

I went to the Cathedral; then I came home and read to the Normans and little Castleton.

"29th.—I feel weak in mind and body. If I go on approving revealed religion, I must be extremely careful of taking the idle fancies of the brain for anything so far superior. I believe many mistake mere meteors for that heavenly light which few receive. Many may have it in a degree, but I should suppose few have it so as to teach others with authority.

"June 1st.—I have been a great part of this morning with poor Rob, who seems now dying. I read a chapter in the Testament to him—the one upon death—and I sat with him for some time afterwards. Poor fellow! I never saw death, or any of its symptoms before; sad to see it truly is. I said a few words to him, and expressed to him how happy we should be in the expectation of immortality and everlasting bliss. Father of mercies, wilt Thou bless him and take him unto Thee? Though my mind is flat this morning, and not favored with Thy Spirit in devotion, yet I exert what I have, and hope it will prove acceptable in Thy sight. Almighty God, Thy will be done, and not ours. May I always be resigned to what Thou hast ordered for me. I humbly thank Thee for allowing my eyes to be opened, so as even to feel faith, hope and love towards Thee. First and last of everything infinite, and not to be comprehended except by Thy Spirit which Thou allowest to enlighten our hearts."

The above is the first of those written prayers which abound in this devoted Christian's Journal, increasing in frequency and fervency to the close. It is worthy of remark, how gradually the devotional spirit became developed in her mind. At about the age of seventeen she wrote, "I love to 'look through nature up to nature's God.' I have no more religion than that; and in the little that I have *I am not the least devotional.*" Two or three months later

she says, "If I were devotional I should fall on my knees and be most grateful for the blessings I enjoy." This was in July. In January following, "I should think it almost impossible to keep strictly to principles without religion; I should think those feelings impossible to obtain, for even if I thought all the Bible was true, I do not think I could make myself feel it: I think I never saw any person who appeared so totally destitute of it. I fear I am by degrees falling away from the path of virtue and truth." When, a month afterwards, the Holy Spirit was first sensibly shed upon her through the preaching of the Gospel, causing tears of joy to flow, she wrote, "I wish the state of enthusiasm I am in may last, for to-day I have felt *that there is a God*; I have been devotional, and my mind has been led away from the follies that it is mostly wrappel up in." Four months thereafter, when watching over and trying to administer the sacrament of Divine love, hope and faith to a poor dying man, the spirit expressed itself as above. Thus the light and warmth of religion very gradually increased in her mind and heart through the exercise of the grace which was given.

"12th.—This evening I have got myself rather in a scrape; I have been helping them beg my father to go to the Guild-dinner, and I don't know whether it was quite what I approve of, or think good for myself; but I shall consider, and do not intend to go, if I disapprove of it. How strange and odd! I really think I shall turn plain Friend. All I say is, search deeply; do nothing rashly, and then I hope to do right. They all, I think, now see it. Keep up to the duties I feel in my heart, let the path be ever so difficult. Err not at all if I can avoid it. Be humble and constant. I do

not like to appear a character I am not certain of being. For a few days past I have at times felt much religion for me; humility and comfort belong to it. I often think very seriously about myself. A few months ago if I had seen any one act as I now do, I should have thought him a fool; but the strongest proof I can have that I am acting right at the present time is that I am certainly a better and I think a happier character. But I often doubt myself when I consider my enthusiastic and changeable feelings. Religion is no common enthusiasm, because it is pure; it is a constant friend, protector, supporter and guardian; it is what we cannot do well without in this world. What can prove its excellence so much as its producing virtue and happiness? How much more solid a character I am since I first got hold of religion! I would not part with what I have for anything. It is a faith that never will leave my mind, I hope most earnestly. I do not believe it will, but I desire always to be a strictly religious character."

In the next entry we have an intimation of her future work.

"13th.—I have some thoughts of by degrees increasing my plan for Sunday evening; and of having several poor children at least to read in the Testament and religious books for an hour. I have begun with Billy, but I hope to continue and increase one by one. I should think it a good plan; but I must not even begin that hastily. It might increase morality among the lower classes if the Scriptures were oftener and better read to them. I believe I cannot exert myself too much: there is nothing gives me such satisfaction as instructing the lower classes of people."

During this summer—1798—John Gurney and his seven daughters traveled into Wales. They met with various classes of people, Quakers and others. The following ex-

tract shows the drawing of Elizabeth's mind toward the more serious part of her own religious Society:

"*Dawlish, August 3rd.*—This morning Kitty came in for us to read the Testament together, which I enjoyed; I read my favorite chapter, the 15th of Corinthians, to them. Oh! how earnestly I hope that we may all know what truth is and follow its dictates. I still continue my belief that I shall turn plain Quaker. I used to think, and do now, how how very little dress matters, but I find it almost impossible to keep up to the principles of Friends without altering my dress and speech. I felt it the other day at Weymouth. If I had been plain I should not have been *tempted* to go to the play, which, at all events I would not do. Plainness appears to be a sort of protection to the principles of Christianity, in the present state of the world. I have just received a letter from Anna Savery, and have been answering it, and have written rather a religious letter which I mean to show them, though it is to me a cross, as I say in it I think I am a Quaker at heart. I hope it will not hurt them; but it is better to be on clear grounds with my best friends upon that which so nearly interests me. I know it hurts Rachel and John the most. Rachel has the seeds of Quakerism in her heart, that, if cultivated, would grow indeed, I have no doubt. I should never be surprised to see us all Quakers.

"*Plymouth Dock, 8th.*— Am I right or not? An officer has come for us to hear a very famous Marine Band; and I do not go, because I have some idea it is wrong even to give countenance to a thing that inflames men's minds to destroy each other. It is truly giving encouragement, as far as lies in my power, to what I most highly disapprove; therefore I think I am right to stay at home.

"*Aberystwith, 23rd.*—Is dancing wrong? I have just been dancing; I think there are many dangers attending it;

it may lead to vanity and other things. The more the pleasures of life are given up, the less we love the world, and our hearts will be set upon better things; not but that we are allowed, I believe, to enjoy the blessings Heaven has sent us. We have power of mind to distinguish the good from the bad; for under the cloak of pleasure infinite evils are carried on. The danger of dancing, I find is throwing me off my center. At times, when dancing, I know that I have not reason left, but that I do things which in calm moments I must repent of.

"28th.—My mind is in an uncomfortable state this morning; for I am astonished to find that I have felt a scruple at music, at least I could not otherwise account for my feelings; but my mind is rather uneasy after spending time in it. These cannot be sensations of my own making, or a contrivance of my own forming, for I have such happiness when I overcome my worldly self; and when I give way to it I am uneasy. Not but what I think feelings are sometimes dangerous to give way to; but how odd, yet how true, that much human reason must be given up. I don't know what to think of it, but I must act somehow, and in some way,—yet do nothing rashly, or hastily, but try to humiliate myself to true religion, and endeavor to look to God who alone can teach me and lead me aright; have faith, hope, and if little things are to follow to protect greater ones, I must, yes, I must do it. I feel certainly happier in being a Quaker, but my reason contradicts it. Now my fears are these: lately I have had Quakerism placed before me in a very interesting and delightful light: and is it unlikely that inclination may put on the appearance of duty? Now my inclination may, before long, lead me some other way; that is a sad foundation to build the fortress upon which must defend me through life. But I think I am wrong in one thing, though it is right to doubt myself; yet do I not make myself more uneasy for fear I should be a ridiculous object to the world and some of my dear friends? I believe I can give myself a

little advice—not to promote anything leading to unquakerism; but try if it make me happy or not, and then take greater steps if I like."

The above is a very curious passage, showing, with dramatic clearness the struggle of conflicting ideas, inclinations and tastes, in a conscientious mind, thoroughly bent on doing its whole duty, and brought, by association, under the influence of opposite currents of opinion and differing modes of practice. Judging at this distance, after the innocent, and may we not say heavenly, charms of music have finally overcome the prejudice against it, even among the sober Quakers, except in a few instances, we can see that the case was not judged on its own intrinsic merits, when it was decided to give up a source of pure and refined pleasure, because it was thought by certain serious people to militate against the Christian life. Still, it is not necessary to conclude that she made a mistake, unless it had been better then and thereto inaugurate a reform, and insist on holding to all that was good in itself, notwithstanding the opposition. This, it is not probable a sensitive girl of eighteen was strong enough to do, without a conflict greater than she could bear, or without producing discords in the society with which it was best for her to remain associated. Why, therefore, might not the Spirit of Divine Wisdom truly have impressed her mind to yield this and other points, as a practical measure of harmony? But we can only say that such *may* have been the case. When we trace the history of this eventful life further, and see that, to her great sorrow, her own children refused to follow her in the narrow path which she felt it right for her to choose, we are in-

clined to question whether a bolder and more steadfast adherence to abstract truth and reason might not have produced better results. Of this we are perhaps incompetent to judge: but we can safely assert that, although circumstances may justify a temporary conformity to existing customs, we should not make our special duties a law for others, or even for ourselves in other relations and circumstances. The law of expediency, or relative duty, has necessarily a large share in the control of human conduct. A very considerable part of the religious practices of men are dictated by it. But since God Himself has wisely adapted His laws to the the varying conditions of mankind, we ought not to consider ourselves bound to anything which our fathers found requisite for themselves, unless an unchanging principle also enjoins it upon us. All societies, as now organized, have their peculiarities which it may be well for their members to abide by until some further development renders these customs inappropriate. When He who "divideth unto every man severally as He will" put Elizabeth Gurney, beautiful and engaging, with the head of a sage and the heart of an angel, into a plain Quaker dress, and persuaded her to give up music and other social amusements, to say "thee" and "thou," and to preach the gospel, and labor for the salvation of lost souls, it is evident that He considered Quakerism a good harness for her to work in; and so the results proved it to be. But it would not follow that others—not even her own children—were bound by all the restrictions which she felt to be necessary. This she herself freely acknowledged at a later period in life, after much sorrow had brought its increase of wisdom.

The following entry which illustrates both her sincerity and good-sense, throws further light on the subject and may help others to understand the source of many of their convictions about religion and religious duty.

"Jan. 29, 1799.—I am in a doubtful state of mind. I think my mind is timid and my affections strong, which may be partly the cause of my being so much inclined to Quakerism. In the first place my affections were worked upon in receiving the first doctrines of religion through a Quaker; therefore it is likely they would put on that garb in my mind. In the next place my timidity may make me uncomfortable in erring from principles that I am so much inclined to adopt. So far I should be on my guard, and I hope not to forget what I have just mentioned. But yet, I think the only true standard I have to direct myself by is that which experience proves to give me the most happiness by enabling me to be the most virtuous. I believe there is something in the mind, or in the heart, that shows its approbation when we do right. I give myself this advice: Do not fear truth, let it be ever so contrary to inclination and feeling."

Her severest trial seems to have been in giving up the social amusements, music, singing and dancing, which appear to have been much, and, we should think, rationally enjoyed, in her large family of seven sisters and four brothers. The regret was not on her own account, for she would have preferred to lay these doves and lambs on the altar of conscience before she did, but she felt the grief it would cause in the dear home circle. Here are some of her touching reflections:

"27th.—This evening I have been doing exercises, and

singing with them; my mind feels very clear to night and my body much better. I have been thinking about singing; I hope in that, as in everything else, to do what is right. I cannot say I feel it is wrong to sing to my own family; it is sweet and right to give them pleasure. I do not approve of singing in company, as it leads to vanity and dissipation of mind; but that I believe I have no occasion to do, as dear Rachel does not request it, for she does not like it herself. I should be sorry quite to give up singing as the gift of nature, and on her account; as long as it does not lead me from what is right I need not fear.

"October 5th.—In the evening a fiddler came and we all had a dance. I had a toothache and so far from its making me merry it made me grave. I do not feel satisfaction in dancing.

"6th.—This morning I awoke not comfortable; the subject of dancing came strongly before my mind. Totally declining it as a matter of pleasure I do not mind; only as I am situated with the others I find it difficult. The question is if these may not be scruples of my own forming that I may one day repent of. The bottom of my heart is inclined to Quakerism, but I know what imagination can do. I believe the formation of my mind is such that it requires the bonds and ties of Quakerism to fit it for immortality. I feel it a very great blessing being so little in the company of superior fascinating Quakers, because it makes me act freely, and look to the only true Judge for what is right for me to do. The next question is, am I sufficiently clear that dancing is wrong to give it up? because I know much precaution is necessary. I believe I may, if I like, make one more trial, and judge again how I feel; but I must reflect upon it, determining to give it up if I think right. I wish to make it a subject of very serious reflection hoping as usual to do right. It will hurt them much I fear, but time I believe will take off that, if they see me happier and better for it. Let me redouble my kindness to them. Catherine

seems to wish I would give up correspondence with Anna Savery, which I think I may do. This day has been very comfortable in most respects, though I have not done much. I have finished my letter to dear cousin Priscilla, and that to Mrs. ———; but I cannot feel quite easy to send it without first speaking to my father; for I do believe it is my duty to make him my friend in all things; though I think it probable he will discourage me in writing to my friend Sophy; yet never keep anything from him; but let me be an open, true, kind, and dutiful daughter to him whilst life is in my body.

"12th.—I have many great faults, but I have some dispositions which I should be most thankful for. I believe I feel much for my fellow-creatures; though I think I mostly see into the minds of those I associate with, and am apt to satirize their weakness; yet I don't remember ever being any time with one who was not extremely disgusting but I felt a sort of love for them, and I do hope I would sacrifice my life for the good of mankind. My mind is too much like a looking-glass;—objects of all kinds are easily reflected in it, whilst present, but when they go their reflection is gone also. I have a faint idea of many things, a strong idea of a few; therefore my mind is cultivated badly. I have many straggling, but not many connected ideas. I have the materials to form good in my mind, but I am not a sufficiently good artificer to unite them properly together, and make a good consistence; for in some parts I am too hard, in others too soft. I hope and believe the Great Artificer is now at work; that if I join my power to the only one able to conduct me aright, I may one day be better than I am.

"17th.—My journal has not gone on well of late; partly owing to my going out, and having people in the room, now there is a fire. I dislike going out; what my mind wants is peace and quiet. The other night as I was alone in a carriage, a fine starlight night, I thought,—What is it I want? how I overflow with the blessings of this world! I have

true friends—as many as I wish for—good health, a happy home, with all that riches can give, and yet all these are nothing without a satisfied conscience. At times I feel satisfied, but I have not reason to feel so often. . . . This afternoon I have much to correct, I feel proud, vain and disagreeable; not touched with the sweet humility of Christianity; nor is my heart enlightened by its happy doctrines. I have two things heavily weighing on my mind—dancing and singing. So sweet and so pretty do they seem; but as surely as I do either, so surely does a dark cloud come over my mind. It is not only my giving up these things, but I am making others miserable, and laying a restraint upon their pleasures. In the next place am I sure I am going upon a good foundation? If I am doing right God will protect me and them also. If I am doing wrong what foundation do I stand upon? None: then all to me is nothing. Let me try to take my thoughts from this world, and look to the only true Judge. I believe singing to be so natural that I may try it a little longer: but I do think dancing may be given up. What particularly led me to this state was our having company, and I thought I must sing. I sang a little but did not stay with them during the playing. My mind continued in a state of agitation, and I did not sleep until some time after I was in bed.

“19th.—My mind feels more this morning, if anything than it did last night. Can such feelings be my own putting on? They seem to affect my whole frame, mental and bodily. They cannot be of myself, for if I were to give worlds I could not remove them. They truly make me shake. When I look forwards I think I can see, if I have strength to do as they direct I shall be another person: sorrow I believe will be removed to be replaced by joy. Then let me now act! My best method of conduct will be to tell Rachel how I am situated in mind, and then ask her what she would advise: and be very kind and tell her the true state of the case. Is it worth while to continue in so small a pleasure for so much

pain? The pleasure is nothing to me, but it is a grand step to take in life.—I have been and spoken to Rachel, saying I think I must give up singing. It is astonishing the total change that has taken place. From misery I am now come to joy. I felt ill before; I now feel well—thankful should I be for being directed, and pray to keep up always to that direction. After having spoken to my darling Rachel, where I fear I said too much, I rode to Norwich after some poor people: I went to see many and added my mite to their comfort. Nothing, I think, could exceed the kindness of my dear Rachel. Though I have no one here to encourage me in Quakerism, I believe I must be one before I am content.

“7th. December.—I have had a letter to say my dear friend William Savery is safely arrived in America. Kitty and I have been having a long talk together this evening upon sects; we both seem to think them almost necessary. It is long since I have what I may truly call written in my journal. Writing in my journal is to me expressing the feelings of my heart during the day. I have partly given it up, from the coldness of the weather and not having a snug fire to sit by. I wish now, as I have opportunity, to look a little into the present situation of my heart. That is the advantage of writing a true journal—it leads the mind to look inward. Of late I do not think I have been sufficiently active, but have rather given way to a dilatory spirit. I have been reading Watts' Logic: it tells me how ill-regulated my thoughts are—they truly ramble! Regularity of thought and deed is what I much want; I appear to myself to have almost a confusion of ideas, which leads to a confusion of actions. I want order. I believe it difficult to obtain, but yet with perseverance attainable. The first way to obtain it appears to me to try to prevent my thoughts from rambling, and to keep them as steadily as possible to the object in view. True religion is what I seldom feel, nor do I sufficiently try after it, by really seeking devotion. I do not warmly seek it, I am sure, nor do I live in the fear of an All-wise Being