

# WOMEN AND SCHOOLS

Do unto others  
As ye would  
That They  
Should  
Do unto  
You.

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## Elizabeth Fry.

NINETY-FOUR years ago there lived in Norwich, England, a motherless girl of twelve years. Her mother had just died, and she was left in the care of others. She was sensitive and timid. Without a good, pious mother to guide such a nature she was at a great loss. To add to her misfortune she was considered dull and did not like to study. She grew obstinate and became worldly-minded. She loved dress, and wore a scarlet riding habit and purple sleeves with scarlet lacings. She was fond of music and dancing, and these led her into excitement, vanity and flirtation. These things went on until she was seventeen years of age. It will not do to forget her name. It was Elizabeth, and her father's name was John Gurney. She was born May 21, 1780.

Elizabeth's mother was an earnest Christian. Her firmness of character was such that the influence of it never left her daughter. At the age of seventeen the prayers of that good mother for her began to be answered, and Elizabeth's heart was led to God. Although there were many influences to lead her away from Christ, she remained firm in her mother's faith. Her former timidity was changed into courage. Her obstinacy

turned into a godly firmness in what she believed to be right. The Gospel she heard preached gave her new views of life and duty. She learned the value of that excellent Christian grace, self-sacrifice for the good of others. She felt that God had called her to do some great work, and with a noble firmness of soul she devoted herself to it, not dreaming of the greatness of the work which she should accomplish. One of the secrets of her great success may be learned from some of her latest words. She said, "Since my heart was touched at seven-



ELIZABETH FRY.

teen years old, I believe I have never awakened from my sleep, day or night, without my first thought being how best I might serve the Lord."

Some time after her conversion she united with the Quakers, whose doctrines and customs she fully endorsed and observed. In 1800 she was married to Joseph Fry. In 1813 she made her first visit to Newgate prison, and four years after that she succeeded in establishing a school and manufactory within the prison, organized a ladies' association for the reformation of the prisoners, and thenceforward

devoted all her energies to prison reform. A writer in an exchange gives the following account of her beautiful and heroic life:

"Soon after she united with the Quakers her fitness to expound the Scriptures was recognized, and her eloquence and power as a preacher gave her great influence. But it was as a prison reformer that she was most eminent. The revolting conditions of prison life in Great Britain at that time, and the causes that led to it, cannot be detailed in a sketch like this. To visit Newgate as Mrs. Fry

first found it, was like going into a den of infuriated wild beasts. Women, almost without clothing, huddled together, screaming, begging, and threatening with awful violence. Not long afterward, under the influence of Mrs. Fry, the change was marvellous. Loud and angry words were no longer heard; order and propriety now reigned. As related by a visitor, the picture was one never to be forgotten. Around a table, occupied in sewing, were many of the women who so lately had been filled with wrath and turbulence. At the head of the table sat Mrs. Fry, reading the Bible, and explaining as she read, while all listened respectfully, and many with eager interest. Instead of scowling, leering, and ill-suppressed laughing, there was in the countenances of the women an expression of self-respect and consciousness of their improved character and condition.

The work begun at Newgate broadened, till not only in England, but throughout Great Britain, the Channel Islands, and Continental Europe, her influence was brought to bear upon the elevation of prison regulations and convict life; remedies in modes of punishment and discipline; and the erection of buildings necessary to the carrying out of her system. In her extensive travels, she was received by royalty and government officials everywhere with great cordiality. They followed her counsels, and joined her in measures of reform; and she enjoyed the rare privilege of living to see most of her reforms become laws of the land. Organizations were founded by her for the improvement of prison life for female and juvenile convicts; for the improvement of prison discipline; for the protection and reformation of juvenile offenders, and of females after