LETTER XXV.

DEAR C.:--

We returned to London, and found Mr. S. and Joseph Sturge waiting for us at the depot. We dined with Mr. Sturge. It seems that Mr. S.'s speech upon the subject of cotton has created some considerable disturbance, different papers declaring themselves for or against it with a good deal of vivacity.

After dinner Mr. Sturge desired me very much to go into the meeting of the women; for it seems that, at the time of the yearly meeting among the Friends, the men and women both have their separate meetings for attending to business. The aspect of the meeting was very interesting--so many placid, amiable faces, shaded by plain Quaker bonnets; so many neat white handkerchiefs, folded across peaceful bosoms. Either a large number of very pretty women wear the Quaker dress, or it is quite becoming in its effect.

There are some things in the mode of speaking among the Friends, particularly in their public meetings, which do not strike me agreeably, and to which I think it would take me some time to become accustomed; such as a kind of intoning somewhat similar to the manner in which the church service is performed in cathedrals. It is a curious fact that religious exercises, in all ages and countries, have inclined to this form of expression. It appears in the cantilation of

the synagogue, the service of the cathedral, the prayers of the Covenanter and the Puritan.

There were a table and writing materials in this meeting, and a circle of from fifty to a hundred ladies. One of those upon the platform requested me to express to them my opinion on free labor. In a few words I told them I considered myself upon that subject more a learner than a teacher, but that I was deeply interested in what I had learned upon this subject since my travelling in England, and particularly interested in the consistency and self-denial practised by their sect.

I have been quite amused with something which has happened lately. It always has seemed to me that distinguished people here in England live a remarkably out-door sort of life; and newspapers tell a vast deal about people's concerns which it is not our custom to put into print in America. Such, for instance, as where the Hon. Mr. A. is staying now, and where he expects to go next; what her grace wore at the last ball, and when the royal children rode out, and what they had on; and whom Lord Such-a-one had to dinner; besides a large number of particulars which probably never happen.

Could I have expected dear old England to make me so much one of the family as to treat my humble fortunes in this same public manner? But it is even so. This week the Times has informed the United Kingdom that Mrs. Stowe is getting a new dress made!--the charming old aristocratic Times, which every body declares is such a wicked paper,

and yet which they can no more do without than they can their breakfast! What am I, and what is my father's house, that such distinction should come upon me? I assure you, my dear, I feel myself altogether too much flattered. There, side by side with speculations on the eastern question, and conjectures with regard to the secret and revealed will of the Emperor of Russia, news from her majesty's most sacred retreat at Osborne, and the last debates in Parliament, comes my brown silk dress! The Times has omitted the color; I had a great mind to send him word about that. But you may tell the girls--for probably the news will spread through the American papers--that it is the brown Chinese silk which they put into my trunk, unmade, when I was too ill to sit up and be fitted.

Mr. Times wants to know if Mrs. Stowe is aware what sort of a place her dress is being made in, and there is a letter from a dressmaker's apprentice stating that it is being made up piecemeal, in the most shockingly distressed dens of London, by poor, miserable white slaves, worse treated than the plantation slaves of America.

Now, Mrs. Stowe did not know any thing of this, but simply gave the silk into the hands of a friend, and was in due time waited on in her own apartment by a very respectable woman, who offered to make the dress; and lo, this is the result! Since the publication of this piece, I have received earnest missives, from various parts of the country, begging me to interfere, hoping that I was not going to patronize the white slavery of England, and that I would employ my

talents equally against oppression under every form. The person who had been so unfortunate as to receive the weight of my public patronage was in a very tragical state; protested her innocence of any connection with dens, of any overworking of hands, &c., with as much fervor as if I had been appointed on a committee of parliamentary inquiry. Let my case be a warning to all philanthropists who may happen to want clothes while they are in London. Some of my correspondents seemed to think that I ought to publish a manifesto for the benefit of distressed Great Britain, stating how I came to do it, and all the circumstances, since they are quite sure I must have meant well, and containing gentle cautions as to the disposal of my future patronage in the dressmaking line.

Could these people only know in what sacred simplicity I had been living in the State of Maine, where the only dressmaker of our circle was an intelligent, refined, well-educated woman, who was considered as the equal of us all, and whose spring and fall ministrations to our wardrobe were regarded a double pleasure,--a friendly visit as well as a domestic assistance,--I say, could they know all this, they would see how guiltless I was in the matter. I verily never thought but that the nice, pleasant person, who came to measure me for my silk, was going to take it home and make it herself; it never occurred to me that she was the head of an establishment.

And now, what am I to do? The Times seems to think that, in order to be consistent, I ought to take up the conflict immediately; but, for

my part, I think otherwise. What an unreasonable creature! Does he suppose me so lost to all due sense of humility as to take out of his hands a cause which he is pleading so well? If the plantation slaves had such a good friend as the Times, and if every over-worked female cotton picker could write as clever letters as this dressmaker's apprentice, and get them published in as influential papers, and excite as general a sensation by them as this seems to have done, I think I should feel that there was no need of my interfering in a work so much better done. Unfortunately, our female cotton pickers do not know how to read and write, and it is against the law to teach them; and this instance shows that the law is a sagacious one, since, doubtless, if they could read and write, most embarrassing communications might be made.

Nothing shows more plainly, to my mind, than this letter, the difference between the working class of England and the slave. The free workman or workwoman of England or America, however poor, is self-respecting; is, to some extent, clever and intelligent; is determined to resist wrong, and, as this incident shows, has abundant means for doing so.

When we shall see the columns of the Charleston Courier adorned with communications from cotton pickers and slave seamstresses, we shall then think the comparison a fair one. In fact, apart from the whimsicality of the affair, and the little annoyance which one feels at notoriety to which one is not accustomed, I consider the incident

as in some aspects a gratifying one, as showing how awake and active are the sympathies of the British public with that much-oppressed class of needlewomen.

Horace Greeley would be delighted could his labors in this line excite a similar commotion in New York.

We dined to-day at the Duke of Argyle's. At dinner there were the members of the family, the Duchess of Sutherland, Lord Carlisle, Lord and Lady Blantyre, &c. The conversation flowed along in a very agreeable channel. I told them the more I contemplated life in Great Britain, the more I was struck with the contrast between the comparative smallness of the territory and the vast power, physical, moral, and intellectual, which it exerted in the world.

The Duchess of Sutherland added, that it was beautiful to observe how gradually the idea of freedom had developed itself in the history of the English nation, growing clearer and more distinct in every successive century.

I might have added that the history of our own American republic is but a continuation of the history of this development. The resistance to the stamp act was of the same kind as the resistance to the ship money; and in our revolutionary war there were as eloquent defences of our principles and course heard in the British Parliament as echoed in Faneuil Hall.

I conversed some with Lady Caroline Campbell, the duke's sister, with regard to Scottish preaching and theology. She is a member of the Free church, and attends, in London, Dr. Cumming's congregation. I derived the impression from her remarks, that the style of preaching in Scotland is more discriminating and doctrinal than in England. One who studies the pictures given in Scott's novels must often have been struck with the apparent similarity in the theologic training and tastes of the laboring classes in New England and Scotland. The hard-featured man, whom he describes in Rob Roy as following the preacher so earnestly, keeping count of the doctrinal points on his successive fingers, is one which can still be seen in the retired, rural districts of New England; and I believe that this severe intellectual discipline of the pulpit has been one of the greatest means in forming that strong, self-sustaining character peculiar to both countries.

The Duke of Argyle said that Chevalier Bunsen had been speaking to him in relation to a college for colored people at Antigua, and inquired my views respecting the emigration of colored people from America to the West India islands. I told him my impression was, that Canada would be a much better place to develop the energies of the race. First, on account of its cold and bracing climate; second, because, having never been a slave state, the white population there are more thrifty and industrious, and of course the influence of such a community was better adapted to form thrift arid industry in the

negro.

In the evening, some of the ladies alluded to the dressmaker's letter in the Times. I inquired if there was nothing done for them as a class in London, and some of them said,--

"O, Lord Shaftesbury can tell you all about it; he is president of the society for their protection."

So I said to Lord Shaftesbury, playfully, "I thought, my lord, you had reformed every thing here in London."

"Ah, indeed," he replied, "but this was not in one of my houses. I preside over the West End."

He talked on the subject for some time with considerable energy; said it was one of the most difficult he had ever attempted to regulate, and promised to send me a few documents, which would show the measures he had pursued. He said, however, that there was progress making; and spoke of one establishment in particular, which had recently been erected in London, and was admirably arranged with regard to ventilation, being conducted in the most perfect manner.

Quite a number of distinguished persons were present this evening; among others, Sir David Brewster, famed in the scientific world. He is a fine-looking old gentleman, with silver-white hair, who seemed to be

on terms of great familiarity with the duke. He bears the character of a decidedly religious man, and is an elder in the Free church.

Lord Mahon, the celebrated historian, was there, with his lady. He is a young-looking man, of agreeable manners, and fluent in conversation. This I gather from Mr. S., with whom he conversed very freely on our historians, Prescott, Bancroft, and especially Dr. Sparks, his sharp controversy with whom he seems to bear with great equanimity.

Lady Mahon is a handsome, interesting woman, with very pleasing manners.

Mr. Gladstone was there also, one of the ablest and best men in the kingdom. It is a commentary on his character that, although one of the highest of the High church, we have never heard him spoken of, even among dissenters, otherwise than as an excellent and highly conscientious man. For a gentleman who has attained to such celebrity, both in theology and politics, he looks remarkably young. He is tall, with dark hair and eyes, a thoughtful, serious cast of countenance, and is easy and agreeable in conversation.

On the whole, this was a very delightful evening.