examination of conscience was carried on to the end of her life:—

"First. Hast thou this day been honest and true in performing thy duties towards thy Creator in the first place, and secondly to thy fellow-creatures, or hast thou been sophistical, and flinched? Second. Hast thou been vigilant in frequently pausing in the hurry and career of the day, to see who thou art endeavouring to serve—whether thy Maker or thyself? And every time that trial and temptation assailed thee, didst thou endeavour to look steadily at the Delivering Power, even to Christ, who can do all for thee? Third. Hast thou endeavoured to perform thy relative duties faithfully: been a tender, loving, yielding wife, where thy own will and pleasure were concerned; a tender, yet steady mother with thy children, making thyself quickly and strictly obeyed, but careful what thou requirest of them; a kind yet honest mistress, telling thy servants of their faults when thou thinkest it for their or thy good, but never unnecessarily worrying thyself or them about trifles; and to every one endeavouring to do as thou wouldst be done by?"

With such a mother Plashet House was the happiest of homes. Her daughter Rachel wrote a delightful description of it long afterward, from which we must quote :—

"Would that I could bring before you our mother," she wrote, "as she was when we first lived at Plashet! The gentle firmness of her rule; the sober gracefulness of her carriage; her exceeding love and tenderness towards her little children, especially during their infancy; the cheerful invigorating influence over us; her care of her domestics, mental and bodily; her systematic attention to the poor. There was our schoolroom, where we were under the kind governess, who laboured in succession with us all. Then our brothers set forth on their ponies to the Vicarage, whither for some time they went daily for instruction, and

after that plan was abandoned, to their tutor, at the cottage at the end of the green walk. The nursery came next, controlled by those whom our mother had herself first taught and trained at Earlham, thus in the care taken of her children, and in their singularly happy childhood, reaping the fruits of her own early labours.

"Household matters, correct account-keeping, the oversight of Earlham School, regular visits to the poor, and social duties all followed in succession. Happy were we when summoned to accompany her into the village, but happier still if 'Irish Row' was to be our destination. Whether it was the noise and dirt and broad Irish accent, or the little ragged sunburnt children who crawled before the doors, I know not, but charming it certainly was. . . . By degrees our mother's influence amongst her poor Irish neighbours became apparent. The Roman Catholic priest was won over to many of her plans. Bibles were circulated freely, and several learned to read. . . . Another pleasure of those happy days was helping our mother to plant primroses and violets in the shrubberies and plantations of Plashet. Whether a cartload of roots had been brought from the forest, or some of her seedlings were ready for transplantation, the occasion was a joyful one for us. Our mother; Sally Allerton, whose Norfolk love of primroses almost equalled her own; Denis Regan, with his spade, basket, trowel and watering-pot, and our party was complete. Our mother's skilful though uncultivated touch in drawing added much to the pleasures of our winter evenings, providing us with little copies or subjects of design, while our father read aloud. Then came the parting word, and with it the Bible and evening psalm before we separated."

This charming description gives us a vivid picture of that ideal home and its wise and gentle mistress. As her brother John once wrote: "After all, those loved my sister Elizabeth best who knew her most in her private life." And further on:

"She was an ardent lover of the beauties of nature, and observed them with delight in their smaller as well as in their larger features: a shell by the seaside, a feather, or a plume would fill her heart with joy and tune her tongue to praise, while she gazed on it as an evidence of Divine wisdom, skill, and goodness." Near Plashet House stood Ham House, in the small park at Upton, where Mrs. Fry's brother Samuel lived. She was tenderly attached to him and his wife and family, and their near neighbourhood to Plashet was a great happiness to her.

Such was the home and environment of the future philanthropist. Doubtless this tranquil domestic life was not the life to which she had looked forward in her young zeal. Now and then, in her journal, there is a hint of regret for the years absorbed "in the duties of a careworn wife and mother." Nevertheless, that quiet waiting-time was not lost, it was training her for more active service. When the call came it found her ready. The time was now coming when the prophecy of the aged Deborah was to be fulfilled, when Elizabeth Fry was verily and indeed to be "a light to the blind, speech to the dumb, and feet to the lame."

CHAPTER II.

IN THE PRISON-HOUSE.

"A loving heart is the great requirement! . . . not to oppress, not to destroy . . . not to exalt oneself by treading down others; but to comfort and befriend those in suffering."—CHINESE SAYING.

IT was in 1813 that Elizabeth Fry's attention was first called by William Foster to the condition of the female prisoners in Newgate. We read in both Mrs. Pittman's and Mr. Augustus Hare's account of this memorable visit, that "at that time all the female prisoners in Newgate were confined in that part afterwards known as 'the untried side.'" "The larger portion of the quadrangle was used as a State prison. The partition wall was not of sufficient height to prevent the State prisoners from overlooking the narrow yard and 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 this time 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. In the same rooms, in rags and dirt, destitute of sufficient clothing, sleeping without bedding on the floor, the boards of which were in part raised to supply a sort of pillow, they lived, cooked, and washed. With the

proceeds of their clamorous begging when any stranger appeared amongst them, the prisoners purchased liquors from a regular tap in the prison; spirits were openly drunk, and the ear assailed by terrible language. Beyond that necessary for their safe custody, there was little restraint over their communication with the outside world."

This awful account was verified by other reliable witnesses. The Rev. C. B. Tayler wrote, that "Mr. Newman, the governor, entered that portion of the prison with reluctance; for half frenzied by the spirits which were openly drunk there, many of the depraved women took a pleasure in yelling, screaming, and using the most vile and terrible language. The governor advised Mrs. Fry and her companion, though without avail, to leave their watches in his house, lest they should be snatched from their sides, before he conducted them to that side of the prison."

It is almost inconceivable to realise that at the beginning of this nineteenth century, and in Christian England, such a pandemonium of squalor, disease, and vice should be suffered to exist; that this lazar-house of moral corruption should infect our English air. Some of these poor creatures were so brutalised and degraded that they were like savage beasts, and might have been seen yelling with fury and tearing off the caps of the other women in a rage that approached insanity.

When Elizabeth Fry paid her first visit to this hell upon earth, she was accompanied by Anna Buxton, the sister of Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton. In her journal she writes of these visits: "Yesterday we were some hours with the poor female felons, attending to their outward necessities. We had been twice previously. Before we went away dear Anna Buxton uttered a few words of supplication, and very unexpectedly to myself I did also. I heard weeping, and I thought they seemed much tendered *(i.e.* softened); a very solemn quiet was observed; it was a striking scene,

the poor people on their knees round us in their very deplorable condition."

The revelations of the horrors that Mrs. Fry witnessed during these visits to Newgate stirred her very soul. She set her children at once to make green baize garments for the unfortunate creatures; but with her increasing family and many duties it was impossible for her to do more for the next few years.

In 1815 a great sorrow came to her. In the previous year she had lost her brother, John Gurney, and now her seventh child and special darling was to be taken from her.

All her love and sorrow and yearning found utterance in her journal: "It has pleased Almighty and Infinite Wisdom to take from us our most dear and tenderly beloved child, little Betsy, between four and five years old. In receiving her, as well as giving her back again, we have, I believe, been enabled to bless the Sacred Name. She was a very precious child, of much wisdom for her years, and I can hardly help believing, much grace. . . . She would often talk of 'Almighty God,' and almost everything had connection with Him on Third Day. After some suffering of body from great sickness she seemed wonderfully relieved . . . and began by telling me how many hymns and stories she knew, with her countenance greatly animated, a flush on her cheeks, her eyes very bright, and a smile of inexpressible content . . . Afterwards she told me one or two droll stories, and made clear and bright comments on them as she went along; then stopped a little while, and said in the fulness of her heart, and the joy of a little child . . . 'Mamma, I love everybody better than myself, and I love thee better than anybody, and I love Almighty God much better than thee, and I hope thee loves Almighty God better than me.' . . . I appeared to satisfy her that it was so. This was on Third Day, and she was a corpse on Fifth Day evening. . . . I have been permitted to feel in-

expressible pangs at her loss, though at first it was so much like partaking with her in joy and glory, that I could not mourn if I would, only rejoice almost with joy unspeakable and full of glory. But a deep baptism was afterwards permitted me, like the enemy coming in like a flood; but even here a way of escape has been made, my supplication answered . . . and the bitter cup sweetened; but at others my loss has touched [me] in a manner almost inexpressible, to awake and find my much-loved little girl so totally fled from my view, so many pleasant pictures marred . . . My much-loved husband and I have drunk this cup together in close sympathy and unity of feeling."

This precious little child, this tenderly loved Betsy, was a sacred memory from that day, and Elizabeth Fry's thought often wandered to the little grave at Barking; but a new baby arrived six months after little Betsy's death to comfort the mother's heart. During these quiet, and on the whole prosperous years, there had been great changes in the old house at Earlham. Catherine, the mother-sister had joined the Church of England, and with her father's consent had been baptized at Barking Church two months before his death; three of her sisters, Richenda, Hannah, and Louisa, had followed her example. Priscilla, Samuel, and Joseph John Gurney, had became plain Quakers. Daniel and Rachel professed Quakerism in its mildest form. In 1817, when Elizabeth Fry was already engaged in her great life-work, all the different branches of the Gurney family had settled homes. Joseph, with the eldest sister Catherine, and the Quaker minister Priscilla, lived at Earlham; Samuel and his family at Ham House; Daniel and Rachel at Runcton; Richenda Cunningham and her clerical husband in their Vicarage of Pakefield; Hannah and Fowell Buxton in Brick Lane, near his brewery; Louisa Hoare and her family at the Hill House, Hampstead, which was their lifelong home, though they

also owned Cliff House at Cromer. Katherine Fry wrote of them :—

"Thus, in the course of nature, the descendants of John Gurney of Earlham had branched off into distinct families, dwelling in their various homes, either in Norfolk or in the neighbourhood of London, differing in some respects, yet united by a common bond of strong family affection, tender sympathy, and unbroken harmony. Truly it might be said of them, 'if one member suffered all the members suffered with it.'"

The numerous cousins were brought up in great intimacy and unrestricted communication, although their parents did not belong to the same religious communities. About Christmas 1816, or January 1817, Elizabeth Fry commenced her work in the prison-house of Newgate. Startling public events had happened since her first visits. The Continent had been in a state of agitation and warfare. Napoleon the prisoner of Elba, had escaped, collected an army, and Waterloo had been fought. The disarmed tyrant was now at St. Helena, and a feeling of security pervaded the nations.

Still Newgate horrors prevailed, although in 1815 a deputation of the Gaol Committee of the Corporation of London had made a visit of inspection. A few improvements were effected. "The sexes were separated, and the women provided with mats to sleep on; visitors were restrained from having much communication with the prisoners, a double row of gratings being placed between the criminals and those who came to see them. Across the space between the gratings it was a common practice for the prisoners to put wooden spoons fastened to long sticks, to receive the contribution of friends."

When Mrs. Fry commenced her systematic visiting at Newgate, she had eleven friends to help her. On her second visit she begged to be left alone with the women for some hours; and Augustus Hare tells us "that on that

occasion she read them the parable of our Lord and the vineyard, and made a few observations on the eleventh hour, and on Christ having come to save sinners—even those who might be said to have wasted the greater part of their lives estranged from Him. Some asked who Christ was; others feared that their day of salvation was past." From the very first the tender motherly heart of Elizabeth Fry was filled with a deep pity for the miserable, puny and stunted children that pressed round her, half-naked, and pining for want of fresh air and proper food. She suggested to the women that a school should be formed for these neglected little creatures, and it was a proof that, even in their degradation, they were not wholly devoid of maternal feeling, when they eagerly assented to this proposition,—they even shed tears of joy."

At Mrs. Fry's next visit she found they had already chosen a schoolmistress from among themselves, a young woman, Mary Connor, who, although fairly educated, had been committed for stealing a watch. We are told "that her conduct was so exemplary as a teacher, that Government granted her a free pardon, which she did not live long to enjoy." An empty cell was granted for the schoolroom, and crowded with the children. A young Friend named Mary Anderson came to assist, but was almost frightened away. She informed Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton of her experiences.

"The railing was crowded with half-naked women, struggling together for the front situation with the most boisterous violence, with the utmost vociferation," and she shuddered with apprehension when the door was shut and she was locked in with these desperate creatures. Even on this first day, the Rev. Thomas Timpson tells us, "the school surpassed their most sanguine expectations; their only pain arose from the numerous and pressing applications made by young women who longed to be taught and

employed. The narrowness of the room rendered it impossible to yield to these requests, whilst a denial seemed a sentence of destruction, excluding every hope and almost every possibility of reformation. . ."

Mrs. Fry wrote: "I have been lately much occupied in forming a school in Newgate for the children of the poor prisoners, as well as the young criminals, which has brought much peace and satisfaction with it. But my mind has also been deeply affected in attending a poor woman who was executed, I suppose, this morning. I visited her twice. This event has brought me into deep feeling."

It was a severe strain on her nervous system to minister to women under sentence of death. "I have suffered much about the hanging of criminals," she wrote. And again: "I have just returned from a melancholy visit to Newgate, where I have been at the request of Elizabeth Fricker previous to her execution to-morrow at eight o'clock. I found her much harried, distressed, and tormented in mind. Her hands were cold and covered with something like the perspiration which precedes death, and in an universal tremor. The women who were with her said she had been so outrageous before my going, that they thought a man must be sent for to manage her. However, after a serious time with her, her troubled soul became calm." With regard to this unfortunate woman, contemporary evidence raised very grave doubts whether she was guilty at all; the man convicted with her, on the day before his execution maintained her complete innocence, though he refused to give the name of the actual culprit.

Another entry in Mrs. Fry's journal draws a dark picture of the interior of Newgate. "Besides this young woman, there are also six men to be hanged, one of whom has a wife, also condemned, and seven young children. Since the awful report came down he has become quite mad from horror of mind, a strait waistcoat could not keep him