

"23rd.—Giving up to make a little remark after reading to the servants, has brought sweet peace: indeed, so far, it has appeared to me that prompt obedience has brought me the most peace. The prospect of the Meetings next week, more particularly the Quarterly Meeting, already makes me tremble. I can hardly say why, but it is very awful to be thus publicly exposed, in a work that I feel so little fitted for; yet I believe it is not my own doing, nor at my own command.

"*Plasnet, First Month, 1st, 1810.*—It is rather awful to me entering a new year, more particularly when I look at the alterations the last has made—most striking the last three months, or a little more. First a child born; second the loss of nurse; third my beloved father's death; fourth my being opened in meetings. My heart says, What can I render for having been so remarkably and mercifully carried through these various dispensations of Providence? I think I never knew the Divine Arm so eminently extended for my comfort, help and deliverance; and though of late I may have had to pass through the valley of the shadow of death, yet it has not lasted long at a time, and Oh, the incomings of love, joy and peace that have, at other periods, arisen for my confirmation and consideration! But the manna of yesterday I find will not do for to-day.

"11th.—It has been strongly impressed upon me how very little it matters, when we look at the short time we remain here, what we appear to others; and how far too much we look at the things of this life.

"What does it signify what we are thought of here, so long as we are not found wanting towards our Heavenly Father? Why should we so much try to keep back something, and not be willing to offer ourselves up to Him, body, soul and spirit, to do with us what may seem best unto Him, and to make us what He would have us to be? O Lord! enable me to be more and more singly, simply and purely obedient to Thy service!

"19th.—Yesterday was an awful, and to me instructive day at Plaistow Meeting. I had not sat very long before I was brought into much feeling desire that the darkness in some minds might be enlightened. However no clearness of expression came with it; but under a very solemn covering of the spirit of supplication, a few words offering, I, after a time, gave way to utter them. But that which appeared greatly in the cross to me was having some words presented to speak in testimony afterwards, which I did, I believe, purely because I desired to serve my Master, and not to look too much to the opinion of my fellow-servants; and there was to me a remarkable solemnity, and something like an owning, or accepting of this poor little offering. I have desired, and have been in a little degree enabled to feel on that sure foundation, that although the winds may blow, and the rain may descend, yet whilst I keep on this Rock they will not be able utterly to cast me down. What a mercy amidst the storm to feel, ever so slightly, something of a sure foundation! Thus much I know, that, even if I be mistaken in this awful undertaking, my desire is to serve Him in it whom my soul, I may truly say, loves and delights to please. O Lord! I pray Thee preserve Thy poor handmaid in the hour of temptation, and enable me to follow Thee in the way of Thy requiremgs even if they lead me into suffering and unto death.

"31st.—My little — has been very naughty; his will I find is very strong; oh that my hands may be strengthened rightly to subdue it. O Lord! I pray for help in these important duties! I may truly say I had rather my dear lambs should not live than live eventually to dishonor Thy great cause; rather may they be taken in innocency: but if Thou seest meet, O Lord! preserve them from great evils, and be pleased in Thy abundant mercy to be with them, as Thou hast been, I believe, with their poor unworthy parents; visit them and revisit them, until Thou hast made them what Thou wouldst have them to be. Oh

that I could like Hannah, bring them to Thee, to be made use of as instruments in thy Holy Temple! I ask nothing for them in comparison of Thy love; and above all blessings, that they may be vessels in Thy house. This blessing I crave for them, that they may be employed in Thy service, for indeed I can bow and say, What honor, what joy so great as, in ever so small a measure, to serve Thee, O Lord!

*"Mildred's Court, Sixth Month, 1st.*—Yesterday I attended the funeral of our beloved Anna Reynolds, whose death has been deeply felt by me. We had, I think I may truly say, a glorious time; for the power of the Most High appeared to overshadow us. A belief of her being in safety has bowed my soul prostrate, in humble thankfulness, and renewedly led me to desire to prove my gratitude for such unspeakable mercy as has been shown my near and beloved relations by my love and entire dedication. I uttered a few words in supplication, at the ground; my uncle Joseph, my cousin Pricilla, and many others, beautifully ministered. After Meeting, I might truly say, my cup ran over, such sweetness covered my mind. After a solemn time in the family, with dear cousin Pricilla and Ann Crowley, I ventured on my knees, praying that His Holy Hand would not spare, nor his eye pity, until He made us what He would have us to be: only I craved that He would not forsake us, but let us be made in some small measure sensible that He was with us, and that it was His rod and His staff that we depended upon. Through heights and through depths, through riches and through poverty may it alone be my will to do the will of the Father!"

The foregoing selections, covering a period of seven months, are sufficient to show the workings of this deeply earnest mind and heart under the impulse of the Spirit to participate in the exercises of the Church. Slow as it may

seem the progress of Elizabeth Fry was more rapid than is usual with this class of ministers, for she was endowed by nature with fertile conception and ready utterance, and, her heart being fully enlisted, so soon as the embarrassment of her new position were off, she became a very ready speaker. Her nature being emotional and full of benevolent impulses, her words appealed to the better feelings of those she addressed, while her prayers, being the sincere utterance of her heart, rather than her intellect, carried the hearts of others to the Throne of grace. In little more than a year from its commencement, her ministry was formally "acknowledged" by the Society as being acceptable. This simple mode of ordination—or laying on of hands in a figurative sense—entitles those receiving it to pass freely through the different branches of the Society and to appoint special meetings if they feel it right to do so; after having obtained the consent of their own Monthly or Quarterly Meetings thus to labor in the work of the Gospel abroad.

Referring to this official acknowledgment Elizabeth Fry says:

"This mark of their unity is sweet, and I think strengthening, and I believe it will have advantages as well as trials attending it. I feel and find it is not by the approbation, any more than the disapprobation, of man that we stand or fall; but it once more leads me only to desire that I may simply and singly follow my Master in the way of His requirements, whatsoever they may be. I think this will make a way for me in some things which have long been on my mind."

The following incidents illustrating her care for the needy in her own neighborhood are related by her daughters.

"In establishing herself at Plashet Mrs Fry had formed various plans for her poorer neighbors which she gradually brought into action. One of her early endeavors was to establish a girls' school for the Parish of East Ham, of which Plashet is a hamlet. Immediately opposite the gate of Plashet House there stood a dilapidated dwelling, picturesque from its gable end and large projecting porch. It was inhabited by an aged man and his still more aged sister. They had seen better days, and eked out a narrow income with the help of a brother's labors in a small garden, and the sale of rabbits of which they kept a vast quantity. Like persons fallen in life they were reserved; the sister almost inaccessible: but by degrees Mrs Fry won her way to the old lady's heart. She might be seen seated in an upper chamber on one side of a fire-place lined with blue Dutch tiles opposite the invalid who, propped by cushions, leaned back in an easy chair, in a short white dressing-gown over a quilted petticoat, her thin wrinkled hands resting on her knees, and her emaciated refined countenance brightening under the gentle cheering influence of her guest, as she endeavored to raise her hopes and stimulate her desires after that country where it shall no more be said 'I am sick.' Annexed to this old building was a spacious and comparatively modern room which appeared suitable for a school-room, and Mrs. Fry's persuasions succeeded in obtaining the consent of the old people to use it as such.

"A young woman named Harriet Howell, who was much occupied at that time in organizing schools on the Lancasterian system, came to Plashet. The excellent clergyman of East Ham, Mr. Aulezark, with his lady united with her in the object. A school of about seventy girls was established, and although afterwards removed to a more central situation, continues to the present day.

"The bodily wants of the poor, especially in cases of sickness or accident, claimed her careful attention. There was a depot of calico and flannels always ready, besides other

garments, and a roomy closet well supplied with drugs. In very hard winters she had soup boiled in an out-house in such quantities as to supply hundreds of poor people with a nourishing meal. Nor was her interest confined to the English poor in East Ham. About half a mile from Plashet, on the high road between Stratford and Ilford, the passer-by will find two long rows of houses with one larger one in the center, if possible more dingy than the rest. At that time they were squalid and dirty; the windows generally stuffed with old rags, or pasted over with brown paper, and the few remaining panes of glass refusing to perform their intended office, from the accumulated dust of years; puddles of thick black water before the doors; children without shoes or stockings; mothers whose matted locks escaped from the remnants of caps which looked as though they never could have been white; pigs on terms of evident familiarity with the family; poultry sharing the children's potatoes—all bespoke an Irish colony.

"It was a pleasant thing to observe the influence obtained by Mrs. Fry over these wild but warm-hearted people. She had in her nature a touch of poetry, and a quick sense of the droll; the Irish character furnished matter for both. Their powers of deep love and bitter grief excited her sympathy; almost against her judgment she would grant the linen shirt and the boughs of evergreen to array the departed and ornament the bed of death.

"One clear frosty morning Mrs. Fry called her elder children to accompany her on a visit to one of these cottages. A poor woman, the mother of a young family had died there; she had been well conducted as a wife and mother, and had long shown a desire for religious instruction; the priest, a kind-hearted, pains-taking man, liberal in his views and anxious for the good of his flock, thought well of the poor woman, had frequently visited her in her illness, and was in that as in many other cases, very grateful to Mrs.

Fry for the relief and nourishment she had bestowed, which it was not in his power to give.

"On the bed of death lay extended the young mother, her features, which were almost beautiful, stiffened into the semblance of marble. Her little children were on the floor, her husband in the corner leaning on a round table, with his face buried in his hands. A paper cross lay on the breast of the corpse; the sun shone into the room and mocked the dreary scene. The apartment was close from the fumes of tobacco and the many guests of the wake which had been held during the night, contrasting strangely with the fresh air which blew in through the half-opened doorway. Mrs. Fry spoke soothingly to the husband; she reminded him of his wife's desires for his good and for that of his children; she slightly alluded to the uselessness of the cross as a symbol, but urged the attention of those present to the great doctrine of which it was intended to remind them. Again she offered solace to the mourner, promised assistance for his little ones, and left the room.

"Some of the scenes in Irish Row were very different. 'Madam Fry,' as she was called by them, being so popular as to cause some inconveniences and many absurdities. She enjoyed giving pleasure; it was an impulse as well as a duty with her to do good. Gathering her garments round her she would thread her way through children and pigs, up broken stair-cases and by narrow passages, to the apartments she sought; there she would listen to their tales of want or woe, or of their difficulties with their children, or of the evil conduct of their husbands. She persuaded many of them to adopt more orderly habits, giving some presents of clothing as encouragement; she induced some to send their children to school, and with the consent of the priest, circulated the Bible amongst them. On one occasion, when the weather was extremely cold and great distress prevailed, being at the time too delicate herself to walk, she went alone in the carriage literally

piled with flannel petticoats for Irish Row, the rest of the party walking to meet her, to assist in the delightful task of distribution. She made relieving the poor a pleasure to her children by the cheerful spirit in which she did it; she employed them as almoners when very young, but expected a minute account of their giving and their reasons for it. After the establishment of the Tract Society she always kept a large supply of such as she approved for distribution. It was her desire never to relieve the bodily wants of any one without endeavoring in some way, more or less directly, to benefit their souls. She was a warm advocate for vaccination, and very successful in performing the operation; she had acquired this art from Dr. Willan, one of its earliest advocates and most skilful practitioners. At intervals she made a sort of investigation of the state of the parish, with a view to vaccinating the children. The result was that small-pox was scarcely known in the villages over which her influence extended.

"In a green lane near Plashet, it has been the annual custom of the gipsies to pitch their tents for a few days in their way to Fairlop fair. The sickness of a gipsy child inducing the mother to apply for relief, led Mrs. Fry to visit their camp; from that time, from year to year, she cared for them when they came into her neighborhood. Clothing for the children and a little medical advice she invariably bestowed; but she did far more than that—she sought to influence their minds aright; she pleaded with them on the bitter fruits of sin, and furnished them with Bibles and books the most likely to arouse their attention. But though thus abounding in labors for the good of all around her, she was liable to deep inward discouragements, undoubtedly increased by her sensitive nature and delicate frame, but arising chiefly from her intense desire in nothing to offend Him whom her soul loved, and whom she so entirely desired to serve.

"In September, Mrs. Fry visited Earlham. On the 10th

of that month, 1811, was he'd the first meeting of the Norwich Bible Society: it was very largely and generally attended. Mrs. Fry, who was warmly interested in the Bible society from its commencement to the close of her life, was present, with her brother Joseph John Gurney, and other members of the family. Mr. Gurney, then in the prime of early manhood, on this occasion first took his stand in public life as an advocate for the general circulation of that sacred volume which he had chosen as the guide of his youth and which has proved the stay of his advancing years."

The following extracts from the Journal are beautifully illustrative:

"*Earlham, Ninth Month, 10th.*—I think a more deeply exercised state—which has at times bordered on distress of soul—I hardly ever remember than I feel this morning on going to meeting; in the first place with the Edwardses and my own family in their various states; in the next place, my prospect of going into the men's Monthly Meeting; and in the last, an idea having passed my mind, whether I may not have, amongst their very large companies who are very likely to be here, consisting of many clergyman and others, to say something, either before meals, or at some other time. The words that (I believe) have arisen for my encouragement are these: 'The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want? Yes I will try not fear, for if God be with me who can be against me?'

"*12th.*—What can I render for all His benefits? In the first place, I went to the Meeting for worship with the Edwardses: I had not long been there before I felt something of a power accompanying me, and words arose, but my exercise of mind was so great that it seemed like being 'bap-

tized for the dead;' though not that I know of from any particular fear of man. I was helped (I believe I may say) as to power, tongue and utterance. That Meeting might be said to end well.

"Yesterday was a day indeed; one that may be called a mark of the times. We first attended a General Meeting of the Bible Society where it was sweet to observe so many of various sentiments all uniting in the one great object—from the good Bishop of Norwich (Bathurst), for so I believe he may be called, to the dissenting minister and young Quaker (my brother Joseph). We afterwards, about thirty-four of us, dined here; I think there were six clergyman of the Establishment, three dissenting ministers, and Richard Philips, beside numbers of others. A very little before the cloth was removed such a power came over me of love, I believe I may say life, that I thought I must ask for silence after Edward Edwards had said grace, and then supplicate the Father of mercies for His blessing, both of the fatness of the earth and the dew of Heaven, upon those who thus desired to promote His cause by spreading the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures; and that He would bless their endeavors, that the knowledge of God and His glory might cover the earth as the waters cover the sea; and also for the preservation of all present, that through the assistance of His grace we might so follow Him and our blessed Lord in time that we might eventually enter into a glorious eternity where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest. The power and solemnity were very great. Richard Philips asked for silence; I soon knelt down: it was like having our High Priest amongst us. Independently of this power His poor instruments are nothing; and with His power how much is effected. I understood many were in tears; I believe all were bowed down spiritually. Soon after I took my seat; the Baptist minister said, 'This is an act of worship;' adding that it reminded him of that which the disciples said. 'Did not our heart burn within us

while He talked with us by the way?' A clergyman said, 'We want no wine for there is that amongst us which does instead.' A Lutheran minister remarked that although he could not always understand the words, being a foreigner, he felt the spirit of prayer, and went on to enlarge in a striking manner. Another clergyman spoke to this effect: How the Almighty visited us, and neither sex nor anything else stood in the way of His grace. I do not exactly remember the words of any one, but it was a most striking circumstance for so many, of such different opinions, thus all to be united in one spirit; and for a poor woman to be made the means, amongst so many great, wise, and I believe good men, of showing forth the praise of the great 'I Am.'"

One of the secretaries of the Bible Society, Mr. Joseph Hughes, thus describes this occasion:—

"On the Monday after my return, I proceeded with my excellent colleagues for Norwich where a numerous and respectable meeting was held on Wednesday in a very spacious and commodious hall. The mayor presided; the Bishop spoke with great decision and equal liberality; and the result of the whole was the establishment of the Norfolk and Norwich Bible Society. About seven hundred pounds was subscribed and one happy, amiable sentiment appeared to pervade the company. My colleagues and myself adjourned to Earlham, two miles from Norwich where we had passed the previous day and where we witnessed emanations of piety, generosity and affection in a degree that does not often meet the eye of mortals. Our hosts and hostesses were the Gurneys, chiefly Quakers, who, together with their guests amounted to thirty-four. A clergyman, at the instance of one of the family and I presume with the most cordial concurrence of the rest, read a portion of the Scriptures morning and evening, and twice we had prayers; I should have said thrice, for after

dinner, on the day of the meeting, the pause encouraged by the Society of Friends, was succeeded by a devout address to the Deity, by a female minister, Elizabeth Fry, whose manner was impressive, and whose words were so appropriate that none present can ever forget the incident, or ever advert to it without emotions alike powerful and pleasing. The first emotion was surprise; the second awe; the third pious fervor. As soon as we were re-adjusted at the table, I thought it might be serviceable to offer a remark that proved the coincidence of my heart with the devotional exercise in which we had been engaged; this had the desired effect. Mr. Owen and others suggested accordant sentiments, and we seemed generally to feel like the disciples whose hearts burned within them as they walked to Emmaus."

Elizabeth Fry's engagements in the Gospel ministry thus received the approbation, not only of her own Society, but also of ministers belonging to several other denominations, whose testimony is the more valuable because it was both cordial and spontaneous.