

"But neither these nor any existing establishments adequately meet the needs of many applicants discharged from the London prisons; and until some further refuge for such is established the labor bestowed upon them during imprisonment must remain, in too many instances, an incomplete work; whether begun by the chaplain, the officers of the gaol, or the ladies of the Visiting Association. Earnestly and unflinchingly did Mrs. Fry urge this topic. She grieved to know that persons not utterly hardened, not wholly given over to depravity, who desired to retrace the downward road along which they had travelled, continually found themselves without resource, without encouragement, exposed to the condemnation of the world, or renewed temptations to vice. She felt that until every unhappy fallen one, without exception had the opportunity afforded her of repentance and amendment of life, England as a Christian country had not fulfilled the injunction of our blessed Lord—'As I have loved you that ye also love one another.'"<sup>\*</sup>

The British Ladies' Society Meeting referred to above is thus spoken of in the Journal:

"*First-day, 15th.*—Yesterday, after a very weak and faint morning, I attended our 'Ladies' British Society' Meeting. It was surprising, even to myself to find what had been accomplished. How many prisons are now visited by ladies, and how much is done for the inhabitants of the prison-house, and what a way is made for their return from evil. It is marvelous in my eyes that a poor instrument should have been the apparent cause of settling forward such a work."

Mrs. Fry's health continuing delicate she was induced to

<sup>\*</sup>Memoir—Vol I, p. 494.

visit Brighton, in May, 1824, where she remained a little over two months. While here, being much distressed by the multitude of applicants for relief, and the impossibility of determining who among them were deserving, she organized, after much labor and discouragement, a District Visiting Society, composed of persons belonging to different religious denominations, with the Earl of Chichester as its President. Its objects were, "the encouragement of industry and frugality among the poor, by visits at their own habitations; the relief of real distress whether arising from sickness or other causes; and the prevention of mendicity and imposture, together with a system of small deposits, upon the plan of a Savings' Bank." This proved a very useful institution.

Being subject during her illness to attacks of faintness which required her often to be taken to an open window looking toward the sea; her eyes invariably rested, in the grey dawn, or through the gathering storm, on the one living object, "the solitary Blockade-man, pacing the shingly beach." Her sympathy was soon excited by his desolate condition, and she applied to the Bible Society for a grant of Bibles to distribute among this ill-provided class of men. Fifty Bibles, and twenty-five New Testaments were immediately placed at her disposal. She thus reviews this period of recreation at Brighton:

"*Dagenham, Seventh Month, 30th.*—We left Brighton last Sixth-day, the 23rd, and after what I passed through in suffering, and afterwards in doing, in various ways, I may acknowledge that I have no adequate expression to convey the gratitude due to my merciful and gracious Lord. I left it after a stay of nearly ten weeks, with a comparatively

healthy body, and above all a remarkably clear and easy mind: with a portion of that overflowing peace that made all things, natural and spiritual appear sweet, and in near love and unity, not only with Friends there, but *many, many* others. I felt as if, although an unworthy instrument, my labors there had not been in vain in the Lord, whether in suffering or doing. It has not been without a good deal of anxiety, fatigue and discouragement that this state of sweet peace has been obtained, as I am apt to suffer so much from many fears and doubts, particularly when in a weak state of health. The District Society in which I was interested, I left, I trust, in a way for establishment, and likely to be very useful to the poor and to the rich. Also an arrangement to supply the Blockade-men on the coast (afterwards called Coast Guard) with Bibles and other books: and I hope they will be put in the way of reading them instead of losing their time. Some of the Blockade-men seemed much affected by the attention paid them, as also did their officers; and I am ready to hope that a little seed is scattered there. In Meetings I passed through much, at times going when I feared I should faint from weakness; but I found that help was laid on One who is Mighty, and I may indeed say, in my ministerial services, that out of weakness I was made strong. The Meetings were generally largely attended by those not Friends, of course without invitation, but I trust that they were good ones, and that we were edified together. This was through deep humiliation and many, many fears. It certainly calls for great care and watchfulness in all things that we enter, to find that they be not of ourselves, but of our Master whose servants we are; for He alone should point out the work. The end, in an uncommon manner, appeared to crown all.

"26th.—I returned from a short expedition to Brighton last evening—a very interesting and I trust, not unimportant one. My object was the District Society that I was

enabled to form there, when I was so ill, or recovering from that state. Much good appears done, much more likely to be done; a fine arrangement made if it be but followed up; and I humbly trust that a blessing will attend the work, and has already attended it. I feel that I have not time to relate our interesting history; but I should say that the short time we spent there was a mark of the features of the present day. A poor unworthy woman, nothing extraordinary in point of power, simply seeking to follow a crucified Lord, and to co-operate with His grace in the heart, yet followed after by almost every rank in society, with the greatest openness for any communications of a religious nature; numbers at Meeting of different denominations, also at our own house—noblemen, ladies in numbers, clergy, dissenters, and Friends. We had most satisfactory religious opportunities together, where the power of an endless life appeared to be in great dominion—our dear Lord and Master Himself appearing remarkably to own us together.

"*Plasnet, Fourth Month, 21st.*—My occupations are are just now multitudinous. The British Society and all that is attached to it; Newgate as usual. Forming with much fear and some misgivings, a Servants' Society, yet with a hope, and something of a trust, that it will be for the good of this class of persons for generations to come. I have felt so much for such, for so many years, that I am willing to sacrifice some time and strength for their sakes. It is, however, with real fear that I do it, because I am sensible of being, at times, pressed beyond my strength of body and mind. But the day is short, and I know not how to reject the work that comes to hand to do.

"*Plasnet, 25th.*—I have had some true encouragement in my objects since I last wrote. The British Society Meeting was got through to much satisfaction. To myself (the poor humble instrument among women in this country) it is really wonderful what has been accomplished in the prisons during the last few years. How the cause has

spread, and what good has been done, how much evil prevented, how much sorrow alleviated, how many plucked like brands from the burning! What a cause for deep thanksgiving, and still deeper humiliation to have been, in any degree, one of the instruments made use of to bring about these results. I have also received a delightful account of the effects of my labors for the poor at Brighton; it appears that the arrangements made have greatly prospered amongst both rich and poor; also for the Blockade-men on the coast. This is cause for fresh thankfulness of heart. I may say that I there sowed in tears, and I now reap in joy.

"The Servants' Society appears gradually opening, as if it would be established according to my desires. No one knows what I go through in forming these Institutions,—it is always in fear.

"*Fifth Month, 23rd.*—I think that I am under the deepest exercise of mind that I ever experienced, in the prospect of a meeting to be held this evening for all the young people assembled at the Yearly Meeting. It is held at my request, my brother Joseph uniting in it. In a remarkable degree it has plunged me into the depths, into real distress; I feel so unfit, so unworthy, so perplexed, so fearful, even so sorrowful, so tempted to mistrustful thoughts, ready to say, 'Can such an one be called to such a service?' I do believe that 'this is my infirmity;' and I have a humble hope and confidence that out of this great weakness I shall be made strong. As far as I know, it has been in simple obedience to manifested duty, that I gave up to this service and went through the ordeal of the Yearly Meeting. If I know my own deceitful heart it has been done in love to my Master and to His cause. Lord, preserve me through this depth; through this stripping season! If it should please Thee to grant me the garments of Thy salvation, and the help of Thy Spirit, further enable me wholly to give unto Thee the glory which is due unto Thy name. If Thou makest use of Thy handmaid to speak in Thy name, be

Thou Thyself her help and her strength, her glory and the lifter up of her head. Enable her to rely on Thee, on Thy might and Thy mercy; to commit her whole case unto Thee, and keep in the remembrance of Thy handmaid that the blessed cause of truth and righteousness is not *hers* but *Thine*.

"*Plasnet, Sixth Month, 2nd.*—The awful and buffeted state of my mind was, in degree, calmed as the day advanced. I went to town with my beloved brother Joseph, who appeared to have been in something of a similar depth of unusual suffering. We went into the meeting together. The large Meeting-house was soon so crowded that no more could get in; I suppose from eighteen hundred to two thousand persons, principally youth. All my children were there except little Harry. I heard hundreds went away who could not get in. After going in and taking my seat my mind was soon calmed, and the fear of man greatly, if not quite, taken away. My beloved brother Joseph bowed the knee and poured forth prayer for us. I soon after rose and expressed what was on my mind towards the assembly: First, that all were acceptable who worked righteousness and served the Lord. Secondly, that the mercies of our God should induce this service as a debt due to Him. Thirdly, that it must be done by following a crucified Lord and faithfully taking up the cross. Fourthly, how important therefore to the church generally, and to our religious society, for us so to do, individually and collectively; so that if this were done there would be, from amongst that company, those who would be as lights in the world, or as a city set on a hill that cannot be hid. I had to conclude with a desire that an entrance might be abundantly ministered unto them into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. I then sat down but did not feel to have fully relieved my mind. Joseph rose and stood more than an hour. He preached a very instructive and striking sermon on faith and doctrine. Then my dear sister Elizabeth Fry,

and my uncle Joseph said something. Afterwards I knelt down in prayer and thought I found no common access to the Fountain of all our sure mercies. I was enabled to cast my burden for the youth and my own beloved offspring with the rest, upon Him who is mighty to save and to deliver. I had to ask for a blessing upon our labors of love towards them, and that our deficiencies might be made up: that the blessing of the Most High might rest on them, from generation to generation, and that cross-bearers and standard-bearers might not be wanting from amongst them. I felt helped in every way; the very spirit and power appeared near, and when I rose from my knees I could in faith leave it all to Him who can alone prosper His own work. A few hints that impressed me, I afterwards expressed, which were to encourage the youth in the good works of the present day; but to entreat them when engaged in them, to maintain the watch, lest they should build up with one hand and pull down with the other. Secondly, that it was never too soon to begin to serve the Lord, and that there was nothing too small to please Him in. Then, commending them to His grace and bidding them farewell, the Meeting concluded in a very solemn manner. It lasted about two hours and a half, and general satisfaction appears to have been felt. When it was over, I may say we rejoiced together, I hope, in the Lord; so that my soul did magnify the Lord, and my spirit rejoiced in God my Saviour."

In 1827 she visited Ireland, accompanied by her brother Joseph John Gurney and her sister-in-law Elizabeth Fry. Arrived at Dublin "a great variety of weighty engagements occupied them closely. They inspected several asylums, four jails, the Bridewell, House of Industry; also a Nunnery; formed Prison Committees, had important interviews with persons in authority, visited many members of

their own religious Society, and attended several large meetings for worship, some of them peculiarly favored ones."

They then pursued their journey from place to place visiting all the principal towns in the island and numerous smaller ones,—went to see the Giant's Causeway, calling at a Moravian settlement on the route, and ended with the Yearly Meeting at Dublin. They were detained a week at Waterford, by the serious illness of Mrs. Fry. The sickness was caused by exhaustion and malaria. After arriving home she wrote:—

"The great numbers that followed us, almost everywhere we went, was one of those things I believe was too much for me. No one can tell, but those who have been brought into similar circumstances, what it is to feel as I did at such times; often weak and fagged in body, exhausted in mind, having things of importance to direct my attention to, and not less than a multitude around me, each expecting a word, or some mark of attention. For instance, on one occasion a General on one side, a Bishop on the other, and perhaps sixty other persons all expecting something from me. Visiting Prisons, Lunatic Asylums, and Infirmaries; each institution exciting feeling and requiring judgment. I endeavored to seek for help from above, and for a quiet mind, and my desire was that such times should not be lost upon those persons. They ended frequently in religious opportunities, and many came in consequence to our Public Meetings. However these things proved too much for me, and tired me more than any part of our service.

"There were some I believe who feared my exaltation, and if they judged from outward appearance I do not wonder at it; but a deep conviction of my unworthiness and infirmity was so living with me that these things appeared

more likely to cast me into the dust than to raise me up on high. We went on thus, from place to place, until we reached Waterford. We had visited Limerick, Cork and other places. I felt completely sinking—hardly able to hold up my head, and by degrees became seriously ill. Fever came on and ran very high, and I found myself in one of my distressing faint states; indeed a few hours were most conflicting. I never remember to have known a more painful time; tried without, distressed within, feeling such fears lest my being thus stopped by illness should try the faith of others and lest my own faith should fail. My pain too, in being from home was great. We were obliged to stop all the Meetings, that we had appointed for days to come. However, much as I suffered for a short time, I had most sweet peace afterwards. My blessed Saviour arose with 'healing in His wings,' delivered me from my fears, poured balm into my wounds, and granted me such a sense of having obtained full reconciliation with my God as I can hardly describe. All was peace. I no longer hankered after home, but was able to commit myself, and those nearest, to this unslumbering, all-merciful, and all-powerful Shepherd. By degrees I was sufficiently raised up to attend Meetings, visit some prisons, and see many persons; and we concluded our general visit to Ireland to my relief, peace and satisfaction. The Yearly Meeting crowned all, as to our ministerial services in our own Society. We left Waterford on the 11th of Fifth Month, after visiting Wicklow and Wexford, at that time remaining in Waterford a few hours only. We entered the steam-packet, slept on board, and left the harbor about three o'clock in the morning."

## CHAPTER SEVENTH.

## PASSING THROUGH THE VALLEY.

It has already appeared that the home life of Elizabeth Fry, though favored with perhaps its full share of blessings, was not without its peculiar and deep trials. Without striving to unveil the source of the secret sorrow which caused the severest pain, and which apparently lay between herself and her husband, there is no occasion to conceal the fact that as their children grew up they generally inclined away from the peculiar views and customs of the religious Society to which they belonged by right of birth, and to which their mother was devotedly attached from sincere conviction of its worth. It is easy to see what ever-recurring pain this fact must have caused, in the maternal heart, as well as constant practical difficulties in the household. Every deviation, every inclination toward the customs of the world, and even toward those of other good people seemed a turning away from herself, and also from Him who had called her into a path of self-denial, and so signally blessed her faithfulness in bearing her allotted cross. How could she believe that the same cross was not equally adapted to her dear offspring, or that in declining it they were not giving evidence of an unconcerted state. However correct or erroneous her judgment may have