

CHAPTER XIII.

DEATH OF HER BROTHERS JOHN AND JAMES.—REFLECTIONS.—
EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS, ETC, FROM 1835 TO 1838.—DEEP
SPIRITUAL CONFLICT.—RELIEF THEREFROM.

ON THE FLUCTUATION OF THOUGHTS.

Reflections, *dated 1st month, 1835.*

It has a little opened to my understanding, that as involuntary thoughts are not at our command, we are only responsible as we willingly cherish, and bring them into action. Secret evil suggestions, which we cannot prevent, arising probably from the yet-permitted power of an unsanctified spirit, are not our thoughts, so long as they are a grief and burden to our hearts; and truly they are humiliating, permitted doubtless in order to humble us, and to shew us what yet remains of the unrenewed, evil nature, or it is possible, that after having measurably experienced, yea! testified, to the power and efficacy of redeeming Love, we might be tempted to conclude that the great work of sanctification was complete, and thus be lulled into a false rest, and forget, or neglect, the important injunction, 'Watch and pray!'

"Memorandum, *3rd mo. 4th, 1835.*

This morning's post brought the affecting tidings that my dear brother James Capper died in London; he was a dearly loved kind brother."

To M. S.

"Birmingham, *3rd mo. 12th, 1835.*

MY KIND FRIEND,

Thy unfeigned sympathy is truly cordial to me; also thy kindness in sending the lovely harbingers of Spring, which now adorn my apartment and cheer me. I thought, as I separated them, (and now think with a sigh of tender sadness) could my beloved brother James have entered my room, he would have admired their beauties, and said, with his usual courtesy, 'And how nicely sister Mary has arranged them!' Ah! how memory brings to mind his gentleness in early life, his patience with my untowardness; and in maturer days, his liberality in pleading my cause, as being of an age to judge for myself respecting the most acceptable way of worshipping God. I do not remember ever to have heard an unkind word from his lips, or a harsh censure, on any occasion. My precious Brother was, for a season, deeply humbled under a sense of his unworthiness; although he had preached Christ, as the Saviour of sinners, he feared that he had not done all that he might have done for those under his care. I have not yet received full particulars, as the survivors have been occupied in the removal of the body to Wilmington, where he had long been known as a father and a Christian counsellor. But I have not a doubt regarding the spirit, redeemed and sanctified by a Saviour's love and power; being stripped of every rag of self-righteousness, it will be clothed in the fine linen, clean and white. This is my hope and consolation for myself and my dear friends. I do feel these privations, in my lengthened life; yet I should be an ungrateful receiver of

continued mercies and privileges, if a murmuring or discontented thought were cherished in my heart. Thy kind correspondent brings my mouth to the dust, so to speak. O! if a spark of genuine good desire has ever been kindled, through so weak an instrument, the praise belongs to a higher Power.

Farewell, my dear friend! with all whom the Father of Mercies has given thee.

Thus subscribes thy affectionate friend,

MARY CAPPER."

TO THE SAME.

"4th mo. 17th, 1835.

The changeable weather is unfavourable to my frail tabernacle; fourscore years is no short period, but marvellous are the gentle dealings; the wearing down is gradual, without any violent dilapidation; but with mild warnings, the great and merciful Lord of all is pleased to instruct me. My prayer is, 'Teach me Thyself.' Yea, Lord! permit me to be numbered with the children who are taught of Thee, as an aged disciple, sitting at thy feet, with my mouth in the dust; only in favoured times, if it may so be, in my feeble way, setting forth thy condescending goodness toward thy rational creation, formed for immortality and glory.' Thus my long-valued friend, I have desired to be led in a plain path, from my early years; far from disputation, or speculation on things too high for me, but in simple obedience; and through the vicissitudes of my long life, I have been favoured with a measure of inward tranquillity, a little foretaste of that peace which this world cannot give, but which is all of Mercy.

MARY CAPPER."

MEMORANDUM.

Received intelligence of the final close of my dear brother, John Capper, the eldest of our large family; the remaining links of the chain are now only two; my youngest brother and myself. My dear brother John died on the 26th of the 4th month, 1835.

To E. S.

"5th mo. 9th, 1835.

My oft-remembered young friend, and fellow-probationer, in a land of pits and snares! I wish to give thee a prompt assurance that I have read thy last communication with very tender feeling and interest. If my experience can avail anything for thy help and encouragement, I would say, Fret not thyself at the present strife of words! It is nothing new. Controversies and strange voices have existed ever since the fall of man, disobedience having marred the Divine image. Enduring Mercy, in tender compassion, made a new Covenant, in order to redeem mankind, according to the Scriptures, which testify that the Son of God was manifested in the flesh,—a body prepared of the Father; this He laid down, as a sacrifice for the sins of the world; suffering, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. And in his spiritual appearance, He is made known to the simple, obedient believer, who will not follow the voice of the stranger; for the voice of the stranger he knows not.

As sheep then of the Good Shepherd's fold, may we, my beloved young friend, press into this safe enclosure, and quietly leave all controversy to those whose food it is. Cultivate inward stillness, that thou mayst be favoured to know the secret teaching of the Holy Spirit. Meddle not with argument. What comes

to thy ear, unsought, bear patiently; guard against excitement; wrestle in prayer, both for thyself and others, for strength, if in the right, still in the right to stay; if not, that heavenly Wisdom may teach the better way.

MARY CAPPER."

TO J. AND S. GRUBB.

"5th mo. 15th, 1835.

YE DEAR LABOURERS,

Be faithful unto death! There is a rest, unpolluted by the strife of words. Controversy has no place in the heavenly city. As one drawing nigh to the end of time, who has indeed been tenderly dealt with, I turn from the strange voices of the present day, and intermeddle not. Yet I think I do a little enter into feeling, and Christian sympathy with the faithful, exercised servants, who have to preach the cross of Christ. O! may a Redeemer's love and power keep you, dear friends, and every deeply proved, tried mind, from the tender youth to the aged sojourner on this side the promised land, that ye faint not, nor grow weary in the Lord's work.

MARY CAPPER."

TO J. AND K. B.

"Birmingham, 5th month, 1835.

MY BELOVED RELATIVES,

I contemplate you in London, with divers other, as disciples, or learners from day to day at the feet of Jesus, in the good old

school, with your mouths in the dust, while some may be busy around you, with a zeal to do well, and to serve the Lord. Gentle, yet impressive was the Saviour's rebuke, 'Martha! Martha! one thing is needful!' O! blessed privilege, to sit at the Redeemer's feet, to know His voice, to learn of Him, in the depth of humiliation, to come unto Him of whom the inspired Scriptures do amply testify. My faith increases in the promises as they stand recorded there; and in the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit, to lead out of all error and into all truth. O! if we had not a merciful High Priest, touched with a feeling of our infirmities, and acquainted with our temptations, what indeed should we do! My spirit is revived by a consoling hope that these clouds and storms, by shaking, to the very foundation, all that can be shaken, will work together for a good end, yet but dimly seen. And I do hope that no unprofitable dismay will obstruct, in any heart, the benefit of the Yearly Meeting. Of course it is not for me, a solitary one, to presume upon my feelings; nevertheless I may state, that in some favoured moments of stillness,—in a quiet not to be formed by human skill, and under a secret sense of that Power that brought me among you as a religious body, and that is still the mercy of the present hour, I have had a belief granted me, that this annual gathering will, at times, be favoured with the overshadowing of Divine Love and Mercy."

MARY CAPPER."

"7th mo. 1835.

Marvellous is the condescending mercy that has brought me hitherto, through a wilderness of pits and snares; and in my old age, provided all things for my comfort; and above all, settled my heart in a peaceful state; no more tossed with floating opinions, but watching, waiting and praying to be perfected and

fitted for the kingdom of heaven. The Lord's own works can alone praise Him!

Had I the pen of a ready writer, or the gift of an Evangelist, what could I write more impressive than what has been already written and stands upon sacred record! viz. 'Do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God. Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.' All the wit and learning of the most learned men, can never equal the precepts of Scripture.

To S. L. Jr.

Birmingham, 9th mo. 21st, 1835.

DEAR SARAH,

It seems long since we had any communication. Months have passed away, not without solemn events and changes, within the circle of our own kindred; so at least it has been permitted to me, to experience link after link to be broken.

My eldest brother died a few weeks after the decease of my dear brother James, who was educated for a preacher in the established mode of worship, and lived, as a pastor, fifty years at Wilmington in Sussex, where he was beloved and lamented. In life and in death, all his hope of salvation rested on the Rock of Ages, which Rock is Christ; his language in his illness, was 'None but Christ! none but Christ! I wish to embrace Him in all his fulness, to be swallowed up in his love!' The enemy of souls endeavoured to persuade him (says his watchful, affectionate daughter) that he would never attain to what he so earnestly desired, viz. a fitness to meet Christ; but he said, 'The waves of the sea are mighty, but the Lord on high is mightier!' and at times, after a sore conflict, he would break forth into praises. He was much in prayer for himself and for

others; petitioning his Heavenly Father to look upon him, and to have pity; often repeating, 'Mercy is all my plea.' In his dying moments, being asked if he was comfortable in the assurance that Jesus would receive him, he replied 'Yes;' and with his usual tenderness, added, 'and you too!' These were his last words.

I hope this little extract, so interesting to me, will not be intrusive. I wish to convey, as far as expression can do it, my very dear love to thy mother, who, with my own soul, longs to be found at the Mercy Seat, waiting for the fulness of redeeming love and power.

MARY CAPPER."

FRAGMENT ON PRAYER; addressed to a Friend.

"11th month, 1835.

With diffidence, as ever becomes me, I am willing to attempt expressing my ideas on the subject alluded to in our late conversation. I am aware that my understanding is very limited, but I think my simple views are not irreconcilable with precept and example in the inspired records. Can there be anything more imperative than the command, 'Watch and pray!' or any language more sweet and encouraging than 'Pray unto thy Father, who seeth in secret?'

Doubtless Christians should live in the spirit of prayer. 'It is the Christian's vital breath;' and marvellous is the privilege, unto this day and hour, of communion with the Almighty Power, God over all, who breathed that breath of life whereby we became living souls! By the same Almighty Power, we are kept from the path of destruction. Sweet is the inviting language of our Redeemer, who has cast up a new and con-

secrated way, by which we have access to the Mercy-seat. 'When ye pray,' said He, 'say, Our Father!' Glorious privilege! that while clothed with human nature, feeling and mourning our omissions and our commissions, we may 'kneel before the Lord our Maker,' in prostration of body, soul and spirit! Although utterance may fail, there is an availing sigh, a tear of contrition, and a Spirit, better than our own, helping our infirmities! I allude not to any forms, but to the real, humble breathings of the soul, athirst for the living God.

MARY CAPPER."

On the 26th of the 1st month, 1836, died Sarah Lamley, of Tredington; after a short and suffering illness; this event was much felt by Mary Capper. In allusion to it, and also to a recent illness with which she had herself been tried, she thus writes;

TO SARAH LAMLEY, JR.

"Birmingham, 3rd mo. 1st, 1836.

DEAR SARAH,

I have abundant cause for thankfulness, having been tenderly cared for in my weak state, and supplied with all the comforts that I needed. Above all, I hope I write it with reverence, my mind was mercifully kept in peace; no doubts troubled me; but, marvellous condescension! the spiritual Guide of my youth (so far as I have been an obedient learner in the best of schools) has brought me hitherto; and with my whole heart, I trust He will be my Guide all my journey through; the staff and stay of my lengthened day!

Very often do I think of your dear valued mother; memory

retraces the many calm and peaceful hours in your little circle, the pleasant steps in your garden, when your precious mother examined and admired the opening buds and flowers. These liberal gifts we contemplated as coming from Him who adorns this lower world, and who cheers the grateful mind upon the way to that glorious City, where anticipation shall be lost in fruition. May your Christian mother's blessing rest upon her children's children!

Express my love to thy sister, &c. Farewell, my dear friend.

Affectionately I subscribe,

MARY CAPPER."

To K. B.

"Birmingham, 3rd mo. 3rd, 1836.

I lament the separation of some promising ones; their being driven by strange voices and tumults from attention to the still, small voice of the Good Shepherd. O! my heart pities, and when enabled, breathes the secret prayer for the sheep scattered from the true fold—the quiet habitation. Never, my dear relatives, did I more appreciate the privilege of being joined to a Christian people,—to the Society to which I am favoured to be united by increasing conviction at this day, of its pure, unsophisticated, Gospel principles. The Shepherd of the sheep is indeed good. O! how gently He leads the simple, as the flock and the children can bear it.

MARY CAPPER."

TO A RELATION.

“3rd mo. 4th, 1836.

The secret language and aspiration of my spirit is, O! that our youth, entering the field of faith and of responsibility, O! that they may be kept from the strange disputations of this day. But why think it strange? Look at the history of mankind from the fall of Adam; disobedience has marked every succeeding generation; subtle device or open rebellion has drawn aside thousands, and continues, in various ways, to allure and deceive the children of men. The natural, uncontrolled, active mind delights in doing something that shall appear goodly; yea, can make sacrifices in its own will and way, and is gratified in self-complacency, and it may be applause; yea, in external acts of religious worship. My long life and observation, tossed and sifted as I have been, have given me a measure of experience in the delusions of self. O! how different, how widely different, from the lowly, humble waiting at the feet of Jesus, the highest Teacher, as with our mouths in the dust; feeling our own impotency, our own blindness! Here is subjugation indeed, bearing the true cross. Ah! my dear, say not in thine heart, ‘Who shall shew us any good? who shall ascend, or who shall descend, to bring our best Teacher? Believe me, He is nigh thee; the living Word! writing the new covenant on the tablet of thy heart. Believe and obey this, and thou wilt be led gently along, as thou canst bear it. When we are faithful in the little, the way is made for farther manifestations of the Divine will concerning us. Avoid speculations, and vainly exercising thyself in things too high for thee. If I know anything of true peace, it is in simple, child-like obedience to the still, small voice of the Good Shepherd, who instructs the lambs and sheep of his fold; a stranger’s voice they will not know nor follow.

This gracious, enduring Mercy was the Guide of my youth, turning my steps into the narrow way; and it is the stay and the staff of my old age; and never did I more fully appreciate what I believe to be the genuine principles of the Society to which I am conscientiously united, than at this day.

* Sacrifices not a few have been called for, but not one which is not doubly repaid by sweet peace. Not one painful accusation is permitted to trouble me; thankfulness and cheerfulness clothing my spirit, in the midst of great reduction of bodily strength.

Though I know not the heart of a parent, I feel much for the rising generation; if there was not faith in an over-ruling Power, our poor thoughts might trouble, if not overwhelm us; for what a sifting day is this, among professors of religion! our own little favoured band not exempt. There seems a prevailing mania, a strife of words and of strange voices! But the Good Shepherd knoweth his own sheep, and they follow Him.

To M. S.

“Birmingham, 3rd mo. 12th, 1836.

MY KIND FRIEND,

Little less than miraculous is the restoration of this poor body! it is marvellous in my view, and I believe in the view of those who witnessed the almost suspension of animal life. For what end thus re-animated, I know not; it is enough for me to know that the Giver of life is good, though I am blind. I am still weak, though I can walk alone from my easy chair to my desk, use my pen as thou mayst perceive, and value the privilege, as I can relieve my affectionate friends from anxiety on my account. I have been very tenderly cared for; indeed the friends of my youth have been more than replaced.

Wonderful favours and mercies have been added to my lengthened days. Time would fail, and language be insufficient, to set forth the mercy that keeps my mind calm, lowly, dependent as a child, disposed to learn at the feet of a crucified Lord. My heart compassionates those who have left the Guide of their youth, or who have not yet known the witness for God in themselves, the Spirit that leadeth out of error into the plain path of duty. O! my precious friend, if we were faithful to the dictates of this Spirit, how many snares and entanglements we should escape; and how would the bitter, mingled by a Sovereign hand, be sweetened!

MARY CAPPER.

To J. AND K. B.

“Birmingham, 4th mo. 5th, 1836.

The recent intelligence of your devoted kinsman James Backhouse, and his companion, with satisfactory accounts from Daniel Wheeler, are consoling evidences that the Universal Father still regards his rational creation as one family, however circumstances may differ; our limited capacities see dimly, and we too often lightly esteem our own mercies. With reverence, at this day, I am ready to testify, that although the surrender of dear, very dear Parents (for I was prohibited the paternal roof,) and of a strong, heart-engaged attachment, led me indeed in a way that I knew not, yet I was favoured with an internal calm that could not argue the matter; to all enquiries, I could only answer, that my peace of mind seemed to depend upon simple obedience. And still, in this dependent, child-like state, humbled by a sense of my evil propensities, which brings me to the foot of the cross, I can now say that every sacrifice made in obedience, is rewarded an hundred fold, infinite adorable mercy crowning

the poor worthless offerings of his children, with the assurance that He accepts them, and that Divine Grace shall be with them, in life and in death.

It seems to me of great importance that there should be no self-complacency, nor creaturely glorying, but true self-reduction, bearing the cross.

MARY CAPPER.”

To M. S.

“4th mo. 12th, 1836.

A bountiful Creator continues to allure us to love, obey and praise Him. Had I the pen of a ready writer, had I the gift of an evangelist, my theme should be, Praise the Lord! Let everything that hath breath praise Him! The way to praise that Almighty Power, who has formed his rational creation for immortality and glory, is obedience. He has not left us without an internal witness, to manifest our errors and our sins, and to point and to lead into safe paths. I assuredly believe that there was a consciousness of good and evil, even before the Gospel dispensation, which is the fulfilment of prophecy in a Saviour incarnate. Glad tidings indeed! Glory to God in the highest! Peace on earth; good will to men! ratified by a new Covenant, written in the heart, and confirmed by Scripture testimony, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save us from our sins,—to redeem us from all iniquity. What can be more convincing! Our restless wanderings arise from the neglect of watching unto prayer, and daily bearing the subduing cross.

MARY CAPPER.”