

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

been, the motherly solicitude she felt was most touching and commendable. Her position was indeed a most trying one.

"22nd (August 1827).—It is hard, very hard, a most difficult matter, to help those whose welfare and salvation are past expression near to us. We can only go to Him who is willing and able, not only to hear our prayers on our own account, but on account of those most tenderly beloved, and who does, in His tender mercy, so bear our griefs and carry our sorrows that our souls can rest on Him. Oh! may I ever have the encouragement of seeing those nearest to me walking closely with God; not doing their own pleasure, nor walking in their own ways, but doing His pleasure, and walking in His ways. I believe it would bring unspeakable joy, refreshment and consolation to my soul; and may I never cease to commend them to Him who can work with or without human instrumentality."

The discretion and care which she exercised to avoid unpleasant differences, and to show forth moderation, in the midst of difficulties, are finely illustrated in the following note and comment.

"Third Month, 3rd, 1825.—I hope I am thankful for being really better though delicate in health. I wish I did not dread illness so much; it is a real infirmity in me; may grace be granted to overcome it. I think, strange to say, I felt, and I fear appeared to those about me, to be irritable. Certainly I had some cause to be so; but after what I have known of the power that is able indeed to help us, I never ought to give way to anything of the kind; all should be meekness, gentleness and love. Perhaps I said too much about some pictures and various ornaments that have been brought from France for us. Much as I love

true Christian simplicity, yet if I show a wrong spirit in my desire to maintain it in our house and furniture, I do wrong and harm the best of causes. I far prefer moderation, both from principle and taste, although my experience in life proves two things: first, that it is greatly for the good of the community to live according to the situation in which we have been placed by a kind Providence if it be done unto the Lord, and therefore done properly; then I believe that by so doing we should help others and not injure ourselves. Second, I have so much seen the extreme importance of occupation to the well-being of mankind, as to be convinced that many works of art which tend to our accommodation, and even the gratification of our taste, may be innocently partaken of, may be used and not abused, and kept in their proper places; as by so doing we encourage that sort of employment which prevents the active powers of man from being spent in things that are evil."

In reference to the above, and other occasional confessions of irritability by Mrs. Fry, her daughters bear the following testimony:—

"The contrition so frequently expressed in the course of Mrs. Fry's journal for *irritability of temper* is calculated to *mislead* a stranger who would naturally suppose that it must occasionally *have betrayed itself in conduct*. To those who intimately knew the never-failing gentleness, forbearance and Christian meekness of her deportment, that *such feelings ever ruffled her mind is almost inexplicable*. Those most closely connected with her, in the nearest and most familiar relations of life, can unhesitatingly bear their testimony to the fact that they *never saw her in what is called a pet*, or heard an angry, or passionate expression of displeasure pass from her lips. Her tender conscience, and fear of offence towards God and man can alone account

for these outpourings of the hidden evils of her heart."

Even this last clause, is considered by her friend and biographer, Mrs. Corder, as too great an admission. "Surely," she says, "they can scarcely be termed *evils*. Sin does not consist in being *tempted*. The Apostle says, 'Blessed is the man who endureth temptation, for when he is tried he shall receive a crown of life.' There is abundant evidence that if a temptation to any feeling of irritability of temper ever presented itself to the mind of this meek servant of Christ, it was resisted and overcome through His grace. Her husband has recently given the Compiler a full assurance of this in the following words:—'I never knew her do an act, and never heard her utter a word that, in her most solemn moments, she could have wished to recall.'"

I am not sure that Mrs. Fry can be so fully vindicated on another point; unless it be lawful to throw the responsibility for our conduct upon those who have made us rules and exacted obedience by penalties too hard to be borne. That point is where she declined, in obedience to the rules of her religious Society, to witness the marriage of such of her children as chose companions of another persuasion, and accepted the aid of a "hireling priest" at the marriage ceremony. If these children manifested no irritability on these occasions, or afterwards, I think it is proof that they inherited some of their mother's virtue.

There is no evidence that she dissented from the narrow rule of her over-scrupulous sect in this matter, and she must therefore bear the reproach of what looks very much like bigotry in her thus sitting apart in sackcloth and ashes while her children were joining hands for life with partners of their own choice and in the manner that best pleased

their companions or themselves. Still we shall find ourselves unable to judge her severely when we read her careful records of these sore trials.

"Plasbet, Eighth Month, 29th.—My beloved daughter Rachel was married last Fifth-day, the 23rd, at Runcton, by my brother-in-law Francis Cunningham.

"Plasbet, Ninth Month, 3rd.—I doubt not but that my late tendency to depression of spirits is caused not only by the sorrow which I certainly feel, and great disappointment from a child not keeping to principles that I have brought her up in, and also from the deep sense I have of their intrinsic value; but, moreover, that I have to bear my conduct in the affair being misconstrued by others. Yet I have certainly met with much kindness, great love and sympathy, and from quarters where I should least have expected it, also particularly from the Friends of my own Monthly Meeting.

"I am very much absorbed at home where many things deeply occupy my heart and head. To do right in my many relative duties is very difficult. How deeply I feel my shortcomings in them! and yet I fervently desire to do my best."

"Dagenham, Tenth Month, 3rd, 1833.—Here I am, sitting in solitude, keeping silence before the Lord; on the wedding-day of my beloved son William. As I could not conscientiously attend the marriage I believe it right to withdraw for the day. Words appear very inadequate to express the earnestness, the depth of my supplication for him and his—that the blessing of the Most High may rest upon them. As for myself, I sit solitary, in many things, but I thought to day (from this wedding bringing these things home to me).—Have I not my Lord as my friend and my comforter? and is He not a husband to all the members of His church? and am I not often satisfied and refreshed by His love?"

How different is the picture, and certainly a very pleasing one, when her daughter Richenda, like a good girl, marries in the Society and agreeably to its truly beautiful order.

"21st, (*May*, 1828).—The day before yesterday the wedding was accomplished. The Meeting was solemn and satisfactory. Our bride and bridegroom spoke well and with feeling.* My dearest brother Joseph prayed for them, and ministered to them; as did others. I prayed at the close of the Meeting most earnestly for them, for the other young people, and ourselves further advanced in life. After a short, solemn silence the certificate was read and signed. In the morning we had a satisfactory reading with our children.

"Thanks be to our Heavenly Father there was, I think, throughout the day, a great mixture of real solemnity with true cheerfulness. It was certainly no common day. Through everything, order, quietness, and cheerfulness were remarkably maintained. After dinner I returned thanks for our many blessings, and could, with a few present, feel how many outward deliverances we had experienced; that we had had our heads kept above the waters, spiritually and temporally, and were able to have such a day of rejoicing. Our dear bride and bridegroom left us in the afternoon. The evening was fine and our lawn looked really beautiful, covered with the large and interesting party. In the evening we assembled together and had a solemn religious time, giving, I trust, the praise that was due alone to Him from whom all good and blessings flow."

The closing scene above referred to is thus described in

*Quakers marry without the aid of a minister, mutually taking each other as wife and husband, and pledging love and fidelity until death. A certificate is then signed by the parties, and others present.

the Memoir—perhaps by the hand of the daughter whose marriage had caused a very different feeling:

"This marriage was hailed by Elizabeth Fry with sincere pleasure: not only was the connexion highly acceptable to her, and one that she believed likely to promote the happiness of her child, but it also possessed what was, in her estimation, the peculiar advantage of being with a member of the Society of Friends. Whilst her hospitable and affectionate nature was gratified with the prospect of receiving the bridal party at Plashet, she craved spiritual blessings for the two most interested, and that the occasion, like the marriage at Cana in Galilee, might be owned by the presence of the Lord. It was a beautiful summer day; the sun shone brilliantly; Plashet was arrayed in all its verdure, gay with bright flowers, and sprinkled with groups of happy young people. After the bride was gone, one of the sisters crossed the lawn to speak to her mother. She said something of the scene before them and the outward prosperity which seemed to surround that beloved parent. The reply was remarkable; for after expressing a strong feeling of gratification and enjoyment she added in words which have riveted themselves on the memory of her to whom they were addressed—'But I have remarked that when great outward prosperity is granted, it is often permitted to precede great trials.' There is an old rhyme which says,

'When joy seemeth highest
Then sorrow is nighest!'

Surely this was verified in the contrast between that day and the events which so shortly followed."

"*Plashet, Eleventh Month, 4th, 1828.*—I have been favored to partake of very sweet feelings of peace and refreshment of soul—that which I am ready to believe, in the most unmerited mercy, is something of the 'Well of water

springing up unto eternal life.' But I find outwardly, and about me there are storms; not, at present, so much in my very own borders as close to them.

"15th.—The storm has now entered my own borders—once more we are brought into perplexity and trial—but I have this consolation, 'He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.' To whom can I go in this time of emergency but to Him who hitherto has helped me, and provided for me and mine in a marvelous manner—made darkness light before me, and crooked things straight? Lord! Thou who remainest to be the God of my life, above all things in this, our sorrow and perplexity, cast us not out of Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from us; keep us from evil and from the appearance of it, that through the help of Thy spirit our conduct may be kept upright, circumspect, and clean in Thy sight, and amongst men! that in all things, at all times, and under all circumstances, we may show forth Thy praise. Keep us in love and unity with those with whom we have to act even if they do contrary to our wishes and judgment. But oh, dearest Lord, if it be Thy holy will, make a way of escape for us from the calamity we so much dread, and continue, in Thy unmerited mercy, to provide for Thy unworthy servant, her family, and all concerned in this trial, that we may not want what is good and needful for us, and that others may be kept from suffering through us. If it be possible remove this bitter cup from us; yet if it be Thy will that we drink it, enable us through the grace and spirit of Him who suffered for us to drink it without repining,—yet trusting in Thy love, Thy mercy, and Thy judgment."

This time the cup was not removed, though the prayer was granted. During a severe financial crisis which occurred at this time, 1828, in England, one of the business houses in which Joseph Fry was a partner, though not that which

he personally conducted, failed in a manner that "involved Elizabeth Fry and her family in a train of sorrows and perplexities which tinged the remaining years of her life. Nature staggered beneath the blow—but the staff on which she leaned could not fail her and she fell not."

"*Eleventh Month, 25th.*—I have been brought at times into little less than anguish of spirit; not I think so much for what we must suffer ourselves, as for what others may suffer. The whole thing appears fraught with distress. When I look at this mysterious dispensation, permitted by Almighty Wisdom, I am ready to say, How is it Lord, Thou dealest thus with Thy servant who loves Thee, trusts Thee, and fears Thy name?—and then I say, this is my infirmity thus to query. Need I not chastisement? Do I not deserve it? May it not be a mysterious dispensation of deep and sore affliction laid not only upon us, but upon others, to draw us all more from the things of time, and to set us more on the enduring riches of Eternity? I cannot reason upon it; I must bow, and only bow, and say in my heart, which I believe I do, 'Not as I will, but as Thou wilt.' Well, if it be of the Lord, let Him do as seemeth Him good. Lord, let Thy grace be found sufficient for us in this most awful time; and grant that we faint not when Thou rebukest us."

The circumstances which caused this misfortune to be so peculiarly distressing are not stated. We are left to conjecture the meaning of that "if it be of the Lord," and why, "on the following Sunday the question was much debated as to whether she, and her family generally, should attend their meeting for worship, or not." But "*she* felt it right to go, and of course she was accompanied by her husband and children. She took her usual seat, bowed down and overwhelmed, with the bitter tears rolling down her

cheeks—no common thing with her. After a very solemn pause, she rose with these words, her voice trembling with emotion; 'Though He slay me yet will I trust in Him;' and testified, in a short and beautiful discourse, that her faith and love were as strong in the hour of adversity as they had been in the time of prosperity. Her friends were deeply affected, marking by their manner, their sympathy and love."

To her only absent child she wrote:

"Plasbet, Eleventh Month, 27th. 1828.

"MY DEAREST R.:

I have at last taken up my pen to write to thee; but to one so near, and so much one with myself, it is difficult. I do not like to pour out my sorrows too heavily upon thee, nor do I like to keep thee in the dark as to our real state. This is, I consider, one of the deepest trials to which we are liable; its perplexities are so great and numerous, its mortifications and humiliation so abounding, and its sorrows so deep. None can tell, but those who have passed through it, the anguish of heart at times felt; but thanks be to our God this extreme state of distress has not been very frequent, nor its continuance very long. I frequently find my mind, in degree, sheathed to the deep sorrows, and am enabled not to look so much at them—but there are also times when secondary things arise—parting with servants, the poor around us, schools, and our dear Place. These things overwhelm me; indeed I think naturally I have a very acute sense of sorrow. Then the bright side of the picture rises. I have found such help and strength in prayer to God; and, highly mysterious as, in some points of view, this dispensation may be, yet I think I have frequently, if not generally, come to be able to say, 'Not as I will, but as Thou wilt,' and to bow under it. All our children, and children-in-law, my brothers and sisters, our many friends and servants,

have been a strong consolation to me; and above all a little refreshment to my tribulated spirit has been granted me at times from what I trust are the well-springs from on High."

"The tide of sympathy flowed marvelously in from all quarters. The mass of letters that exist attest by how many, and how well she was loved, how highly she was valued, and upon how many hearts she and her sorrows were borne."

FROM WILLIAM WILBERFORCE.

"Farnham Castle, 29th. Nov. 1828.

"MY DEAR FRIEND:

Though my eyes are just now weaker than usual, I must claim a short exercise of their powers for the purpose of expressing to you the warm sympathy which Mrs. Wilberforce, and indeed all of my family that have the pleasure of knowing you, as well as myself, are feeling on your account. Yet you, I doubt not will be enabled to *feel* as well as to *know*, that even this event will be one of those which in your instance are working for good. You have been enabled to exhibit a bright specimen of Christian excellence in *doing* the will of God, and I doubt not you will manifest a similar specimen in the harder and more difficult exercise of *suffering* it. I have often thought that we are sometimes apt to forget that key for unlocking what we deem a very mysterious dispensation of Providence, in the misfortunes and afflictions of eminent servants of God that is afforded by a passage in St. Paul's Epistle to his beloved Philippians. 'Unto you it is given not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake.' It is the strong only that will be selected for exhibiting those graces which require peculiar strength. May you, my dear friend (indeed I doubt not you will) be enabled to bear the whole will of God, with cheerful confidence in His unerring wisdom and unflinching goodness. May every loss of this world's wealth