

were poured forth before and unto the Lord in deep prayer and supplication. Joseph almost sobbed; still a solemn quiet and peace reigned over us. I believe the Lord was with us and owned us at this solemn time. We left the ship and walked by the side of the Pier, until they were towed out; then we went away and wept bitterly—but not the tears of deep sorrow; far from it; how different from the grief for sin, or even disease, or the perplexities of life.’

Soon after this Mrs. Fry proposed a plan for securing more intercourse on religious subjects with her children, who had, in different ways, and by various means, been brought to acknowledge their Saviour’s claims—thus affording an answer to her motherly travail and prayers, though not in the manner of her own choosing. She thus speaks of it immediately before the experiment was tried.

“*Ninth Month, 2nd, 1837.*—I have for many months past deeply felt the wish for more religious intercourse with my children, and more uniting with them upon important and interesting subjects. I have turned it in my mind again and again, and at last have proposed making the experiment, and meeting this evening, first to consider different subjects of usefulness in charities, and then to close with serious reading, and such religious communication as way may open for.

“Thou, Lord, only knowest the depth of my desire for the everlasting welfare of my children. If it be Thy holy and blessed will, grant that we may be truly united to Thee, as members of thy Militant Church on earth, and spiritually united amongst ourselves, as members of one body, each filling his different office faithfully unto Thee. Grant that this little effort may be blessed to promote this end, and cause that in making it we may experience the

sweet influence of Thy love shed abroad in each of our hearts, to our real help, comfort, edification and unity.”

The proposal was made as follows:

“*Upton Lane, Eighth Month, 15th, 1837.*

“MY DEAREST CHILDREN,

Many of you know that for some time I have felt and expressed the want of our social intercourse at times leading to religious union and communion amongst us. It has pleased the Almighty to permit that by far the larger number of you no longer walk with me in my religious course. Except very occasionally, we do not meet together for the solemn purpose of worship, and upon some other points we do not see eye to eye; and whilst I feel deeply sensible that notwithstanding this diversity we are truly united in our Holy Head, there are times when, in my declining years I seriously feel the loss of not having more of the spiritual help and encouragement of those I have brought up, and truly sought to nurture in the Lord. This has led me to many serious considerations how the case may, under present circumstances, be in any way met.

“My conclusion is that believing as we do in one Lord as our Saviour, one Holy Spirit as our Sanctifier, and one God and Father of us all, our points of union are surely strong; and if we are members of one living Church, and expect to be such forever, we may profitably unite in some religious engagements here below.

“The world and the things of it occupy us too much and they are rapidly passing away; it would be well if we occasionally set apart a time for unitedly attending to the things of Eternity. I therefore propose that we try the following plan; if it answer, continue it; if not, by no means feel bound to it.—That our party, in the first instance, should consist of no others than our children, and such grandchildren as may be old enough to attend. That



our object in meeting be for the strengthening of our faith, for our advancement in a devoted, religious, and holy life, and for the promotion of Christian love and fellowship.

"That we read the Scriptures unitedly, in an easy, familiar manner, each being at perfect liberty to make any remark or ask any question; that it should be a time of religious instruction by seeking to understand the mind of the Lord, for doctrine and practice in searching the Scriptures, and bringing ourselves and our deeds to the light, that it may be made manifest if they are wrought in God. That either before or after the Scriptures are read, we should consider how far we are really engaged for the good of our fellow-men, and what, as far as we can judge, most conduces to this object. All the members of this little community are advised to communicate anything they may have found useful or interesting in religious books, and to bring forward anything that is doing for the good of mankind in the world generally.

"I hope that thus meeting together may stimulate the family to more devotion of heart to the service of their God, at home and abroad, to mind their different callings, however varied, and to be active in helping others. It is proposed that this meeting should take place once a month, at each house in rotation.

"I have now drawn some little outline of what I desire, and if any of you like to unite with me in making the experiment it would be very gratifying to me; still I hope that all will feel at liberty to do as they think best themselves.

I am indeed your nearly attached mother,

ELIZABETH FRY."

In reference to this proposal and its results the daughters state, in her Memoir, that "The plan was tried and found to answer exceedingly well. Some of the collateral branches of the family afterwards joined these little reunions: they proved occasions of stimulus in 'every good

word and work.' Some important good has resulted from the combined exertions consequent upon them, and they continue to this day under the name of 'philanthropic evenings;' and they are always concluded by a Scripture reading, and occasionally by prayer." Thus do her works follow her.