

CHAPTER XII.

MEMORANDA.—EXTRACTS OF LETTERS, ETC.—DEATH OF HER
FRIEND H. EVANS, AND OF M. C.'S ONLY SISTER.

To M. S.

“14, Dale End, Birmingham, 1st mo. 3rd, 1827.

MY LONG LOVED FRIEND,

We live to see various events and changes, but we do not forget our dear, unseen fellow-sojourners in a state of probation, and in what is at times a weary pilgrimage. Although it is ordered by our heavenly Leader, that our path through the wilderness lies hidden from each other, surely there are favoured seasons of sweet union in spirit. While each is pursuing the manifested way of duty, the port, the haven of rest, ever aimed at, and sometimes in marvellous mercy opened to our view, seems to bind together the disciples of the one Lord. My mental feelings have of late been various; I desire to bear, with patient, humble submission, the purifying fire, though I may be again and again cast into the furnace. I am satisfied that my Redeemer, the Son of God, liveth, and that, through Him, my soul will live also.

MARY CAPPER.”

To K. B.

“Dale End, 2nd mo. 5th, 1827.

Many are the ponderings of my mind, on the important and deeply interesting subject of the hidden evils of the heart. My late reflections have been, that the subjugating power of Divine Grace, as it does much for the obedient soul, gives a quick sense of evil; manifesting the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and separating the precious from the vile.

8th. I have been prevented from following the train of my thoughts, so as to communicate them to thee, yet I desire to tell thee a little of the path I now tread. Self-reduction is a hard lesson to most of us; after years of religious profession, and even sacrifices not a few, some natural propensities still cleave close; and we may not be fully aware of their power unless occasion stirs them up. It is easy to conclude that all is well, when no temptation presents,—no provocation of temper arises; but I hope my late meditations have tended to increase my faith, my reverent, humble confidence, in the mediatorial sacrifice of redeeming love. The unfathomable mystery I willingly leave; and with thankfulness, cling to the things revealed to my understanding.

I think I have even recently seen, that when we are exercised in our Christian warfare, with deep humiliations, in the conflict of nature with Grace, it is, at times, a preparation for some unforeseen trial or privation. The spirit being hereby contrited, and the heart humbled, there is a submission wrought, a lowly bending under the hand that afflicts, and to the Power that forgiveth sins, that healeth all our mental diseases.

To M. S.

“Birmingham, 2nd mo. 27th, 1827.

A short time back I had not a thought of so soon taking my seat by your fire side. I anticipate being in my old corner; bear in mind that I am not a stranger, nor a visiter for a day only. I hope it is not presumption, when I think that it is Christian love which gently constrains me to leave my home and my dear friends here, in order to manifest, in person, the best desires that I am capable of forming, for my young friends, that in their early steps, and in the progress of their pilgrimage, they may ever keep in view, the redeeming, the sanctifying power of God the Father, revealed through Christ Jesus the Son; as testified of, in the Scriptures, from Genesis to Revelation.

MARY CAPPER.”

TO THE SAME.

“Birmingham, 5th mo. 18th, 1827.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I have not forgotten you; I have a pleasing recollection of the afternoon spent, under your roof, with T. D. &c. 'Tis sweet; yea! like unto precious oil, which gently flows over all, and smooths the rough surface, when we are favoured to feel the influence of Christian love, that love which thinketh no evil, but hopeth all things, even in dark and gloomy days, looking with an eye of faith, beyond those troubles and offences that do come, and will come upon us in this world. I much wish to know how dear Candia Burlingham is; she is a patient sufferer, and I have no doubt but that her Lord

is purifying her immortal spirit, for an admittance into his glorious kingdom, where nothing shall any more offend. My dear love to them all. To thy husband, thyself, and the dear children, with their kind governess; I think I need not say much in order to assure you of my love unfeigned. While I write and think of you, my spirit breathes the petition, to the Father of Mercies, that He would never forsake you, but lead you in a plain path, keep you, with my own soul, from evil, sanctify us throughout, and clothe our spirits with the fine linen, clean and white, that we may be fit companions for the redeemed. My soul longs for this complete work.

Farewell,

MARY CAPPER.”

In the 12th month Mary Capper attended the Quarterly Meeting held at Coventry, and went to Warwick, where she writes:—

“12th mo. 24th, 1827.

Found my dear friend, Hannah Evans, recovering from some alarming symptoms of apoplexy; we secretly enjoyed our mutual intercourse, in precious unity of spirit.”

On the last day of the year, Mary Capper wrote thus:

TO HER NIECE K. B.

“12th mo. 31st, 1827.

MY BELOVED NIECE,

I am inclined to believe that we both accede to the truth that it is well for those who can look back, uncondemned, on the past year, and recount their mercies. With humility and contrition

we may see, and mourn over our omissions and commissions, our defects and infirmities; to this very day I am as weak, of myself, as the least babe; by watching unto prayer, is my faith renewed, my hope of entire sanctification, and of salvation.

I dare not cherish dismay or discouragement, though I secretly mourn, in times of deep humiliation; but with reverence and thankfulness, my heart owns the mercies of God in Christ Jesus. O! how unspeakable is the favour when we stumble not at those things, which, as yet, we do not comprehend, but with reverent fear, keep low, and patiently wait for farther illumination. May presumptuous disputation ever be kept from us, and from entering the thoughts of a rising generation!"

In the early part of 1828, Mary Capper visited her friend Sarah Lamley, at Tredington; and about the 14th of 1st month, went to Warwick, where she found her long-loved friend Hannah Evans much indisposed, and concluded to remain with her for a time. It proved to be to the conclusion of her course. They were permitted many times of much enjoyment together, during H. Evans's decline, partaking of the sweets of true christian friendship and love. While there Mary Capper heard of the death of a friend to whom she was much attached, respecting which event she wrote to R. and E. C. as follows.

"Warwick, 1st mo. 25th, 1828.

MY KIND FRIENDS,

On all occasions I witness your prompt exertions and affectionate desires to serve and gratify me. What shall I render for the continuation of mercies which I consider as flowing from a far purer source than any good in me! I wrestle in the spirit of prayer, that a thankful heart may crown every blessing so graciously bestowed. The details respecting our late endeared friend have been perused with no common feelings, the thoughts

of my heart have been night and day occupied on the solemn subject. O! that ten thousand times ten thousand may be gathered to the standard of the Christian faith, the faith in which this, our highly favoured friend, lived and died; in the glorious hope of salvation, through Christ Jesus, who shed his blood for sinners! To see how a Christian can die is a privilege; but to die the death of a christian, clothed with the light, and life of our Mediator and Advocate with the Father, O how glorious!"

In a memorandum made at Warwick, Mary Capper says, respecting H. Evans, "I was favoured with strength to attend my beloved friend in the last conflict of nature, which was suffering in the extreme, from sickness, &c. so that I was thankful when it ceased. She died on the 13th of second month, 1828; and although I have to mourn the painful void, I am thankful too for the retrospect of our precious union and fellowship."

Mary Capper attended the Yearly Meeting this year, and remained in and about London till the seventh month, visiting her friends and relations. Her only sister, Rebecca Tibbatts, was then in poor health; and on the 5th of the 7th month, she departed this life, at the house of one of her sons, who had long made her a comfortable home, and been affectionately attentive to her. M. C. was much gratified in being occasionally with them, and in witnessing their mutual attachment; she also was comforted in the belief, that it might be said of her dear sister, who had had many sore tribulations, that her last days were her best days. She died meekly confiding in her Saviour, and exclaiming, 'Happy, happy, happy!'

Thus rapidly was Mary Capper stripped of her near relations and friends; but through all, she was enabled to confide, and to rejoice, in Him who had attracted her to Himself in early

life, and for whom she had been enabled to give up all. He proved Himself to be to her a never-failing Friend, almighty to console and support.

She was much tried, while in London, by the serious illness of her faithful servant, Hannah Simms, who had lived with her eight years, and whom she had taken to town with her as her attendant. H. Simms was, with difficulty conveyed back to Birmingham, to which place Mary Capper also returned in the 8th month; on the 23rd of that month, H. Simms breathed her last; much regretted by her affectionate mistress, though she writes on the subject, "I was favoured with a calm, lowly resignation of my will to that Divine Power who reigns over all, and who orders all things well. My kind and attentive friends, R. and E. C. propose my being their inmate for a few days, and E. C. with the affection of a relative, came for me. I have some consoling ground to believe that dear H. Simms has, for some time past, been under the refining hand and power of the Redeemer, who prepares a place for all those that patiently abide the fire and sword, sent to separate the precious from the vile. Her hope of salvation was fixed on the immutable Rock of Ages, and this Rock is Christ."

An awful visitation of fever was permitted this year at Ackworth School, and many who attended the General Meeting, were made partakers of the affliction. Rebecca Dickenson, a lovely young woman, the daughter of Barnard Dickenson, of Coalbrookdale, took the fever there, and died, after about twelve days' illness, at Darlington, where she had gone on a visit to the house of John Backhouse, whose young people also took the same complaint at Ackworth. While they continued struggling with the fever, Mary Capper wrote to her niece Katharine Backhouse as follows:

" Birmingham, 9th mo. 5th, 1828.

MY DEAR NIECE,

Yesterday I received the affecting account of your trials; my own sink in the scale, as of minor weight, save only, as in some sort, they fit my heart and spirit to enter into sympathy with the afflicted. O! how sweet and confirming when the young Christian believer, thus called away by the Lord at the early dawn of the day, can emphatically testify her only trust, her hope and her joy, to be in a Redeemer, a Saviour from sin and its condemnation; how this encourages us to press forward, though we may mourn the privation! The dear friends who have been bereaved may allowably indulge a tender sorrow, but I hope they will be comforted by the evidence of their dear child being safely landed. For you and your children, affecting as the event has been, and painful as is the uncertainty which still rests on the future, my faith points to the Rock of our salvation, trusting that the sustaining arm of Divine help will be underneath, in the trials of each succeeding day. Your dear Ann, in her weak, low and suffering state, with sorrow around, may prove a favoured scholar in the school of Christ, her Redeemer. This sickness, not being unto death, may be to the manifestation of the power and glory of God."

Ann Backhouse, did apparently recover from the fever, but symptoms of consumption shewed themselves early in the following year; and Mary Capper thus writes to her afflicted parents:

" 3rd mo. 11th, 1829.

Very many are the trials, and various the provings of faith and resignation at this day; but shall we call in question the dealings of Omnipotence, in whatever is brought upon his servants?

Rather may we unite in prostration at his footstool, supplicating that neither things present nor yet to come may shake our Christian confidence. Entire reduction, perfect submission to the Refiner's power, seems in my view a great work, a work of wonder, but a needful work; for here indeed, no flesh can glory. My kind nephew! thy communication of affection and unity is truly acceptable; surely it is well thus to encourage one another. The declining health of your endeared child is indeed affecting; a rose in the bud is no small sacrifice; but to bloom in perfect beauty sheltered from the storm and blast, O! how cheering to the Christian believer is the prospect. We may weep, but there is a balm to mollify our wounds. Your precious child is gently dealt with, to be thus kept, by the power of redeeming love, patient and calm, and no way dismayed at the apprehension of an early dismissal from the world, 'with life's bitterness untried.' The God of all consolation, who comforteth those that are cast down, be with you, and manifest his power, in a day of trouble."

To M. S.

"Birmingham, 5th mo. 11th, 1829.

MY KINDLY PARTIAL FRIEND,

I would relieve thee from thy solicitude as to my health, which is improving. O! for sanctification of spirit; I feel far short of this; and no doubt it is safe to be humbled at the Redeemer's feet; what else can keep us from falling, through the power of temptation suited to our various temperaments. Let us pity the fallen, and fear for ourselves. To thy dear husband's sister, under solicitude for the sight of her eyes, so precious a gift, I wish to express the love and sympathy of a fellow pilgrim toward the Celestial City, where there is no darkness at all!

MARY CAPPER."

To B. C. AND M. C.

IN LONDON AT THE YEARLY MEETING.

"Warwick, 5th mo. 28th, 1829.

MY KINDLY INTERESTED FRIENDS,

Whilst you are met in a large number, for the help and strengthening of the different members, imploring that healing balm, which can comfort the mourners and cure the wounded, the solitary ones may also have their portion of exercise in spirit. I believe my right place was with those left at home, stripped of many, whose countenances and help are missed; however, it is perhaps wisely ordered, as it breaks our dependence upon human aid, that our faith may be increased. It is likely that you would hear of the death of John Whitehead. I felt bound to attend the interment, for which purpose I came to Warwick; you, my dear friends, may judge that it was no light matter to me, to sit as one alone, to be gazed at by a very large concourse, but my mind was kept calm. O! how condescending is our heavenly Father. Can we, his poor children, be too humble, too watchful! I hope what was spoken was right; no condemnation rests upon my spirit, which I consider a great favour.

MARY CAPPER."

To C. B. C.

"Leicester, 7th mo. 1829.

I have abundant cause, with reverence, to acknowledge that all things needful to my comfort are provided for me; living as in the bosom of affectionately attached friends, what can I desire more, but an increase of humility and of thankfulness, and of watchful obedience to the beneficent author of all our mercies.

Thy love is very precious to me; it is a sweet cordial, in lengthened years, to love and be beloved. May we continue to look straight on, toward the mark for the prize of our high calling, undismayed by those things that are brought upon us, in our pilgrimage journey."

TO THE SAME.

"Dudley, 11th mo. 4th, 1829.

The report from your dear parents is truly acceptable; the retrospect of years gone by, when, in our youthful vigour, we joyed together, and exchanged lively tokens of affection, seems to touch a tender chord yet in tune, and raises tears; not tears of murmur or regret, ah no! but of grateful recollection, that enduring Mercy has kept us from the broad way of destruction, and in adorable compassion, forsakes not in old age. In sickness, weakness and suffering, when mental and bodily powers fail, O! how consoling is the belief that the arm of Omnipotence sustains us, sanctifies every dispensation, and prepares his children for a glorious immortality,—a purchased possession for the ransomed and redeemed of the Lord.

MARY CAPPER."

Early in the year 1830, Mary Capper went to Coventry, where she was detained by a lingering illness, the effect of a cold. While there she wrote,

TO J. AND K. B.

"Coventry, 2nd mo. 4th, 1830.

I should not now, perhaps, call to mind your days of sorrow, in the bereavement, and in the deposit of the remains of your beloved child among strangers; but, with you my dear relatives,

I have a grateful remembrance of the mercy mixed with the dispensation, by that gracious Being who fitted and emancipated the soul of the young Christian for heaven. I seem gently impressed to communicate the language which arose in my heart, on reading thy testimony, my dear niece, corroborated by others who knew something of the life and manners of your precious child; the language still arises with freshness, Happy, happy spirit! so early released from a mortal tabernacle. May we not say, favoured to know comparatively little of life's bitters, and spared the many conflicts which, in the allotment of unerring Wisdom, the wrestling spirit has to endure, in life's protracted, lengthened span. But who shall say to the righteous Judge of the whole earth, What doest Thou? O! for a calm and quiet mind, to live by faith, a simple faith that asks not why or wherefore, nor requires sensible tokens, but receives the transient gleams of good, from the most excellent Glory, with deep reverence and gratitude. This is what my spirit presses after, not as having attained, but I dare not halt, through unbelief. Your lonely situation, in a foreign land, may be blessed; you and your dear children may seek and find, by patient waiting for it, the refreshment which cometh from the presence of the Lord.*

I am almost weary with writing, and have not yet noticed your pleasant prospects, myrtles, orange trees, &c. the snow-girt mountains, and the volcano. Admirable I doubt not; but my little home in Dale End suits me better. I hope you may be favoured in due time to return in peace to your own country and endeared friends."

On the the 29th of the 3rd month, Mary Capper made the following memorandum:

"I have had so much fever as greatly to reduce my strength,

* See notice of Ann Backhouse, in Memorials of deceased Friends, by S. Corder.

and am still nearly confined to my bed and chamber. This is a trying dispensation, though made comparatively easy by many mercies; let me gratefully acknowledge favours received!"

About this time she addressed these lines to the friends where she was staying:

To J. & S. C. while resident under their roof, in much
bodily weakness.

"Coventry, 3rd mo., 1830.

As an individual incorporated into the Society of Christian believers, denominated Friends or Quakers, not by education nor much familiar intercourse with any of them, not in my minority, but in more advanced years of my life; and having seen, with serious observation, it may be rather more variety of scenes and manners than falls to the lot of every private person, I may say, that although I was ignorant and as easily led into folly as my associates, brought up in the same habits and dissipations, there were times when I was led, in deep thoughtfulness, to query with myself, What is a profession of religion? Having, at an early age, gone through the forms of what is called our National Church, and with reverence partaken of the outward and visible sign of faith in the blood of Christ, as an atoning sacrifice, oft-times it arose in my mind, What has this done for me? Does the inward and spiritual grace subdue my evil propensities, and direct my steps into a path of circumspection and self-denial, consistent with the promises made for me in my unconscious infancy, and afterwards made binding, on my own responsibility, as I came of age to understand the nature and import of the engagement? I was aware that the ceremony was but a shadow of the substantial good.

I simply relate my own experience, implicating none; 'to our own master, we must stand or fall.' Without a laborious

investigation of the opinions of the various denominations of Christians, but not without sacrifices, hindrances and discouragements, by little and little, not rashly, but after mature deliberation, in simple obedience to apprehended duty, I attended the religious meetings of Friends. To me, solemn and reverential was that stillness, that silence, which seemed to hush every thought. I believe, that in this still calm, there is a renewal of spiritual strength to be known; yea! an enlargement of spiritual understanding, in communion with the Father of Spirits, which surely is true, spiritual worship. Thus, as an individual, I was led step by step, and found no difficulty in comprehending the ground and consistency of adopting plainness of speech, behaviour and apparel; all seemed consonant with apostolic counsel, evangelic doctrine, and the example of the early Christian converts. A corruption of language and of manners has crept in, and is adopted by many Christian professors, in the present day. The Society of Friends having seen this, and being gathered in early times as a 'people turned to a pure language,' I marvel not at their setting a cautious guard against innovations.

A friend to consistency though no dictator,

MARY CAPPER.

N.B. It has been remarked that the Romans were particularly careful to preserve the purity of their language. The state itself, it seems, thought it a subject so worthy of attention, that no innovation was allowed, in their public acts, without permission. Seneca gives it as a certain maxim, that when a false taste in style or expression prevails, it is a sign of corruption of morals in the people. (See Pliny's Letters, Book the First.) Why not apply this to our present instruction?"

Mary Capper appears to have returned home in the 4th month, whence she writes.