell.
   Must come at his command, to heaven,
   Or else—depart—to hell.

5. **O thou, that wouldst not have**
   One wretched sinner die;
   Who didst thyself my soul to save
   From endless misery?
   Show me the way to save
   Thy dreadful wrath averse;
   That when thou comest on thy throne,
   I may with joy appear!

6. **Thou art thyself the way:**
   Thyself in me reveal.
   So shall I speed my life’s short day
   Obedient to thy will.
   Seest thou I love thy God;
   Because he first loved me.
   And praise thee in thy bright abode,
   To all eternity.
BY THE SAME AUTHOR:

CONTINENTAL INDIA AND CEYLON.


It is proposed to republish this work, as soon as a sufficient number of Subscribers' names shall have been obtained. To be paid for on delivery. Price One Dollar.

On its first appearance, this publication was favourably noticed by several respectable Periodicals, from which the following extracts have been made:

"We ought perhaps to apologise for having so long detained our readers from the interesting work which this article is designed to introduce to their notice. Those, however, who may be induced by our recommendation of the "Narrative of the Mission to Ceylon" to peruse that useful and agreeable publication, will immediately perceive what it was that gave birth to our preliminary discussion."

"It will surely commend itself to general credit by the air of good sense and integrity which pervades it."—British Review.

"We can introduce to our readers this work with great satisfaction. It presents us with much that is highly interesting, both as it respects the circumstances under which the Wesleyan Mission was entered on, the local state of the island of Ceylon, and the adjoining shores of India—the sketch of the history of this island, and the narrative of the proceedings of the Missionaries there, cannot fail to instruct the reader."—Evangelical Register of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion.

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