

Elizabeth Fry in Newgate

In connection with the well-known picture painted by Jerry Barrett, in which we see a number of prominent persons present at one of E. Fry's visits, the following extracts from the journals of Elizabeth Fry are illuminating :

“ 1828. 2mo. 2. Went to town, & to Newgate where I went under a feeling of rather deep concern, and found unexpectedly *numbers* there—a magistrate who I feared not a religious man, I doubt a Christian, numbers of others—foreigners, a Jew, a clergyman, many ladies, friends, brother Sam., who, strange to say, I stand in awe of naturally in such services, kind, dear & sympathising as he is to me. Sister E. [Elizabeth Fry, spinster] said something, but there has been of late so much felt & said by those in power about our doing too much in these things with the prisoners & so going out of our province, that it makes me fearful, & believe that as far as the spirit is *rightly* subject to the prophets so far we ought to curtail at this critical time in these things.”

“ Upton, 9mo. 22. 1830. I have felt much comfort in my Newgate visits, & having had but little company, I have been able more than common to attend to the prisoners.”

Apparently, at times, a different class of persons attended the prison services.

In the journals there is a long and striking account of a visit to a person who had been greatly impressed in the meetings in Newgate, of which the following is an extract :

“ I then proceeded to Clapham to visit a poor dying converted Jew, who had sent a letter to beg me to go to see him. My visit was highly interesting. (I often wish for the pen of a ready writer & the pencil of an artist to picture many of the scenes I am brought into.) He has been in the practice of frequently attending my readings at Newgate & apparently with great attention.”

THE STORY OF THE PICTURE

Jerry Barrett (c. 1824-1906) was a birthright Friend, but did not remain a Friend. In a letter to John Thompson, of Hitchin, in 1867, he wrote :

“ I painted the picture by means of the kind assistance of Miss Fry [Katharine Fry, eldest daughter of Elizabeth Fry] ; and the Governors of Newgate allowed me to make a careful sketch of the room in which Mrs. Fry used to meet. The room was pulled down a few weeks afterwards. The prisoners are painted from some poor women who were staying in the Field Lane Refuge, and the lady in the foreground of the picture is a likeness of Mrs. Ryding, daughter of the late Edward James.

“ Others who appear represent Dr. Ryder, Bishop of Gloucester ; behind him Joseph John Gurney ; Dorcas Coventry, the lady at Mrs. Fry's right ; Sir T. F. Buxton, the gentleman with spectacles, and behind him Samuel Gurney.” The date is given as 1816.

The picture was purchased by Joseph Robinson and was hung at the Friends' Institute in London from 1878 to about 1883. Soon after this last-named date the picture was presented by Joseph Robinson to Henry Edmund Gurney, of Nutwood, Reigate. It was removed to Norwich and became the property of H. E. Gurney's daughter, the wife of John Henry Gurney, of Keswick Hall, near Norwich. For several weeks it was on view on the Friends' Adult School premises in Norwich, where it was inspected by a large number of people. Dean Lefroy visited the exhibition twice and preached a sermon on the picture, which was reported in the *Eastern Daily Press*. The picture is now the property of Gerard Gurney, of Keswick Hall, Norwich. Critics point out an anatomical inexactitude.

NOTE BY HENRY J. CADBURY

The letter giving Thomas Carlyle's opinion of George Fox as a subject for his biographical study compared with Lilburne his contemporary (*Jnl.* xxvii. 25) reminds me that, beside his famous references to George Fox in *Sartor Resartus*, Carlyle's opinion of another Quaker is reported.

Charles Boner, who visited Carlyle in 1862, reported among other parts of his conversation some reference to hearing Elizabeth Fry reading aloud (*Memoirs and Letters of Charles Boner*, by R. M. Kettle, quoted by David Alex Wilson in his *Carlyle to Threescore-and-Ten*, 1929, p. 454).

“ No, he did not care to hear anyone read aloud. He did not like it. He had only heard one person read to please him, that was Mrs. Fry in Newgate. He was a boy then. There were the poor unfortunate outcasts opposite to her, looking and laughing as though they were the world and all the rest nothing ; and there she, the wonderful creature, calmly and quietly took out the Bible, and began reading to

them the history of Martha ; and she read in a way that showed she understood it, had thought it over, and knew perfectly well all about it. She made you understand it *all*—all the meanings and all the bearings. She had a good voice, but it was not that so much as the earnestness of the creature, and her sincerity.

“ And it had its effect, for the women were quiet and listened. There Mrs. Fry stood among’ them in her Quaker dress, clean and neat, and calm and strong in her own persuasion of the righteousness of the work. And there were some other cleanly-dressed creatures about her—Quakers they were too, I believe ; and altogether it was a wonderful sight. I have never seen the like of it.”

John Candler to his Wife, 1853

The following is extracted from a letter of John Candler, written at sea, 9 mo. 13.¹ William and Josiah Forster, William Holmes and the writer formed a deputation to visit U.S.A. :

“ Among our men folks we have an English clergyman and two American doctors of divinity. The Englishman went across the Atlantic about 30 years ago with Isaac and Anna Braithwaite, of whom he speaks very respectfully. ‘ Mrs. Braithwaite,’ he supposes, ‘ went over to help in resisting the Hicksites.’ One of the American clergymen was brought up in or rather lived in a family of the Hicksites, but was led to see the sad tendency of their doctrines, and to escape the poison. He loved Joseph John Gurney and attended one or two of his meetings. ‘ Mr. Gurney,’ he said, ‘ had an unction from the Holy One ; all he said bespoke this.’

“ Another of our passengers is Chief Justice Shaw, of Boston, who, as Chancery Judge, delivered judgment against John Wilbur and his fellow-seceders on the claim they set up, as the true orthodox Friends, to possess certain property belonging to the Society. I am also much pleased with Henry Tuke Parker, a Bostonian, who tells me his father named him Henry Tuke because he was pleased with his writings on the principles of Friends.”

¹ This letter forms No. 1 of a series of letters written to Maria Candler, presented in 1931 by Lucy Candler, of Tunbridge Wells, great-niece. Among them is a vivid account of the last days of William Forster, who died in Tennessee. The letters are now in Friends’ Library, Haverford College, Pa.