

CHAPTER NINTH.

FIRST AND SECOND VISITS TO THE CONTINENT.

In 1838 Elizabeth Fry began the remarkable series of visits to the Continent of Europe which rendered her name almost as familiar there as it was in England. The subject is thus briefly opened in her Journal:

"Twelfth Month, 20th.—I have laid before my Monthly Meeting my prospect of visiting France, and obtained the concurrence of Friends. Oh! for help, daily, hourly,—and may a sound mind, love and power be granted to me and to others, to our own peace and the glory of God.

"Upton Lane, First Month, 6th, 1838.—I yesterday returned from a visit to Norfolk. Before going there I laid my concern to go to France before our large Quarterly Meeting, and had the very great encouragement of such a flow of unity as I have seldom heard expressed on any occasion.

"24th.—I expect to leave home to-morrow for France. My spirit has been very much brought down before the Lord; some causes of anxiety have arisen; still in this my going out love abounds in no common degree, and a portion of soul-sustaining peace underneath. These words comforted me this morning, 2 Timothy, i. 12: 'I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.' I therefore, in this my going out commit myself and my all to my most blessed and holy Keeper, even to the Lord God

of my salvation, my only hope of real help and defence, and of eternal glory."

She was accompanied in this journey by her husband, their friend Josiah Forster, and Lydia Irving. In keeping with the plan I have in view I shall give only the most important incidents of these journeys, leaving those who wish a more detailed account to find it in the fuller memorials from which these selections are made.

The travelers found but little to do in *Bo. logne*, but visited the prison, convent and hospital and then went directly to Paris where "comfortable and commodious apartments were prepared for them at the Hotel de Castile by the kind attentions of M. Francois Delessert. They arrived there very tired and very cold on the 30th of January. The morning of the 31st was opened with solemn united prayer, offered for wisdom from on High to direct, and strength to perform, whatever might be called for at their hands. Then came a visit from Madame Delessert, two notes from Lord Granville, the English Ambassador at Paris, a call at the Embassy, and in the evening the company of M. de Presensé, the Secretary of the Bible Society, with his wife.

"Feb. 1st, they attended a small Friends' Meeting held in the Faubourg du Roule, and afterwards called on La Baronne Pelet de la Lozere. In her Elizabeth Fry found a friend and sister in Christ. They then paid a visit to Count Montalivet, Minister of the Interior, by whom they were most kindly received and promised all needful admissions to the different prisons."

A summary of her engagements in Paris is given in a letter to her children written from St. Germain.

“Third Month, 5th, 1838.

“We arrived here last evening after quitting the most deeply interesting field of service I think I was ever engaged in. My first feeling is peace and true thankfulness for the extraordinary help granted to us; my next feeling an earnest desire to communicate to you, my most tenderly beloved children, and others nearest to me, the sense I have of the kindness, and goodness, and mercy, of my Heavenly Father who has dealt so bountifully with me, that it may lead all to serve Him fully, love Him more, and follow more simply the guidance of the Spirit.

“I mean now to tell you a little of my reflections upon this important period, the last month in Paris. I was at first very poorly, very low, and saw little opening for religious usefulness, though some for charity and benevolent objects. Soon my health revived and we had full occupation in visiting prisons and other institutions, and saw many influential persons. This opened a door in various ways for close communication with a deeply interesting variety of both philanthropic and religious people, and thus introduced into a more intimate acquaintance with the state of general society. Religiously, we find some, indeed we may say a great many, who appear much broken off from the bonds of Roman Catholic superstition; but with it, I fear have been ready to give up religion itself, though feeling the need of it for themselves and others. To these I think we have been helpful by upholding religion in its simplicity and most strongly expressing our sense of the necessity of it, and that nothing can alter or improve the moral character, or bring real peace, but true Christian principles. To this we have very faithfully borne testimony, and most strongly encouraged all to promote a more free circulation of the Scriptures, particularly the New Testament, and a more diligent reading of the Bible in institutions and families. I have in private circles introduced (frequently by describing what poor criminals wanted in prisons) the simple

truths of the Gospel, illustrated sometimes by interesting facts respecting the conversion of these poor woman prisoners; and have been thus enabled in numerous parties to show the *broad, clear, and simple* way of salvation, through our Lord and Saviour for *all*. It has been striking to me in our dinner visits, some of them splendid occasions, how curiously way has opened, without the least formality, or even difficulty, in conversation, to ‘speak the truth in love’—especially one day as to how far balls and theatres were Christian and right; the way in which Roman Catholic priests appeared to hinder the spread of the Gospel; the importance of circulating good books (this has been a very common subject) and above all the New Testament. At our Ambassador’s, Lord Granville’s several were in tears during the conversation. I think our dinner visits have been an important part of our service, so much has been done by these communications after and at them. In many instances numbers have joined us in the evening, particularly the youth. With these it has pleased my Heavenly Father to give me some influence. Last First-day evening I had a very large party of them to a reading, which appears to have given much satisfaction. It has been a most curious opening with persons of many nations. Many have lately flocked to our little meetings. I wonder how I could feel easy to go away from such a field of service, but I did, and therefore went. On Third-day went to the King and Queen, and therefore could not attend our little week day Meeting: they said eighty persons came to it who went away. I have found unusual help at these times to speak the truth with power; my belief is that there are many unsettled and seeking minds in this country.

“We have had much intercourse with the Minister of Instruction, and he gives me leave to send him a large number of books from England to be translated into French. My full belief is that many Testaments and valuable books will circulate in consequence of our visit.

"The efforts made to form a Ladies Society to visit the prisons of France, and particularly Paris, (whether they succeed or not) have been important. First, by my taking many ladies to visit the great Female Prison of St. Lazare and there reading, or having read, small portions of Scripture, and my few words through an interpreter producing (far beyond what I could have expected) such a wonderful effect upon these poor sinners. The glad tidings of the Gospel appeared to touch their hearts; many wept exceedingly, and it was a fresh and striking proof of the power of truth, when simply told. In the next place the large number of ladies that have met at our house upon the subject has afforded so remarkable an opportunity to express to them my views of salvation by Christ alone, of the unity that should exist among Christians, and must do so, if sanctified by the Spirit; and deeply to impress the simplicity and spirituality of true religion. I think something important in the prison cause will eventually come of it, but it will take time.

"We have had very large parties of English and Americans, and some French, at the houses of the Methodist minister, the American minister, and at another serious person's. Also we joined the French Wesleyan Methodists in their chapel, and had a precious meeting with them. Of the highly evangelical Episcopalians and Independents, we had large parties at different houses. In all these we have had solemn religious service. The Episcopalians have been brought into very close union with us. In our own house we have had two large parties of a philanthropic and religious nature, attended by many. Lady Olivia Sparrow has often been quite a comfort to me; and many others I may say have proved true helpers—French and Americans, and more than these—the Chargé d'Affaires of the House Towns and his wife, also Russians and Swiss. The Greek Ambassador Coletti came to me for advice on some points in the state of Greece, in which I believe I shall be enabled to

assist him. A Captain B— thinks of having my sister Hoare's 'Hints for the Laboring Classes' translated for the parents of the children who attend the schools upon the mountains in India. We have also seen many of the medical students, English and American, and are anxious to have some efforts made for their moral and religious good, in Paris where so many come.

"Our visit to the King and Queen was interesting; but alas! what, in reality is rank? The King I think in person like the late Lord Torrington, the Queen a very agreeable and even interesting woman. I expressed my religious interest and concern for them, which was well received, and we had much conversation with the Queen and the Princess Adelaide before the King came into the room. We strongly expressed to the Queen our desire to have the Sabbath better kept, and the Scriptures more read. She is a sweet-minded, merciful woman. There were present Madame Adelaide, the King's sister, one of the young Princesses, the Marchioness of D—, principal Lady of Honor to the Queen.

"We then proceeded to the Duchess of Orleans; there we had a delightful visit, and the sweetest religious communication with her, and other interesting conversation. We found her an uncommon person; my belief is that she is a very valuable young woman.

"The Queen appeared much pleased with my Text-book; and the Princess Adelaide said she should keep it in her pocket and read it daily. Indeed no books have given the same pleasure as the Text-books, both in French and English. I think we have given many hundreds of them, and next in number my sister Louisa's books on Education; they delight the people; also a great many of Joseph's letters to Dr. A—, of which we have a beautiful edition in French, and his Sabbath; of these we expect to give many hundreds; and one or two other tracts on Christian Duties, and the offices of the Holy Spirit. Our various books and

tracts have had a very open reception, but we have been very careful when, where, and what to give; although in some of the newspapers it was stated that I distributed controversial tracts, which is not true.

"I began in my letter to say what a variety we have seen, but I did not say what interesting and delightful persons we have met with; amongst the Protestants particularly some first rate ladies who have been as sisters to me, so abundant in kindness and love. One has truly reminded me of my sister Rachel in her person, her mind, and her excessive care over me; she has felt me I believe like her own. We have indeed increased our dear and near friends by this visit, much as it was in Jersey and Guernsey, only in far greater numbers. I think nothing could be more seasonable than our visit, as it respected the prisons; and I believe the influence of our advice has been very decided, with many persons of consideration. The schools we have also attended to, and I have encouraged a more Scriptural education; some schools of great consequence, kept by serious Protestants in a district of Paris, want much help. There are seven hundred children, and we hear that the Head of the Police in that neighborhood says the people generally are improved in consequence.

"The want of the language I have now and then much felt, but not very often, so many speak English well, and many understand it who cannot speak it. Also I blunder out a little French.

"The entreaties for us to stop longer in Paris have been very great, but my inclination draws homeward; I am a very great friend to not stopping too long in a place. And as I believed I saw a little light on our departure, we thought it best to leave all for the present, if we even have, before many months more, to return for a short time. We have been a united and often a cheerful little party. At times I have carried a great weight, never hardly having my home party out of mind for long together, however

full and occupied. At other times our business has been so great as almost to overwhelm us—callers almost innumerable, and most of them on important business, and out and in almost constantly ourselves, so that I have sometimes felt as if I could not long bear it, particularly when I could not obtain some rest in the afternoon. Through all I must say He who I believe put me forth has, from season to season, restored my soul and body and helped me from hour to hour. This day week I sat down upon my chair and wept; but I was soon helped and revived. I long for every child, brother, sister, and all near to me, to be sensible how very near my Holy Helper has been to me; and yet I have exceedingly and deeply felt my utter unworthiness and short coming, and that all is from the fulness and freeness of unmerited mercy and love in Christ Jesus. I can hardly express the very near love I have felt for you all. My prayers very often have arisen for you; and if any labor I have been engaged in has been accepted *through the Beloved*, may you, my most tenderly beloved ones partake of the blessing attendant upon it. My dearest husband has been a true helper; and Josiah Foster and Lydia Irving, very kind and useful companions.

"I forgot to say, I think the few friends in Paris have been greatly comforted and stimulated by our visit.

"I end my account by saying what I trust is true, 'The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.' We are now quietly at St. Germain. We hear most interesting accounts of the state of Normandy, and have many letters of introduction to the places where we propose to go: if not wanted home I shall be glad to go there. We propose going to Rouen to-morrow.

I am your most devotedly attached

ELIZABETH FRY."

The remainder of the account is from the pen of her daughters.

"At Rouen they were much interested by meeting with a respectable woman in humble life who had lived nurse fifteen years in a gentleman's family, a Roman Catholic, but his wife a Protestant. There she had been so much impressed by religious truth, (though still a Roman Catholic herself) that she felt it her duty where she resided to circulate the Scriptures and religious tracts. Her master told them it was surprising the great influence she had obtained in the neighborhood. Mrs. Fry supplied her with six Testaments and a Bible, from the Bible Society Depot. From the same society she obtained a number of copies for the school in the prison, where the Testament was habitually read but the supply was very inadequate. This school was under the care of the Abbé Gossier, M. Du Harnel, and other religious gentlemen who themselves daily instructed the young prisoners.

"At Caen they found some excellent and devoted Methodists amongst the French, and learned that through the efforts of one young English lady, (an orphan residing in a gentleman's family as governess,) many copies of the Scriptures had been purchased; and at the shop of a Roman Catholic more than a hundred of de Lacy's Testaments sold since the beginning of the year.

"The prison of Beaulieu, near Caen, was visited by them with much satisfaction; nearly a thousand prisoners were confined there. They found it admirably regulated and a serious Roman Catholic clergyman devoted to the good of those under his care. He gladly welcomed the gift of fifty Testaments.

"At Havre the Ladies' Bible Society had sold during the former year, four hundred and twenty-six Testaments, and thirty-three Bibles, and had given fifty Testaments to soldiers who were in the habit of reading them every evening to their comrades in the barracks.

"At Bologne they made arrangements for the sale of the Holy Scriptures, and took a lively interest in the District

Society, thence crossed to Dover, and on the following day Mrs. Fry had the comfort of finding herself again with her family at home.

"The effect on her mind of this, her first introduction to France, was very powerful. She was greatly attracted by the life and facility of the French character. In a letter she speaks of them as 'such a nation—such a numerous people—filling such a place in the world—and Satan appearing in no common degree to be seeking to destroy them: first by infidelity and so-called philosophy; secondly, by superstition, and the priesthood rising with fresh power; thirdly, by an extreme love of the world and its pleasures; fourthly by an unsettled, restless and warlike spirit: yet under all this a hidden power of good at work amongst them, many very extraordinary Christian characters, bright, sober, zealous Catholics and Protestants; education increasing; the Holy Scriptures more read and valued; a general stirring to improve the prisons of France—the Government making fresh regulations for that purpose—but great fear of the priests prevailing, from the palace downwards; and they, alas! resisting all good wherever or however it may arise."

The Journal continues:

"*Upton Lane, Fourth Month, 27th.*—Yesterday was the largest British Society meeting I ever remember, partly collected to hear my account of our French journey; there must have been some hundreds of ladies present, many of them of rank. In the desire not to say too much perhaps I said too little upon some points. Although I do not feel condemned, yet I am ready to think if I had watched and prayed more I should have done better. My prayers have arisen that, however imperfectly or unworthily sown the seed scattered yesterday may be so prospered by His own free power, life and grace that it may bear a full crop to His praise!"

"20th.—To-morrow I am fifty-eight, an advanced period of what I apprehend to be not a very common pilgrimage. I now very earnestly desire and pray that my Lord may guide me continually, cause me to know more of the day of His power, that I may have my will wholly subjected to His will. What He would have me to do that may I do, where He would have me to go, there may I go—what He may call me to suffer for His name's sake may I be willing to suffer. Further may He keep me from all false fears and imaginations, and ever preserve me from putting my hand to any work not called for by Him, even if my fellow-creatures press me into it; as I think some are disposed to do about America. Be pleased to grant these my desires and prayers for Thine own Holy and Blessed name's sake."

In reference to what called forth the above prayer her daughters remark: "There was a subject at this time weighing heavily upon the mind of Elizabeth Fry which she turned again and again before she dare dismiss it; and then it was more that other calls of duty appeared immediately required of her, than that she deliberately abandoned the idea. Her brother Joseph John Gurney was pursuing his labors in America as a minister of the Gospel; and she doubted whether it might not be her duty to cross the Atlantic, in order to join him for a time in his visits in the United States, and to accompany him to the West Indies. There were those who thought she ought to go; * but on

* This was urged from the belief that her remarkable power as a peace maker might aid in closing the breach which had recently occurred in the Society of Friends in America. But some who were acquainted with the case were convinced that the effort would have been unavailing, partly from the extent and intensity of the discord, and partly from the failure of British Friends fully to understand all the

the other hand she knew how entirely it would be against, not only the wishes, but the judgment of her own family. She had learned to trust very little to the opinions of any of her fellow-mortals, and these conflicting views only served to bring her in deeper dependence and more entire self-resignation, to the footstool of her great Master to learn His will, that she might fulfil it. Whilst she pondered these things a strong conviction arose in her heart that there was a present duty for her to fulfil—once more to visit Friends and their Meetings in North Britain, again to inspect the prisons there, and to communicate with the magistrates and men in authority, whilst the Bill was still pending which had been brought before the House the preceding Session of Parliament, to improve prisons and prison discipline in Scotland."

This expedition occupied something more than a month and resulted in much benefit to the cause of Prison Reform, her recommendations being received with great consideration by the authorities, and often speedily put into practice. The following passage exhibits her method of dealing with difficult points, and shows the discriminating character of her mind.

"Mrs. Fry was at this time extremely anxious as to the extent to which Prison Discipline was carried in Scotland. She greatly feared the enforcement of solitary confinement, and felt it her duty to make a sort of appeal against its possible abuses.

causes of the division, which embraced not merely points of doctrine but the principles of liberty in religious association. One party stood for Orthodoxy in doctrine, the other for the right of Christians to differ in opinion, and each was on too strong ground to be easily convinced.