

Reminiscences in Old Age

ELIZABETH FRY'S MEMORIES, AS RECORDED BY HER GRAND-DAUGHTER

At the time of the Tercentenary celebrations, Dr. W. D. Chapman of Windermere sent to Kendal a manuscript journal of his aunt, Elizabeth (Fry) Chapman, in the years 1844 and 1845, which has remained in the family continuously since that time. The book is of the exercise-book pattern, in half-leather with marbled paper over boards. It contains 126 pages of manuscript (7¾ inches by 6½ inches) at about 20 lines to the page.

In view of the importance of this new material concerning Elizabeth Fry, Dr. Chapman has allowed us to give the following account of the manuscript.

The journal of Elizabeth Fry, daughter of John and Rachel Fry and grand-daughter of Elizabeth Fry the philanthropist, commences on 2nd September, 1844, and runs with almost unbroken daily entries until 28th October. After a break, there are some scattered entries from May through the summer of 1845 ending with the death and burial of Elizabeth Fry, 13th and 20th October, 1845. The volume closes with copies of five letters from Elizabeth Fry to her grand-daughter or to the family.

The account opens with Elizabeth's departure from Berne, 2nd September, 1844, on hearing of the death on 27th August of "Uncle William Fry" from scarlet fever. The Dover crossing was made on 7th September, and the travellers visited "Grandmamma & many of our dear relations" at Walmer. The journal gives an account of the last illness of William Storrs Fry and of his two daughters, Juliana and Minnie, but it is around Elizabeth Fry ("Grandmamma") that the interest of the writer and the reader alike centre, as the journal entries tell their story.

[9.ix.1844] We all assembled at Grandpapa's house & Aunt Creswell read a Memoir of the late sad Events, after which our beloved Grandmamma prayed & spoke most beautifully & touchingly quite with her former strength & power of mind for on all religious subjects she is perfectly clear, tho' her mind wanders, on matters of trivial importance.

How little did we think a few months ago, that we should ever see again this fondly cherished & valued relative; and as this blessing is permitted us, may we duly appreciate & make use of the privilege of being constantly with her and hearing her words.

It is partly with this intention & partly with the belief

that in after life these particulars may be interesting to myself & my sisters that I shall endeavour as far as is possible to note down all I think worthy of remark during the time I hope to have frequent intercourse with her.

[19.ix.1844. In conversation, Elizabeth Fry, when speaking of her past life, said] "I think I may say, without boasting, that mine has been a most remarkable & extremely interesting life. It has had many ups and downs,—its sweet moments & its bitter moments. I was brought up, by an indulgent father in the lap of luxury & only first knew real sorrow at the time of the failure of our bank. I remember however, that I used actively to employ myself in writings of different kinds endeavouring also to conciliate as far as was in my power, the creditors of thy Grandfather, & by my exertions I so gratified the assignees that they presented me with the handsome old Cabinet which now stands in my room with my books & shells:—thee knows it well?" And when I replied that I did indeed know it well, she added "I think thee ought to have it, it ought to be in the possession of the 2nd Elizabeth Fry."

PRISON VISITS

27th [ix.1844]. While conversing this morning with dearest Grandmamma on the subject of her life among prisons etc. she said to me, "I have frequently visited prisons where really bad wicked men were confined, & where most people thought it dangerous to enter but never except in one single instance was anything rude or inkind said or done to me. My plan was this, I used on entering to say to the prisoners, 'My good friends, I trust you all & hope you will have no objection to listen to what I have to say.' And I found they always seemed pleased to hear me. The exception I speak of was once in the prison of La Force at Paris,¹ when a man spoke very rudely, asking me why I did not let them out of prison or pay their debts, if they were to be troubled by me, and if I wanted to do them any good."

ELIZABETH FRY'S BOOKS

3rd [x.1844]. I passed this morning a most interesting time with dearest Grandmamma, looking over her old Bibles & books of different kinds, mostly gifts from celebrated

¹ Prison established in 1780 in the Paris mansion of the ducs de La Force. Abolished 1850.

people. Amongst others a splendid Bible given her by the Queen of France, one of Hannah More's works presented by the amiable & gifted Authoress herself & many equally valuable. But none were so interesting in my eyes as the Bibles filled with marks & notes by our dear Grandmamma in her own handwriting, recording at the same time her sweet pious mind & certain events happening at that period. We read together the 58th chapter of Isaiah which she had read and expounded in to the King¹ & Queen of Prussia rather in allusion to the persecutions of the Protestant Christians by his father and with the end to encourage him in turning from such ways and in protecting all those who had suffered so much for their religion.

4th [x.1844]. This morning I read with Grandmamma the 2nd chapter of Colossians, an epistle which she feels peculiarly valuable & which we intend reading together. . . . On reading the 14th verse Grandmamma said "Ah! *that* verse and those following to the end of the Chapter first made me a Quaker! Yet though I would have man's ordinances 'blotted out' I still think it is well in many cases for weak minds to have a certain degree of form in their religious services. It keeps up order, and respect for what is most Holy."

A ROYAL OCCASION

Afterwards when referring to her visit to the King of Prussia she said "It is not boasting when I say that my many visits to Royalty have been highly interesting. The first of the kind was to Queen Charlotte² at the Mansion House at the examination of the Schools in London. Wishing to shew me honour and the esteem she felt for me she sent & desired me to meet her there. I never shall forget that day, it will be always imprinted on my memory. I was very unwell at the time but of course was obliged to make the effort. We drove first to the house of Countess Harcourt the Queen's Lady of Honour who was to take charge of me, and after the examination introduce me privately to the Queen, this being thought the best way of shewing me honour by the Queen herself, who knew that being a Friend I could not be publickly presented at Court, and she was I heard exceedingly anxious to see me.

"I drove with the Countess in her own carriage & joined

¹ Frederick William IV.

² Queen consort of George III.

the procession of the Queen who was in about the 2nd carriage before us. Thee cannot think how strange I felt in my plain Quaker's Dress, in the midst of all the smartly dressed ladies, & sitting by the Countess in elegant full morning dress without a bonnet & in a friends' cap, exciting the surprise & curiosity of every one.

"It unfortunately happened that our coachman drove to the wrong door of the Mansion House & instead of taking us to the private door where the Queen entered & where we were to have entered also in her suite he took us to the great public entrance where crowds of people were pressing in. Here we found ourselves in a most awkward predicament, for unable again to join the line of carriages, we were obliged to dismount & push our way through the crowd. I knew the way better than the Countess & she being nearly blind, was a most troublesome companion. Just at this moment I called out 'There goes the Bishop of Gloucester'¹ & again 'There goes Alderman Wood.' We sent our servants after them & they both came to our assistance—the Bishop giving his arm to the Countess & Alderman Wood (afterwards Sir Mathew)² helping me, we got safely into the great Egyptian Hall after much difficulty in struggling through the multitudes of people. The plan had been for me to have gone with the Queen into the private apartment prepared for her and then followed her into the hall in company with the other members of the Royal family, therefore when the Countess & I found ourselves in the middle of the Hall, we were wholly at a loss to know what to do & we could not possibly get to the Queen, so the Bishop proposed we should go with him to the seats prepared for the Bishops & sit with them. Accordingly thither we proceeded & the Countess & I were placed at the end of a long row of Bishops at the side of the Hall. Behind us were the Aldermen, & we occupied the foremost seat.

"After waiting a short time the Queen appeared followed by the Royal family & her whole Court. The Examination was most interesting & lasted four hours at the end of which time

¹ Henry Ryder (1777-1836), successively bishop of Gloucester and of Lichfield and Coventry, was actively Evangelical in sympathy.

² Sir Matthew Wood (1768-1843), municipal and political reformer. Wood was trustee for the financial affairs of the Duke of Kent, and it was due to him that the Duke and Duchess were able to reside in England. "By this means Queen Victoria was born on English instead of on foreign soil." *D.N.B.*

the Queen stood up, & immediately every one in the Hall rose also. While we were standing, myself ready to drop with fatigue after all I had gone through, fancy my amazement when I saw the Queen followed by her whole Court walking across the Hall towards me! I felt at first overcome with nervousness, but I raised an inward prayer that I might be supported, and I am often astonished when I look back upon that scene and remember how wonderfully I was helped to speak what was in my mind. The Queen came before me & made a low curtsy, which I being a friend did not return, but made a respectful salutation & bowed.

“I forget the exact words the Queen used but she expressed her extreme pleasure at seeing me & was pleased to honour me with many compliments on my different labours & exertions. After the first instant, my fear wholly left me, I had power given me to speak, the dread of man forsook me, and after much interesting conversation I was enabled to give her and her family a blessing. The Queen then retired & the moment we ceased speaking, a breathless silence having hitherto filled the Hall, the multitude burst forth in one tremendous acclamation, I never shall forget the clappings and the shouts, which clearly shewed how interested all had been in our Interview, and how greatly it was approved.

“Lord Cholmondely¹ who was a great deal about the Court at that time told me the Queen had often talked to him about me, and was extremely interested in the various objects which occupied me. She was anxious also to instil into George IV then Prince of Wales a similar interest, but Lord Cholmondely told me without success, and that the Prince had often said to him ‘The Queen worries me always about that Mrs. Fry!’ ”

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In the evening dear Grandmama & I amused ourselves with looking over her portraits of celebrated people & the crowned heads, with whom she was acquainted, mostly presented by themselves and signed with their names in their own handwriting, amongst others were Queen Victoria & Prince Albert, the Duchess of Gloucester,² Queen Adelaide,³

¹ George James Cholmondeley, 1st marquess of Cholmondeley (1749-1827), Lord Steward of the Household, 1812-21.

² Mary, daughter of George III, married William Frederick, duke of Gloucester, 1816, b. 1776, d. 1857.

³ Queen consort of William IV.

King & Queen of Prussia, Prince Charles & Prince William¹ of Prussia with their Princesses, King & Queen of Denmark, King & Queen of Hanover,² Prince George of Cumberland,³ King & Queen of Belgium,⁴ the Duchess of Kent,⁵ Baron Humbolt,⁶ Laborde,⁷ &c. &c. &c.

13th [x.1844]. Sunday—To-day has been most interesting. Dearest Grandmamma went to meeting this morning. Uncle Gurney, Chrissy & I went with her in the carriage and at the door of the meeting house Grandpapa & Uncle Joseph & Harry met her & wheeled her into the room in her bath chair. She sat facing the congregation at the right hand side with Aunt Alice on one side & myself opposite her. After a short pause, she uttered a most beautiful prayer & after two or three other friends had spoken, she preached an admirable sermon, with a power & flow of language, an earnestness of manner & strength of voice that astonished all who knew her weak state. . . . Before any of the friends left the house Grandmamma was wheeled out as she had entered and we came quickly home.

LETTER TO THE DUCHESS OF KENT

14th [x.1844]. On Saturday dear Grandmamma wrote a note to the Duchess of Kent in answer to one from the Duchess containing inquiries after her health. I copy it here, because it shews the degree of intimacy of our beloved Grandmamma with the Royal family.

“Upton 10th Month 12th 1844

“My dear Duchess of Kent

“I feel much obliged for thy very kind inquiries and I may say in reply that I am as well as I can expect to be, considering my deep afflictions during my long and severe illness, as it has pleased the Almighty to take from us within the last three

¹ Afterwards Emperor William I, d. 1888.

² Ernest, duke of Cumberland, king of Hanover 1837-51; b. 1771, d. 1851; married Frederica, 1815.

³ George, duke of Cumberland, king of Hanover 1851-66; b. 1819, d. 1878.

⁴ Leopold I, king 1831-65; married Louisa, daughter of Louis Philippe, king of France.

⁵ Victoria, widow of Edward, duke of Kent (d. 1820), mother of Queen Victoria.

Wilhelm (1767-1835) or Alexander (1769-1859) von Humbolt.

Alexandre Louis Joseph, comte de Laborde (1774-1842).

months by death a dear & only sister of my husband,¹ then a sweet grandson aged thirteen years and since then within the last few weeks a most valuable and tenderly beloved son in the meridian of his life and his two eldest daughters of ten & five years old, leaving his wife (whose father Sir Henry Pelly I believe the Queen knows) near her confinement, and four other Children, so that our sorrows have been *very* great.

“I tell thee of them as I believe that thou wilt sympathize in them. I am glad to be able to congratulate thee on the safe delivery of our beloved Queen and her restoration to health & that the young Prince is doing well.²”

“I have been much interested in the visit of the King of the French to our country and should be much pleased if thou wouldst have the kindness to present to him my affectionate & respectful regards.

“I hope the Duchess of Gloucester is in good health.

“I am truly grateful to thee and to our dear Queen & Prince Albert for their & thy most kind inquiries. I feel deeply interested for the Queen & her Royal Consort, and truly desire that the blessing of the Most High God may rest on them and on their Children—& on thyself. I am

Thy obliged & attached friend

ELIZABETH FRY.

“To the Duchess of Kent.”

16th [x.1844]. This morning dearest Grandmama received the following answer to the above note.

“Frogmore 14th Octbr 1844

“My dear Mrs. Fry

“I am extremely glad to learn your restoration to health & beg you to believe in my *warmest* sympathy with the sorrows which your late heavy afflictions have brought upon you.

“The late visit to Scotland has afforded the Queen & the Prince the truest satisfaction and they and their dear Children are thank God, as well as I could wish them to be.³ The King

¹ Elizabeth Fry, of Plashet Cottage, d. 2.vii.1844, aged 65.

² Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh, Duke of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha; b. August 6, 1844; d. July 30, 1900.

³ Queen Victoria's children in 1844 numbered four: Alfred, the infant; Princess Victoria, b. November 21, 1840, married the Emperor Frederick; Edward VII, b. November 9, 1841; Princess Alice, b. April 25, 1843, married Louis, Grand Duke of Hesse.

of the French has been highly gratified by his reception in this Country and he has left us deeply impressed with the kindly feelings which his presence invariably called forth.

“I shall have much pleasure in remembering you to the Duchess of Gloucester who is at present I am happy to say quite well.

Believe me to remain
Your sincere friend

VICTORIA.”

24th [x.1844]. In the afternoon being prevented by the weather from going out, we all sat together in the Bow room, Grandmama with her Bible before her frequently reading passages aloud and making interesting remarks. She read to us the 6th, 7th, 8th and 9th verses of the 1st of Jeremiah and said “How could I have gone through what I have without feeling that the Lord was with me! Those verses have always been a comfort and support to me!”

In explaining to me the different marks in her Bible Grandmama said “The letter U signifies the Universality of the Grace of God, a point on which so many now differ, and particularly Dr. Malan. I remember once in conversation with him quoting the text ‘O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, &c., &c. how often would I have gathered thy Children together as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings *and ye would not.*’ which clearly proves there is no predestination and that if they *would* they might have been saved—If repentance first comes, the grace of God is *universally* a ‘free gift’.”

26th [x.1844]. This morning I read with dear Grandmama the 42nd Psalm which seemed greatly to comfort her in her *very* low weak state which I grieve to say continues. I read afterwards for some time to her a little book called *The faithful Nurse, a Memorial of Hannah Meek*¹ which delighted her & while listening she seemed to forget her own sufferings, which proves that it is good for her to have her mind diverted from herself.

28th [x.1844]. This morning I took my leave of dearest Grandmama before starting for London.

There is a break in the Journal here until the following May, 1845. In that month the writer records how Elizabeth Fry went twice to London during Yearly Meeting.

¹ Published by the Religious Tract Society, 1837.

. . . During the Yearly Meeting of Friends Grandmama went twice to London first to attend a business Meeting, and afterwards on Friday the 30th of May, a Women's Meeting for Worship. This was a highly interesting occasion, Grandmama was supported into the Meeting House by Aunt Richenda and myself & placed in a chair, immediately below the clerk's seat, *facing* the whole assembly. She prayed first and then preached two or three times in a most solemn and impressive manner, her loud clear voice filling the whole House. She remained in her seat till after the Meeting was over and then received with her usual kindness the crowds of Friends who pressed around her, each eager to shake hands with her, to express their sincere pleasure at seeing her there again & hopes that she might long be spared to dwell among them. She did not appear tired by this exciting scene and returned home in her usual cheerful spirits.

The writer records the death of Elizabeth Fry at Ramsgate, 13th October, 1845, and her burial a week later. At the funeral Joseph John Gurney spoke, and at Ham House in the evening J. J. Gurney, Elizabeth Dudley, Hannah Backhouse and Alicia Nickolls all spoke.

The Journal is followed by copies of letters from Elizabeth Fry to her granddaughter (or in which she was included). They are dated Upton Lane 24.vi.1834 and 2.vii.1842; Congenies 20.v.1839; "Silesia" 19.ix.1841; and February 1845.

Quaker Broadsides at Harvard

THE Harvard College Library has acquired recently a collection of broadsides formerly belonging to the Marquess of Bute. A catalogue of the collection was printed in 1892, entitled, *A list of broadsides and satires, prose, poetical, religious, political, with verses of bellmen, etc., illustrative of English history and social life 1560-1748, comprised and bound in five volumes folio, the property of the Marquess of Bute, K.T.*

Out of 346 items a score are by or against Friends. Of these the following are apparently unknown or imperfectly known to the bibliographers Joseph Smith and Donald Wing. Except the first they are all anti-Quaker.