children allowed to go in to see the baby, holding on to each other's frocks in an orderly line. Not two years afterwards I remember them in a similar line walking past their dying mother."

Catherine Gurney seems to have been an excellent wife and mother. In a memorandum found after her death she lays down a brief rule of life: "First, to promote my duty to my Maker; secondly, my duty to my husband and children, relations, servants, and poor neighbours." She also notes in her journals "that in her daily walks with them she made a point of endeavouring to enjoy each individually." In one of her letters to her cousin Priscilla Hannah Gurney, she mentions her children, Elizabeth amongst them. "My dovelike Betsy scarcely ever offends, and is, in every sense of the word, truly engaging."

In 1786 John Gurney hired Earlham from its owner, Mr. Bacon Frank, of Campsall, in Yorkshire, as the family had outgrown the Bramerton cottage. Eventually he purchased a considerable estate at Earlham, on the opposite side of the road. This estate is still in the possession of his descendants, who may still be called the Gurneys of Earlham. John Gurney and his wife were not what was called "plain Quakers,"—they were intellectual, benevolent, and courteous; but though they attended First-Day meeting, "they did not adopt the strict garb of the Society, and their children studied music and dancing;" but those who shook their heads at the "worldliness" of the Gurneys, little dreamt of the remarkable lives that were being moulded under the Gurney roof. Elizabeth, "the dovelike Betsy," mentioned in the journal, idolised her mother. She seems to have been a shy, somewhat morbid child, possessing a poor opinion of her own merits. She says in her early recollections, "I believe I had a name only for being obstinate, for my nature had a strong tendency

that way, and I was disposed to a spirit of contradiction, always ready to see things a little differently from others, and not willing to yield my sentiments to them." But in later years this spirit of contradiction was merged in that decision of character needed for her great work.

She was considered rather dull of intellect, and her health was delicate, but she was by no means deficient in penetration and common sense. She seems to have suffered greatly from nervous fear—she could not bear to be alone in the dark. And she was so devoted to her mother that she seldom left her side, and would watch her mother's slumbers almost breathlessly, fearing she would never wake. The death of that beloved mother, when Elizabeth was twelve years old, clouded the happy home at Earlham and brought bitter grief to her husband and children. With her dying breath she committed the care of the younger ones to her eldest daughter Catherine; her last articulate words were "Peace, sweet is peace!"

It was a strange and heavy responsibility for a girl of seventeen to be placed suddenly at the head of the household. There was no one to help her. Her father's only sister, Mrs. Barclay, lived too far away—indeed, she died the following year; but Hannah Judd, the housekeeper, and Sarah Williman, the devoted nurse, rendered her faithful service.

"Here, then, we were left," she wrote long afterwards; "I, not seventeen, as the head, wholly ignorant of common life, from the retirement in which we had been educated; quite unprepared for filling an important station, and unaccustomed to act on independent principles. Still, my father placed me naturally at the head of the family—a continual weight and pain which wore my health and spirits. I never again had the joy and glee of youth."

But, in spite of these sad words, Catherine Gurney seems to have done her part nobly. She directed her sisters'

education, sympathized with them, and loved them. Her word was law; no one rebelled against "Kitty's advice," and all through her life she was a blessing to her family.

It is wonderfully interesting to read her account of her sisters in her old age. In speaking of Elizabeth, the third sister, she writes:

"She had more genius than any one from her retiring disposition gave her credit for in her early days. She had tender feelings, especially towards her parents, to whom she was the most loving and obedient of any of their children. She was gentle in look and manner, and pleasing in person; though she had not Rachel's glowing beauty, yet some thought her quite as attractive. She disliked learning languages, and was somewhat obstinate in her temper, except towards her mother. After we were left alone, her aversion to learning was a serious disadvantage to her; and though she was quick in natural talent, her education was very imperfect and defective. Enterprise and benevolence were the two predominant features of her character, and wonderfully did these dispositions afterwards unfold under the influence of religion. In contemplating her remarkable and peculiar gifts, I am struck with the development of her character and the manner in which the qualities, considered faults when she was a child, became virtues, and proved in her case of the most important efficacy in her career of active service. Her natural timidity was, I think, in itself the means of acquiring the opposite virtue of courage, through the transforming power of Divine grace, which stamped this endowment in her with a holy moderation and nice discretion that never failed to direct it aright. Her natural obstinacy, the only failing in her temper as a child, became that finely-tempered decision and firmness which enabled her to execute her project for the good of others. What in childhood was something like cunning, ripened into the most uncommon

penetration, long-sightedness, and skill in influencing the minds of others. . . . She was about seventeen, I believe, when the good impressions she had imbibed from her mother in her earliest years began to revive. . . . There was more timidity and scrupulousness in her early than in her mature religion, more of sectarian and peculiar view; but as her experimental knowledge of the Gospel advanced, her sympathies became enlarged, and the line into which she was drawn by her public engagements taught her in the most noble and catholic spirit to acknowledge the truth under every form and modification. She became a living illustration of St. Paul's description of charity, few seeming to partake so abundantly of the glorious liberty of the children of God."

This noble panegyric from Catherine Gurney's pen is worthy of being quoted in most of its fulness; every word speaks of the wise insight and knowledge of character of that loved mother-sister. It was a happy circle of bright young faces that gathered round Kitty when she read to them as they worked; and at other times she would join the games of hide-and-seek with the younger children "in the winding passages and eighty cupboards of the old house."

We have quaint but charming pictures of the fair sisterhood scouring the country on their ponies in scarlet habits. "On one occasion it is recorded that the seven linked arms, drew a line across the road, and stopped the mail coach from ascending the neighbouring hill"—hardly Quakerlike behaviour.

Catherine, gentle as she was, shared her sisters' distaste to the Quaker Sundays; the long, dreary silence, and drearier sermons of the Meeting in Goat Lane. "Goat was dis." was often written in their journals, meaning "the Meeting was disgusting." Augustus Hare tells us that Betsy Gurney mentions a curious circumstance relating to

her child life to Mr. Pitchford. "So much was she impressed with horror at reading of the sacrifice of Isaac, that she always dreaded to go to Meeting lest her parents should sacrifice her there."

As the sisters grew up, their charms attracted the young officers quartered at Norwich, who were also willing to enjoy the fishing and shooting at the Hall; and they had soon plenty of friends, among them a Roman Catholic surgeon settled at Norwich, John Pitchford, famed as a botanist, and his son John; the latter soon becoming very intimate with them, going almost daily to Earlham, singing, walking, boating, and playing cricket with the fair sisters, whom he termed "my seven most enchanting friends." Objections were raised by the Friends to this constant intercourse, and Mr. Gurney was obliged to beg him to relax his visits; but, after his marriage, he frequently walked over with his wife to Ham House, and was always welcomed by Samuel Gurney. John Pitchford had a great and very good influence over the minds of the sisters when the wave of infidelity, which came with the French Revolution, affected their young minds; "we elder sisters were ourselves in no small degree carried off our centre," writes Kitty, in her quaint phraseology. Their cousin, Mary Anne Galton, afterwards Mrs. Schimmelpenninck, was also much beloved by them; and Mrs. Opie, author of several pathetic novels, became intimate at Earlham, and would practise for hours with Rachel Gurney and her sisters.

Well might Miss Martineau speak of the Gurneys as "a set of dashing young people, dressing in gay riding-habits and scarlet boots." The little creatures, holding each other's frocks as they went in procession to see the baby brother, now sat in a row at "Goat's," in front of the gallery, in their gay attire. One memorable Sunday, February 4th, 1778, when Betsy was in her twentieth year, they were all

in their usual places, Betsy in a pair of new purple boots laced with scarlet. The American Friend, William Savery, was to preach. Richenda Gurney gives an account of this Sunday:

"His voice and manner were arresting," she wrote, "and we all liked the sound; but Betsy's attention became fixed, and at last I saw her begin to weep, and she became a good deal agitated. As soon as Meeting was over she made her way to the men's side of the Meeting, and having found my father, she asked him if she might dine at the Grove, our Uncle Joseph's, where William Savery was staying. He consented, though rather surprised at the request. The others went home as usual, and for a wonder we wished to go in the afternoon. As we returned in the carriage, Betsy sat in the middle, and astounded us all by weeping most of the way home. The next morning William Savery came to breakfast, and preached afterwards to our sister, prophesying a high and important calling into which she would be led. What she went through in her own mind I cannot say, but the results were most powerful and most evident. From that day her love of the world and of pleasure seemed gone."

Her own account is clothed in quaint phraseology: "To-day I have felt that there is a God. I have been devotional, and my mind has been led away from the follies that it is mostly wrapped in. We had much serious conversation; in short, what he said, and what I felt, was like a refreshing shower falling upon earth that had been dried for ages. It has not made me unhappy. I have felt ever since humble. I have longed for virtue. I hope to be truly virtuous, to let sophistry fly from my mind; not to be enthusiastic and foolish, but only to be so far religious as will lead to virtue. There seems nothing so little understood as religion."

From this time she began quietly withdrawing from the

amusements and occupations of her sisters and leading a life apart. Catherine Gurney writes of her in her tender way: "I have a clear picture of Betsy's appearance at this time. It was peculiarly lovely. . . . When she told us she could not dance with us any more (which was at that time my greatest delight) it was almost more than I could bear, and I tried to argue with her, and begged and persecuted her. But it was all in vain. . . . The Bible became her study; visiting the poor—especially the sick—her great object. . . . Yet it was after she had received these powerful impressions that, with my father's consent, she went to London, literally to see the world, being determined to prove all things and hold fast that which was good."

So Elizabeth went under Mrs. Hanbury's care. She was taken to Drury Lane and Covent Garden Theatres; she saw *Hamlet* and *Bluebeard*, and other plays; but she could not enjoy them. She remarked in her droll way that when her hair was dressed "she felt like a monkey, and decided that London was not the place for heartful pleasure." Amongst the people she met were Amelia Opie, Mrs. Siddons, Mrs. Inchbald, and "Peter Pindar." As a result of this visit she determined to become a plain Quaker—to adopt the close cap and kerchief, to use "thee " and "thou." She also troubled her sisters by adopting Quaker peculiarities; it is even said that she refused to see the picture Opie was painting of her father; but she afterwards emancipated herself from these useless restrictions. Her first good work was to open a small school for the poor children of Norwich, and in a short time she had about seventy scholars under her care.

In the summer of 1798 Mr. Gurney took his seven daughters for a tour through England and Wales. During this journey Elizabeth saw the aged Friend, Deborah Darley, who told her that she would be "a light to the

blind, speech to the dumb, and feet to the lame." This prophecy greatly impressed the girl.

Amongst her brother John's schoolfellows at Wandsworth had been a boy named Joseph Fry; he belonged to an old family which took its name from Frie, in Normandy. Being afterwards placed with a "Friend," Robert Holmes, in Norfolk, to learn farming, he became acquainted with the Gurneys. His heart was soon won by Betsy. In an evening walk, as we read in Augustus Hare's "Memorials," he first became fully conscious of his feelings towards her. It is remembered that she was dressed that evening in a brown silk gown, with a black lace veil wound round her head like a turban, the ends pendant on one side of her face, and contrasting with her beautiful light brown hair." Very shortly afterwards the hair was hidden under the close cap of the plain Quakeress.

Joseph Fry's suit was not successful at first; when he proposed, Elizabeth refused him. He was supposed to be rich, and had a good house, was an excellent linguist and sang splendidly, bore a high character, belonged to the strict sect of "plain Quakers"; but his appearance and manners were against him. There is a curious story told of Joseph Fry's courtship: how he bought a handsome gold watch and chain and laid them on the garden seat, watched by six pairs of eyes—the six sisters hidden in six laurel bushes; and how the "tall, graceful Betsy"—her flaxen hair now hidden under a Quaker cap—shyly emerged upon the gravel walk. She seemed scarcely conscious of her surroundings, as if "on the wings of prayer she was being wafted into the unseen." . . . But though the watch remained on the garden seat, and Betsy in girlish scare fled back to the house, the loving spies remained in their laurel bushes. An hour later Betsy emerged again from the house, and slowly and tremblingly took up the watch. It is a satisfaction to know that she never repented this decision.

The Seven Sisters

She was little more than twenty when she was married to Joseph Fry in the Friends' Meeting House, on August 19th, 1800. It must have been a sore trial to the loving heart of Elizabeth to leave her dear home and its inmates, but she was promised long annual visits to Earlham, one or other sister would often be with her, and her young brother Samuel, a boy of fourteen, about to be articled to her husband—was to live under their roof. The future home was in St. Mildred's Court, in the heart of the city. The family into which she married was a Quaker family of the strictest order, and in spite of her orthodoxy she was, in the midst of the Frys, "the gay instead of the plain and scrupulous one of the family." Indeed, as Mr. Ingram tells us in his "Life of Elizabeth Fry," "for a little time she experienced some difficulty in reconciling her accustomed habits with the tenets of her husband's household and connections, but in the end succeeded."

Rachel and Hannah Gurney were at St. Mildred's Court when Elizabeth Fry's first child, Katherine, was born. A few weeks later the whole family assembled at the door of Earlham as a travelling carriage approached, containing the proud young mother and her babe, and her sisters Rachel and Hannah.

Elizabeth Fry had followed her chosen path during her young married life by ministering to the sick and poor among the slums of London. She visited them in their own homes. She also took interest in educational matters, and visited the workhouse and school belonging to the Society of Friends at Islington. On the death of her father-in-law, in the spring of 1808, the family removed from St. Mildred's Court to Plashet, in Essex. Writing of this pleasant change, Mrs. Fry says, "I do not think I have ever expressed the pleasure and enjoyment I find in a country life both for myself and the dear children. It has frequently led me to feel grateful for the numerous benefits

conferred, and I have also desired that I may not rest in, nor too much depend on, any of these outward enjoyments. It is certainly to me a time of pleasure."

In the October of this year Mr. Gurney died at Earlham, from the effects of an operation. On hearing of his danger, Mrs. Fry hurried down to him. The whole family were together at the funeral, and it is worthy of note, that it was by this beloved parent's grave that Elizabeth gave public thanks for his merciful release; this being her first public appearance in the ministry. An eye-witness describes the scene: "Just before the first earth was thrown into the grave, Mrs. Fry threw herself forward into an attitude of prayer, and supported by her husband and sister, and almost choked by emotion, loudly prayed to be endued with thankfulness under affliction." From this day the Meeting of which she was a member acknowledged Mrs. Fry as a minister, and thus gave sanction to her speaking in their assemblies. She spoke at some of the meetings of the Norwich Auxiliary Bible Society. For some years the births of her numerous children, and the cares of a large household fully occupied Mrs. Fry, and prevented her from undertaking more public work. Her domestic duties were fulfilled with cheerfulness and conscientiousness, and the revelations of her journal speak of her deep inward piety. In those years she had many cares and sorrows, frequent illnesses, the death of dear relatives, and the loss of one child, her tenderly beloved Betsy, a little creature of between four and five years. In later years other trials came to her. She had to bear the pain of seeing some of her children marry out of the Society of Friends, while losses in business involved a sad reduction in household comforts; but nothing could shake her serenity and calmness.

A short extract from her journal, penned in the first year of her married life, shows her self-discipline. This