

LETTER XII.

MY DEAR H.:--

After leaving Kenilworth we drove to Coventry, where we took the cars again. This whole ride from Stratford to Warwick, and on to Coventry, answers more to my ideas of old England than any thing I have seen; it is considered one of the most beautiful parts of the kingdom. It has quaint old houses, and a certain air of rural, picturesque quiet, which is very charming.

Coventry is old and queer, with narrow streets and curious houses, famed for the ancient legend of Godiva, one of those beautiful myths that grow, like the mistletoe, on the bare branches of history, and which, if they never were true in the letter, have been a thousand times true in the spirit.

The evening came on raw and chilly, so that we rejoiced to find ourselves once more in the curtained parlor by the bright, sociable fire.

As we were drinking tea Elihu Burritt came in. It was the first time I had ever seen him, though I had heard a great deal of him from our friends in Edinburgh. He is a man in middle life, tall and slender, with fair complexion, blue eyes, an air of delicacy and refinement, and

manners of great gentleness. My ideas of the "Learned Blacksmith" had been of something altogether more ponderous and peremptory. Elihu has been, for some years, operating in England and on the continent in a movement which many, in our half-Christianized times, regard with as much incredulity as the grim, old, warlike barons did the suspicious imbecilities of reading and writing. The sword now, as then, seems so much more direct a way to terminate controversies, that many Christian men, even, cannot conceive how the world is to get along without it.

Burritt's mode of operation has been by the silent organization of circles of ladies in all the different towns of the United Kingdom, who raise a certain sum for the diffusion of the principles of peace on earth and good will to men. Articles, setting forth the evils of war, moral, political, and social, being prepared, these circles pay for their insertion in all the principal newspapers of the continent. They have secured to themselves in this way a continual utterance in France, Spain, Italy, Switzerland, Austria, and Germany; so that from week to week, and month to month, they can insert articles upon these subjects. Many times the editors insert the articles as editorial, which still further favors their design. In addition to this, the ladies of these circles in England correspond with the ladies of similar circles existing in other countries; and in this way there is a mutual kindness of feeling established through these countries.

When recently war was threatening between England and France, through the influence of these societies conciliatory addresses were sent from

many of the principal towns of England to many of the principal towns of France; and the effect of these measures in allaying irritation and agitation was very perceptible.

Furthermore, these societies are preparing numerous little books for children, in which the principles of peace, kindness, and mutual forbearance are constantly set forth, and the evil and unchristian nature of the mere collision of brute force exemplified in a thousand ways. These tracts also are reprinted in the other modern languages of Europe, and are becoming a part of family literature.

The object had in view by those in this movement is, the general disbandment of standing armies and warlike establishments, and the arrangement, in their place, of some settled system of national arbitration. They suggest the organization of some tribunal of international law, which shall correspond to the position of the Supreme Court of the United States with reference to the several states. The fact that the several states of our Union, though each a distinct sovereignty, yet agree in this arrangement, is held up as an instance of its practicability. These ideas are not to be considered entirely chimerical, if we reflect that commerce and trade are as essentially opposed to war as is Christianity. War is the death of commerce, manufactures, agriculture, and the fine arts. Its evil results are always certain and definite, its good results scattered and accidental. The whole current of modern society is as much against war as against slavery; and the time must certainly come when some more rational and

humane mode of resolving national difficulties will prevail.

When we ask these reformers how people are to be freed from the yoke of despotism without war, they answer, "By the diffusion of ideas among the masses--by teaching the bayonets to think." They say, "If we convince every individual soldier of a despot's army that war is ruinous, immoral, and unchristian, we take the instrument out of the tyrant's hand. If each individual man would refuse to rob and murder for the Emperor of Austria, and the Emperor of Russia, where would be their power to hold Hungary? What gave power to the masses in the French revolution, but that the army, pervaded by new ideas, refused any longer to keep the people down?"

These views are daily gaining strength in England. They are supported by the whole body of the Quakers, who maintain them with that degree of inflexible perseverance and never-dying activity which have rendered the benevolent actions of that body so efficient. The object that they are aiming at is one most certain to be accomplished, infallible as the prediction that swords are to be beaten into ploughshares, and spears into pruning-hooks, and that nations shall learn war no more.

This movement, small and despised in its origin, has gained strength from year to year, and now has an effect on the public opinion of England which is quite perceptible.

We spent the evening in talking over these things, and also various

topics relating to the antislavery movement. Mr. Sturge was very confident that something more was to be done than had ever been done yet, by combinations for the encouragement of free, in the place of slave-grown, produce; a question which has, ever since the days of Clarkson, more or less deeply occupied the minds of abolitionists in England.

I should say that Mr. Sturge in his family has for many years conscientiously forborne the use of any article produced by slave labor. I could scarcely believe it possible that there could be such an abundance and variety of all that is comfortable and desirable in the various departments of household living within these limits. Mr. Sturge presents the subject with very great force, the more so from the consistency of his example.

From what I have since observed, as well as from what they said, I should imagine that the Quakers generally pursue this course of entire separation from all connection with slavery, even in the disuse of its products. The subject of the disuse of slave-grown produce has obtained currency in the same sphere in which Elihu Burritt operates, and has excited the attention of the Olive Leaf Circles. Its prospects are not so weak as on first view might be imagined, if we consider that Great Britain has large tracts of cotton-growing land at her disposal in India. It has been calculated that, were suitable railroads and arrangements for transportation provided for India, cotton could be raised in that empire sufficient for the whole wants of England, at a

rate much cheaper than it can be imported from America. Not only so, but they could then afford to furnish cotton cheaper at Lowell than the same article could be procured from the Southern States.

It is consolatory to know that a set of men have undertaken this work whose perseverance in any thing once begun has never been daunted. Slave labor is becoming every year more expensive in America. The wide market which has been opened for it has raised it to such an extravagant price as makes the stocking of a plantation almost ruinous. If England enters the race with free labor, which has none of these expenses, and none of the risk, she will be sure to succeed. All the forces of nature go with free labor; and all the forces of nature resist slave labor. The stars in their courses fight against it; and it cannot but be that ere long some way will be found to bring these two forces to a decisive issue.

Mr. Sturge seemed exceedingly anxious that the American states should adopt the theory of immediate, and not gradual, emancipation. I told him the great difficulty was to persuade them to think of any emancipation at all; that the present disposition was to treat slavery as the pillar and ground of the truth, the ark of religion, the summary of morals, and the only true millennial form of modern society.

He gave me, however, a little account of their antislavery struggles in England, and said, what was well worthy of note, that they made no apparent progress in affecting public opinion until they firmly advocated the right of every innocent being to immediate and complete

freedom, without any conditions. He said that a woman is fairly entitled to the credit of this suggestion. Elizabeth Heyrick of Leicester, a member of the society of Friends, published a pamphlet entitled Immediate, not Gradual Emancipation. This little pamphlet contains much good sense; and, being put forth at a time when men were really anxious to know the truth, produced a powerful impression.

She remarked, very sensibly, that the difficulty had arisen from indistinct ideas in respect to what is implied in emancipation. She went on to show that emancipation did not imply freedom from government and restraint; that it properly brought a slave under the control of the law, instead of that of an individual; and that it was possible so to apply law as perfectly to control the emancipated. This is an idea which seems simple enough when pointed out; but men often stumble a long while before they discover what is most obvious.

The next day was Sunday; and, in order to preserve our incognito, and secure an uninterrupted rest, free from conversation and excitement, we were obliged to deprive ourselves of the pleasure of hearing our friend Rev. John Angell James, which we had much desired to do.

It was a warm, pleasant day, and we spent much of our time in a beautiful arbor constructed in a retired place in the garden, where the trees and shrubbery were so arranged as to make a most charming retreat.

The grounds of Mr. Sturge are very near to those of his brother--only a

narrow road interposing between them. They have contrived to make them one by building under this road a subterranean passage, so that the two families can pass and repass into each other's grounds in perfect privacy.

These English gardens delight me much; they unite variety, quaintness, and an imitation of the wildness of nature with the utmost care and cultivation. I was particularly pleased with the rockwork, which at times formed the walls of certain walks, the hollows and interstices of which were filled with every variety of creeping plants. Mr. Sturge told me that the substance of which these rockeries are made is sold expressly for the purpose.

On one side of the grounds was an old-fashioned cottage, which one of my friends informed me Mr. Sturge formerly kept fitted up as a water cure hospital, for those whose means did not allow them to go to larger establishments. The plan was afterwards abandoned. One must see that such an enterprise would have many practical difficulties.

At noon we dined in the house of the other brother, Mr. Edmund Sturge. Here I noticed a full-length engraving of Joseph Sturge. He is represented as standing with his hand placed protectingly on the head of a black child.

We enjoyed our quiet season with these two families exceedingly. We seemed to feel ourselves in an atmosphere where all was peace and good



will to man. The little children, after dinner, took us through the walks, to show us their beautiful rabbits and other pets. Every thing seemed in order, peaceable and quiet. Towards evening we went back through the arched passage to the other house again. My Sunday here has always seemed to me a pleasant kind of pastoral, much like the communion of Christian and Faithful with the shepherds on the Delectable Mountains.

What is remarkable of all these Friends is, that, although they have been called, in the prosecution of philanthropic enterprises, to encounter so much opposition, and see so much of the unfavorable side of human nature, they are so habitually free from any tinge of uncharitableness or evil speaking in their statements with regard to the character and motives of others. There is also an habitual avoidance of all exaggerated forms of statement, a sobriety of diction, which, united with great affectionateness of manner, inspires the warmest confidence.

C. had been, with Mr. Sturge, during the afternoon, to a meeting of the Friends, and heard a discourse from Sibyl Jones, one of the most popular of their female preachers. Sibyl is a native of the town of Brunswick, in the State of Maine. She and her husband, being both preachers, have travelled extensively in the prosecution of various philanthropic and religious enterprises.

In the evening Mr. Sturge said that she had expressed a desire to see me. Accordingly I went with him to call upon her, and found her in the

family of two aged Friends, surrounded by a circle of the same denomination. She is a woman of great delicacy of appearance, betokening very frail health. I am told that she is most of her time in a state of extreme suffering from neuralgic complaints. There was a mingled expression of enthusiasm and tenderness in her face which was very interesting. She had had, according to the language of her sect, a concern upon her mind for me.

To my mind there is something peculiarly interesting about that primitive simplicity and frankness with which the members of this body express themselves. She desired to caution me against the temptations of too much flattery and applause, and against the worldliness which might beset me in London. Her manner of addressing me was like one who is commissioned with a message which must be spoken with plainness and sincerity. After this the whole circle kneeled, and she offered prayer.

I was somewhat painfully impressed with her evident fragility of body, compared with the enthusiastic workings of her mind.

In the course of the conversation she inquired if I was going to Ireland. I told her, yes, that was my intention. She begged that I would visit the western coast, adding, with great feeling, "It was the miseries which I saw there which have brought my health to the state it is." She had travelled extensively in the Southern States, and had, in private conversation, been able very fully to bear her witness against slavery, and had never been heard with unkindness.

The whole incident afforded me matter for reflection. The calling of women to distinct religious vocations, it appears to me, was a part of primitive Christianity; has been one of the most efficient elements of power in the Romish church; obtained among the Methodists in England; and has, in all these cases, been productive of great good. The deaconesses whom the apostle mentions with honor in his epistle, Madame Guyon in the Romish church, Mrs. Fletcher, Elizabeth Fry, are instances which show how much may be done for mankind by women who feel themselves impelled to a special religious vocation.

The Bible, which always favors liberal development, countenances this idea, by the instances of Deborah, Anna the prophetess, and by allusions in the New Testament, which plainly show that the prophetic gift descended upon women. St. Peter, quoting from the prophetic writings, says, "Upon your sons and upon your daughters I will pour out my spirit, and they shall prophesy." And St. Paul alludes to women praying and prophesying in the public assemblies of the Christians, and only enjoins that it should be done with becoming attention to the established usages of female delicacy. The example of the Quakers is a sufficient proof that acting upon this idea does not produce discord and domestic disorder. No class of people are more remarkable for quietness and propriety of deportment, and for household order and domestic excellence. By the admission of this liberty, the world is now and then gifted with a woman like Elizabeth Fry, while the family state loses none of its security and sacredness. No one in our day can charge the ladies of the Quaker sect with boldness or indecorum; and they have

demonstrated that even public teaching, when performed under the influence of an overpowering devotional spirit, does not interfere with feminine propriety and modesty.

The fact is, that the number of women to whom this vocation is given will always be comparatively few: they are, and generally will be, exceptions; and the majority of the religious world, ancient and modern, has decided that these exceptions are to be treated with reverence.

The next morning, as we were sitting down to breakfast, our friends of the other house sent in to me a plate of the largest, finest strawberries I have ever seen, which, considering that it was only the latter part of April, seemed to me quite an astonishing luxury.

On the morning before we left we had agreed to meet a circle of friends from Birmingham, consisting of the Abolition Society there, which is of long standing, extending back in its memories to the very commencement of the agitation under Clarkson and Wilberforce. It was a pleasant morning, the 1st of May. The windows of the parlor were opened to the ground; and the company invited filled not only the room, but stood in a crowd on the grass around the window. Among the peaceable company present was an admiral in the navy, a fine, cheerful old gentleman, who entered with hearty interest into the scene.

The lady secretary of the society read a neatly-written address, full of kind feeling and Christian sentiment. Joseph Sturge made a few sensible

and practical remarks on the present aspects of the antislavery cause in the world, and the most practical mode of assisting it among English Christians. He dwelt particularly on the encouragement of free labor. The Rev. John Angell James followed with some extremely kind and interesting remarks, and Mr. S. replied. As we were intending to return to this city to make a longer visit, we felt that this interview was but a glimpse of friends whom we hoped to know more perfectly hereafter.

A throng of friends accompanied us to the depot. We had the pleasure of the company of Elihu Burritt, and enjoyed a delightful run to London, where we arrived towards evening.