

the concluding remarks of her daughters who are her authentic biographers, and who were naturally best qualified to express what remained to be said after she had herself spoken.

“CONCLUSION.—There may be some who expect a sketch to be here given of the character of Elizabeth Fry—but a little reflection will show that in the present case to attempt doing so would be presumptuous. Neither is it necessary. Her actions and conduct in life have been narrated. Her letters to her family and friends portray her domestic feelings and her power of loving. Her communications to others supply the knowledge of her opinions upon the subjects to which she gave her attention. In her Journal may be found the outpourings of her heart, the communings between God and her own soul.

“But there is a voice from the Dead—and the living are called to proclaim, before their work is concluded and the memory of the departed committed to the stream of time, something of her earnest desires for the well-being of her fellow creatures, especially for that of her own sex. She was willing to spend and be spent in her Master's service. She considered herself called to a peculiar course. She was very young when she first saw a prison; she had an extraordinary desire to visit one, and at last her father yielded to her wishes and took her to see a bridewell—when and where is not exactly known; but not long before her death she narrated the circumstances to a friend, and how powerful an impression it had made upon her mind. It must be a question whether this visit was occasioned by, or led to the peculiar bent of her disposition; that it tended to strengthen it is indubitable, and that it was one link in the chain of Providential circumstances which produced in the end such signal results. But she would have shrunk from urging the same course upon others. She feared her

daughters, and young women generally, undertaking questionable or difficult public offices; but she believed that where one erred from over-activity in duty many more omitted that which it behooved them to perform. ‘Woman's mission’ has become almost a word of the day. Elizabeth Fry was persuaded that every woman has her individual vocation and that in following it she would fulfill her mission. She laid great stress on the outward circumstances of life; how and where providentially placed; the opportunities afforded; the powers given. She considered domestic duties the first and greatest earthly claims in the life of woman; although, in accordance with the tenets of the Society to which she belonged, she believed in some instances, her own amongst others, that under the immediate direction of the Spirit of God, individuals were called to leave for a time their homes and families and devote themselves to the work of the ministry. She did not consider this call to be general, or to apply to persons under an administration different from her own. But it was her conviction that there is a sphere of usefulness open to all. She appreciated to the full the usual charities of gentlewomen—their visits to the sick and aged poor, and their attention to the cottage children; but she grieved to think how few complete the work of mercy by following the widow or disabled when driven by necessity to the workhouse, or caring for the workhouse school, that resort of the orphaned and forsaken, less attractive, perhaps, than the school of the village, but even more requiring oversight and attention.

“A fearful accident, or hereditary disease, consigns the mother of a family, or some frail child to the hospital. In how many cases does she lie there from day to day, watching the rays of the morning sun reflected on the wall opposite, tracing them as they move onward through the day and disappear as it advances—and this, perhaps for weeks and months, without hearing the voice of kindness and sym-



pathy from her own sex, save from the matron, or the hired nurses of the establishment. What might not, and when bestowed, what does not, woman's tenderness effect here?

"She heard of thousands and ten-thousands of homeless and abandoned children, wandering or perishing in our streets. She knew that attempts were made to rescue them, and that unflinching men and women labored and toiled to infuse some portion of moral health into that mass of living corruption; but she mourned that so few assisted in this work of mercy, compared to the many who utterly neglect the call. She saw a vast number of her own sex degraded and guilty—many a fair young creature, once the light of her parents' dwelling, fallen and polluted—many who had filled useful situations in business or domestic service sunken and debased—the downward road open wide before them but no hand stretched forth to lift them the first step up the rugged path of repentance, or assist in their hard struggle against sin. She encountered in the prisons every grade and variety of crime—woman bold and daring and reckless, reveling in her iniquity and hardened in vice, her only remaining joy to seduce others and make them still more the children of Hell than herself; the thoughtless culprit, not lost to good and holy feeling nor dead to impression from without; and lastly the beginner, she who from poverty had been driven to theft or drawn by others into temptation. Elizabeth Fry marked all these and *despaired of none amongst them!* Here again, in her estimation, a crying need existed for influence, for instruction, for reproof, and for encouragement. But it was not to all she would have allotted *this* task, though she could never be persuaded but that in every instance women well qualified for the office might be found to care for the interests of the people.

"These were the things which she saw and bitterly deplored. She believed that a mighty power rested with her own sex to check and control this torrent of evil—a moral

force which the educated and virtuous might bring to bear upon the ignorant and vicious. She desired to have every home duty accomplished, every household affection met; but reason and Scripture taught her that each individual has something to bestow, either of time, talent, or wealth, which, spent in the service of others, would return in blessing on herself and her own family. In the little parlor behind the shop, in the suburban villa, in the perfumed boudoir and the gilded hall, she saw powers unemployed and time unoccupied. She lived to illustrate all that she had advocated. She wore away her life in striving for the good of her fellow-beings.

"Does she now regret those labors? or find any service to have been 'in vain in the Lord?' When our great Redeemer declared that in feeding the hungry and giving the thirsty drink, receiving the stranger, clothing the naked, and visiting the sick, it was done unto Him, He added, 'I was in *prison* and ye came unto me.' She was one who felt the force of this commendation, and took it in its largest sense—not as applicable to those alone who 'suffer for conscience sake,' but to the guilty and the wretched—in the spirit of Him who came to seek and to save that which is lost. Through weariness and painfulness she labored to fulfill it. And now that her conflicts upon earth are ended, and her work done, may it not be confidently believed that for her, and such as her, are those words of marvelous joy—'Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'"