

## CHAPTER SIXTH.

### EXCURSIONS IN GREAT BRITAIN.

Elizabeth Fry's first considerable journey was made in the autumn of 1818, shortly after the commencement of her prison-reform labors. It was directed to the northern part of England and to Scotland, with a view both to religious visits among the Friends, and to an examination of the prisons in those parts of the Kingdom. She was accompanied by her brother John Joseph Gurney, his wife, and one of her own daughters. The commencement of the trip is thus described in her Journal.

*“Bedford, Northumberland, Eighth Month, 25<sup>th</sup>.—*For some months I have looked to attending the General Meeting in Scotland, but it appeared almost impossible, my home claims being so very strong. Indeed the Monthly Meeting before the last it came with great weight, so as to frighten me; but I neither saw outward way for it, nor did I feel the heart made willing; but as I have so often found when there is a real ‘putting forth,’ way is made within and without; so it has been now, all my sweet flock are, I trust, carefully provided for; not only outward way has been made, but the willing heart also granted, and I had remarkably sweet peace and relief in being willing to give up to it; such an evidence that I think it remains undoubted in my mind. Friends appeared to feel much unity with me which was a

help. My beloved brother Joseph, and sister Jane joining me has been much cause for humble thankfulness; it has made what would have been very hard to flesh and blood comparatively sweet and easy; we are a united band in spirit and in nature; Joseph a very great help in the ministry. I think he is, and will yet be more abundantly, an instrument of honor in his Master's hand. We have sat four Meetings, visited several families of Friends, and inspected many prisons, which is one of our objects. In our religious services our gracious Helper has appeared very near; we have gone on in them with much nearness and unity; we know the blessed truth that, as we abide in Christ, we are one in Him. I have felt at seasons as leaving all for my Master's sake, and setting out without much of purse or scrip; but how bountifully I am provided for, both internally and externally. The great Shepherd of the sheep has been near to me in spirit, as strength in my weakness, riches in my poverty and a present helper in the needful time. I may say,

‘Are these Thy favors day by day,  
To me above the rest?  
Then let me love Thee more than they,  
And try to serve Thee best.’

Conflicts have attended, and no doubt will attend me; but I look upon it as an honor, a favor and a blessing, even to suffer in the Lamb's army, if we may but be of the number of the soldiers who fight the good fight of faith, and are in any degree permitted to promote the cause of truth and righteousness upon earth.

*“Aberdeen, 29<sup>th</sup>.—*I have felt low upon arriving here, five hundred miles from my beloved husband and children; but a good account of them is cause for thankfulness: still it is a deeply weighty thing, and I have to try my ground again and again. In almost every new place the language of my spirit is, Why am I here? At this place we find sev-

eral other Friends also traveling in the ministry, which makes me feel it the more; but as my coming is not of my own choice, or my own ordering, I desire to leave it, and to commit myself, my spirit and body, and all that is dear to me, absent and present, to Christ my Redeemer. We visited the old Darclay seat at Ury where our mother's forefathers once lived. How great the change from what it once was!

"*Stonehaven, Ninth Month, 2nd.*—We left Aberdeen this afternoon, having finished our services there, and at Kinmuck where several Friends reside. Other Friends besides ourselves being at Aberdeen certainly tended to increase my exercise, for fear of the ministry not going on well, or by not keeping in our ranks; but I think we were enabled to do so, and although much passed yet we had cause for thankfulness, inasmuch as there appeared to be harmonious labor for the advancement of truth and the spreading thereof. Our General Meeting at Aberdeen was ended under a feeling of quiet peace; but fears crept in for myself that I had fallen away a little as to life in the truth, and power in the ministry, for I did not experience that overflowing power which I have sometimes done at such seasons. Still gracious help was granted me from season to season. The day after the General Meeting we went to Kinmuck, about fifteen miles north of Aberdeen. A short time after our arrival there, before I went to meeting, such a feeling of suffering came over me as I can hardly express. It appeared only nervous, as I was so well in body that I could not attribute it to that. It continued exceedingly upon sitting down in Meeting, and led me into deep strong supplication that the enemy might by no means deceive us, or cause our ministry to be affected by anything but the holy anointing. I feared, if this awful state had to do with those present, that I should have something very close to express; if only with myself I considered that it might be a refining trial. However Joseph knelt down in the beginning of the meeting, as well as myself, and afterwards he

spoke as if he felt it necessary to warn some to flee from their evil ways and from the bondage of Satan. This tended to my relief; but it appeared as if I must follow him and rise with these words, 'The sorrows of death compassed me about, the pains of hell gat hold upon me;' then enlarging upon the feeling I had of the power of the enemy, and the absolute need there is to watch, to pray, and to flee unto Christ as our only sure refuge and deliverer. I had to show that we might be tried and buffeted by Satan as a further trial of faith and of patience, but that if we did not yield to him, it would only tend to refinement. After a time I felt greatly relieved, but what seemed remarkable was that neither Joseph nor I dared to leave the Meeting without once more bowing the knee for these dear Friends. But after all this very deep and remarkable exercise a solemn silence prevailed, really as if truth had risen into dominion; and after my making some such acknowledgment in testimony, that our low estate had been regarded, that our souls could then magnify the Lord, and our spirits rejoice in God our Saviour, that light had risen in obscurity, and darkness had, in measure, become as the noon-day, and the encouragement it was for us to run with patience the race that was set before us, &c., the Meeting concluded, and I think upon shaking hands with the Friends there hardly appeared an eye that had not been weeping, amongst those that were grown up. This whole exercise was very remarkable in a nice little country meeting, and the external so fair; but afterwards we heard of one or two painful things, one in particular. We visited nearly all the families, were pleased with some of them: their mode of living truly humble like our cottagers. The next day we had a Meeting with a few Friends at Aberdeen where the exercise was not very great and the flow in the ministry sweet, and I trust powerful. We parted from our beloved friends, John and Elizabeth Wigham, their children, and children's children, and are now on our way to Edinburgh.

"*Hawick, 13th.*—I may thankfully acknowledge being so far on our way, but our journey through life is a little like a common journey; we may, after a day's traveling, lie down and rest, but we have on the morrow to set off again upon our travels: so I find my journey in life. I am not unfrequently permitted to come for a short time to a sweet, quiet resting-place; but I find that I soon have to set forth again. I was glad and relieved in leaving Aberdeen, and then a fresh work began in Edinburgh. On Seventh day we visited the prisons, accompanied by some gentlemen, the Lord Provost and others. Here we were much interested. On First-day we went in the morning to Meeting, and were favored to do well; many were not Friends; and what were my feelings in the evening to find a considerable number of people, quite a Public Meeting. It gave me a great deal of alarm, but we had a good Meeting and I trust the cause was exalted. The morning before we came away about eighteen gentlemen and ladies came to breakfast with us, amongst them Sir George and Lady Grey, good people whom I have long wished to know: we had, after breakfast, a solemn time. Alexander Cruickshank read, and afterwards I knelt down, and I think we were drawn together in love and unity of spirit. We arrived at Glasgow that evening and the next day visited the prisons, and formed a Ladies Committee. We visited some families the next day, and, accompanied by several gentlemen, magistrates and others, we again went to the Bridewell and Prison, where I had to start the Committee in their proceedings; it was awful to me, having to bow the knee for a blessing, before so many who were strangers to our ways, but blessed be the Lord, the power of truth appeared to be over all, so that I remembered these words, 'Rejoice not that the spirits are made subject unto you, but rather rejoice that your names are written in Heaven.' We had two meetings, one in the morning for Friends, but many others came, and one to my deep humiliation in the evening for the public. Awful work it was: we

were favored to get through well, and to leave Glasgow with clear minds. We have since traveled through great part of Cumberland, attended many meetings there, some very important ones, and some highly favored by the Presence and Power of the Most High;—thence to Kendal.

"At Liverpool was the next meeting we attended; it was a large public one, and so it has been in many places. I deeply felt it, I hardly dared to raise my eyes because of the feathers and ribbons before me. However best help was afforded, to my very great relief and consolation; truth appeared to be in great dominion. After a sweet uniting time with the Benson family, we left Liverpool for Knowsley, the seat of the Earl of Derby, as we had a pressing invitation from Lady Derby. We were received with the utmost kindness and openness by all this very large household. A palace was now our allotment; a cottage has been so during our journey. My internal feeling was humiliation and self-abasement.

"*Knowsley, 24th.*—Here we are, all the family about to be collected for a religious opportunity. Lord, be pleased to be with us, to own us by Thy life-giving presence, and help us by Thy Spirit, for it is a very awful time. Make us, Thy unworthy children, fit for Thy service, and touch our lips as with a live coal from Thy altar, for we are unworthy to take Thy great and ever-excellent name into our mouths. Thou, Lord, only knowest the state of Thy unworthy servant; help her infirmities, blot out her transgressions, and enable her to show forth Thy praise, if consistent with Thy holy will, that all may be more abundantly converted unto Thee, and brought into the knowledge of Thy beloved Son, Christ Jesus our Lord.

"*Sheffield, 26th.*—After writing the above I was summoned into the dining-room, where the family were assembled—I should think in all nearly a hundred. My beloved brother read the third chapter of John; there was then a solemn pause, and I found it my place to kneel down, pray,

ing for a blessing upon the house and family, and giving thanks for the mercies bestowed upon them; particularly in the time of their affliction, in having been supported by the everlasting Arm; and prayer arose for its being sanctified unto them. The large party appeared humbled and tendered. Then dearest Joseph arose and was greatly helped by the power of the Spirit. I followed him with a few words. Many of the party were in tears; some exceedingly affected. Joseph then knelt down, greatly helped; the service principally fell upon him. After he rose I reminded them of the words of our blessed Redeemer, that 'whosoever giveth a disciple a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, shall receive a disciple's reward.' This, I said, I humbly trusted would be their case. I also alluded to their servant's kindness in the same way. Thus ended this memorable occasion. It was like what we read of in Friends' journals formerly, when the power appeared to be over all in a very extraordinary manner. I remember in John Richardson's journal some such account. So it is,—and this is not, and cannot be, our own work; surely it is the Lord's doing, and marvelous in our eyes.

"*Earlham, Tenth Month, 6th.*—Once more arrived at this interesting place that has so long been a home to me. I will go back to where I left off. Our visit to Sheffield was an important one; I had so deeply to feel for a beloved Friend who has long been a mother in Israel, under heavy family affliction. Oh! what I felt for her in meeting and out of meeting I cannot describe; my spirit was in strong intercession for her preservation and support under these deep tribulations. We had a favored meeting in the morning, though I had indeed to go through the depths before I ascended the heights. By the desire of my dear brother we had a Public Meeting in the evening, which was well got through, but not without suffering. We then proceeded to York; I can hardly express how deeply I felt entering that Quarterly Meeting; 'fears got hold upon me,' still

hope arose underneath that this one of our services, as to our northern journey, would crown all, and so I think it proved. Not only, from service to service, and from meeting to meeting, did the holy, blessed, anointing Power appear to be abundantly poured forth upon the speakers, but upon the hearers also. Where I feared most, I found least to fear; such unity of spirit, such a flow of love and life, as quite refreshed, encouraged and comforted my soul. I was much rejoiced to find so many fathers and mothers amongst them. 'Bless the Lord, O my soul! and all that is within me bless His holy name!—Praise and exalt Him above all forever!' might then have been the language of my soul.

"We traveled on to Lynn, and there my brother with his dear Jane left me. At the meetings there I felt as if I had to minister almost without the power, and yet that I must yield to the service; but I was so fearful and weak at both meetings that truth did not appear in dominion. Perhaps I found the change after York, and missed my dear brother Joseph. I often minister as if in bonds; this is very humbling—so many fears, so many doubts arising; this was the case in nearly all my services during the day."

"In the course of this northern journey, J. J. Gurney and his sister had visited the prisons of the several towns through which they passed. They found them to be generally in a condition of the most disgraceful neglect—and the hardships, and even cruelty endured by the inmates were harrowing in the extreme to the tender nature of Elizabeth Fry.

"But the cases of the poor lunatics confined in some of those abodes of misery, made, above all, a most powerful impression on her heart, and induced a sympathy with such as were afflicted with this heaviest of physical maladies, that continued deeply to influence her feelings through life.

"The results of their observations were published in a pamphlet—'Notes on a Visit to Prisons, &c., by J. J. Gurney and Elizabeth Fry.'

"To such persons as were interested in Prison Reform, this book afforded much matter for reflection. Whilst they deplored the evils described, they rejoiced that they should be brought to light—as the first step towards their being remedied.

"The voice of Elizabeth Fry was heard and her appeals were promptly responded to. Her brother, in writing of this northern journey says: 'she exhibited a perfect tact and propriety in her transactions, and well knew, when in pursuit of such objects how to soothe all asperities, influence all parties, and overcome the greatest difficulties.' In confirmation of which some passages may be quoted from a letter written by a Scotch lady who accompanied her when she visited the prisons at Glasgow.

"'She found our prisons very badly managed,' &c., and 'has left a letter for the magistrates.' She had an interview with them, and this evening a number of ladies met at the Bridewell. She told them with much simplicity what had been done at Newgate. She entered into pleasant conversation with every one and all were delighted when she offered to speak a little to the poor women. But the keeper of the Bridewell said he feared it was a dangerous experiment; that they never, but by compulsion listened to reading, and were generally disposed to turn anything of the kind into ridicule. She said that she was not without fears of this happening, but she thought it right to attempt it. The women, about a hundred, were then assembled in a large room, and we went in, misdoubting and anxious. She took off her bonnet and sat down on a low seat, fronting the women; then looking at them with a kind, conciliating eye, yet an eye that met every eye there, she said, 'I had better just tell you what we are come about.' She told them she had to deal with a great number of poor women, sadly wicked, and in what manner they were recovered from evil. Her language was scriptural, always referring to our Saviour's promises, and cheering with holy hope: these dis-

solute beings. 'Would not you like to turn from that which is wrong? Would not you like for ladies to visit you, and speak comfort to you, and help you to become better? Surely you would tell them your griefs; they who have done evil have many sorrows.' As she read to them the '*Rules*,' asking them, if approved to hold up their hands, all hands were upraised, and as soon as she spoke tears began to flow. One very beautiful girl near me had her eyes swimming with tears, and her lips moved as if following Mrs. Fry. One old woman who held her Bible we saw clasping it with emotion as she became more and more impressed. The hands were ready to rise at every pause, and these callous and obdurate offenders were with one consent bowed before her. Then she took the Bible and read the parables of the *lost sheep*, the *piece of silver*, and the *prodigal son*.

'It is impossible for me to express to you the effect of her saintly voice, while speaking such blessed words. She often paused and looked at the poor women with a sweetness that won their confidence, applying, with beauty and taste all the parts of the story to them, and in a manner I never before heard,—and particularly the words, 'His father saw him when he was yet afar off.' A solemn pause succeeded the reading. Then resting the large Bible on the ground we saw her on her knees before them. Her prayer was devout and soothing, and her musical voice, in the peculiar, sweet tones of the Quakers, seemed like the voice of a mother to her suffering child.

'In the prison of Glasgow, the emotions were much more varied than at Bridewell—astonishing repugnance, and in some instances obstinate resistance to listen; in others anxious desire to accept her aid. She read and conversed with them, and the proposal of work was in general, greedily received. How different were the impressions in the various figures before her! One old woman, with the appearance of a menial servant, and hardened features, said

'No! no use work!' But these rugged lines were at length relaxed, and I saw a tear fall over the brown visage. But it was not the prisoners alone; for there was not a man in the room unmoved.'

Many letters were received after the publication of the "Notes;" among them the following from the Countess Harcourt.

"MY DEAR AND MOST RESPECTED FRIEND:

It is impossible to have read the excellent publication giving an account of your tour with Mr. Gurney, without being most anxious to express the satisfaction Lord Harcourt and I received from the work. He read it to me, and there was scarcely a page at which we did not stop to exclaim our admiration of the justness of the remarks, and our earnest wishes that they might prove the means of ameliorating the system of our prisons. We felt that each word gave conviction to our minds, and the beauty of the style certainly added to the gratification of reading it. Oh! my good friend, what a blessed tour you have made, and may Heaven reward your wonderful exertions, by making them effectual to the purpose intended.

"I ought not to use the word envy, but I cannot help feeling the great difference between the manner in which your life is spent and my own. You ought indeed to be thankful that it has pleased God 'to put into your mind good desires,' and to have given you health to go through such arduous undertakings."

Early in the following year, however, the reaction came from her "great and varied exertions," and she was obliged to spend several weeks in recruiting her health at Brighton.

Also the secret troubles of her heart were becoming enlarged from the growing cloud of differences in her home,

of which she is compelled very rarely to speak in her Journal. After visiting her sister Priscilla in a dangerous illness, she writes:

"Since I have left her sick room sorrow and deep discouragement have been my portion from the extreme difficulty of doing right toward those most near; it does appear at times impossible for me, but most likely this arises from want of more watchfulness, and more close abiding in the Light and Life of our Lord. When I exercise a watchful care from seeing the dangers that attend some, it seems to give the greatest pain, and so causes me the deepest discouragement. Still, yesterday, in the great and bitter sorrow of my heart, I found in a remarkable manner the power of my Redeemer near, even helping by His own good Spirit and presence. When I felt almost ready to sink, and my footsteps indeed ready to slip—then the Lord held me up. In the first place, after a very little while from having been deeply wounded, my heart overflowed with love and forgiveness towards the one who had pained me, and I felt, what would I not do for the individual? and a most anxious desire if I had missed it to make it up by every means in my power. Thus when I had feared discouragements would have almost overwhelmed my spirit, there was such a calming, blessed and cheering influence came over my heart that it was like the sick coming to the Saviour formerly, and being immediately healed; so that I was not even able to mourn over my calamity. It appeared as if 'the Holy One who inhabiteth Eternity,' would not give me over to the will of my enemies."

We are nowhere informed as to the particular nature of this skeleton in the house of Elizabeth Fry. It is but just, however, that we should know that her path was not all sunshine, that she often carried a heavy heart on missions of love to the sorrowing, and that in ministering consolation to