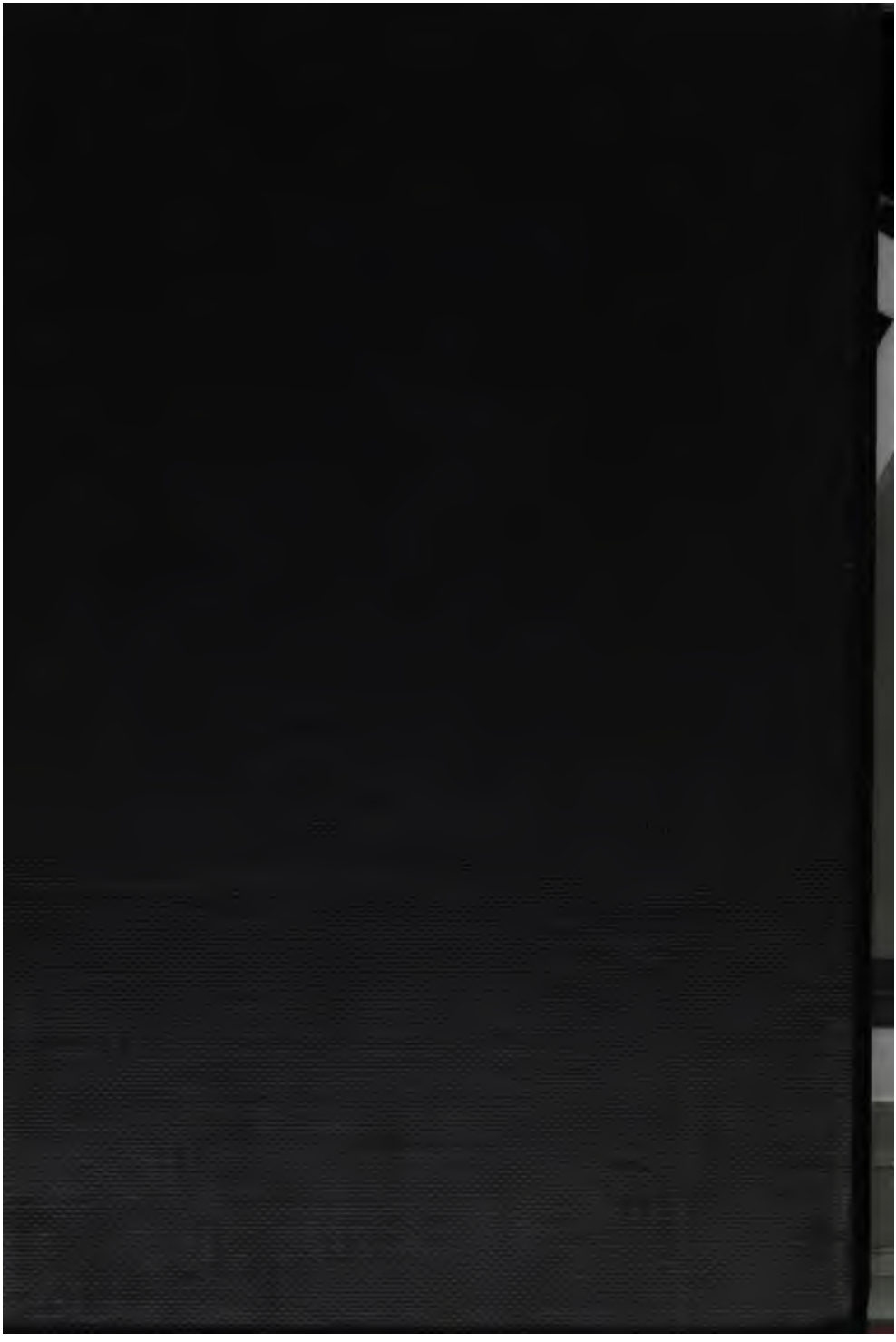

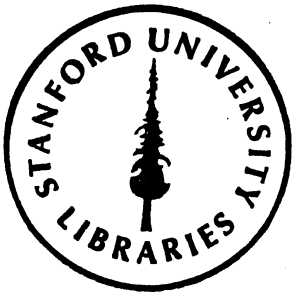

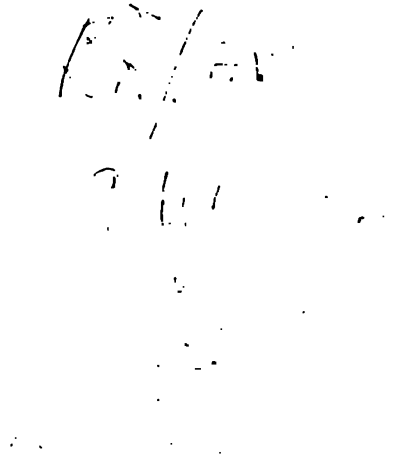

LADY FRY

FRANK W. COOPER, PHOTO, DARLINGTON F. JENKINS HÉLIOG. PARIS

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LADY FRY

OF DARLINGTON

BY

ELIZA ORME, LL.B.

LONDON

HODDER AND STOUGHTON

27 PATERNOSTER ROW

1898

INTRODUCTION

THIS slight sketch of the life and work of Lady Fry of Darlington has been undertaken at the request of some of those who worked under her guidance in one or more of the public objects she had at heart. It is thought that it may be useful to women desirous of following in her steps and unable now to obtain from her that hearty encouragement which she was always so ready to give to any who came to her with an earnest desire to do useful work.

My thanks are due to the members of Lady Fry's family and several of her old friends for supplying me with information,

although in the first instance they doubted whether the life of one who had lived so much within her own home, and who had never sought publicity for its own sake, was a fitting subject for publication.

ELIZA ORME.

118, UPPER TULSE HILL, S.W.

March, 1898.

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CHAPTER I

EARLY INFLUENCES

SOPHIA PEASE, afterwards Lady Fry, was the daughter of John Pease, of East Mount, Darlington, in the county of Durham, and his wife Sophia. She was born at East Mount on June 11, 1837. In order to understand the influences under which she grew up it is necessary to recall something of the conditions of life in the North of England sixty years ago and to consider the position occupied by members of her family in relation to politics, philanthropy, and industrial enterprise.

Edward Pease, the grandfather of Sophia,

was born in 1767. He was the staunch friend of George Stephenson, and is known as the Father of the Railway System. Living at Darlington, he foresaw the advantage it would be to have improved methods of transfer for coal and iron, and it is not too much to say that the marvellous impetus which has since been given to these industries in the northern counties must be attributed to the courage and liberality with which he enabled Stephenson to run the first line of railway from Stockton to Darlington. The tale has often been told how, in 1820, Edward Pease the Quaker, then fifty-three years of age, and fortunately possessed of the capital without which Stephenson with all his genius could effect nothing, managed to obtain an Act of Parliament for the construction of a railway, to be worked "with men and horses or otherwise." The little inn may still be

seen at Yarm, where Pease laid down £10,000 as the first subscription towards the cost of the railway. It is called the "George and Dragon." In 1821 the work was begun, and in four years the line was opened. The whole face of the country was changed by this development. Districts like Middlesborough, which had hitherto been purely agricultural, became great centres for the shipment of coal and iron, and many capitalists transferred their wealth into these tempting lines of investment. Edward Pease, who had formerly been chiefly interested in the spinning and weaving of wool, became more and more connected with railway enterprise and the iron trade, and his three sons, John, Joseph, and Henry, were drawn in the same direction.

John Pease, the eldest son of Stephenson's friend, was born in 1797. He married at the age of twenty-six, just at the anxious time

when the Stockton and Darlington Railway was being laid down, and half the world was sneering at the wild speculation, and prophesying the most preposterous results. His wife Sophia was the youngest daughter of the large family of Jowitts, influential members of the Society of Friends in Leeds. She was connected with many Quaker families, such as the Aldams and Fryers, and brought with her to Darlington the traditions of a cheerful and hospitable circle. She and her husband were well suited to work together, as they both had the same enthusiasm for religious and philanthropic efforts. Early in life John Pease dissolved partnership with his brothers in the woollen factory, but continued to feel great interest in the management of the business, and was often consulted about it. Later on he resigned his place on the directorate of the Stockton and Darlington

Railway, but attended the meetings by invitation, until at last the management became amalgamated with that of the North-Eastern Railway Company. He was endowed with great business talent, which was recognised by all who knew him, and he was always willing to use it in the promotion of enterprises he approved, especially if they had for their object the improvement of the moral or physical conditions of the people. He was a promoter, and for some time a director, of the Darlington Gas Company—a concern which was afterwards purchased by the Corporation. He was also on the Board of the Stockton and Middlesborough Water Company, and was an active member of the Darlington Board of Health before the incorporation of the borough. But in spite of all this successful business activity his principal energies were devoted to religious teaching. He had a great gift

of eloquence, being considered by some to be the most impressive preacher of the time, and generally acknowledged to have no superior within the ranks of the sect to which he belonged. His manner was very earnest and impressive. He soon fixed the attention of his hearers, and the words he uttered were not easily forgotten. It was not only in the Darlington Meeting-house that he spoke. He was invited from far and near, and preached throughout the United Kingdom, in various parts of the Continent, and in the United States of America. His wife was also an accepted preacher in the Society of Friends, and many of her hearers retain a most pleasing memory of her at Darlington and elsewhere. Her language was simple and direct, appealing to the feelings of those she addressed, and her religious fervour was not less than that which inspired her husband's unweary-

ing efforts. She sometimes accompanied him on his missionary tours, and throughout their married life she seconded all his best work and encouraged him to give time and energy to those high objects which the best instincts of his nature prompted him to undertake. Her geniality and the kindness of her smile are remembered by persons who knew her in their childhood. She dressed in the strictest Friends' costume, but she had a beautiful pink-and-white complexion, which added light and colour to the sombre Quaker garb.

The second son of Edward Pease was Joseph, father of the present Sir Joseph Whitwell Pease, Bart., M.P. It was chiefly due to the talent and business capacity of this son that his father, Edward Pease, and his brothers became so largely interested in railways, coal, and iron. In 1832 he was

elected in the Liberal interest as the representative of his native county in the reformed House of Commons, and was the first Quaker who ever sat in Parliament. The same seat has since been held by his brother Henry and by his son, Sir Joseph Whitwell Pease. His name is well known in connection with untiring efforts in favour of peace and many other reforms, and his active participation in politics brought his family into close connection with the greatest movements of the day.

Mr. and Mrs. John Pease lived at a comfortable family house called "East Mount," in Darlington, in the simple style which was adopted by Friends in those days. Any useless luxury or ostentation was deemed to be mischievous, if not actually sinful. All amusements involving excitement, such as dancing, music, and the drama, were strictly forbidden. The numerous guests

hospitably entertained were chiefly members of the Society of Friends residing in Darlington, or drawn there by Quarterly Meetings or other religious functions, or were persons with whom the host and hostess were in sympathy in the pursuit of some good work. The eldest daughter, Sophia, was born fourteen years after her parents' marriage, and three years later they had a second daughter, Mary Anna, now the wife of Mr. Jonathan Backhouse Hodgkin, of Elm Ridge, Darlington. There were no other children, and the two girls passed the years of their childhood in close and unbroken companionship. It was not until she was fourteen years of age that Sophia was sent to school, and she returned home in less than a year. Her life affords an interesting instance to the student of education of the effect of bringing up a girl at home under a system of tuition by

able teachers, seconded by the higher education of hearing the conversation, and to a certain extent sharing the work, of parents and relatives.

Without denying the enormous strides made during the last fifty years in the education of girls, it may well be asked whether too great a sacrifice has not been made in giving up almost entirely the influences of home. The modern schoolgirl enjoys the bright and wholesome intellectual atmosphere she breathes. The school term is divided between first-rate lessons and first-rate games, and her association with teachers and schoolfellows supplies a moral training of high value. She looks forward eagerly to the holidays which bring Christmas festivities or summer tours. But where in this programme can be found the opportunity for a girl to make the acquaintance of her parents, and brothers, and sisters?

Yet it is those to whom she is bound by family associations, inherited tastes, and the similarity of circumstances, who will probably be the companions of her future life, and it is among them that she must win the respect and affection that will secure her their co-operation in whatever work she may take in hand. Such considerations make one doubt whether public opinion insists sufficiently upon home influence as a valuable element in the education of girls.

It must not be supposed that the life at Eastmount was either dull or monotonous. Besides the higher life of the parents, which gave its tone to the conversation carried on over the hospitable table and round the cosy hearth, there were the numberless matters in which the family were more or less concerned, and in which the girls took an increasing share as they became

able to understand them. The Peases had always been known for the conscientious care they felt for those employed by them. In those days legislation had done little to protect the workers from their own ignorance or the greed of the capitalist. It is difficult for the young people of to-day to understand what factory life could become before the Factory Acts were part of our law and when there were no inspectors to discover the gross abuse of power which too often existed. Perhaps a strong public opinion is as good a defence for the worker as any system of inspection can be, but there was very little of that at the time we are considering. If the employer and the parents had it not in their own consciences to prevent it, little children could be worked with a persistent cruelty never equalled even in the slave gangs of America, and were utterly cut off from

education, unless by almost unbelievable energy they snatched a few hours in a den of a night school. The Peases were amongst the few employers who anticipated legislative reform in these matters by interesting themselves in the sanitary condition of the homes of their workpeople by aiding the establishment of schools for the young, and by encouraging intelligent discussion, religious life, and habits of thrift and temperance among those who had grown up in deplorable ignorance. Such endeavours to raise the standard of life among the poorer classes became doubly necessary when the sleepy tranquillity of rural villages was transformed by the railway into the rush and turmoil of crowded towns. All the human sympathy, combined with the shrewd common sense of business men, possessed by the Peases in no ordinary degree, was needed

to cope with the rapidly growing wants of the community in which they lived and from which they drew their great commercial profits. In philanthropic work, if intelligently planned, there is room for each and all. Even a little child may lend a helping hand, and the daughter of John and Sophia Pease had every encouragement to find her work and her pleasure in relieving the wants and brightening the lives of the vast toiling population of her native town.

In 1851 one of the most approved boarding-schools for girls belonging to the Society of Friends was kept by a Miss Wilhelmina Taylor at Frenchay, a village about five miles from Bristol. There was a very large Quaker settlement in the city of Bristol, and among the leading families was that of the Frys. The two brothers, Richard and Francis, lived at Cot-

ham, a beautiful district of wooded hills between Bristol and Redland, and their gardens opened into each other in the manner so common among Friends. It seems as if the absence of some of the amusements and excitements of life necessitated by the rules of their sect induced Quakers in old times to devote unusual attention to the cultivation of their gardens, and even at the present time, when their habits are so much less distinguishable from those of others than used to be the case, their gardens remain unrivalled for picturesque effect and brilliant hues.

Francis Fry, chiefly known as the collector of English Bibles, had built his house close to the round tower of Cotham, erected, in 1779, on an eminence commanding a splendid view of Kingswood on one side and of Bristol and its environs on the other. The spot was a favourite one for tourists, who

were allowed to ascend the tower to enjoy the view, and students were made welcome to see the wonderful collection of English Bibles kept in the library of Cotham House. The wife of Richard Fry was the daughter of Edward Pease, and thus there was a close connection between Darlington and Bristol. The old man frequently visited his daughter, and in 1851 he was accompanied by his little granddaughter Sophia Pease, then fourteen years of age. The distance between Durham and Gloucestershire made the journey in those days of early railway-travelling a formidable matter, and if she had been going among strangers Sophia would have felt herself banished to a great distance from home. Her aunt and the numerous family with which she was connected made any feeling of loneliness impossible, and she spent her first evening in Bristol at the house of Francis Fry, of Cotham, one day to be

her own father-in-law. Here she found herself in a large circle of young people, including her future husband and many of his near relations. From Cotham she went to Miss Taylor's school at Frenchay. During the short time she stayed there no great progress could be made in book knowledge, but she secured one valued friend whose companionship and correspondence was the source of much mutual delight to both of them during many years. This was Sarah Sturge, the niece of the well-known philanthropist, Joseph Sturge, of Birmingham. In later years the friends were more closely connected, as Sarah married Sophia's cousin, Mr. Edward Pease. She died in 1875, leaving one child, the present Countess of Portsmouth. Writing in that year to Sophia Pease (then Mrs. Theodore Fry), she says, in speaking of this friendship: "I valued it beyond what words can express. Mer-

cies have abounded all my life through. One of the greatest blessings I count this one."

The little village of Frenchay, in which Miss Taylor's school was situated, is well described in the Life of F. D. Maurice,[1] whose father lived there at the beginning of the century.

"The village is small as it well can be. It lies in a beautiful country of rocky streams and park-land, hill and dale, with perhaps some of the finest timber in England within a short distance of it. A little hamlet, at that time chiefly of Quaker houses, nestled together along one side of a tiny village green, across which the houses look towards a deep ravine, faced on the opposite hillsides by graceful woods. In the very middle of the village lies, as it were, as the epitome of its characteristics,

[1] Vol. i. p. 10.

a little Quaker graveyard, shut out from all the world on every side but that on which a narrow entrance running under the tiny meeting-room gives a bare approach to it, and seems to admit you to the very stillness of a Quaker meeting of the dead. There was at that time no church. This little Quaker meeting-house, Mr. Maurice's tiny chapel, and the graveyards belonging to them, were the only spots devoted to sacred purposes within it."

The little village slowly grew as people were attracted by the exceptional beauty of the neighbourhood and the convenient distance from the City, but it was not until easy communication by railway made so many of our English villages into the outskirts of towns that Frenchay and the neighbouring village of Fishponds where in the old days one Joel Lean had a large Friends' school for boys, became altered beyond all

recognition, and, in fact, a mere fashionable suburb of Bristol.

We may, then, imagine that Sophia Pease had happy experiences of school life. The opinions and traditions of the place were not different from those amongst which she had been brought up. Her parents' names were honoured by all with whom she came into contact, and she was received as a dear friend and relation by the large circle of Friends in Bristol and the neighbourhood. She made many friends among her school-fellows and acquaintances, and was genial and unreserved in her intercourse with young people. The natural beauties of a Southern county must have been pleasant as a variety after the bleak moors and rugged hills of Yorkshire and Durham. But the enervating climate did not suit her health, and after a year's trial she returned to Darlington to continue her studies at home.

During the next ten years Sophia Fry led a very quiet life in her parents' home, slowly building up the intimate knowledge which was afterwards so useful to her in her public work, and which she possessed in no common degree—the knowledge of the life of the poor. Many unselfish workers manage to acquaint themselves very accurately with the facts and figures of the subject. They know the average rent of the houses of any given class of the population with the average rate of wages, of births, and of deaths. They are primed with a list of things that need reform, and generally have the corresponding list of reforms to recommend. But the knowledge of the wants and difficulties of other people which Sophia Pease gained during the years she lived and worked under her parents' influence was something entirely different from this. She was able not to theorize

about the poor, but to think with them, and in all the public work she undertook in later life, the great difference between these two methods distinguished her from many of her contemporaries.

The first object with which Sophia became interested was a Sunday-school class which she conducted in connection with the meeting-house at Skinnergate. She was a favourite teacher, and soon learned to know a good deal of her pupils outside the walls of the class-room. The first thing that impressed her was the great need of efficient elementary education, and the wider her experience became of the poorer class of girls the stronger was her desire to meet this difficulty to the limited extent that was possible before the Elementary Education Act had come into existence. Several schools existed in Darlington supported by voluntary effort, the largest centre for girls

being that in Kendrew Street. To this she attached herself as an active helper, giving much time and thought to the work and devising new methods of infusing life and spirit into it. For instance, she formed a class of the pupil teachers, which met once a week and which she herself conducted until a short time before her marriage. Several years later she was the instigator of a centre of cookery classes being opened in connection with these schools, which was quite an innovation at the time when she did it, although now most people regard it as a necessary part of an elementary school for girls. She never lost her interest in the school, and continued to act on a sub-committee of management appointed by the School Board after the election of that body in 1870.

Four years after her brief experience of school life the routine of home was again

varied, but this time the removal was not to any great distance. John Pease inherited, in 1856, from a distant relative, a house at Great Ayton, called Cleveland Lodge. It is about ten miles from Middlesborough, close under Rosebery Topping, the highest hill in the district, and commands magnificent views of the surrounding country. The house itself has an interesting history, having been built by a man named Thomas Richardson, who went to London as a lad with the traditional half-crown in his pocket. He obtained a situation in a London bank, and finally, with the assistance of capitalists who had confidence in his ability, he started a discounting business, which became famous under the name of Overend and Gurney. On his retirement from this partnership he returned a rich man to his native place, and there the recollection of his early difficulties induced him to subscribe largely to the

CLEVELAND LODGE, GREAT AYTON.

building and endowment of a boarding school, at which about eighty boys and girls in humble life were to be trained. The management was intrusted to a committee of men and women, and the institution has already been very successful in accomplishing the objects for which it was established. Mr. and Mrs. John Pease and their daughters, after coming into possession of Cleveland Lodge, made a practice of spending a great part of every summer at Ayton, and took an active share in the conduct of the school. With her knowledge of similar work in Darlington, Sophia Pease was particularly interested in it, and from time to time served on the Board of Management.

The Cleveland district is very tempting to those who love open air and beautiful scenery. The sisters acquired the habit of taking long walks and rides, and sometimes they made pleasant excursions with their

parents to more distant places of interest, travelling on these occasions in the family carriage.

The Friends' school at Great Ayton, endowed by Thomas Richardson, was, and still is, one especially fitted to interest such a young woman as Sophia Pease. The front of the house is close on the old-fashioned village green, but the back of it opens on large grounds very different from those ordinarily found surrounding an institution of this kind. There are good-sized separate playgrounds for the boys and girls, and beyond these a real English garden, with flowers and evergreens, lawns and winding paths, and, most unusual of all, a babbling stream and a romantic waterfall. At the present time this waterfall is utilised to allow of the building being lighted by electricity, and a large swimming bath, a gymnasium, and a model laundry have been erected.

But even as it was in the old days, it must have been far above the average school for children of the poorer classes, and there was plenty of room for trying experiments and seeking to make the pupils as happy and useful as possible. At first it was intended to train the boys in agriculture, and a farm was part of the institution. This has been discontinued, as other industries have been found more desirable, and the farm is let to a tenant who supplies the school with dairy produce. The lodging-house next door to the school was used when Mr. and Mrs. John Pease were at Cleveland Lodge as a training school for domestic servants. A lady still living in Darlington remembers being, with her husband, the first guests, and she thinks this was a special privilege, as gentlemen were not favoured as lodgers. This house is still a travellers' rest, but being managed merely as an ordinary lodging-

house, the kindly but somewhat narrow rules of its Quaker founders are long forgotten. On the other side of the school stands the tiny Meeting-house, with a private opening from the school garden, through which a very large proportion of the congregation enter, namely, the teachers and their eighty scholars. I believe only about one-fifth of the children are Friends, but many of them are related closely to Friends, and all of them know on entering the school that it is a Friends' school, and receive religious training in accordance with the views of the Society. The instruction, apart from the industrial training, is given to boys and girls together, and the system has been found to work admirably. The curriculum is very broad, embracing French, Science, and many subjects which are too often omitted in schools of this class. The whole tone of the place is such as to remind one of home, and

has nothing in it of the formal institution. Considering the backward state of education when the place was started, the parsimonious views of the general public about elementary education, which continued during the years of its early management, and the great difficulty of housing eighty children in a home and not a barrack, the efficiency and unusual characteristics observable at Great Ayton speak worlds for the wisdom and kindliness of the Thomas Richardsons and those who have carried on the work. Miss Rouse, the last governess who taught Sophia Pease and her sister, and who afterwards was for many years the principal of an excellent ladies' school at York, used to speak with great affection and admiration of her former pupil. She was struck with the power she had even as a young girl of attending to several things at the same time and keeping the threads in her mind distinct and dis-

entangled. This power she thought had been developed by the active share Sophia had taken under her parents' influence in the practical work of committees from which, Miss Rouse would add, she had learned much more than from books. It is easy to understand how she obtained this kind of training by assisting in managing the Great Ayton school during her frequent visits to Cleveland Lodge. The girls—many of them her own age—and being educated in the same religious principles, would call forth her sympathy, and the fact that they were preparing themselves to fight the battle of life without the assistance of inherited wealth, must have brought to her mind very early in life some of those problems which the children of the rich generally hear nothing about.

Edward Pease died in 1858 at the age of ninety-one, and was buried in the Friends'

graveyard at Darlington, having outlived his younger contemporary, George Stephenson, by ten years.

Partly by new acquaintances made during his numerous journeys for religious purposes, and partly by ever-increasing family connections, the circle of friends welcomed by John Pease to his Darlington home, or to the lovely retreat at Ayton, grew rapidly wider. His daughter Sophia was now of an age to become his sympathetic companion as well as his loving child. This companionship she valued intensely, and probably owed more to it than to any other influence she experienced during her girlhood. But she did not spend all her time at Darlington or Cleveland during these years. She had many friends who, besides visiting her and corresponding by letter, claimed in return visits from her to their own homes in various parts of England,

the principal one always being Sarah Sturge, of Birmingham. Her life was busy and cheerful. At home, in attending to the important duties she had undertaken, in the companionship of the members of her family, and in the cheerful part she always took in extending to her parents' guests the genuine hospitality for which they were so widely known, she always found every hour of the day fully occupied. Constant activity of mind and body was the habit of her girlhood, and the fact explains to some extent the amount of work she was able to get through in later life, and which was the source of inexhaustible surprise to many who desired to follow her example and found themselves left behind. When away from home she was generally among those who held similar views to her own as to the more important questions of life and who yet had experiences differing in

some degree from hers. Thus she was able to compare and test her plans, and in doing so showed an unusual open-mindedness and an anxiety to hear the opinions of others. This characteristic remained with her through life, and was a valuable aid in working in association with men and women when often the same object is sought by different methods, and co-operation is only possible if each is ready to hear with an unprejudiced mind the plans of others.

On August 14, 1862, Sophia Pease was married to Theodore, the second son of Francis Fry, of Bristol, at whose beautiful house at Cotham she had spent her first evening away from home eleven years ago. The old grandfather was not spared to see the result of that momentous journey which he had taken with his little granddaughter when he had introduced her into a family

of which one day she was to become a beloved member. But her parents and many other friends and relations rejoiced with her and stood around her in the Friends' meeting-house at Darlington during the simple service which inaugurated her new life. Mr. and Mrs. Theodore Fry travelled through Switzerland and the Italian Lakes, a country quite new to the bride, spending six weeks in this way before they settled down in Bristol. Of their private life little is intended to be said in these pages, but whilst the thought of that happy day in 1862 is in our minds it seems appropriate to quote from a memorandum which she wrote for her children very shortly before her death:—

"I desire that they may lead useful and happy lives. They may be more useful than mine, but I fear they cannot be happier."

The early life of Mrs. John Pease's two

daughters was rendered much more cheerful than it would otherwise have been by the close intimacy which existed between them and their cousins, the children of Joseph and Henry Pease. Joseph lived at a large house in Darlington called South End, which was surrounded with a beautiful garden, and there was constant intercourse between the young people of this house and at East Mount, and plenty of healthy exercise, such as riding and driving, took place amongst them. Sophia was particularly fond of her live pets and her garden. The love of flowers remained with her all her life. In a letter dated April 8, 1845, from East Mount, to a governess who had recently left in consequence of ill health, she says: "I send thee in this some violets. . . . We are enjoying this sweet spring much; the hedges are budding so finely. The daffodils are out.

Thy wild one has leaves, but the flower does not show."

Years afterwards, when she had the delight of watching the increasing beauties of the gardens at Woodburn, she noted the change of seasons with the same interest as that which is shown in the letter in large round-hand of the child of eight years old, and distributed amongst many houses in Darlington the fruit and flowers from her hothouses with the same graceful generosity that had prompted the gift of violets to her governess.

Her liking for horses she also retained, and was for many years seen in Darlington driving a pair of fast ponies. These tastes, acquired in childhood, made her always happy in the country, and gave her the wonderful health which enabled her to bear the constant fatigues of life in London.

There is a letter from East Mount dated

17th and 18th December, 1844, written by Mrs. John Pease to the same governess, with a little postscript by Sophia. Mrs. Pease, after some inquiries as to her correspondent's health, says: "Since our return from our pleasant visit to my relations we have sat down with punctuality to our little school at half after nine, and enjoyed going on with such parts of dear Sophy's lessons as I feel most up to. She has been a sweet little pupil. Indeed I have no fault thus far. Of course we have interruptions of various kinds. Enough already to satisfy me it is not a plan that can be kept up with advantage to either mother or child. In the afternoon we have mostly read and worked together. This week my district and the Female Charity must have some attention. I have been half through to ascertain what articles are wanted, and when these are distributed the care will

be light. I have formed no plan for the future. We have heard of several young women, but, desiring no direct applications, there is a natural inclination to defer doing anything from day to day. I am much obliged by the trouble thou took in writing out a little list of procedure, and believe such will be useful to another, as I have found it to myself. This is our dear Polly's birthday,[1] and I suppose has been one of the happiest of her life—scarcely one cloud intervening to dull the brightness with which she saluted my ear before morning's light, darling child! How I desire she may be a lamb of Christ's fold!" The letter then describes the guests invited for the birthday dinner, and tells how some of the party afterwards attended a Temperance meeting, which on their return "they report glowingly." She continues: "This day

[1] Her second daughter, Mary Anna.

has also been fraught with other mercies, among which I may prominently rank that of a good report of my dearest earthly treasure. He writes from Philadelphia, where and around he expects to spend much of the winter," and so, with some account of the religious mission in which her husband was occupied, she concludes with a postscript of kind messages to the governess's relatives. On the next page, in large round-hand, follows Sophy's contribution :—

"MY DEAR MARY,—Mamma and I get on very nicely with our lessons. I like to have mamma to teach me very much. Alice sends her love, and is glad thou art better. I wish thou would write to me soon. We have not much afternoon school. Yesterday was the 17th of 12th month, dear Mary Anna's birthday. Very likely

thou remembered it. Some of cousins were here. There has been some snow. We have not seen the baby at South End yet, but hope to to-morrow. With very dear love to Cary and thyself.

"SOPHIA PEASE, Junr.

"EAST MOUNT, 12*th mo.* 18*th*, '44."

Here is a letter written to one of the Darlington cousins in her early schooldays on August 16, 1851 :—

"FRENCHAY.

"MY VERY DEAR EMMA,—I did think it very kind of thee to write me such a nice long letter to read on my arrival at a strange place, and it was very pleasant to have it to read just as papa was leaving. The parting I got over as well as might be expected, and now I have got to feel quite at home and happy. Only seven of the girls have yet arrived, of which I think Sarah Sturge, of

Birmingham (afterwards Mrs. Edward Pease), is the most agreeable. . . .

"I shall not forget you at Monthly Meeting at Cotherstone on 3rd day. . . . I think it is generally a very pleasant Monthly Meeting, and I feel many regrets at not being there. However, the time will come again, I hope, for being at liberty to enjoy home pleasures once more, for time will fly, and I do feel more than a little pleasure at nearly one week of my school life being passed. For though school is pleasant, home is certainly pleasan*ter*, though I doubt not for one moment that my life here is more profitable. We take a walk nearly every day, and I am much struck with the great beauty of the country—so country-like it really feels rather like being out of the world to hear no railway nor sea.

"I am much more pleased with —— than I expected from accounts, though I rather fancy hers is a character which will not bear

very deep inspection, as she seems to be by no means a general favourite.

"I like the mistresses here very much, though there is something about Wilhelmina Taylor which makes one feel rather afraid of her. Elizabeth Whitton is a cheerful, learned, and very pleasant person, and Janie Jacob, the under teacher, once a scholar, who sleeps in the same room as I do, is really a very sweet young person. Do you know that Aunt Fry is going with uncle to Paris on 2nd day? I think it will be a very fine thing. She called here yesterday, or I believe it was 5th day (but one gets quite out of one's reckonings with having Meeting on 4th day) with cousin Elizabeth Pease, who is paying her a visit. But I must conclude, as I want if possible to write to Rachel.

"And believe me, with dear love to each of you,

"Thy very loving

"S. PEASE, Junior."

In view of the strong feeling she had about Irish questions at a later period of her life, the following letter written when she was nineteen, is interesting :—

"DUBLIN, *7th month, 1st day*, 1856.

"BRAY, *7th month, 2nd day*, 1856.

"MY DEAR EMMA,—It is late on 1st day evening, and we have to be off early to-morrow, so that I must not write thee much. Yet I do not like to go into the country without sending thee a few lines to tell thee how capitally we got across here. I am sure you may pluck up courage, for there really is not the slightest difficulty, indeed I think we found the voyage easier than four hours' summer railway travelling. We were on deck the whole time, five hours from when we first went on board, and did not have the slightest feeling of sickness. The evening was lovely and calm, though not very clear,

and the boat extremely steady, so that in the centre you could hardly feel any motion. As we came in sight of Kingstown the summer lightning was very beautiful as it gleamed over the Wicklow mountains and the harbour. Papa says he would not recommend crossing in the evening, and certainly the scramble by daylight would be more desirable. But, really, it was not quite so bad as I expected. You must have a considerable degree of patient resignation about your luggage. Yet too much will not do, or you will miss the train from Kingstown, which goes every half-hour, but never waits at all, and we saw many fellow-passengers, less fortunate than ourselves, left behind. The little Paddies, minus shoes and stockings, rush all about to show the way, and seem to think you are made of pence. At Dublin there is a tremendous scrimmage, but the porters seem very attentive, trying to do their best.

The 'Upsets,' as we have named them[1], are waiting there in great numbers, and are most extraordinary vehicles, like half omnibuses, of which the doors almost touch the ground, and as you enter it seems just a chance if you will be able to settle on the steep side or tumble out again into the road. We did not get to bed till nearly two, and about half-past two there was a tremendous storm of thunder and lightning, which woke us up as soon as we were settled, and as flash after flash of forked lightning danced on the window-panes and the rain sounded as if it would come in at the roof, we did feel very helpless, and as they say such storms are very uncommon it is very pleasant it is over before your arrival. Yesterday we went a drive in Phœnix Park, which is very pretty, and the carman's thoroughly Irish descriptions were most entertaining. He seemed to think

[1] Inside cars.

the present Governor (Lord Mulgrave) perfection—'the finest man in the world'—and said: 'Why, sure, there's never a concert or ball, or a panorama, but he's the first in it.'

. . . . .

"We went to tea at Jonathan Pim's at Kingstown, who took us a most lovely drive by the edge of the bay. The views were splendid, the country being beautifully wooded and fertile towards Dublin, and the Wicklow mountains look fine and wild. To-day we have had two very nice Meetings and two good sermons. It is a very formidable Meeting to go to—almost up to Devonshire House.[1] . . ."

The following letter to her cousin Emma during a Continental tour with her parents, gives a vivid picture of the close companionship she enjoyed with them, both in their recreation and in the serious work of their lives.

[1] Friends' meeting-house at Westminster.

"VEVAY, 26. 6. 1858.

"MY DEAREST EMMA,—I hasten to send thee what must have appeared to thee my very tardy acknowledgments for thy kind and interesting letter, which unfortunately missed us at Cologne and has followed us in our wanderings, only catching us up here last evening. . . . I wrote to grandpapa (Mr. Edward Pease) from Interlaken. You might perhaps hear from him how greatly we enjoyed our 'tarrience' there, especially our visit to the Ernidelhald Glacier. Since then we have had two hard days of posting, part of the way through magnificent scenery. The bold, rocky crags and mountains, deep gorges, and foaming torrents, rivalled, I think, anything we have seen elsewhere. It is a great comfort that papa is so very much better. For the last week he has seemed steadily to gain ground, and is now able to take his daily and

sometimes morning walks, and exceedingly to enjoy the scenery through which we have passed. We were all pretty well tired when we got here last evening, and found most comfortable and restful quarters, which are certainly luxurious after the little mountain inns we have been at during the last two days. And we have wondered if this is the same room you had when here. I can only describe it, I think, as a large room on the first floor, with the lodging-room on the right. It was rather pleasant as we held our little Meeting here this morning to think that it might not be the first silent though I hope worshipping company who had met here. The view from the balcony is so lovely that I think we shall not be tempted out far to-day, and our experience of the English Church at Zurich has not much tempted Margaret and myself to try again. We

certainly heard a good sermon, but rather dryish! The scene from the balcony here last evening was intensely lovely. We watched the setting sun light up with a bright red glow the rocky cliffs on the edge of the lake, and then its parting rays seemed to linger on the snow-capped mountains till, gently passing away, all seemed clothed in grey, cold twilight. Then the moon rose behind the distant hills till its streams of silver light seemed to illumine the whole surface of the lake, and here and there a snowy height caught a faint ray, and then a flash of sheet lightning seemed for a moment to brighten even the frowning summit of the Tête Noir. Meanwhile in the garden below us there was a splendid band, and their national, and at times half-sacred music, added greatly to the whole effect, while in celebration of some gala day, beautiful rockets were fired

far, far above us, and their bright stars were extinguished in the waters of the lake. Then we saw a little barque glide by, its white sail shining in the moonbeams, and soon after a tiny boat, whose oars splashed quietly as it neared the land. Do not think me growing lunatic in my enjoyment of such scenes. Perchance my poor description may call back to thee some memories of such scenes which seem almost holy, if anything on this earth can be so. We hope to-morrow to visit Chillon, the Hôtel Byron, &c., and Montreux. It will be touchingly interesting to see the last resting-places of some there. We hope to be in Geneva on 4th and 5th days, and probably reach Paris the end of the week. Letters are extremely welcome and will be none the less so for our being rather nearer home. I was rather glad to hear, through a note from ——, that the 1st day

school is getting on as well as could be expected during the continued absence of Mr. Parker, for so far as I have seen no one can *fill* his place. It must be quite a relief to you to have left the first class under such care, and very kind of —— to undertake it. Will you send any representatives to the 1st day school Conference at Ackworth Quarterly Meeting, I wonder, and are any of you going? When mamma told us that Eliza Gurney had spoken of being there it did make a little longing spring up in our minds to have another peep at her and share in the interests we three so enjoyed together two years ago; but I suppose there is no chance of this. I hope some of you will be there, and we shall remember you, both there and at the Quarterly Meeting on 3rd day. I have not yet said, dear Emma, what I have often felt—the hope that thou art feeling quite

refreshed by thy stay in the South, and that the fresh breezes will remove all the relics of thy tedious cold.

"With very much love to each of your circle,

"I am thy ever loving cos,

"SOPHIA PEASE, Junior."

Writing from Bristol to her cousin Emma the year before her marriage, she says:—

"I am indeed enjoying myself *very much.* From 4th day to 7th I was here where there does indeed seem everything to make home happy. . . . I took a class at school on 1st day which seemed curiously still to my ears, and though I certainly enjoyed the quiet, felt rather to conclude that additional life and energy is given by being in the same room as the boys."

LIFE IN BRISTOL AND DARLINGTON.

PHILANTHROPIC WORK

CHAPTER II

LIFE IN BRISTOL AND DARLINGTON. PHILANTHROPIC WORK

THE first four years of Mrs. Theodore Fry's married life were spent in the neighbourhood of Bristol, where her husband was a partner in engineering works. Francis Fry in the early part of his life had devoted himself to the rapidly growing family business for the manufacture of cocoa and chocolate, in which he was for many years a partner, but he was also greatly interested in railway enterprises and other public companies, particularly the Bristol Waterworks Company, of which he was a director from its commencement in 1848, and was ap-

pointed chairman of the Board in 1874. He was one of the first Board of Directors of the Bristol and Gloucester and Gloucester and Birmingham Railways, and a little later of the Bristol and Exeter Railway of the South Devon Railway Company and also of the Devon and Cornwall Railway. Possessed of great business experience and of a singularly keen judgment, especially useful in the promotion of new enterprises, his co-operation was sought by his fellow-citizens in all important movements, and although he avoided taking any part in municipal work, refusing, for instance, to become a member of the town council, his life was full of stirring interests, and in all this his sons took their natural share. Mrs. Theodore Fry was already well known to many in the circle of which she now found herself a member, and her character was such as to raise no difficulties in the way of new friendships. She

very soon became a valued and beloved helper among the Society of Friends at Bristol, and, following the lines of her work in Darlington, established a Mothers' Meeting, which was chiefly attended by the wives of the men in her husband's works, and she also undertook from time to time an adult Sunday class in connection with the meeting-house. Her new home was in a comfortable house called Woodburn, and here her first three children were born. Frequent visits from relations and friends, and especially from her parents, returned by her as far as increasing family ties allowed, kept her very busy, and she could have found ample excuse, if she had desired to do so, for laying aside all philanthropic work for the time being. In a letter written to Emma Pease, of South End, Darlington, from Woodburn House, Cotham Park, Bristol, on January 31, 1863, when she had been married a few months, and

had been recently paying a visit to her old home, she says, after apologising for delay in writing :—

"It seems hardly the thing for a person with apparently so little to do to make excuses, but I have found just at first coming home various little occupations and more claims on my pen by way of letters to East Mount" (her parents' house) "than there will be when we again grow a little more hardened to our lot of separation. . . . Next 2nd day we expect some friends here to consider the subject of this new Girls' School" (a British School). "They seem quite in good heart about it. If —— will come liberally forward, as he usually does, . . . I shall be very glad if —— can get the situation of governess, but feel a little fearful, as the testimonials I have read from the Borough Road" (British and Foreign School Society) "do not speak very strongly

as to her general power in teaching, though as to attainments, good influences, &c., they are very good. I feel if this little school is started it will be a pleasant object to me, and one requiring a kind of attention which it is easy to pay. Many thanks, dear Emma, for thy kind interest in my little undertakings. It is very helpful to feel any one else thinks of me so far away. I have felt it more homeish since my return, though my quiet days feel a great contrast to East Mount. Still there are several calls I ought to pay, and I feel no need to be idle. I have pretty much made up my mind to look out for some eligible woman whom I can employ about two days in the week to seek out poor people and to have rather an especial view to some of Albert and Theodore's workpeople, some of whom I should like to know more of, but am rather waiting 'to feel my way' as friends would say. . . ."

It is pleasant to know that the "little school" was not only successfully started but is still in good working order, and supported by voluntary contributions. The present head-mistress, writing to a friend after Lady Fry's death, says :—

"Though so long ago, I can look back with much pleasure to her kindness when I came (only just out of my teens straight from college) to take charge of the Friends' Girls' Day School.

"I remember how anxious she was that a happy Christian home should be secured for me, and that I should be met and welcomed, and during the two years of her management always felt cheered and encouraged by her kindly, genial manner and just decisions—so much so that when she left I thought I had lost my best friend. . . ."

Mrs. Fry remained only four years in Bristol. In 1866 the business in which her

husband was interested was made over to a Limited Company, and he decided for various reasons, to remove permanently to Darlington. Here he joined others in building Iron Rolling Mills at Rise Carr, and his wife found herself surrounded again by the friends and interests of her girlhood. It was particularly happy for her to be able to live so near her parents, whose increasing age and her own growing family made constant visits between Bristol and Darlington yearly more difficult. There was a very strong tie of affection between her and her father, and his influence and inspiration was most valuable to her in every thought and deed. Not only his eloquence, which had earned for him the name of "the silver trumpet of the North," but his unselfish devotion to religious and philanthropic efforts, his wise counsel and kindly sympathy, and the personal charm which is remembered by all who knew him made him

a man of whom a daughter might well be proud. His daughter Sophia was very proud of him, and of the great influence for good which he exerted in his native town and elsewhere. He allowed her to take an active share in many of his projects, and he availed himself largely of the sympathetic companionship which she was well fitted to offer him. Mr. and Mrs. Theodore Fry chose a beautiful spot near Darlington for the site of their new home, and in loving recollection of the one they had left, named the house "Woodburn." But these bright prospects were soon shadowed by the unexpected death of Mr. John Pease, which took place in 1868, after a fortnight's illness. His daughter always mentioned this event as the greatest grief she ever knew. Mr. Pease was seventy-one years of age, but had good health, and seemed called away when his hands were full of work. His widow and un-

WOODBURN, DARLINGTON.

married daughter came to live at Elm Ridge, a house standing in the same grounds as Woodburn, so that Mrs. Fry could see as much of her mother as if they lived beneath one roof. But again these domestic plans were altered by the cold sentence of death, for Mrs. John Pease died in 1870, having survived her husband only two years. On the marriage of Mary Anne Pease a few years later, Elm Ridge became the home of her and her husband, Mr. Jonathan Backhouse Hodgkin.

The life of Mrs. Fry during the years that passed between her return to Darlington and 1880 became gradually more crowded with interests, both public and private. Her husband served on the town council and was elected mayor for the year 1877–8. He was also a member of the Darlington School Board for nine years, and of the Board of Guardians. In the various duties attached

to these offices his wife was keenly interested, more particularly in any which were connected with education. Of the numerous schemes which she originated or took a part in successfully steering, some details must be given as illustrations of her method of work, but generally it may be said that she was asked to help in every new undertaking, and never refused if the object was one she approved. She worked with all classes and all sects. In some cases she was a liberal subscriber and accompanied her gifts with encouraging words that made them doubly welcome. But in many cases money was the least important part of her aid. If the matter was one in which she felt personally fitted to help she was ready to give time and attention often invaluable to her colleagues. Nor did her interest fade after the novelty of a new departure had worn off. She would serve upon committees with a punctuality

astonishing to those who could estimate something of the pressure of her home duties year after year for periods in some cases exceeding twenty-five years.

In the meantime the home was not neglected. To the group of three children born in Bristol five more were added at Darlington, and she strove to make her little ones as free and cheerful and full of interests as she herself had been.

A letter to Miss Emma Pease, dated March 22, 1879, and giving an account of Dean Stanley's address on the occasion of the opening of the Training College for Teachers at Darlington, conveys a striking picture of Mrs. Fry's busy life at this period:—

"I know, dear Emma, thy thoughts will have been with us yesterday, and that thou wilt be glad to learn that the Dean's visit has become a great success on the whole.

There are always some not fully satisfied, and it is seldom in this world that one does not wish some things had happened a little differently. Still, altogether there is a most pleasant retrospect. The gathering at the College was large, the Lecture Hall full. The Dean's address there was short, as intended, and some present who could not attend the evening meeting felt rather disappointed. But the meeting could only last one hour, and the reading and adoption of the Report as previously arranged took some time. We thought —— had been very successful in drawing it up and incorporating what the ladies had prepared. Uncle and Aunt Henry (Mr. and Mrs. Henry Pease) kindly invited all the members of the Committee to dinner at six o'clock, when a party of seventeen sat down. The 'very reverend gentleman' was most affable, and those who sat near him greatly enjoyed his conversation,

but felt rather sorry it could not be more generally heard. It turned chiefly on Macaulay and his writings. The time after dinner was short, and we reached the Central Hall at eight o'clock. There was a crowded and enthusiastic audience. There had been some little mistake about the scale of payment, which was below what most of the Committee approved, the hall being divided into reserved and free seats. The former were charged at half a crown, and four hundred tickets issued, but after nearly sixty had been given to the Committee and others and two schools admitted at half price, the pecuniary result was not very satisfactory. But there can be no doubt the interest has been greatly increased by the College being so prominently brought forward. I was glad to see the R——s, also Mr. H—— and Mr. S——, on the platform, but sorry that some of our church-going friends, the X——s,

Y——s, and others, absented themselves, wishing to bear their testimony against the Dean's 'broad views.' They prevented themselves enjoying a rich treat, and I think you will not find that anything was said to which they could have objected. The discourse was not a sermon, and it seems rather audacious to find any fault with so beautiful and powerful an address, but it seemed a little cold, and critics would doubtless observe omissions. Christ as the Light of the World was most beautifully set before us, and there seemed no special call to mention Him as 'the Saviour,' which was not done. It was just such an address as those who have read the Dean's writings would expect, and was, like them, clear, powerful, and intensely interesting. It is well reported in the *Echo*. I did not know if you would receive a copy, and have sent one. Can you kindly return it, as we should like to

keep the address, and the *Echo* seems nearly sold out. One very pleasant feature of the day was that —— (an official) was in a most happy, amiable frame of mind. He thinks the College was never before in so satisfactory a state . . . and that the ladies' management is a success, and no change needed!!! Now, dear Emma, thou wilt be weary of this long epistle. We missed thee much, and should have been truly glad couldst thou have shared the interests of the day. With much dear love,

"Ever affectionately,

"S. T. FRY."

The name of the institution thus brilliantly opened is the British and Foreign School Society's North of England College. The Society had need of a place in the North in which to train mistresses for elementary schools, and the offer of a large

sum in the hands of trustees which was at the time available for the purpose decided them to choose Darlington. From the first promulgation of the scheme until the day of her death Lady Fry took an earnest and unfailing interest in this College. It was chiefly due to her that women had a responsible share in the management, and her punctual attendance at the Committee meetings was an example to the Committee and a great encouragement to the Principal and other officials. The chief thing that struck all who were brought into contact with her in this particular work was the personal interest she took in the students, and the steady perseverance with which she continued during eighteen years to give the support and assistance she had promised. On March 18, 1896, her husband, who was Chairman of Committee, presided when Sir Joseph Pease, M.P., opened the new wing

(for technical education) of the College, which had thus become the most complete building of its kind in the United Kingdom. Lady Fry was present as a member of the Committee, and must have contrasted the meeting, crowded as it was with wealthy subscribers and active friends, with that which she had seen in 1879.

Another institution in Darlington with which the name of Lady Fry is even more closely associated is the Hospital. In every manufacturing town a place where accidents can be immediately and effectively treated is a pressing necessity, and the old Cottage Hospital in another part of the town was quite inadequate for the large and increasing population of Darlington. In 1882 Mrs. Theodore Fry set herself the task of collecting the funds for building a large General Hospital, and she succeeded in raising, by her indomitable energy and the

respect with which persons of all shades of opinion considered her requests, no less than £10,000. The Duke of Cleveland, a man by no means noted for indiscriminate charity, headed the list with £500, and the proceeds of a bazaar promoted by Mrs. Theodore Fry amounted to about £3,000. When the hospital was opened in 1884, besides the ordinary committee of management, there was reappointed a larger ladies' committee, of which Mrs. Fry was a most regular attender. Nor did her assistance end with formal committee work. She took great interest in every detail, and specially favoured the cheerful decoration of the wards, and in the arrangement of Christmas festivities. More than all, whenever it was possible, she visited every one who was taken to the hospital after an accident, making no distinction between the workmen of her husband or of any other employer. Very frequently when sitting by the bedside

of a patient she would tell him that she intended to visit his wife—a promise she would promptly fulfil, thus gladdening the hearts of both and immeasurably lessening the prejudice against hospital treatment so often felt by the poor. A few months after her death I visited the hospital, feeling a wish to see the place that had been so much in her thoughts. When the matron told a man in the accident ward that I wanted to hear about Lady Fry, he said it was strange that he had been telling her only the day before his recollections of how Lady Fry helped him and many hundreds of his fellow-workers a few years ago on the occasion of their being out of work from the closing of some steel works in the town. He then described how she had helped to establish a kitchen for these starving families, and arranged that the women should cook on week-days, but on Sunday the women should

rest and their husbands cook for them. He was very humorous over the achievements of himself and his mates, and evidently thought the Sunday dinners were as well cooked as any in the week.

Of all the different schemes originated by Lady Fry for the good of the poorer classes in Darlington, none was so entirely her own as her Mothers' Meeting. She had commenced one on a small scale in Bristol, but it was at Darlington that she was able, through long years, to develop her ideas of what such an institution should be. At first she met her class in a room near her husband's works at Rise Carr, but later on, with the assistance of members of her family, she obtained a good hall, called the Hopetown Mission Hall, with small committee-rooms attached. Three clubs were organised, to which the women subscribe according to their means and their appreciation of the value of saving. The first is an

ordinary savings' bank, and the deposits amounted to over £3,000 at the time of her death, after thirty years' work. Another club is for the purchase of blankets, and the third is a burial club. At first a clothing club was also organised, but with the development of the co-operative stores this was found unnecessary and was discontinued. The Hopetown Mission has four branches affiliated to it—one in a colliery district near Darlington, and the others in villages near by. Two of these branches are held in Friends' meeting-houses, and one in a Moravian chapel. A clergyman of the Established Church not infrequently looks in at Hopetown, and in every possible way all sects of Christianity are put on an equal footing.

The success which attended this particular form of philanthropic effort in Bristol, though only tried there in a small way, was more marked in Darlington, and this fact as

showing that her management produced the same results in such entirely different localities, is very interesting because too often failure is attributed to the habits of the people in a particular neighbourhood. The habits of the working classes in Bristol and Darlington are widely different. In Bristol a great deal of home-work is done by women, whereas in Darlington factory or workshop industry is the rule. In numberless other details of home life there are important distinctions between the two places, some arising from the character of the people, some from the chances of commercial enterprise, and many from the difference of climate. Mrs. Theodore Fry proved her ability to adapt herself to necessary conditions, by organising large meetings which were regularly attended in both these towns. From the accounts given by members of these classes it seems that the great element of

success was in the personal chord of sympathy which existed between the speaker and every individual she addressed. She did not insist upon administering a dose of instruction, or of doctrine previously prepared in her own mind, but she managed to find out what it would be useful to her hearers to have explained, and she brought the explanation well within their comprehension, and gave it in a manner that made it a pleasing rest and recreation to them to receive it. This power of imparting information and advice, of however simple a nature, to grown-up people, is undoubtedly a natural gift. It is impossible for any one to exercise it who does not feel a real genuine interest in the people to be addressed. No sense of duty or secondary pleasure in the due accomplishment of a task will make up for this essential attribute. Mrs. Theodore Fry felt actual satisfaction in the conduct of her Mothers' Meetings. They were not a

task, but a part of her social pleasure. She looked forward to the opportunity of meeting these women, and talking to them, and learning to know them better, in much the same way as she enjoyed the pleasant, social intercourse which she approved and encouraged among persons in her own rank of life. But beyond this mere enjoyment of intercourse with others there was a far higher kind of pleasure which resulted from the knowledge that the meetings she held really raised the standard of life in the homes from which the women came. It has become a fashion with some people to sneer at the name "Mothers' Meetings," and many who are quite ignorant of its true signification, draw on their imagination and describe it as something ridiculous. It is quite evident, however, to any one acquainted with the tendencies of the time, that Mothers' Meetings, if wisely conducted, may be the source of untold happiness and

benefit to those who attend them. Among the working classes higher education is not attained by young people during a University course and finished before they settle down in married life. If an artisan is in receipt of good wages he generally marries early, and if he is intellectually gifted he continues to improve himself by reading at a free library, attending evening classes, taking part in the management of his co-operative stores, or his trades union, joining in discussions at his club, and in numerous other ways which advancing civilisation is opening to him every day. During the years that his education is being thus completed his wife is kept at home by household cares, and in particular by the tie of the young children. Except through her husband's conversation she can learn very little of the interests that are filling his mind, and she necessarily remains absolutely ignorant of subjects that he is studying,

but has neither time nor talent to teach. This often results in gradual estrangement between those who ought to be helpmates to each other, and it is impossible to say how much sunshine is taken from family life among the poorer classes by this one cause. Splendid progress has been made in the education of the young and in the higher education of young men, if they choose to use their leisure time for mental culture, but the problem is still unsolved of improving the education of a woman who has burdened herself with family cares while still a girl, and whose best instincts teach her that she must not leave her home.

As a partial solution of this problem Mrs. Theodore Fry arranged to hold her meetings on an afternoon in the week which suited the majority of those she desired to attract, and at an hour when the children were in school and some leisure time could be counted upon.

The subjects she brought forward were not entirely religious, although the principles of Christianity were the principal theme, and it was the earnest belief in them, and the inspiration arising from that belief, that formed the closest bond between her and her class. Other topics, however, were introduced, as, for example, lessons in household management and the treatment of children, exhortations on temperance, thrift, and other virtues especially important to women of the kind she was addressing, and any matters likely to brighten their lives and make them more able to fulfil their duties as wives and mothers. The best proof of success was the large and regular attendance at the class. The women came and came again because they felt they received something well worth the time and trouble expended, and they soon gained a personal affection and hearty admiration for their teacher. Here is an

instance of the tact with which Mrs. Fry overcame the reluctance of a member who after great family afflictions, shrank from appearing again in the class. After asking her to come and failing to get her promise Mrs. Fry said to her, "Come, Mrs. A.—say you will be there next Wednesday. The class does not seem natural without you." The appeal was successful, and the woman never missed a week again unless too ill to leave her bed. In one of her addresses given at the New Year Lady Fry spoke of the value of kindness among neighbours, and of the possibility of all, even the very poor, helping one another. A woman said, as she went out, "Ah, she just hit me there." Many women still attending the class which is being carried on by one of Lady Fry's daughters, can boast of a regular attendance during twenty-four years, and even longer, and they recall, with deep feeling, little incidents of kindness

and sympathy, and invaluable help in times of sorrow and temptation, given by their beloved teacher during the thirty years of her unfailing interest in the class.

To mention all the societies, schools, churches, and institutions of every sort in which Lady Fry was interested would be to enumerate almost a complete list of the religious and philanthropic efforts in Darlington and the surrounding districts. If the object was good, and she approved the method of obtaining it and was able to respect the active promoters, her help might be regarded as certain. In nearly every case she would bring other helpers in her wake, and she invariably supported by act what she professed in words. For instance, in 1885, the Darlington High School for Girls was started. She joined the committee and gave substantial aid; but besides this she did what many would have lacked courage for.

She sent her younger daughters to the school with entire disregard for social prejudice, and allowed them to attend regularly for two years until they went to the Continent for a short time at the close of their school career. Conduct of this kind in a provincial town is more likely to draw classes together in the important matter of obtaining good teaching for their girls and maintaining a high tone in the public school of their town than all the speeches and subscription lists in the world.

Another very marked characteristic of all Lady Fry's public work deserves to be noticed. She was perfectly clear-headed in avoiding cross issues of every kind. If she were working in a Philanthropic Society she would work hand in hand with a Tory and would not introduce party politics into the discussion of a question about which members of both parties agree. On the

other hand, when she became a prominent worker in party politics she refused to weaken her organisation by introducing any test question that was not a party question. In her Mothers' Meeting politics were strictly avoided and even the distribution of notices of a political meeting was prohibited by her express orders. In this way she was able to collect for a special purpose all who were in agreement with her in respect of that purpose, and thus the basis of her work was generally much broader and secure than is generally the case in organisations managed by women. Her Mothers' Meeting had as its sole object the inculcation of Christian principles together with the encouragement of such domestic qualities as temperance and thrift. Every poor woman who felt she would benefit by the Bible lesson, the hymns and sympathetic words, the clothing club and the savings' bank, knew she would be welcome whether she was

Churchwoman or Dissenter, Tory or Liberal. It is obvious what a much larger class this appealed to than if the meeting had been for mothers belonging to any particular sect or party. Women too often allow themselves to disapprove of those who differ from them on any one point, and if they start a club or a society begin by excluding all of these as being unworthy of help. Even if they admit persons of different views from their own they practically expel them afterwards by using their position of authority to force controverted topics on unwilling hearers. Lady Fry was never guilty of this mistake. If she invited co-operation for a particular purpose, those who came at her call felt secure that so long as they approved that purpose the work would be what they could conscientiously undertake. It was quite true what her old governess said of her: she could carry on several committees at once and keep

all the threads separate. It would be a great mistake to suppose that this power of working with others was due to any lukewarmness about the questions on which she differed from them. Few philanthropic workers have had more earnest views as to the necessity for temperance reform than she had. But she would not make it a test question if she were seeking helpers in another cause. Her religious opinions were very strong, but she worked with every religious sect in Darlington in the pursuit of good objects. The whole secret was that she could and did "keep the threads separate," and if her example in this one respect were generally followed a revolution would be worked in the public efforts throughout the country, especially in those cases where women play an important part.

In 1880, on the election of her husband as member for Darlington, her activity at home was often interrupted by visits to London.

A letter written after a few months in the pleasant house in which they settled in Queen Anne's Gate, Westminster, gives an interesting peep into her first experiences of the great whirlpool of politics into which she was afterwards to be drawn. Writing to her cousin Emma Pease, on June 11, 1880, she says:—

"DEAREST EMMA,—I am sorry my letter had to be written rather hurriedly this evening, but I knew if not posted it would not reach till Sunday, and did not want so long to delay thanks for thy beautiful gift. Thee so kindly say you[1] hear little of us that I feel tempted to tell thee a little more of what passes here. It is indeed a very interesting life. I only wish the days were longer. We

[1] "You" refers to her cousin Emma and another sister living together at South End. Note the use of the singular and plural pronoun—a distinct advantage in the language of Friends.

find this house so very comfortable and convenient. It adds much to our pleasure, and thus far we have had an abundance of fresh air, and Bernie and Hilda greatly enjoy their walks in the parks including occasional visits to Rotten Row. I think the excitement over powdered coachmen and footmen and especially "wigs," which have had a considerable charm for them, is hardly on the wane yet. I miss the elder children and baby much. Still I promised I would try to take a month's holiday with as little care as could be and have been really trying to do so and not to worry about anything, and feel all the brighter in mind and body. It will soon be two years since we were a month away from home, and I hope they will find us all the more agreeable on our return! I am afraid in progress of time one grows rather fretful as well as weary. We look with much delight to spending Sunday week at home, and hope soon

after to have May and Gertie here. So many thanks for the pleasant evening thou gave them.

"The first part of our stay here was diversified by Yearly Meeting, and pleasant visits from friends, Frank and Maria Fox, Fanny and Reynolds and A. Peckover; Christopher and Sarah Bowly were also with us two or three times. Harry Backhouse has been up. Ted and Janet, &c., &c. We dined at Edward Leatham's last Monday and at P. D. Tuckett's on Wednesday, and I was at Joseph's (Sir J. W. Pease, M.P.) on Tuesday evening. Last Sunday we were at Westminster (*i.e.*, the Friend's meeting-house). Six members of Parliament were present, and after a nice Meeting J. B. B. made some very welcoming remarks to those who for a time only belonged to their Meeting, hoping they would feel at home, &c. I have not yet called at J. B. B.'s, but hope to very soon.

. . . .

"William Clark and his wife (John Bright's daughter) were spending the Sunday with John Bright. He looks very nicely, but lonely. Still I think his children are often one or other with him, especially Albert. George Palmer and family are pleasant acquaintances. Altogether there seems quite a bright little circle of Friends here.

. . . . .

"Last week Sally spent at Lewis' quarters which was quite a treat for me, and we did gad about a little together! Took a drive in the Park, called on Miss Harnet, &c. I told Mary Anna I would do no Philanthropics for a month, and fear I have been living a rather selfish life. But the spell is likely to be broken next week, as Lady Bell has proposed to spend an afternoon with me to talk over her wonderful work at Middlesbro', of which I expect thou hast heard. Four hundred men

have now joined the club she opened in the winter, and she is very anxious that a few ladies in the district will unite with her in taking an interest in the work, as she had no idea of the proportions it would assume, and I have agreed to ask Mary, Arthur (Pease), and two or three others to meet her here to hear some particulars of it. We also have an invitation to a drawing-room meeting to hear about Miss Leigh's Paris work. Theodore is greatly interested in his new duties, and much less tired than I expected. Being so near he can always come in to dinner, which makes a nice little break in the evenings to both of us. He generally finds some pleasant member who does not object to walk round to dinner. Thus I hear a good deal of what is passing in the House, and glean a share of the interests. I have been there two nights. The last time Sally Fry and Lizzie Leatham

and I stayed till 1 a.m. to hear Joseph's speech on opium, and the debate which followed. I think it would have done Edward good to see the interest and warm feeling for the right elicited.

. . . . .

"I think thee will be thoroughly tired of this long letter. Theodore would join in much love, but is at the House.

"Ever affectionately,

"SOPHIA T. FRY.

"*June* 11, 1880."

It was not, however, until six years later that her life became greatly influenced by political questions.

POLITICAL WORK

CHAPTER III

POLITICAL WORK

AT the time of the General Election in 1880 many people, women as well as men, who had been accustomed to hold themselves aloof from party politics, took an active share in the struggle. It happens thus from time to time in our country, the political temperature rising to the necessary point either because of the interest of the public questions at issue or because of the overwhelming influence of a leading statesman, and very often from both these causes acting and reacting on one another. For such reforms as the Abolition of the Slave

Trade and the Repeal of the Corn Laws many a philanthropist has felt for the first time that philanthropy and politics are inseparable. In some cases, when the special interest has passed from the political arena, the worker who has been aroused by it takes his rest again with a quiet conscience, but very often a habit of political activity is acquired, and those who have come forward to claim one reform continue to work in furtherance of others, the value of which they have learned in their increased intercourse with their fellow-citizens. This was particularly the case in 1879–80, when Mr. Gladstone awakened the consciences of so many of his fellow-countrymen and countrywomen by the speeches he made during the memorable Midlothian Campaign. In the North of England the enthusiasm ran very high, and Darlington, with its large Nonconformist element, was not likely to

be behind other towns in sympathy with oppressed Christianity in Eastern Europe. Mr. Edmund Backhouse, a member of the Society of Friends, and the principal partner in the Darlington Bank, at that time represented the borough in the Liberal interest, but he announced his intention of retiring at the General Election. Mr. Theodore Fry, who had served for twelve years on the Town Council, and had been elected mayor in 1877–8, seemed to the local party leaders to be his most suitable and natural successor. It is not surprising that Mrs. Theodore Fry, with her unsurpassed energy, combined with that pressing sense of the needs of the poorer classes which any sympathetic woman visiting amongst them must of necessity possess, entered with her whole heart into the contested election, which resulted in the triumphant return of her husband with a majority of 1,331. At

that time there was no organised work on the part of Liberal women, but in many places individuals had placed their services at the disposal of candidates and agents, and had striven in various ways to promote the adoption of the views they held. These attempts were sufficient to attract the attention of some of the leaders, and Mr. Gladstone himself, speaking at Dalkeith on November 26, 1879, on the evils of foreign war, addressed women especially in the following words:—

"I think that in appealing to you ungrudgingly to open your own feelings and bear your own part in a political crisis like this, we are making no inappropriate demand, but are beseeching you to fulfil a duty which belongs to you, which, so far from involving any departure from your character as women, is associated with the fulfilment of that character, and the per-

formance of its duties; the neglect of which would in future times be to you a source of pain and just mortification, and the fulfilment of which will serve to gild your own future years with sweet remembrances, and to warrant you in hoping that, each in your own place and sphere, you have raised your voice for justice, and have striven to mitigate the sorrows and misfortunes of mankind."

As a direct consequence of this advice, and of similar counsel from other authoritative quarters, small societies, after the turmoil of the General Election was over, were formed in Bristol, York, and Darlington, with the object of drawing together women who desired to educate themselves and others in political questions, and assist the Liberal politicians in their several localities whenever the necessity arose. These societies were called Women's Liberal Asso-

ciations, and, starting in 1880 and 1881, may claim to be the pioneers of the several political organisations of women which have since then come into existence. The Primrose League, a Conservative organisation of men and women, held its inaugural meeting in the year 1883. The Women's Liberal Unionist Association was started some time after the split on the Irish Question in 1886, and the two large societies of Liberal women at present existing, viz., the Women's Liberal Federation and the Women's National Liberal Association, were both developments of the movement commenced in Bristol, York, and Darlington in 1880 and 1881.

In London and the provinces the interest felt in the General Elections of 1880 and 1885 by women of all classes was exhibited in various ways. In some places they worked without any organisation, and

in some were invited to become members of men's associations, and their work was repaid by admission to more or less of the privileges of membership. The great want was communication between women working in different parts of the country, and Mrs. Theodore Fry felt this directly she began to organise her own Association in Darlington. Such questions as whether or no the societies of men and women should remain separate or amalgamate under one committee of management, whether subscriptions in money should be compulsory, and many others of a like nature, had to be considered, and could be satisfactorily settled only by consultation with those who were doing the same kind of work under similar conditions. Mrs. Theodore Fry collected a great deal of information by correspondence, and during the first five years of her political work

between 1880 and 1886, which included another sharp contest in Darlington in 1885, at which Mr. Fry was again returned with a majority of over 1,200, she became the acknowledged centre of all those who approved of the education and active participation of women in practical politics. Her business experience in the conduct of the various societies in which she had taken a leading part since her girlhood, enabled her to plan a movement which was destined to grow far more rapidly than its projectors dared to hope, and to become an important factor in the lives of many thousands of families of all classes of the community.

In the spring of 1886 Mrs. Theodore Fry summoned a meeting of women engaged in political work, at the house in Queen Anne's Gate, which she and her husband were occupying during the Parliamentary Session. Mr. Gladstone had just announced his Irish

policy, and the wisest of political prophets were at a loss to say what would happen from day to day. Mr. Theodore Fry from the first gave unhesitating support to Home Rule, and appeared with Mr. John Dillon at a mass meeting held in Battersea, the first of the kind in England, some time before Irish Nationalists were familiar features in English political gatherings. At the Queen Anne's Gate meeting Lady Milbank presided. She was the wife of Sir Frederick Milbank, who for many years represented the North Riding of Yorkshire, and since 1885 had sat for a division of the same county. This lady had long been known in Yorkshire as an earnest supporter of her husband's political views, and long before it was the general custom to do so she had taken an active and intelligent share in the canvass which preceded every contested election. Carefully avoiding anything which approached undue coercion,

she and her daughters visited largely amongst such of the constituents as were considered likely to be without opportunity or desire for information on the political situation, and did their utmost to arouse in the voters and their wives a sense of the responsibility of citizenship. But in spite of this practical experience of what women can do, Lady Milbank was doubtful as to the advisability of any general attempt to organise a Women's Liberal League, and for some time she shrank from the notoriety which would necessarily result for her if she accepted the presidency of the executive committee, as Mrs. Fry urged her to do. Her doubts chiefly arose from the fear that women would be unable to enter into the excitement of political struggles without neglecting, to some extent, their home duties. These scruples Mrs. Theodore Fry overcame by the force of her enthusiasm which she had the power of imparting to

others, and also by the belief she held herself so strongly that it was actually necessary for the success of the Liberal Party that women as well as men should take their share in stirring up the apathetic voters, and inducing the prejudiced to reconsider the questions at issue. Lady Milbank was earnest in her desire for the attainment of Liberal reforms, and she was thus induced to give her great experience and influence to the new scheme. At this preliminary meeting, reports were presented by delegates from seventeen Women's Liberal Associations already existing in the North, in the Midlands, and a few in the southern counties, and having an aggregate membership of over six thousand women. Men were not excluded, and an important resolution recommending the encouragement of Women's Liberal Associations, "with the special object of promoting a more extended knowledge of Liberal principles amongst women of all

classes, such as to enable them to form sound opinions on public questions," was proposed by Professor James Stuart, M.P., and seconded by Sir Hugh Gilzean Reid, then the Liberal representative of Aston Manor. It was decided to form a provisional committee, with the view of ultimately founding such a central organisation as the workers needed, and Mrs. Fry undertook the arduous duties of honorary secretary. The keynote of the meeting had been the necessity of breadth and tolerance in seeking and accepting co-operation, and this principle Mrs. Fry was well able to carry out, for it was the marked characteristic of all the work she ever undertook. In speaking at a Conference at Newcastle, in 1892, she said, by way of advice to those who were forming associations in different parts of the country—

"It is essential to success in forming your committees to secure the full co-operation of all classes of society, and to endeavour to

keep an even balance between different classes. We know that it is the working man's vote that turns our elections, and hence it is of the utmost importance to ascertain the view of that class on the questions of the day, and to have the full sympathy of the wives in the work our committees can undertake. At the same time we need the help of women who have had a superior education, but they must not allow their superiority to be so felt as to mar the harmony of the society to which they belong."

And again in the course of the same speech she dwelt on the advisability of gathering workers from the ranks of philanthropists as well as from the ranks of those already interested in politics—

"We are sure to find in every town a few women who already sympathise with us, but they are not likely to be enough to arouse the locality unless by chance some resident of

great influence takes up the work. There will very likely be in every town a body of intelligent women actively engaged in different vocations, who will tell you they have no time for politics. It is important that you should not give them up as unconvincible. An attempt to carry on political work without their aid is seldom successful, for it is they who understand the special needs of the locality, and very often they are the most experienced workers to be found. The wisest thing is to persuade them that it will be to the advantage of the particular objects they care for to combine with their present efforts a sound knowledge of politics. The devoted Temperance reformer may be easily convinced of the importance of legislative action ; the Charity Organisation worker will be interested in proposals for the better housing of the poor, and those who are absorbed in what they consider to be more

decidedly Church work will acknowledge the value of any action which ensures their town being represented by thoroughly satisfactory candidates."

This advice, to secure the co-operation of Liberal women of all classes of society and of all shades of opinion, was that which Mrs. Fry impressed upon her colleagues from the very beginning, and although in 1886, at the preliminary meeting at which her scheme was first unfolded, she left the making of speeches to others, her influence was felt by all and inspired most of those who actually spoke. It was in this spirit that she carried on the work of the provisional committee, and she was rewarded by the unexpectedly rapid growth of the organisation.

The meeting at Queen Anne's Gate was held in May, 1886, and on February 25, 1887, the first general meeting of the new Federation took place in the Whitehall rooms

of the Metropole Hotel to receive the report of the provisional committee and decide upon the rules under which it was to be henceforth governed. Mrs. Fry had good reason to feel proud of the work she had accomplished in less than a year. In the first place, the seventeen associations represented at the preliminary meeting had increased to forty, and these had an aggregate membership of over ten thousand women. In the second place, Mrs. Fry's dream of the Federation being a common meeting-place for all classes of women had been realised beyond her expectation. Mrs. Gladstone, who had never before taken any part publicly in political work, had consented to be nominated as President of the Federation, and actually presided on this occasion. Many ladies of rank and wealth were there as vice-presidents of the various local associations, and sitting beside them were

factory hands, Board School teachers, the wives and daughters of tradespeople and artisans, and women of all grades in society, who had been chosen by the members of their several associations to represent them at this first general meeting. After Mrs. Fry had read her report Mrs. Gladstone made the first speech she had ever made on a public platform, and it was listened to with an interest and enthusiasm which is explained by the fact that the women who formed the bulk of the large audience knew well what an important share she had taken for nearly fifty years in the work of one of England's greatest citizens. She spoke in a subdued voice, but with deliberation, and the emphasis with which she marked each sentence, enabled nearly all to hear her. It may have required all Mrs. Fry's enthusiasm and perseverance to persuade Mrs. Gladstone to undertake the duty, but having once con-

sented she put her whole heart into it, and none who were present that day will ever forget the earnestness of the beautiful face as it was turned towards the audience for some moments before she began to speak. These were the few words she said :—

"You have all heard with great interest, I have no doubt, the statement which Mrs. Fry has made. In taking the chair here to-day, I do so because I believe that there are a number of women anxious to work for the Liberal cause, and able to do so with advantage. Such work on the part of women, as of men, should be open and clear, and brought to bear by direct rather than by backstairs influence. It is to embody these views that I understand our association exists. Women's associations who join it are each free to form their own programme. We here are not bound by their programmes. There may be some more advanced, and

some who, like myself, are rather old-fashioned as to our views of the part to be taken by women in the world's work. And, do not think when I admit that my views are old-fashioned that I think they are out of date. I stick to my guns about that. But we are all united in our desire to help the Liberal cause, which has always been the cause of progress and justice to all, and women are able in this to give powerful help. Our party has good prospects just now. The situation is full of hope. I welcome you to take part in a winning cause, and I wish you all God-speed in your work."

The new organisation was christened the Women's Liberal Federation, and started under good auspices and with fair promise of success. Mrs. Theodore Fry was elected one of the honorary secretaries, and devoted a great part of her time for some years to the correspondence necessitated by her office,

and also to personal visits to many of the local branches. She was in constant requisition as a speaker at Liberal meetings, and supplied something which no one else could give in the same degree. As the originator and one of the principal officers of the Federation, she represented it with authority at political gatherings. But her genial manner and easy, informal style of speaking prevented her presence giving any stiff official tone to the proceedings in which she took part, and the most nervous beginners were encouraged by her to do their best. She frequently declared in letters to the newspapers and in the speeches she made from public platforms that the object of the central union she had been instrumental in forming was "to assist and not to control the local branches." This important principle was never forgotten, and in addressing local associations she freely gave them her

experience, and quoted that of others, but made it quite clear that she left her suggestions for their use and consideration, and had no idea of dictating to them what their action on any particular point should be.

During most of the time which intervened between the General Elections of 1886 and 1892 the principal political questions had reference to Ireland, and it was in the study of these that the members of the Federation were chiefly engaged. Mrs. Fry was no stranger to Ireland. As early as 1856, when she was only nineteen, she had visited it with her parents. In 1878 she had made a tour through Donegal with her husband, and after seeing the Giant's Causeway had travelled from Portrush to Larne in a tandem car. After Mr. Gladstone had introduced his famous measures in 1886 Mr. Theodore Fry paid frequent visits to the more disturbed districts to make personal investiga-

tion into the condition of the people and the administration of the law. In 1892 Mrs. Fry accompanied him, and they went to several interesting places, including Letterfrack, where Miss Sturge was engaged in establishing a basket-making industry. During this tour Mrs. Fry was able to examine for herself the conditions of life among the poorer classes in town and country. On her return she spoke at York and many other places, chiefly dwelling on the necessity of the development of the resources of the country so as to avoid the cruel necessity of emigration. She was much interested in such practical and business-like enterprises as Miss Sturge's at Letterfrack, but acknowledged the pressing need of some sweeping reform in the land laws which would result in a more equitable distribution of the land among the population. Mrs. Fry also advocated active tem-

perance work in Ireland, and regretted the laxity with which the licensing laws are administered. At the same time she carefully abstained from any wholesale accusations of intemperance against the Irish, and was fond of comparing the excise statistics of that country with those of other parts of the United Kingdom. Mrs. Fry was an advocate of Mr. Gladstone's proposals for the better government of Ireland before her visits across St. George's Channel, and her views were confirmed and strengthened by what she learned during her tour. She said at York shortly after her return: "Of one thing I am quite certain, viz., that Irishmen and women are fully able to understand and to govern their own people."

Another question which was much discussed amongst the members of the Federation was the advisability of extending the Parliamentary Suffrage to women. Some

prominent and valuable members were opposed to such a measure in any form. Either they disapproved of the principle of women being directly represented in Parliament or they considered that although the principle was good the right time had not arrived for carrying it out. There was another section of the Federation as extreme in the opposite direction, who not only thought it desirable to enfranchise women at the earliest possible date, but also desired that this should be a declared object of the Women's Liberal Federation, printed as such on its published programme. The women who held the latter view were in favour of devoting a considerable proportion of time at the meetings held by the Federation to the discussion of questions which they considered were specially important to women, and which were rather moral and social in their nature than political in the

ordinary sense of the word. Mrs. Theodore Fry held views which enabled her to sympathise with and understand the position of both these extreme sections. She had never publicly advocated the political enfranchisement of women, but believed the time would come when a liberal measure would be accepted by the country, by means of which the responsibilities and interests of citizenship would be extended to women. On the other hand she considered that the great Liberal organisation which she had herself originated was not available for the promotion of reforms about which Liberals are in disagreement, and which are in fact not part of an accepted party programme. Speaking at a Conference of the Federation, held in Newcastle in 1891, she said, after carefully examining the effects which would be produced by the Federation making Women's Suffrage a plank in its platform :—

"Again, how would such an addition to our objects affect those who have already joined us, and who do not yet see their way to granting women the Parliamentary Suffrage? Certainly they would have a perfect right to withdraw from us, and this would, I am sure, cause a very serious defection. It would be a defection, not of numerical strength alone, but of political power. Possibly some of you will answer that women who do not see with us on this vital question are not worthy of unitin with us in political work. This is a most narrow-minded view, but I am bound to say it is one which has been suggested to me. The very object of our Federation is to draw in these women so that they may gradually become more interested in every question which benefits womankind and mankind.

"How is education to be advanced by the

exclusion of those who are not yet fully enlightened?

"Then again I am met by the opinion that a Women's Federation is practically useless until women have the vote. To this I would reply that we have formed this Federation on existing conditions of law. We could not afford to wait until the advocates of Women's Suffrage had carried their measure, and we have abundantly proved by the value of our work that it would have been most unwise to have allowed such a delay.

"We are at present educating a class whom the Suffrage movement does not reach, and whose interest in politics and whose connection with earnest, intelligent, and yet judicious women-workers will induce themselves and the nation to look more favourably upon the capability of women to discharge the duty of voters.

"Shall we not as a united Federation

persevere in this course, endeavouring to spread political life and light in every sphere that it is possible for us to reach, working in harmony with all who seek the good and the enlightenment of mankind?

"We gladly realise that the advocates of Women's Suffrage, our Temperance friends, and other social reformers have very enlightened and powerful organisations, sufficient to carry their purposes to a successful issue, which can work most harmoniously with our own without that amalgamation which might tend to fetter usefulness and prevent extension.

"The time may come when there will be more unanimity of thought. Let us then persevere in the great cause set before us, realising the unity of all earnest workers and the liberty of individual thought."

These wise counsels unfortunately failed to effect a compromise between the different

parties, and in 1892 Mrs. Fry, with several prominent members of the Federation, thought it best to retire from that body and work for the principles of Liberalism on the lines they could thoroughly approve. After several months for deliberation and inquiry it was considered advisable to form a union to centralise and assist the local associations which found themselves no longer in sympathy with the old Federation under its new management. This union was called the Women's National Liberal Association, and its rules were carefully drawn so as to guard against the misunderstandings which had occasioned so much friction before. In connection with this Association Mrs. Theodore Fry carried on her work with all her old energy, attending meetings in various parts of the country, corresponding with a great number of people who sought her advice and co-operation, and taking a leading part in the

annual meetings which were held in London every May. From the commencement until her death she acted as vice-president of the executive of the Association.

In order to show the estimation in which she was held by her colleagues I may quote from a letter written by one of them to a member of her family on hearing of her death:—

"The loss to us, her fellow-workers, is absolutely irreparable. I am dismayed as I look to the future. She *was* the work. She created us. She kept us going. Her faith and courage never failed, and her sweetness knew no intermission. All through troubled and conflicting times I never heard from her one harsh, unkind judgment of either friend or opponent, and her abounding generosity was a full but silent stream."

The slight sketch I have given of the difference of opinion existing among the

members of the earlier organisation indicates the nature of the political work which was done by Lady Fry outside the Association of women to which she belonged. She worked heartily for the return of Parliamentary candidates who were in her opinion likely to further the adoption of the reforms which she believed to be necessary for the welfare of the country. The fact of a candidate not agreeing with her in every particular did not prevent or even weaken her endeavours in his behalf. Nor did she confine herself to the election of representatives in her own borough. She had considerable influence throughout the northern counties and in some parts of the South of England, and wherever she could help the cause she had so much at heart she was ready to do so. Thus during the General Election which took place in 1892, besides doing her utmost in Darlington in the hardly contested fight

which resulted in the return of her husband by the narrow majority of fifty-seven, she did much in the Liberal interest in several boroughs and county divisions in Durham, Yorkshire, Westmoreland, and even farther afield. In 1895 the unfortunate accident which she and her husband had recently sustained in Italy entirely prevented her from doing anything but attending two or three meetings in Darlington on the eve of the election, and in many committee-rooms it was felt that the old enthusiasm was gone in her absence.

The large majority of Conservative and Liberal Unionist members returned to Parliament in 1895 paralysed the work of many inexperienced politicians who were surprised at so great a change in public opinion, and had not learned to expect the swing of the pendulum as an ordinary occurrence in political affairs. Lady Fry seemed neither

astonished nor disheartened. Directly she was sufficiently recovered from the effects of her serious accident, and perhaps sooner than she was really capable of undergoing much fatigue, she recommenced her self-imposed task of inducing women to study the political questions of the moment, and use their knowledge to promote the interests of the party of progress. She was in favour of making every election, municipal, educational, or parliamentary, the occasion of an active and intelligent canvass, and unless special reasons existed to make such a course inexpedient she approved of such elections being fought on party lines. She considered that by such means greater interest is aroused, and a larger percentage of voters induced to exercise their right of voting. She frequently urged the associations of women with which she was connected to make organised attempts to bring

the women voters to the poll in all the elections in which they possess the suffrage, and insisted upon this being the best and most practical way of leading up to that further enfranchisement which some were so eager to obtain. In such directions as these, and in the bye-elections which took place from time to time, Lady Fry found ample opportunity to show her unabated interest in the Liberal cause after the defeat of 1895, and her example of hope and cheerfulness did much in sustaining the courage of others. The following account of the nature of her political influence outside her own borough is given by Mrs. Smithson, who served for some time as a member of the executive of the Federation in its early days, and who has been the honorary secretary of the Women's Liberal Association at York since its formation.

"My impressions of Lady Fry do not

date further back than about seven years. The work done by women in the General Election of 1885 had brought the older Women's Liberal Associations more prominently forward and originated a number of new ones, and it was in the spring of 1886 that Lady Fry asked me to call at her house in London to discuss a scheme for organizing the existing W.L.A's. into a league or union. For at least a year after that I was in constant correspondence with her about this scheme, which, within a few months, shaped itself into a federation, and is now represented by our W.N.L.A. Afterwards, when Lady Fry was joined on the executive committee by a number of capable, political women residing in London, who were able to give continual personal attention to the work, the share of those of us who lived at a distance became slighter.

"What especially impressed me on my first

meeting with Lady Fry was the thoughtful kindness and geniality which went with her earnestness and enthusiasm—sets of qualities which we are all accustomed to meet separately, but less often in close combination. In my experience she was never so much absorbed in public work as to lose personal interest in her co-workers, or to give them the feeling of being looked upon as mere instruments to an end. Leaders of "causes" are particularly liable to make this mistake, excusable enough, no doubt, but very irritating to their lieutenants, and extremely damaging to their own influence. And the human kindness which was so marked a feature in Lady Fry seemed to take nothing away from the strenuousness of her labours. In the early days when a constitution was being formed for the Federation, and conferences and meetings being arranged, she never seemed to spare

pains or trouble. This was the more surprising as we came to realise the number and variety of her interests, educational, philanthropic, and religious, as well as political. She must have possessed an uncommon capacity for keeping a number of threads in hand without entanglement. Undoubtedly it was to her organising power that the Federation of W.L.A.'s was due in the first instance. It was she who performed the unseen work involved in the first planning of it. Able and brilliant colleagues she had, who came into the work by degrees, but these would be the first to allow that it was Lady Fry who prepared the ground, and played the difficult part of pioneer. Later on, all that forbearance, amiability, and a determination to keep the peace before all things, could do to avoid the split which occurred in 1892, was done by Lady Fry. The split, how-

ever, was bound to come in an executive committee the two main parties in which differed so widely on essential points that the bond of a common Liberalism was powerless to unite them in any one course of action.

"After the first year of the Federation's existence I knew Lady Fry best as a most sympathetic friend and adviser in local political work, and an effective speaker at our meetings. Our York Association owes her very much, for her help to us went far beyond giving her name as vice-president, and we received constant proof of her sympathetic interest in our work. A local politician of experience used to say that he considered the success of our meetings assured when Lady Fry would consent to preside over them. The combined sweetness and dignity of her manner on a platform, together with a fluency and

readiness which never seemed to fail her, made her extremely popular.

"Any attempt to convey an impression of Lady Fry which should leave unmentioned her social and domestic qualities, would be absurdly incomplete. No one could share in the large hospitalities of Woodburn or notice her charm and sweetness as hostess without a conviction that her capacity for public work was at any rate equalled by her success in home organisation."

CONCLUSION

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

IT would be a great mistake to suppose that the political work described in the last chapter by any means monopolised Lady Fry's attention even during the last years of her life, although it undoubtedly demanded an ever-increasing share of her time. But until the last two years she was blessed with unusually good health, and her energy seemed to have no limit. We have already seen that when she increased the number and the responsibility of her philanthropic efforts she did not in any way

neglect her home duties. At the time, when she was organising perhaps one of the most successful Mothers' Meeting in the country, raising funds to build a General Hospital, acting as manager of a British School, and as a leading member of the Committee of a High School, giving practical aid in the working of the Darlington Association for the Care of Girls, in arranging the work of a nurse and Bible-women, and joining in innumerable other endeavours, we find her the centre of a large social circle, taking her part at one period as the Mayoress of Darlington, at another as the wife of the borough member, and always with a well-ordered household, the very type of kindly hospitality and family comfort. As her children grew up she watched their education, letting them benefit by all that the advance of civilisation had done since her own childhood. In encouraging

her daughters to take their share of public work she avoided the common mistake of assuming that girls must care for exactly the same things as their mother cares for, and sought rather to allow each to develop her own best qualities. The love she had felt for her children when they were little was reawakened by her grandchildren, the infant son and daughter of her eldest son John Pease, who married in 1891 the daughter of her old friends, Frank and Maria Fox, of Plymouth. In the midst of exciting and fatiguing work she would steal an hour to spend in the nursery with the baby on her knee. On one occasion when her grandson, then about a year old, had been left in her charge at Woodburn she brought him into a room where a friend was waiting to discuss with her some troublesome business in which a good deal of worry and disappointment had to be

faced. Holding up the little fellow with great affection she said, "I do not think one can be entirely unhappy with a baby in the house." But it was not in her nature to be "entirely unhappy" about anything. The gleam of sunshine was always there. Perhaps this was one reason for her doing more work than most women would find possible.

She did not neglect home duties for philanthropy, and she did not neglect her philanthropic duties when she took up political work. We have seen how the committees she joined were regularly attended, except during necessary absence from home, through long years and not merely while they were novelties. It has been a problem to many who saw her in public and knew her at home to discover how she got through her work. In addition to the physical health and the personal

characteristics already mentioned we should also note the remarkable habits she had of business-like method, very probably derived from the intimate companionship with her father. Her boudoir at Woodburn, furnished with several desks for different kinds of work and decorated with a few favourite portraits and pictures, was the scene of many a long spell of application when letters were answered and afterwards carefully sorted and docketed. She was always particular to bring this sort of thing up to date before leaving home for any holiday or long stay in London. Her household accounts were carefully kept by herself and systematically posted in a ledger. Until recently, when one of her daughters relieved her of the duty, she kept the accounts of the clubs connected with her Mothers' Meeting with the greatest exactness. It is probable that this methodical habit enabled her to meet the calls of a corre

spondence which would otherwise have been quite overwhelming.

For several years (from 1879 to 1886) besides their home in Darlington and their temporary homes in London, Mr. and Mrs. Theodore Fry had a delightful retreat at Rydal, near Grasmere. Here the formalities of town could be put aside, and with their children, and very often with a chosen circle of friends, they enjoyed rest and recreation which enabled them to take up their work again with renewed strength. All her old love of country life made Mrs. Fry delight in these visits to the Lake district, but even there she did not forget her missionary spirit, for she used to visit the quarrymen in the district during their dinner hour, and gave them suitable matter to read on the subjects she thought would interest them. Nearly every year she and her husband spent several weeks on the Continent, or occasion-

ally in Ireland or Scotland, and wherever she was she not only enjoyed the scenery and places of interest but studied the conditions of the people, thus increasing her knowledge of politics in the highest sense of the word.

During her visits to London she necessarily spent a considerable time in receiving and returning the visits of her large circle of relations, friends, and acquaintances, and her hearty, straightforward manner won her a quick and easy road to the confidence and affection of all who had much intercourse with her. Her conversation was almost always about practical matters in which she could take genuine interest. She was not in the habit of discussing theories, religious, political, or social. She preferred to choose questions from which she and those with whom she was talking were in general agreement, and then to consider the best

methods of promoting their common desire. She was not fond of altercation, but in committee or on other occasions when she found herself differing from others as to a question to be decided by vote she would state her views with great decision and courage, without exaggeration or temper, and she possessed the somewhat rare quality of being able to hear with patience and open-mindedness the opinions of others. Many of those who worked with her for years are still puzzled to know how well she overcame the little difficulties which nearly always occur when several persons frequently meet to manage the details of any scheme. It is probable that good temper and reasonable respect for the opinions of other people had as much to do with it as anything else, but we must also remember that the energy and perseverance which made her an invaluable colleague gave to her own opinions as ex-

pressed in committee great weight, and she was thus able to turn the scale in many cases without much contention.

In the active life we have been describing there was not very much time to devote to reading, but it would be incorrect to suppose that Lady Fry was not fond of books. In the boudoir at Woodburn there were some shelves filled with her own favourite volumes, many of them the relics of her childhood. In early life she had committed to memory considerable portions of the poetical works of favourite authors, and in her later years she could recite these without difficulty if, for example, she were nursing one of her children through the long hours of convalescence. From time to time a modern writer would arouse her admiration, and in the intervals of her busy life she would read and re-read his works. But in general the few books she loved when she was a girl re-

tained their place in her estimation, and she sought in them any literary recreation she desired. She was very prone to give books, both religious and secular works, to friends, or even slight acquaintances, if she thought she knew of a particular one that would suit them. Some people administer books and tracts like doses of physic, and think only of the effect to be produced if the patient will swallow it. This was not at all the spirit in which Lady Fry chose her gifts. She loved to make a book known to one to whom she thought it would bring happiness exactly as she would introduce two persons to one another, believing that they would become congenial co-workers in some useful object.

Amongst the Birthday honours of 1894 was the creation of the baronetage of Sir Theodore Fry. Lady Fry was deeply affected by the widespread sympathy evinced on the announcement of this recognition of good

work. Amongst the congratulations that poured in by telegram and letter there were two from Canada, which she particularly noticed as they arrived almost simultaneously. One was from the Countess of Aberdeen and the other from a working man formerly employed in Darlington. It seemed difficult at first for those who had worked with her as Mrs. Theodore Fry to learn to think of her with her new name. But the individual was the same, and in a very short time women of all classes and with all manner of schemes on hand were clamouring for the approval, the sympathy, and the active help of Lady Fry just as they had been in the habit of asking them from Mrs. Theodore Fry.

The period intervening between the General Election of 1892, when Mr. Gladstone returned to power with a very small Liberal majority, and the General Election of 1895 was one of unremitting labour for active politicians.

Lady Fry took her full share in the work, not only in her husband's constituency but in all parts of the country. In the Cleveland division of Durham, in Durham city, in Stockton, in Westmoreland, and in several other places close connection with the principal Liberal workers caused her to be almost as much interested as if she had been a resident, and her friendship with a great number of sitting Members and proposed Liberal candidates made it difficult for her to avoid giving assistance sometimes by correspondence and the employment of carefully selected deputies, but often by appearing herself on the platform in many parts of the United Kingdom. In the spring of 1895 she and her husband were in great need of rest, and having visited Italy five or six times since the tour already mentioned in the year of their marriage they again selected that country as the best place in

which they could obtain it. A visit to the Italian lakes was planned for the Whitsuntide recess, and immediately the House rose they started. A few days after their arrival they were driving along the bank of the Lago D'Orta in an open carriage. When they were about three miles from the little inn of Omegna, their carriage was overturned, in consequence of the horse violently shying, and both Lady Fry and her husband were seriously hurt. Lady Fry was precipitated into the margin of the lake and was seriously bruised by the fall, but she was also nervously affected by seeing the great injuries which her husband had incurred by having been thrown under the carriage which could not at once be removed. Great discomfort, fatigue, and sleeplessness followed this deplorable accident, until they were joined by one of their daughters and proper accommodation and medical attendance could be secured. In

the meantime, another General Election became imminent, and Sir Theodore's enforced absence was keenly felt by his supporters in Darlington. He returned with his wife two days before the election, and many a woman in Darlington declared that the Liberals must win as "Lady Fry had shown her face among them." The result was the return of the Unionist candidate, and was in accordance with the general change of public opinion exhibited throughout the country. No doubt the excitement of the election added greatly to the effects of the accident abroad, and Lady Fry frequently complained of fatigue when she resumed her work in a way which she had never done before. Her efforts were not slackened, but they became at times very difficult to make. At the great Liberal gathering at Huddersfield in 1896 she was present with several intimate friends and felt much inte-

rest in the discussion of the rules of the National Liberal Federation and the declaration of its policy and management which took place under the presidency of Dr. Spence Watson. She keenly enjoyed the speech of Lord Rosebery at the mass meeting in the evening and occupied a seat on the platform surrounded by her own friends, including Lady Dale, of Darlington. She also attended a soirée, at which the Liberal delegates and their friends were entertained, and where she met numbers of co-workers from all parts of the country. No one in that vast crowd was more full of hope for the future, nor more reasonable in appreciating the defeat of the moment than Lady Fry. But she felt the fatigue and excitement in a way that was quite a new experience to her, and she was perfectly conscious of the fact and spoke of it to the friends who were staying with her. As

months passed she resumed more and more of the old engagements in Darlington and London and elsewhere, refusing numberless appeals and yet attending more committees and meetings and paying more visits to rich and poor, especially poor, and writing and receiving more letters than people of average strength could attempt. In spite of cold and neuralgia which attacked her in the early spring of 1897 she insisted upon continuing her usual round of work, until a tour in Spain was planned with her husband and one of her daughters for the Easter holidays, and it was hoped that this rest and change would be of great benefit to her health. On the 11th of March she attended the Friends' Monthly Meeting at Stockton, and on the following day was present at an important meeting of the Darlington Temperance Society. Besides numerous other engagements, kept in spite of the indisposition from which she was

suffering, two fatiguing political meetings were attended on the 18th and 19th of March. On the 18th she presided at the Annual Meeting of the Darlington Women's Liberal Association, and on the following day addressed the members of the Barnard Castle Women's Liberal Association. To the last she was faithful to her Mothers' Meeting, and as the departure for Spain was fixed for Wednesday, the 24th, and this was the regular day for the meeting, a special one was held on Monday, the 22nd, at which she bade the members goodbye. This was the last occasion on which she was called upon to exert her unselfish devotion to the good of others. The words she spoke on that day are treasured up by those who heard them as very precious remembrances and they have not yet learned to allude to that last meeting without emotion.

Lady Fry passed through London on the 24th, and saw a medical man, who approved her journey to the Continent, although she was still suffering. She herself was persuaded the journey would do her good. After a short rest in Paris the travellers proceeded to Biarritz, where they stayed at the Grand Hotel. Here a serious change for the worse occurred; medical assistance was obtained, and Lady Fry died early in the morning of Tuesday, the 30th of March. The news of her death was felt as a terrible blow in Darlington and by the women throughout the country who had for so long counted on her support. The poor had lost not merely a benefactor but a personal friend. Leaders of various charities and political societies felt at first paralysed by the loss of the wise, moderating influence and never-tiring energy, for both of which she was unrivalled. Over a

thousand messages were received by her family, including over one hundred resolutions of regret and of condolence passed by various public bodies, and not a few of these were prompted by respect for her character in spite of an entire difference of opinion between them and her. Not only did these expressions come from every sect of the Christian Church but from Liberal Unionist Associations and from commercial bodies well known to be predominantly Conservative. One letter from the Hopetown Hall Adult School may be quoted as expressing with touching simplicity the universal feeling of the poor in Darlington :—

"*To Sir Theodore Fry, Bart.*

"SIR,—At the Monthly Meeting of the Hopetown Hall Adult School, held on the 6th inst., I was requested on behalf of the

scholars to convey to yourself and your family a message of sympathy with you all in this great loss—a loss not confined within the limits of your own family but to thousands who have come under that warm sunshine of a loving, generous heart. I can truly say the fervent, earnest expression of all who gave expression to their thoughts was deepfelt at their loss, and also the genuine sorrow for you all. Our earnest desire is that the Lord will be ever close, and those words of love to us all may ever be a solace: 'Behold I am with thee.'

"Your most respectful,

"J. F. J——."

The great variety of class, sect, and political opinion which was represented by these resolutions was equally remarkable in the letters written by individuals. Dignitaries

of the Church, Catholic priests, and Dissenting ministers, Conservatives and Liberals, rich and poor, learned and simple, expressed in different ways, but all with the true ring of genuine feeling, their personal sorrow and their sympathy with those who had lost something more than a friend and colleague. This unanimity of feeling was most strikingly shown on the day of her funeral, which took place on Saturday, April 3rd. No arrangements were made for anything but the usual quiet interment in the Friends' graveyard behind the Darlington meeting-house, and service in accordance with the customs of the Society. But the people of Darlington themselves made the day one of public mourning, and the event was a striking and an imposing display of the affection and respect inspired by an unselfish life. No more fitting resting-place could

have been chosen. Her grandfather, Edward Pease, ever to be remembered in connection with one of our greatest institutions, the railway system; John Pease, known during his life as the "Silver Trumpet of the North," and always thought of by her not only as her father but as her friend and as the inspirer of her earliest efforts; Sophia Pease, the gentle mother, who had striven conscientiously to keep up the discipline of the schoolroom, but had let her off very lightly in the matter of afternoon lessons; Edward Pease, the cousin at South End, by whom and by whose wife her warmest friendship had been awakened, and numbers of others more or less connected with her family have all been buried there, with no ceremony but the simple words spontaneously spoken by any of those present who feel moved to do so. Amongst those who

spoke on the occasion of Lady Fry's funeral was her brother-in-law, Mr. J. B. Hodgkin, for so many years her faithful coadjutor in every good work in Darlington. Others said a few words, including two ladies, for, as is well known, the Society of Friends makes no distinction of sex in the privileges accorded to its members.

It only remains to say that one other proof of the worth of Lady Fry's work is to be found in the fact that it has not ended with her life. The loss of such a worker must always cause a great shock, and it is possible that the gap may never be so well filled again. But the organisations which have been built up with long years of perseverance ought not to be fatally affected by the withdrawal of any one individual, and really healthy ones can always recover themselves and con-

tinue to exist as memorials of the energy and wisdom of their founders. So it seems to be with nearly all the good works in which Lady Fry took a leading part. She did not allow people to depend upon her blindly and childishly. She worked on even terms with her colleagues; it was "counsel asked and counsel given." Every lieutenant was trained to take the place of the captain when the occasion arose. Hence in philanthropic and political work as in the inner circle of her own home, after the effects of the shock of so unexpected a loss were over, the first thought was, "How would she have advised us to act now?" and all is being done to carry on uninterruptedly as effectively as possible the work of her life at home and abroad. Thus she unconsciously built for herself the greatest monument that could be devised, and

one that is likely to last beyond the time when those who were fortunate enough to know her personally are still living to tell of the woman they loved.

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