

ELIZABETH FRY.

One hundred years ago the word Newgate was a synonym for all that was miserable, vile and vicious. From this horrible den of crime and disease, virtue, purity, health, morality were as effectually banished as if they had never existed. The great principles of prison discipline and reform were not yet inactive operations to lighten the punishment or ameliorate the condition of that unfortunate class who naturally or by force of circumstance are led into a life of crime. Wilful and wicked though they might be, the great prison of England gave no opportunity to offenders to seek a better mode of life, but was calculated to crush them into still deeper depths of degradation. What was true of Newgate was probably true, to a greater or less degree, of all the prisons of Europe.

It was reserved for a noble woman to set in motion those great reforms which should redeem humanity from the shame of inhuman treatment of its outcasts—treatment which made them simply worse than beasts.

Elizabeth Fry, born in Norwich on the 21st of May, 1780, was the third daughter of John Gurney of Earlham, a wealthy merchant and banker, and the great great granddaughter on her mother's side of the well known apologist of the Quakers, Robert Barclay, friend and companion of George Fox.

The family belonged to the Society of Friends, but was not strict in its observance of the customs, dress and manners of that sect.

Elizabeth's mind began to entertain serious thoughts concerning religion when she was still a girl. Yet, as her diary shows, she was torn by conflicting feelings, unable to decide what course to take, until at a Friends' meeting in Norwich on the 4th of February 1798, she heard the man through whose preaching she was finally converted to a life of firm, cheerful and earnest piety which influenced and extended through all her after years.

It seems strange that at this time, and in her peculiar and awakened state of mind, she was taken to London by her father for the very singular reason "that she might become acquainted, for herself, with those amusements and fascinations that the world offers its votaries; that she might have the opportunity of 'trying all things' and choosing for herself that which appeared to her 'to be good.'"

How many churches at the present day would like to send their young converts into the fascinations and amusements of a great city in order to test their capacity for selecting the good from the evil? It might be a dangerous experiment for some. But it worked well with Elizabeth Gurney. For, after she had remained in London several weeks, often interested and amused with the objects that were presented to her notice, but seldom satisfied and approving, "she returned home entirely decided; and from that time, most steadily, though gently, did she continue to advance in the path in which she believed it to be her duty henceforth to walk."

With an active disposition it was impossible to be idle, and with religious zeal added to her natural kindness and benevolence of heart, her activity began to flow as a matter of course into the channel of usefulness for others. This was manifested first in visiting and relieving the poor and sick; reading the Bible to them and instructing their children; and her school, started with one little boy, grew from this single scholar to a school of seventy, which she taught unaided.

However, the labor of these early years was but the preparation for the great mission of her life, the work of prison reform. In it she was but gaining the experience which should enable her with tact, judgment and skill to accomplish a task which might well have destroyed the faith of others and discouraged and dismayed a less determined and devoted heart.

On the 19th of August, 1800, she was married to Mr. Joseph Fry in the Quaker meeting house in Norwich.

About twelve years later Elizabeth Fry first visited Newgate, probably induced to do so by the representations of four members of the Society of Friends (particularly of William Forster) who had visited certain condemned prisoners, her object being to inspect the state of the women, with a view to alleviating their sufferings, occasioned by the inclement season. The scenes that she then witnessed she never forgot. Probably she had never imagined anything so dreadful as the condition of these unfortunate female prisoners. What were the sights that met the eye of Elizabeth Fry and stirred her sensitive heart to its centre with pity and sympathy—and kindled the fires of that great resolve to do what she could to redeem these people from their horrible state, physically and spiritually? On page 228 of Vol. I. of the memoir of her life, by two of her daughters, we find the following graphic description of the condition of the female prisoners in Newgate in 1813:—

"All the female prisoners in Newgate were confined in the part now known as the untried side. The larger portion of the

In company with only one lady, a sister of Sir T. F. Buxton, Mrs. Fry entered the prison, and was deeply touched by the sorrowful and neglected condition of the women and their miserable children.

The first systematic effort for the improvement of these unfortunates was the establishment of a school for the children. It was followed later by the formation of a society called "An Association for the Improvement of the Female Prisoners in Newgate," this society being formed by the wife of a clergyman and eleven members of the Society of Friends, and the object of which was to provide employment for the idle and mischievous hands. The school for the children and manufactory for the tried side were eminently successful. Constant improvement took place in the character and conduct of the inmates of the prison. Mrs. Fry was indefatigable in her efforts. The third step in the march of reform was the appointment of a matron. The prisoners were divided into classes and placed in her charge. Thus the good work continued until it attracted the attention of the public

every quarter of Europe. She died, after a lingering illness, October 12th, 1845.

Mrs. Fry's influence will doubtless extend upon this earth so long as there are prisons and prisoners to fill them. Her work was a noble one, any work which helps to lift a human being from degradation and despair is noble; how much more so when that work is not for one but for a multitude; not for a season only but for all time.

One circumstance that is worthy of remark is that Mrs. Fry's work was done in the midst of ever increasing family cares and often in the shadow of trouble and affliction. She was the mother of eleven children and loved them and her husband dearly. She was very anxious to be perfect in all her home duties, and yet, with these domestic cares constantly pressing upon her, she still found time to do the great work to which she felt irresistibly drawn. The life of Mrs. Fry has proved that a woman can be both a tender-hearted mother and an active laborer in the vineyard of the world. —Selected.

RUDDERLESS.

Mr. F—, a passenger on one of our ocean steamers, lately, found an old college friend in the captain, and they passed some of their leisure time in discussing their former classmates and their fate.

"I never could understand," said Mr. F—, one day, "why Will Pettit did not succeed. He left college equipped with every qualification for the struggle of life. He had sound health, a vigorous intellect, warm affections and a competence.

"He proposed to enter the ministry, but just before leaving college, fell in with some free-thinking fellows and gave up that idea. Then he studied law and was admitted, but after a year's practice he closed his office and went to farming. I met him now and then. He had become a sceptic, but talked little of his religious doubts.

"Then he left the farm and his wife, and went to California, gold-hunting.

"In 1876 I was in Idaho, and there I met Will. He had lost everything, and supported himself by odd jobs of work, principally driving cattle. He was neither a drunkard nor a gambler, yet he had never succeeded in anything which he undertook. He tried a new road to luck two or three times a year.

"He was now almost insane in his opposition to Christianity and talked incessantly of religion, with the vilest and most profane abuse. A month or two later he died, in the same bitter humor, a rebel against God if there ever was one. It is a mystery to me why such a man should have made such an end."

After a short silence, the captain said,—

"Old sailors have a superstition that there are phantom ships that traverse the sea. I saw a vessel once that explained to me how the idea originated. It was a full-rigged bark, under sail and driving before a brisk sou'-wester. There was not a living man on board. I surmised that some virulent disease had broken out on her, and that the crew were all dead or had deserted her. I tried to capture her, but could not.

"Several months later I passed her again. Her top-mast was gone, her sails hung in rags, and the wind drove her where it would. A year after she came across our bows one stormy winter evening. She was a shattered hulk, every plank started, the waves washed her back and forth. She went down at last into the darkness and storm.

"She was a good ship at first, but," he added significantly, "she had lost her rudder."

How many young lads who read this are starting out on the one long voyage which waits for every man, well-equipped, and apparently promising, but without a rudder! —Youth's Companion.

HE THAT TRUSTETH in his own heart is a fool.—Prov. 28 : 26.



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quadrangle was then used as a state prison. The partition wall was not of sufficient height to prevent the state prisoners from over-looking the narrow yard, and the windows of the two wards and two cells, of which the women's division consisted; these four rooms comprised about one hundred and ninety superficial yards, into which, at the time of these visits, nearly three hundred women with their numerous children were crowded; tried and untried, misdemeanants and felons; without classification, without employment, and with no other superintendence than that given by a man and his son, who had charge of them by night and by day. Destitute of sufficient clothing, for which there was no provision; in rags and dirt without bedding, they slept on the floor, the boards of which were in part raised to supply a sort of pillow. In the same rooms they lived, cooked and washed. With the proceeds of their clamorous begging, when any strangers appeared amongst them, the prisoners purchased liquors from a regular tap in the prisons. Spirits were openly drunk and the ear was assailed by the most terrible language."

and Elizabeth Fry's name became well-known throughout all England, and her influence was felt in nearly all the gaols, houses of correction, infirmaries and lunatic asylums in the United Kingdom. From Great Britain her fame spread to other countries and we find her visiting the prisons of Europe and expounding her plans wherever she went. In 1827 she visited Ireland, and she then had her attention directed to other houses of detention besides prisons, and the result was important improvements in hospitals and insane asylums.

When she had organized the work so that other hands could carry it on in her native land this noble woman, not content to relieve suffering at home, felt it to be her duty to extend her sphere of usefulness into the neighboring states of Europe, and between 1837 and 1842 made several journeys to the continent, everywhere received with marked respect and consideration, and her reports received by high authorities, especially in France.

Failing health prevented further activity, but she had the pleasure of knowing that her suggestions were carried out in nearly