

SOME
Remarkable Passages
IN THE
L I F E
OF
Mr. JOHN LIVINGSTON,

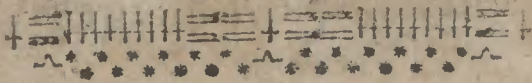
Late Minister of the Gospel at ANCRUM,
in TEVIOTDALE.

With a particular Account of his remarkable
SERMON at the Kirk of SIOTS, by which,
about Five hundred persons
were Converted.



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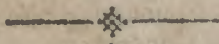
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REMARKABLE PASSAGES

IN THE LIFE OF

MR. JOHN LIVINGSTON.



JOHN LIVINGSTON was born in
1603. He was son to Mr. Wil-
vington, minister at Monybroch,
 Perth, who was afterwards trans-
 Lanerk; he was nearly related
 house of Calder.

He taught his son to read
 He sent him to the Latin School
 under Mr. Wallace, a godly
 man. He stayed there till
 17, when he returned home. —
 Following he was sent to the
 Glasgow, where he stayed
 till he passed Master of
 After this, he stayed with
 his

his father, until he began to preach; during which time he began to observe the Lord's great goodness that he was born of such parents, who taught him the principles of religion so soon as he was capable to understand any thing.

He says, in his own Historical Account of his Life, that he does not remember the time or means of particularly, whereby the Lord at first wrought upon his heart; only, when he was very young, he would sometimes pray with some feeling, and read the word with some delight; but thereafter did often intermit such exercises, and then would have some challenges, and begin and intermit again, &c.

He says, he had no inclination to the ministry, nor more after he had passed his time in the College; upon which he was directed to the knowledge of medicine, and to go to London; but when proposed to comply.

His father, having purchased a house in the parish of Monmouth, took the rights in his son's name, proposing that he should marry and live there; but this he refused, thinking

ing it would divert him from his Studies, and, in the midst of these straits, he resolved to set apart a day by himself before God, for more special direction; which he did near Cleg-horn-wood, where, after much confusion anent the state of his soul, at last he thought it was made out to him, that he behoved to preach Jesus Christ; which if he did not, he should have no assurance of salvation. Upon which, laying aside all thoughts of other things, he betook himself to the study of divinity.

He continued a year and a half in his father's house, where he studied and sometimes preached. During which time, he wrote all his Sermons before he preached them, until one day, being to preach after the Communion at Q. . . . and having in readiness a Sermon . . . he had preached at another place . . . before; but perceiving several . . . had heard him preach that Sermon . . . he resolved to choose a . . . wrote only some notes of . . . to deliver: Yet, he says . . . that . . . more assistance in engaging up in these points, and more motion in his own heart than ever he had found before; which made him afterwards never write any more Sermons, excepting only some notes, for the help of his memory.

ABOUT April 1626, he was sent for by Lord Kenmuir to Galloway, in reference to a Call to the parish of Anwoth; but some hindrance coming in the way, this design was laid aside. In the harvest following, he hearkened to another Call to Torphichen; but this proved also unsuccessful.

After this he went to the Earl of Wigton's, where he stayed some time. The most part of this summer he travelled from place to place, according as he got invitations to preach, and especially at Communion in Lanark, Irvine, Newmills, Kinniel, &c.

He was also sometimes invited to preach at the Shots: In that place, he says, he used to find more liberty in preaching than elsewhere; yea, the only day in all his life wherein he found most of the presence of God in preaching, he observes, was on a Monday after a Communion, at the Kirk of Shots, June 21, 1630.—The night before he had been with some Christians, who spent the night in prayer and conference; on the morning there came such a misgiving of spirit upon him, in considering his own unworthiness and weakness, and the expectation of the people,

ple, that he was consulting to have stolen away somewhere, and declined that day's work; but thinking he could not so distrust God, he went to Sermon, where he got remarkable assistance in speaking about one hour and a half from Ezekiel xxxvi. 25, 26. "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon y^e u, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, &c." Here he was led out in such a melting strain, that, by the down-pouring of the Spirit from on high, a most discernable change was wrought upon about 500 of the hearers, who could either date their conversion or some remarkable confirmation from that day forward. Some little of that stamp, he says, remained on him the Thursday after, when he preached at Kilmarnock; but on the Monday following, preaching at Irvine, he was so deserted, that when he had meditated upon, wrote, and kept fully in memory, he could not get pronounced; which so discouraged him, that he was resolved not to preach for some time, at least in Irvine; but Mr. Dickson would not suffer him to go from thence, till he preached the next Sabbath, which he did with some freedom.

This summer, being in Irvine, he got letters from Viscount Clanniboy to come to Ireland, in reference to a call to Killinchie;

kinchie; and, seeing no appearance of entering into the ministry in Scotland, he went thither, and got an unanimous call from that parish. Here he laboured with the utmost assiduity among that people, who were both rude and profane before that, and they became the most experienced Christians in that country. But he was not above a year there until the Bishop of Down suspended him and Mr. Blair for non-conformity. They remained deposed until May 1632, when, by the intercession of Lord Castle-Stuart, a warrant was granted them from the king to be restored.

After this he was married to the eldest daughter of Bartholomew Fleming, merchant in Edinburgh, who was then in Ireland. In Nov. 1635, he was again deposed by the Bishop of Down; and a little after, by his orders, excommunicated by one Mr. Melvil, minister of Down. This winter, finding no appearance of liberty, either to ministers or professors, from the bondage of the prelates, he, with others of the deposed ministers, took a resolution to go to New England. Upon which they built a ship for that purpose; and when all things were ready, they, about the 9th of September loosed from Lochfergus; but

a violent storm arising, they were driven near the bank of Newfoundland, and were all in danger of being drowned; and, after prayer and consultation, they were obliged to turn back to Lochfergus. After this he stayed in Ireland, until he heard that he and Mr. Blair were to be apprehended; and then they went out of the way, and came over to Scotland. When he came to Irvine, Mr. Dickson crused him preach, for which he was called in question afterwards. Leaving Irvine, he passed by Ludon and Lanerk to Edinburgh, where he continued some time.

About the beginning of March, 1638, when the body of the land was about to renew the National Covenant, he was sent post to London with several copies of the Covenant, and letters to friends at Court of both nations. When he came there, Mr. Borthwick delivered the letters for him; but he had been there but a few days when he had word sent him from the Marquis of Hamilton, that he had overheard the King say, He was come, but he should put a pair of fetters about his feet. Whereupon, fearing he should be taken in the post-way, he bought a horse, and came home by St. Alban's and the western way, and was present at Lanerk and other

places, when the Covenant was read and sworn unto; and, excepting at the Kirk of Shots, already noticed, he, as himself says, never saw such motions from the Spirit of God, all the people so generally and willingly concurring, yea, thousands of persons all at once lifting up their hands, and the tears falling from their eyes; so that, through the whole land, the people (a few Papists, and others who adhered to the Prelates, excepted) universally entered into the Covenant of God, for the reformation of religion against Prelates and their ceremonies:

After this, in the year 1638, he got a call both from Stranrawer in Galloway, and Straiton in Carrick, but he referred the matter to Messrs. Blair, Dickson, Cant, Henderson, Rutherford and his father, who, having heard both parties, advised him to Stranrawer; and he was received there by the Presbytery upon the 5th of July 1638. Here he remained, in the faithful discharge of the ministry, until harvest 1648, that he was, by the sentence of the General Assembly, transported to Ancrum in Teviotdale. When he came to Ancrum, he found the people very tractable, but very ignorant, and some of them very loose in their carriage; and it was a long time before

fore any competent number of them were brought to such a condition, that he could adventure to celebrate the Lord's Supper; but by his diligence, through the grace of God, some of them began to lay religion to heart.

In the year 1649, the Parliament and Church of Scotland had sent some Commissioners to treat with the King at the Hague, in order to his admission; but they returned without satisfaction. Yet the Parliament, in summer 1650 sent other Commissioners to prosecute the foresaid treaty at Breda; and the Commission of the Kirk chose Mr. Livingston & Mr. Wood, and after that added Mr. Hutcheson to them, with the Lords Cassils and Brody, as ruling Elders, that in name of the Church they should present and prosecute their desires. Mr. Livingston was very unwilling to go, and that for several reasons, the chief of which was; he still suspected the King to be not right at heart in respect of the true Presbyterian religion, and notwithstanding, he saw that many in the kingdom were ready to receive the King home upon any terms; but he was prevailed upon by Messrs. David Dickson, James Guthrie; and Patrick Gillespie, to go. After much conference and reasoning with the King
at

at Breda, they were not like to come to any conclusion. Here he observed, that the King still continued the use of the Service-Book and his Chaplains; and was many a night balling and dancing till near day. This, with many other things, made him conclude there would be no blessing on that treaty. The treaty, to his unspeakable grief, was at last concluded; and some time after, the King set sail for Scotland: but Mr. Livingston refused to go aboard with them; so that when Brody and Mr. Hutcheson saw that they could not prevail with him to go on board, they desired him, before parting, to go into the ship, to speak of some matters in hand, which he did; and, in the meanwhile, the boat that should have waited his return, made straight for shore without him.

After this, the King agreed with the Commissioners, to swear and subscribe the Covenant: and it was laid upon him to preach the next Sabbath, and tender the Covenants, both National and Solemn League, and take his oath thereon: But he, judging that such a rash and precipitate swearing of the Covenants would not be for the honour of the cause they were embarked in, did all he could to deter the King and Commissioners from doing it
until

until he came to Scotland. But when nothing would dissuade the King from his resolution. it was done; for the King performed every thing that could have been required of him. Upon which Mr. Livingston observed, that it seems to have been the guilt not only of Commissioners, but of the whole kingdom, yea of the Church also, who knew the terms whereupon he was to be admitted to his government, and yet without any evidence of a real change upon his heart, and without forsaking former principles, counsels and company, admitted him.

After they landed in Scotland, before he took his leave of the King at Dundee, he used some freedom with him. After speaking somewhat to him anent his carriage, he advised him, that as he saw the English army approaching in a most victorious manner, he would divert the stroke by a declaration, or some such way, wherein he needed not weaken his right to the crown of England, and not prosecute his title at present by fire and sword, until the storm blew over, and then perhaps they would be in a better case to be governed, &c. But he did not relish this motion well, saying, he would not wish to sell his father's blood: Which made Mr. Livingston conclude,

that either he was not called to meddle with State-matters, or else he should have little success.

Another instance of this he gives us, in the year 1654, when he and Mr. Patrick Gillespie and Mr. Minzies were called up by the Protector to London, where he proposed to him, that he would take off the heavy fines that were laid on several in Scotland, which they were unable to pay. He seemed to like the motion, but when he proposed the Overture to the Council, they went not into the purpose.

While at London, preaching before the Protector, he mentioned the King in prayer, whereat some were greatly incensed; but Cromwel knowing Mr. Livingstone's influence in Scotland, said, "Let him alone, he is a good man; and what are we, poor men, in comparison of the Kings of England?"

The General Assembly appointed some ministers, and him among the rest, to wait upon the army and the Committee of Estates that resided with them; but the fear and apprehension of what ensued, kept him back from going, and he went home until he got the sad news of the defeat at Dumbar.—

After

After which Cromwel wrote to him from Edinburgh to come and speak to him; but he excused himself.

That winter the unhappy difference fell out anent the Public Resolutions. His light carried him to join the Protestors against the Resolutions. And the Assembly that followed thereafter, he was present at their first meeting in the west at Kilmarnock, and several other meetings of the Protesting Brethren afterwards; but not being satisfied with keeping these meetings so often, and continuing them so long, which he imagined made the breach wider, he declined them for some time.

After this, he spent the rest of his time in the exercise of the ministry, both at Ancrum and other places, until summer 1660, that news was brought him that the King was called home, and then he clearly foresaw that the overturning of the whole work of reformation would ensue, and a trial to all who would adhere to the same.

But, in the year 1662, when the Parliament and Council had, by proclamation, ordered all Ministers, who had come in since 1649, and had not kept the holy day of the 29th of May, either to acknowledge
the

the Prelates or remove, he then more clearly foresaw a storm approaching.

At the last Communion which he had at Auerum, in the month of October, he says, That after sermon on Monday, it pleased the Lord to open his mouth, in a very large discourse anent the grounds and encouragements to suffer for the present controversy of the Kingdom of Christ, in appointing the Government of his House. Then he took his leave of that place, although he knew nothing of what was soon to follow after.

After he had, with Elijah, eaten before a great journey, having communicated before he entered upon suffering, he heard in a little time, of the Council's procedure against him and about twelve or sixteen others, who were to be brought before them. He went presently to Edinburgh, (before the summons could reach him) and lurked there some time, until he got certain information of the Council's design, whether they were for their life, like as was done with Mr. Guthrie, or only for banishment, as was done with Mr. M'Ward and Mr. Simpson; but finding they intended only the last, he accordingly resolved to appear with his brethren.

He

He appeared D. c. 11. and was examined before the Council, the sum of which came to this, That they required him to subscribe or take the oath of allegiance, which he, upon several solid grounds and reasons, refused; and sentence was pronounced, that in forty-eight hours he should depart Edinburgh, and go to the north side of Tay, and within two months depart out of all the King's dominions. Accordingly he went from Edinburgh to Leith, and thereafter, upon a petition in regard of his infirmity, he obtained liberty to stay there until he should remove. He petitioned also for a few days to go home to see his wife and children but was refused; as also for an extract of his sentence, but could not obtain it.

In the year 1663 he went aboard, accompanied by several friends to the ship. They set sail, and in eight days came to Rotterdam, where he found the rest of the banished Ministers there before him. Here he got frequent occasion of preaching to the Scots Congregation at Rotterdam: and in December following, his wife, with two of his children, went over to him, and the other five were left in Scotland.

Here

Here, upon a retrograde view of his life; he (in the foresaid historical account.) observes, that the Lord had given him a body not very strong, and yet not weak; for he could hardly remember himself wearied in reading and studying. although he had continued seven or eight hours without rising: And also, that there was but two recreations that he was in danger to be taken with; the first was hunting on horseback, but this he had very little occasion of, yet he found it very inticing; the other was, singing in Concerts of Music, wherein he had some skill, and in which he took great delight. He says further, That he was always short-sighted, and could not discern any person or thing afar off but hitherto he had found no occasion for spectacles, and could read small print as long and with as little light almost as any other. And as to his inclination, he was generally soft and amorous; averse to debates. rather given to laziness than rashness, and too easy to be wrought upon. And, although he could not say what Luther affirmed of himself concerning covetousness, yet he could say, that he had been less troubled with covetousness and cares than many other evils, and rather inclined to solitariness than company, and was much troubled with wandering of mind and idle thoughts;

and

and for outward things, he was never rich (and although, when in Killinchie, he had not above four pounds Sterling of st. pence a-year) yet he was never in want.

He further observes, That he could not remember any particular time of conversion, or that he was much cast down, or lifted up; only one night, in the Dean of Kilmarnock, having been most of the day before, in company with some people of Stuarton, who were under rare and sad exercise of mind; he lay down under some heaviness, that he never had such experience of; but, in the midst of his sleep there came such a terror of the wrath of God upon him, that if it had but increased a little higher, or continued but a few minutes longer, he had been in a most dreadful condition! but it was instantly removed, and he thought it was said within his heart, See what a fool thou art, to desire the thing thou couldst not endure.

In his preaching he was sometimes much deserted and cast down; and again, at other times, tolerably assisted: He himself declares, That he never preached a sermon excepting two, that he would be earnest to see again in print; the first was at the Kirk of Shots (as was already noticed) and

the

the other at a Communion Monday at Holywood in Ireland; and both these times he had spent the night before in conference and prayer with some Christians, without any more than ordinary preparation: For otherwise, says he, his gift was rather suited to common people than to learned judicious auditors.

He had a tolerable insight in the Hebrew, Chaldee, and somewhat of the Syriac languages; Arabic he did essay, but he soon dropped it. He had as much of the French, Italian, Dutch and Spanish, as enabled him to make use of their books and Bibles.

It was thrice laid upon him by the General Assembly to write the History of the Church of Scotland since the Reformation 1638; but this, for certain reasons, he had altogether omitted.

The greater part of his time in Holland he spent in reducing the original text unto a Latin translation of the Bible; and for that purpose compared Pagnin's with the original text and with the later translations, such as Munster, the Tigurine, Junius, the English, but especially the Dutch, which he thought was the most accurate translation.

Whether by constant sitting at these studies, or for some other reasons, the infirmities of old age creeping on, he could not determine, but since the year 1664 there was such a continual pain contracted in his bladder, that he could not walk abroad, and a skaking of his hands, that he could scarcely write any; otherwise, he blessed the Lord that hitherto he had found no great defection either of body or mind.

Thus he continued at Rotterdam until August 9th. 1672. when he died.

Some of his last words were. " Carry my
 " commendation to heaven to Jesus Christ,
 " till I come there myself." After a pause,
 he added, " I die in the faith, that the truths
 " of God, which he hath helped the Church
 " of Scotland to own, shall be owned by
 " him as truths so long as sun and moon
 " endure; and that Independency, though
 " there be good men and well-meaning
 " professors of that way, will be found
 " more to the prejudice of the work of God
 " than many are aware of for they vanish
 " into vain opinions. I have had my own
 " faults, as well as other men, but he made
 " me always abhor shews. I have, I know,
 " given offence to many, through my slack-
 " ness and negligence, but I forgive, and
 " desire

desire to be forgiven." After a pause, or he was not able to speak much at a time, he said, "I would not have people to forecast the worst, but there is a dark clóud above the reformed churches which prognosticates a storm coming." His wife, fearing what shortly fell wed, desired him to take leave of his friends: "I dare not," replied he, with an affectionate tenderness, "but it is like our parting will only be for a short time." And then he slept in the Lord.

Alth ough it is usual with the most of men, when writing their own memoirs, through modesty, to conceal their parts, qualifications, and other abilities, yet here these things cannot be hid; for it is pretty evident, that since our Reformation commenced in Scotland, there has been none whose labours in the gospel have been more remarkably blessed with the down-pouring of the Spirit in conversion-work, than Mr. Livingstone's were; yea, it is a question, if any one, since the primitive times, can produce so many convincing and confirming seals of their ministry; as witness the Kirk of Scots, and Hlywood in Ireland, at which two places, it is said, that about 1500 souls were either confirmed or converted and brought to Christ.

His

His works, besides his Letter from Leith 1663, to his parishioners at Ancrum, are his Memorable Characteristics of Divine Providence, &c. and a Manuscript of his own Life, of which this is an abbreviate.— He also (while in his Patmos of Holland) wrote a new Latin translation of the Old Testament, which was revised and approved of by V. M. s, Essenius, Nathneus, Leusden and other eminent lights of that time before his death. it was put into the hands of the last to be printed.

Mr. LIVINGSTON'S Account of

THE GREAT WORK

At the Kirk of SHOTS.

THE only day in all my life, wherein I found most of the presence of God in preaching, was on a Monday after the Communion, preaching in the Church-yard of Shots. June 21. 1630. The night before I had been in company with some Christians who spent the night in prayer and conference. When I was alone in the fields about eight or nine o'clock in the morning before we were to go to Sermon, there came

such

such a misgiving of spirit upon me, con-
 sidering my unworthiness and weakness,
 to speak before so many aged and worthy
 ministers, and so many eminent and expe-
 rienced Christians, that I was consulting
 with myself to have stolen away, and was
 actually gone away to some distance; but
 when just about to lose sight of the Kirk of
 Scots, these words, *Was I ever a barren-
 wilderness, or a land of darkness?* were
 brought into my heart with such an over-
 powering power, as constrained me to think it
 my duty to return and comply with the call
 to preach; which I accordingly did, with
 good assistance, for about an hour and
 a half, on the points I had meditated from
 that text, Ezek xxxvi. 25, 26. "Then will
 I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye
 shall be clean. From all your filthiness,
 and from all your idols will I cleanse you.
 A new heart also will I give you, and
 a new spirit will I put within you; and
 I will take away the stony heart out of
 your flesh, and I will give you an heart
 of flesh." As I was about to close,
 heaviness was coming suddenly on, made
 the people hastily take to their cloaks and
 mantles, I began to speak to the following
 purpose: "If a few drops of rain from
 the clouds should descend upon you, how dis-
 composed would you be, how full of horror
 and

and despair, if G d should deal with them as they deserved; and thus he will deal with all the finally impenitent. That God might justly rain fire and brimstone upon them, as upon Sodom and Gomorrah, and the other cities of the plain. That the Son of G d, by tabernacling in our nature; and obeying and suffering in it, is the only refuge and covert from the storm of divine wrath due to us for sin. That his merits and mediation are the alone skreen from that storm; and none but penitent believers shall have the benefit of that shelter.

In these, or some expressions to this purpose, and many others, he was led on for about an hour's time (after he had done with what he had premeditated) in a strain of exhortation and warning, with great enlargement and melting of heart; which was followed with such power, that it was thought five hundred persons could date their conversion from that Sermon.

F I N I S.

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