

"Though I acknowledge myself completely unable to write in English, as you wish me to do, for to show your friends in England the state of our prisons, such as the Ladies Committee found it to be, and such as it is now, eight months after the establishment of the society; yet when you told me it would prove a token of our regard and high esteem for Mrs. Fry and her fellow laborers, I readily comply with your request, and shall try to overcome all the difficulties which ignorance of your language and the novelty of the subject present to me. Not I alone, sir, but all the ladies of our committee expressed a hearty wish that something of our public exertions, and of our efforts to follow the example which that lady gives us, might be communicated to her, as a proof that her labors are blessed from above, and that a spark of that love which animates her generous heart has also reached our distant country, and influenced many hearts with the same Christian feeling for suffering humanity. May this prove a comfort to her soul, and a new encouragement for her to continue her labors in that large and important field of usefulness in which she is called to serve our Lord. We will all endeavor to follow her according to the strength and abilities granted us, looking for help and hoping for success to and from Him from whom we receive every blessing, and whose 'strength is made perfect in weakness.'"

Extract of a letter from Elizabeth Fry to Walter Venning.

"RESPECTED FRIEND:

Though personally unknown to thee I am confident, from the interest we both feel in one cause, thou wilt excuse the liberty I take in writing to thee to express my heart-felt satisfaction at the interesting and important accounts thou hast given my brother Hoare of the proceedings of the Gentlemen and Ladies' Prison Associations of Petersburg. Most warmly do I desire their encouragement

in this work of charity and utility; for the more I am acquainted with the subject, and the more extensive my observation of the effects of prison discipline is, the more confident I feel of its importance; and that, although the work will be gradual, yet through the Divine blessing its results will be sure. Not only that many will be stopped in their career of vice, but some truly turned from their evil ways, and the security and comfort of the community at large increased by our prisons which have been too generally the nurseries of vice, and scenes of idleness, filth and debauchery, being so arranged and attended to that they may become schools where the most reprobate may be instructed in their duty towards their Creator and their fellow mortals, and where the very habits of their lives may be changed.

"It will be found in this, as in every other good work, that some trials and discouragements will attend it; but the great end in view must induce those engaged in it to persevere and use increased diligence to overcome them, doing what we do to the Lord and not unto man, and then we shall do it well.

"We continue to have much satisfaction with the results of our efforts in Newgate—good order appears increasingly established, there is much cleanliness amongst our poor women, and some very encouraging proofs of reformation in habit, and what is much more, in heart. This, in a prison so ill-arranged, with no classification, except tried from untried, no good inspection and many other great disadvantages, is more than the most zealous advocates of prison discipline could look for.

"I lately had the pleasure of seeing the Duchess of Gloucester, who is our Patroness; she desired me to express how much gratified she was with thy account of what you are doing in Petersburg, and her wish that the ladies may be encouraged in their good work.

"How delightful it is to hear of the interest that the Emperor Alexander, Prince Galitzin, and ladies of high rank



take in the cause of the poor prisoners. May the best of blessings rest upon them for thus manifesting their care over the destitute of the earth.

"We also feel gratefully sensible of the kindness to our friends William Allen and Stephen Grellet. I hope thou wilt let us know before long how you go on. I am much obliged for the book thou kindly sent me; and believe me, with much regard and esteem, Thy friend

"ELIZABETH FRY."

After the death of Walter Venning the correspondence and the work in Russia were continued by his brother John Venning, who states that the letters which he received from Elizabeth Fry were "invaluable, as regarded the treatment and management of both prisoners and insane persons. It was the fruit of her own rich practical experience, communicated with touching simplicity, and it produced lasting benefit to those institutions in Russia."

"After he had presented to the Emperor Nicholas a statement of the defects of the Government lunatic asylum, the Dowager Empress and her son visited the asylum together, and, being convinced of the necessity of a complete reform in the management of the insane, the Emperor requested his mother to take it under her own care and to appoint John Venning the governor of it. An order was soon given to purchase, of one of the princes, a palace-like house, having above two miles of garden, and a fine stream of water running through the grounds. A plan of this great building was sent to Elizabeth Fry for her inspection and hints for improvements. Two extensive wings were recommended for dormitories. The wings cost 15,000 pounds. In addition to this sum from the Government, the Emperor gave 3000 pounds for cast-iron window frames recommended by Elizabeth Fry; as the clumsy iron bars in the old institu-

tion had drawn from many a poor inmate a sigh, with 'Sir, prison! prison!'

"Elizabeth Fry recommended that all, except the violent lunatics, should dine together at a table covered with a cloth and furnished with plates and spoons. The Empress was delighted with this plan, and when the arrangements were completed requested John Venning to invite them to dinner. Sixteen came and took their seats. The Empress approached the table, ordering one of the upper servants to sit at the head of it and ask a blessing. When he arose to do this they all stood up. The soup, with small pieces of meat was then served, and as soon as they had dined they all rose up spontaneously, and thanked her for her motherly kindness. She was deeply moved, and turning to John Venning, said, 'My friend this is one of the happiest days of my life.' The next day the number at table was increased, and the day following was still greater.

"A letter from Elizabeth Fry on 'the great importance of supplying the lunatics with the Scriptures,' which John Venning said 'deserved to be written in letters of gold,' and which he sent to the imperial family, was received with marked approbation. The court-physician, Dr. Richl, a devoted philanthropist requested a copy of it. This letter removed all difficulties on the subject and John Venning was requested to furnish them in their various languages. It was considered by some 'a wild and dangerous proceeding;' but he soon found them collected in groups and quietly listening, while one of their number was reading the New Testament; and instead of disturbing their minds it produced a soothing influence. A Russian priest, a lunatic, collected a number together and read to them. And John Venning found a poor Frenchman in his bed-room, during a lucid interval reading the New Testament, with tears rolling down his cheeks.

"Whenever John Venning received a letter from Elizabeth Fry he would write it out in French for the Empress,



and was pleased to see, as soon as she had read it, with what alacrity she ordered one of her secretaries to translate it into Russian, to be entered into the journal of the asylum for immediate adoption. One contained a list of fourteen rules which were all confirmed by the Empress the same day. And they introduced very important arrangements, viz.: 'treating the inmates, as far as possible, as the sane persons, both in conversation and manners towards them; to allow them as much liberty as possible; to engage them daily to take exercise in the open air; to allow them to wear their own clothes, and no uniform prison dress; most strictly to fulfil whatever was promised them; to exercise *patience, gentleness, kindness, and love* towards them; and to be exceedingly careful as to the characters of the keepers appointed to watch over them.

"Petersburg was not the only continental city with which communication on the subject of ladies visiting prisoners had now been opened.

"At Turin, La Marquise de Barol née Colbert was assiduously occupied in this important work. This lady was a Roman Catholic and had entered upon it from a sense of duty. Francis Cunningham, when traveling through that place had obtained permission to see the prison, had there become acquainted with her, and opened a correspondence for her with his sister-in-law, Elizabeth Fry, which was maintained for many years. Letters were also received from Amsterdam, where those interested in the cause were endeavoring to form a Prison Discipline Society and Committee to visit the prisoners."\*

In 1822 the Prince and Princess Royal of Denmark visited England, on which occasion the Princess called and took breakfast with Mrs. Fry. This was the commencement of a life-long association and friendship between these

\*Life by S. Corder.

excellent ladies. In November of this year, the following letter was addressed to the Princess.

"DEAR AND RESPECTED FRIEND,

Allow me to call thee so, for such I feel thee, as thou art truly both loved and respected by me. According to thy kind and condescending wish, expressed when here, I take up my pen to inform thee that upon the first of this month through the tender mercy of my God, I was safely delivered of a sweet boy, and to add to our cause of joy and thanksgiving, my dear daughter had also one born on the same day, so that twenty-four hours added a son and a grandson to our already numerous family. (This was her eleventh and last child.) We have both of us with our infants been going on well, and with the exception of some illness that I passed through in the early part of my confinement, and my habitual delicacy at such times, I am as well now as I can expect to be.

"I have often thought of thy kind visit with deep interest, and strong desires are raised in my heart for thy welfare and preservation every way, that the God of Peace may be with thee continually, guiding thee by His counsel, helping thee by His Spirit, comforting thee by His love, during thy continuance here; and afterwards, when He may be pleased to take thee hence, to be seen of men no more, through His mercy in Christ Jesus, receiving thee into glory. I also feel real interest and best desires for the Prince Royal,—may you both be encouraged in every good word and work. I remember the words of Paul in the 15th chapter of the 1st of Corinthians, 58th verse: 'Be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.'"

"It would give me great pleasure and satisfaction to hear from thee, or if that be asking too much, perhaps the lady whom we had the pleasure of seeing here, will let us know



many particulars respecting your welfare, and how you go on in Denmark, as it respects the prisons, schools, and other works of charity and love. I should also be pleased to know whether the books and the other things which we sent to Count Moltke, and also some of the work of the prisoners, ever came safely to thy hand, as we were prevented sending them quite so soon as we hoped to have done. I should be glad to be very respectfully and affectionately remembered to the Queen, and also to the Prince Royal, thy consort: and believe me, with much respect and regard

"Thy attached and obliged friend,  
"ELIZABETH FRY."

The nobility of her nature, so thoroughly redeemed and irradiated by heavenly grace, brought Mrs. Fry naturally into association with the finest spirits of the age in which she lived. She was acquainted with Dr. Chalmers, and to some extent a co-laborer with him; but no particulars are recorded. "They mutually helped each other in their plans of benevolence."

When in Bristol attending religious meetings and visiting the prisons, she called on Hannah More, from whom she had previously received a copy of her "Practical Piety" containing this inscription:

TO MRS. FRY  
Presented by Hannah More,  
As a token of veneration  
Of her heroic zeal,  
Christian charity,  
And persevering kindness.  
To the most forlorn  
Of human beings.  
They were naked and she

Clothed them;  
In prison and she visited them;  
Ignorant and she taught them,  
For *His* sake,  
In *His* name, and by *His* word,  
Who went about doing good.

Barley Wood, June 17th, 1818.

It will be seen by the date that this beautiful tribute was given soon after the commencement of the Newgate reform. In 1825 in reply to a slight request from Elizabeth Fry, Hannah More wrote her the following letter.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,

Any request of yours, if within my very limited power cannot fail to be immediately complied with. In your kind note I wish you had mentioned something of your own health, and that of your family.

"I look back with no small pleasure to the too short visit with which you once indulged me; a repetition of it would be no little gratification to me. Whether Divine Providence may grant it or not, I trust, through Him who loved us and gave Himself for us, that we may hereafter meet in that blessed country where there is neither sin, sorrow, nor separation.

"Believe me, my dear friend, with true esteem and warm affection to remain your s, sincerely,

"H. MORE.

"Barley Wood, 15th, April.

The affection and esteem expressed with such Christian grace was fully reciprocated by Mrs. Fry who "entertained a high appreciation of the character of Hannah More and of the benefits which she had conferred upon her contemporaries, especially upon her country-women. She always re-



ferred with great pleasure to her visit to Barley Wood, and the impression made upon her by the mingled sweetness and dignity of Hannah More's countenance and manner."

Could anything be more charming than the meeting of two such women, and the sisterly love and admiration they felt for each other. Only the great can fully appreciate the greatness of others, and none can be truly great who are not truly good.

With Wilberforce Mrs. Fry was not unfrequently associated in benevolent labors. One of these occasions is thus described:

"The return of the season had brought with it the interest of the annual transportation of convicts. During this year, five ships had been employed for that purpose. A young lady—the daughter of an Admiral—has often recurred to a farewell visit to a convict-ship, on the point of sailing, in which she accompanied Elizabeth Fry. In allusion to this visit she says:—

"I could scarcely look upon her as any other than an angel of mercy, calmly passing from one to another of the poor wretched beings around her with the word of counsel, comfort, or reproof that seemed suited to each individual case, as it presented itself to her notice. With several kind assistants she was arranging work for them during the voyage; in itself no trifling matter. But many a point of deepest interest and anxiety brought to her ready ear, met with such response as could only be looked for from a devoted follower of Him who went about doing good."

"On the mind of this young person the circumstance was strongly impressed of accompanying her father, on another occasion, to the female convict-ships lying off Woolwich, to meet William Wilberforce and Elizabeth Fry.

"On board one of them between two and three hundred

women were assembled in order to listen to the exhortation and prayers of perhaps the two brightest personifications of Christian philanthropy that the age could boast. Scarcely could two voices, so distinguished for beauty and power, be imagined united in a more touching engagement—as indeed was testified by the breathless attention, the tears, and the suppressed sobs, of the gathered listeners. All of man's word, however, there heard, heart-stirring as it was at that time, has faded from memory; but no lapse of time can ever efface the impression of the 107th Psalm, as read by Mrs. Fry, with such extraordinary emphasis and intonation that it seemed to make the simple reading a commentary; and, as she passed on from passage to passage, it struck my youthful mind as if the whole series of allusions might have been written by the pen of inspiration, in view of such a scene as was then before us. At an interval of twenty years it is recalled to me as often as that Psalm is brought to my notice.—Never in this world can it be known to how many hearts its solemn appeals were that day carried home by that potent voice."

An interesting incident, in connection with these visits to the convict ships, is related by a boat-captain, afterwards Harbor Master at Ramsgate.

"It was on a fine sultry day in the summer of 1821 that I was racing up the Thames, in command of the Ramsgate Steam Packet, *Eagle*, hoping to overtake our Margate competitors, the *Victory* and *Favorite* steamers, and bring them nearer to view as we rounded the points of the Reach of the river. It was in the midst of this excitement that we encountered one of those sudden thunder squalls so common in this country, and which, passing off with heavy rain, leave behind them a strong and increasing northerly gale. I was looking out ahead, pleasing myself with the reflection that we were the fastest vessel against a head wind, and



should certainly overtake our Margate friends; when upon entering Long Reach about two miles below Purfleet, I saw a boat laboring with very little effect against the gale, and with a whole ebb tide just making, to add to their difficulties. In this boat were two ladies in the close habit of the Society of Friends, evidently drenched with the heavy shower that had overtaken them. I was then a dashing, high-spirited sailor; but I had always a secret admiration of the quiet demeanor of that Society, and occasionally had some of them passengers with me, always intelligent and inquiring, and always pleased with any information a sailor could extend to them. Well, here was a dilemma! To stop would spoil my chase, in which most of my passengers were as eager as myself; but to go on and pass two ladies in such a situation! I passed the word softly to the engineer, desired the mate to sheer alongside the boat carefully, threw the delighted rowers a rope, and, before the passengers were fully aware that we had stopped the engines, the ladies were on board, the boat made fast astern, and the *Eagle* again flying up the Thames. I have those two persons strongly, nay, indeibly, stamped upon my mind's eye. The one I had last assisted on board still held my hand as she thanked me, with dignified, but beautiful expression: 'It is kind of thee captain, and we thank thee. We made no sign to thee; having held up our handkerchiefs to the other packets, we did not think we should succeed with thee.' I assured them that I could not have passed them under such circumstances, and called the stewardess to take them below into the ladies' cabin and see to their comfort. They had been well cloaked, and had not suffered so much as I had anticipated.

"The gale had cleared away the rain, and in a very short time they came upon deck again. One of them was Mrs. Fry, and she never lost an opportunity of doing good. I saw her speaking to some of my crew, who were looking very serious as she offered them tracts, and some of them

cast a side glance at me, for my approval or otherwise. I had some little dislike to sects then, which I thank God left me in riper years,—but who could resist this beautiful, persuasive, and heavenly-minded woman? To see her was to love her; to hear her was to feel as if a guardian angel had bid you follow that teaching which could alone subdue the temptations and evils of this life, and secure a Redeemer's love in eternity. In her you saw all that was attractive in woman lit up by the bright beams of philanthropy, devoting the prime of life and health and personal grace to her Divine Master's service; and I feel assured that much of the success which attended her missions of mercy, was based upon that awe which such a presence inspired. It was something to possess a countenance which portrayed in every look the overflowing of such a heart; and thus, as a humble instrument in the hands of Divine Providence, she was indeed highly favored among women.

"She told me that her companion, Mrs. Prior, and herself had been down to Gravesend to take leave of the unfortunate women (convicts) on board a ship bound to the settlements, and gave me so touching a description of their behaviour, that I volunteered to take charge of anything for her at any time, or render her any service in my power, in my voyages. When about to land her anxiety to make some pecuniary recompense was very great, but I would not allow her to do so. Mrs. Fry never forgot me when she came near our locality. I saw her from time to time, the earthly tabernacle failing, but the same spirit lighting up with animation her untiring energies. It was an honor to know her in this world; may we follow her to the society of the accepted and blessed in that which is to come.

K. B. MARTIN."

"Ramsgate, February, 1847."