

Strength in Weakness

M A N I F E S T:

IN THE

L I F E,

Various Trials, and Christian Testimony, of that faithful
Servant and Handmaid of the Lord,

ELIZABETH STIRREDGE,

Who departed this Life, at her House in Hempstead, in
Hertfordshire, in the 72d Year of her Age.

Written by her own Hand.

Shewing her pious Care and Counsel to her Children, and
according to their Desire, made Publick : Also for the
Instruction and Benefit of many other Parents and Children
concerned.

PROV. xxxi. 13. *Who can find a virtuous Woman? &c.*
Verse 30. *A Woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.*

THE FOURTH EDITION.

L O N D O N,

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A

P R E F A C E

*Concerning the AUTHOR, and the following
Book.*

AS the memory of the just is blessed, so there is a justice due to their memories, who walked in the path of the just, which is as a shining light, and are the blessed who die in the Lord, who rest from their labours, and their works follow them, to their everlasting reward in the kingdom of heaven : or for the example and admonition of them they leave behind. And that is either by publishing their own memoirs of their lives, when they leave any, which is instructing, and often not the least edifying, or else by supplying that where wanting, in commemorating them otherwise, according to the example of the Holy Scripture, even concerning women as well as men ; the first of which is in the following relation, written by an early disciple of Christ in this gospel-day of her labours in it ; and so the less need of the latter, viz. to say much of the author ; her own book being a sufficient memorial of her, and what she was in her day; only as a necessary introduction to her account, I have this in short to premise concerning her.

I knew her, and was acquainted with her many years, being my country-woman; and I have this testimony that

lives in my heart concerning her, that she was a religious exercised woman, always seeking the best things, and through the goodness of God, found him whom her soul loved. An honest, sincere, tender-hearted, zealous woman for God, and underwent many deep exercises inwardly, and also outwardly, by reason of contrary spirits who opposed the work of the Lord, and testimony of truth in his servants and handmaids, with whom she was often concerned, and bore a faithful testimony as the Lord laid it upon her, and made way for her, being a serious, weighty, concerned woman in her spirit, a true mourner in Sion for the abominations of the times. She had a solid savoury testimony for the truth, which she received early, and was faithful and diligent in it according to her gift, and was well received and esteemed for her service by the honest-hearted in and about Bristol, and Chew-magna, in the County of Somerset, where, and in the counties adjacent, her service mostly lay; till she and her husband and family removed to Hempstead, in Hertfordshire, in the year 1688, where she was well received, as by the following testimonies appear. And she used to come to my house at London, when she came to the yearly meeting, and I was often comforted in her savoury testimony, and to find that the Lord's presence was so fresh with her, in her latter days. And after several years abode at Hempstead, and labour and service there, and thereaway, she died in the Lord, and laid down her head in peace, in a good old age, in the year 1706, and of her age 72, and is undoubtedly entered into rest.

And as for the following papers written with her own hand, in relation to her life, labours, travels, exercises, trials, service, and sufferings, with desire they should be published after her decease, for the benefit of her children and others: they were some time since put into my hand to peruse, as falling mostly within the compass of my knowledge; especially that part in relation to her sufferings and imprisonment at Ivelchester, I being then a prisoner there for the testimony of truth, in the time of the great imprisonment for meetings, &c. in the year 1683, she being

taken at a meeting at Chew-magna, with near thirty more, and sent to prison by that wicked persecutor, and under-sheriff of the county, John Helliard, of Bristol, at the instigation of the priest of the parish; both which were soon after cut off by death. The said priest Cross immediately thereupon, in a very remarkable manner, as is herein related; and the said Helliard, not long after being smitten with great terror and horror of mind for the violence he had committed on the people of God in that city, &c. keeping men to watch with him night and day for fear the devil would fetch him away; as I have been credibly informed he expressed. As another great persecutor there, R. Oliffe, who had made such spoil of the said people, as I heard, crying out he was damned, and that they should make restitution, i.e. to them he had wronged, which he was never able to do; and so both died miserable, and several others.

Such a thrifty trade, says one, is persecution, that it leaves men never a friend in heaven or on earth. Oh that others would take warning in time by such examples of divine vengeance, to avoid such things, and do no more so wickedly. For as the memory of the just is blessed, and the righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance, so the name of the wicked shall rot; and wherever Helliard's name is mentioned, it stinks, as all persecutors do.

And according to desire, I have for the truth's sake, and the respect I had to her, and owe to her memory, carefully perused and put in order the following relation; which I have been comforted in reading of, being very solid, serious, weighty, matter of experience, warning, exhortation, and counsel, written in a good sense and understanding of the things of God, and mysteries of his kingdom, and very sound and savoury in the expression of it. To which is added, a short supplement of the last fourteen years of her life; collected chiefly from her son's account; with an epistle to friends, and a warning to others, formerly printed; all which I doubt not will have an answer in every conscience of such as read it in the fear of God; and hope it may be of service to her posterity, and

benefit of others; and that it will tend to the glory of God, and the comfort and edification of his people; to whose perusal, in much love and sincerity, I recommend it, and all to the grace of God, which is able to build them up, and give them an inheritance among them that are sanctified; which is the sincere desire of, Reader,

Thy real Friend,

JOHN WHITING.

London, the 21st of the
2d Month, 1711.

A

T E S T I M O N Y

From several Friends belonging to the Meeting, at Hemel, Hempstead, and the Parts adjacent, in the County of Hertford, concerning E. STIRREDGE, the 8th of the Third Month, 1711.

OUR dear friends, James and Elizabeth Stirredge, came here to inhabit about the year 1688, whose coming into these parts was seasonable, and we believe ordered by the good providence of God; for it had a good tendency to the strength and edification of friends; for about that time, some were busy to weaken love among brethren, under specious pretences of liberty, &c. But the said Elizabeth being gifted for the ministry, and acquainted with the wiles and subtil devices of the enemy, was made a serviceable instrument in our defence and preservation; being attend with power, wisdom, and true zeal, for the prosperity of the truth, and people of God. She was sound and savoury in her doctrine and publick ministry and tender and affectionate in Christian advice and counsel, to the comfort of the afflicted and exercised in spirit; declaring that the way to the kingdom of God is through tribulation; agreeable to the ancient account we read of in holy scripture. And she did frequently press friends to sincerity and uprightness of heart. And although the Lord had given her a large gift, and a good utterance, she was not forward to appear in her publick service, but as an immediate concern came upon her. She was a good example in her frequenting meetings, both on the first and weekdays; and was there often made instrumental to the stirring up of the pure minds of many, by way of remembrance, to our mutual comfort, by her fresh and living testimony.

Her husband also, who departed this life some time since her decease, was an honest zealous friend, and her fellow-helper in the work of the Lord, in his proper gift; and our true friend and brother: and they were both very near and acceptable to friends here, and here-aways. But what shall we say, the Lord having called them to his rest in good old age; but earnestly desire, as they frequently did, that the young generation might come up in faithfulness, and fill up the rooms of all such, being there unto spirit by the Lord, that his name may be more and more known, and glorified to all succeeding generations, world without end. Amen.

Our said friend Elizabeth Stirredge, departed this life at Hempstead aforesaid, on the 7th of the ninth month, 1706, and was buried in friends burying-ground at Wood-End, in the same parish.

John Edmunds,
Moses West,
Edmund Neal,

Michael Tirpin,
Michael Tirpin, Jun.
James Stirredge.

JOHN THORNTON'S *Account of his*
Neighbour ELIZABETH STIRREDGE.

I having opportunity by dwelling in Hempstead several years before she departed this life, had an intimate acquaintance with her; and as the Lord had given her a measure of his Holy Spirit to guide, lead, and direct her in the way of peace, he also gave her a large talent in a publick testimony, in which she was serviceable in our meetings; being attended with power, wisdom, and true zeal; so that her testimony was sound and savoury, to the comforting of the upright-hearted; she being many times drawn forth to encourage the exercised and afflicted in spirit; and led to declare, that the way to the kingdom of God is through tribulations. And also would frequently press friends to upright-heartedness, sincerity, and integrity; she being also a good example in her conversation. And although the Lord had given her a large gift in a verbal testimony, yet she was backward to appear therein, except she found it was immediately required of her. She was zealously concerned against that spirit that led into separation and division, and also against all manner of deceit and hypocrisy. She commonly had a sharp and piercing testimony against such that the great enemy had so misled. She was a diligent frequenter of meetings, both on first and week-days. Her husband also being an honest and zealous friend, and since her, departed this life; they being both serviceable to truth and friends, are missed. But what shall I say? The will of God be done; for fully satisfied am I, that they are gone to rest, and entered into joy and happiness, where all sorrows cease, and tears are wiped away.

JOHN THORNTON.

JOHN NEALE'S *Testimony concerning*
ELIZABETH STIRREDGE.

IT is in my mind to write something as a testimony concerning my dear and well-beloved friend Elizabeth Stirredge, deceased.

She was one who received the truth in the love of it, in her young years, as I have heard from her own mouth, and as in her following book is more fully related, wherefore I need say no more of that, but descend to write something concerning her, during the time of my acquaintance with her, which was about fifteen years.

She lived for that time about seven miles from us, and sometimes would come to visit our meeting at Watford, whom I, and many more were glad to see, she being one whom the Lord was pleased to bestow a talent and gift of ministry upon, which he is pleased to give unto both male and female they being one in Christ Jesus, that she might tell unto others, what God had done for her soul; for those, and those only are they, whose mouths the Lord openeth, that do and shall shew forth his praise. And indeed her testimony was reaching and affecting; my heart hath been well affected many times in meetings with her testimony, for she spoke as one having authority, almost to admiration, considering the weakness of body wherewithal she was pretty much afflicted; but the Lord was with her, who giveth strength to the weak, and his power was her support.

It was her lot many times, when she came to our meeting, to lodge at my house, my dear mother Hannah Neale and she being very intimate friends, and heartily loving each others company; and indeed her company I also

loved, for it was pleasant and delightful to the honest-hearted; and I may say her discourse was edifying to me.

And I have been affected to hear her give an account of her sufferings, deep trial, and exercises of friends, which she, and many others went through in early days; how when they were going to a meeting, they went as it were in peril of their lives, by reason of wicked and ungodly people throwing stones, clods, and other things at them. And although many were they that rose up against them, yet how wonderfully did the Lord preserve his people in that day, through many tribulations; many of which various exercises and trials, that divers of our worthy ancients passed through, blessed be the Lord, we in this our day are freed from.

Much might be said concerning this our friend; but in short, she was a valiant woman for truth on earth, a mother in Israel, and a worthy faithful elder in the church of Christ in her time.

And now my desire is, that we who are of a younger generation, and are yet left behind, may in our measure be found treading in the steps of this, and many others of our ancients, who have served the Lord faithfully in their generation, and are removed from us.

Though our loss of such worthies be great, yet their gain is far greater; for doubtless they are entered into those mansions of eternal bliss, where joy unspeakable and full of glory is their portion, and that for evermore.

JOHN NEALE.

*Concerning her Husband JAMES STIRREDGE,
by the same Hand.*

HE was a man with whom I was well acquainted for many years; and I may say of him, he was an honest upright-hearted man, one that feared God, and eschewed evil;

zealous for the honour of God, and for the promotion of his truth on earth; a hearty lover of faithful friends, and in his conversation amongst men, I think I may say, blameless.

A zealous man for monthly and quarterly meetings of church government; his desire was that friends in such meetings might so wait upon the Lord, to receive counsel from him, as that they might act in the wisdom of God, that every thing that is contrary to the principle of truth might be kept out of them, and that nothing but truth might have the pre-eminence.

In fine, he was a meek-spirited and lowly-minded man, more in substance than in shew.

I went to visit him in his last illness, when he was very weak in body, so weak, that he spake very low, but very sensible, and was in a good frame of mind and spirit; so that I was refreshed in my visit, and he was pleased to see me.

He was very patient under his affliction, and I believe was fully resigned to the will of God.

He departed his life in the tenth month, 1708, at Hempstead in Hertfordshire, and was buried at friends burying-ground at Wood-End, in the same county.

JOHN NEALE.

STRENGTH in WEAKNESS
manifested, &c.

SEEING the Lord hath been pleased to count me worthy to travel in Sion's way; and having found the way so strait, and so narrow, and so many that have been called; that some, that have entered into it, have gone into by-paths, and crooked ways again; and I have found the blessed effect of keeping in the right way; therefore I have a great concern upon my spirit, for my children, that are coming up after me, that they might not be forgetful of keeping in the right way, whensoever the Lord shall be pleased to take me from them.

Therefore it is in my heart, as my heavenly Father will be pleased to assist me, to leave a short testimony behind me, for my children, of the passages of my life, ever since I had a remembrance; and the goodness of the Lord to me all my life long, unto this very day, which is worthy for ever to be had in remembrance, above all that ever my eyes beheld, and in reverence to the worthy name and power of the Lord is it spoken, and he shall have the praise of his own work for ever.

1634. In the first place, I was born at Thornbury in Gloucestershire, of honest parents; my father's name was William Tayler; my father and mother were people fearing God, and very zealous in their day; and my father, being one of those called Puritans, prophesied of friends many

years before they came; he said, "There was a day coming, wherein truth will gloriously break forth, more glorious than ever since the apostles days; but said, I shall not live to see it;" he died in the faith of it seven years before they came; whose honest and chaste life is often in my remembrance, and his fervent and zealous prayers amongst his family, are not forgotten by me. My parents brought me up after a very strict manner, so that I can truly say, I was much a stranger unto the world, and its ways.

In my tender years I was one of a sad heart, and much concerned and surprised with inward fear, what would become of me when I should die: and when my lot was to be near any that would talk rudely, or swear, or be overcome with strong drink, I dread to pass by them; and when I did hear it thunder, Oh! the dread and terror that would fall upon me; I would get to the privatest place I could, to mourn in secret, thinking the Lord would render vengeance upon the heads of the wicked. When I saw the flashes of lightning, Oh! thought I, whither shall I go to hide myself from the wrath of the dreadful and terrible God? Thus was I possess with my soul's concern, before I was ten years of age; I was so filled with fears and doubts, that I could take no delight in any thing of this world. And when I grew up to riper years, I went to hear those accounted the best men, that lived up to what was made known unto them, and I delighted to hear them, and be in company with them that talked of good things, and discoursed of scripture, and of God and Christ, and of heaven's glory. Oh! how delightedsome was it unto me; but still I was unsatisfied, because I found I was not a living witness of these states and conditions that the people of God were in, in former days; and how to attain unto it, I did not know. Then did I mourn unto myself, and say in my heart, Oh! that I had been born in the days when the Lord spake unto Moses, and unto the children of Israel, and with a high and wonderful power brought forth his people out of Egypt, and through the red sea, that I might have known how to have walked in the right way, and to have done what the Lord would have required of me, and been in

acquaintance and familiarity with my Maker; that I might have known when I had pleased or displeased the Lord, whom my soul loved, but knew not how to come acquainted with him. Oh! what would I have parted with for the enjoyment of the Lord, and assurance of salvation? Surely, if it were possible for me to have enjoyed all the world, I could freely have parted with it for peace, comfort, and satisfaction for my poor distressed soul, that mourned as without hope; and many a time, and many hours, have I been alone, reading and mourning, when no eye saw me, nor ear heard me, neither could I find comfort in reading, because it was a book sealed unto me. Then did I mourn, and say, Oh! that I had been born in the days when our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ was upon the earth; how would I have followed him, and sate at his feet, as Mary did; how freely could I have left my father's house, and all my relations, for true peace, and assurance of life eternal, for my immortal soul.

And under this exercise I grew very sad, insomuch that my mother feared I was going into a consumption, and greatly feared my death; and would say unto me, "Canst thou take delight in nothing? I would have thee walk forth into the fields with the young people, for recreation, and delight thyself in something." And to please her, I have sometimes, when we were out of our employment, gone forth with sober young people; but I found no comfort in that. Then I fell into a custom of reading the scriptures, and to be alone in private, reading and crying, because I knew not that heavenly power and spirit to have dominion in me, that was in them that gave for the scriptures; and nothing else but the substance would give me true satisfaction, therefore the scriptures was but a book sealed unto me.

Then did I fall down upon my knees to pray unto the Lord, with my heart full of sorrow, and the tears running down my face, and could not utter one word; which seemed very strange unto me, and set me thinking, that there was none like unto me. But it was the enemy's work, to persuade me there was none like unto me: and because I

could not pray in words, as others could, and likewise under afflictions, therefore the Lord had no regard unto me. But the enemy is as great a lyar as ever, for the Lord was near me in every exercise, and broke my heart, and melted my spirit, or else it would not have been so with me. Oh! my soul can now behold his goodness, for he was near me, although I was not aware of it; for I thought none was so miserable as I, the enemy endeavouring to cast me down, and to make me despair. And truly, it was the great mercy of the Lord in preserving me from it, for my affliction was great, and my distresses very many, the enemy following me with is temptations; and for want of right information where my strength was to be found, which was to have stood still, and have waited upon the living God for strength to overcome my soul's enemy. And instead of so doing, the enemy so disturbed me, and so followed me with his subtil allurements, sometimes to draw my mind into the vanities of this world, and to delight in bedecking myself in fine clothes, that I might appear comely in the eyes of the world; "for," said the enemy, "as for this way of sadness and trouble that thou art under, it will redound to no advantage, benefit, nor comfort; thou wilt not be in any esteem amongst thy neighbours; therefore take thy pleasure, and be at rest." A lyar he is, and ever was from the beginning; and my dear children, believe him not, if it be your lots to be under temptations, or exercise of any kind; or what way soever the Lord may be pleased to lead you in for the trial of your faith and patience in any kind, either now, or any time of your pilgrimage in this life, I say, the enemy will befool as many as he can; therefore look unto the Lord, and keep him in your remembrance, and pray unto him in the inward of your minds, although you cannot utter one word; know it assuredly, that he is near to help his afflicted children at all times as they stand in need of him. Oh! that I had known this in the days of my ignorance, and in my young and tender years, when the Lord was near me, and at work in my heart, and I knew it not. For want of an understanding, the enemy befooled me, and led me aside into those things abovenamed; and by

hearkening unto him, and the young people who were my neighbours, in persuading me, that it would be of great benefit to me, for I was young, and knew not what I might come to; and I was left of my tender father, and hardly any friend was left me; and in my distress and afflictions, willing to have a little rest and comfort, I lent out an ear unto the enemy of my soul, and let my mind go forth after fine clothes; but when it was drawn out, it went without limit; and when I bedecked myself as fine and as choice as I could, it would hardly give me content; for when I had one new thing, when I saw another, or the third, I was as desirous as for the former; so ever unsatisfied. Oh! the lying enemy, who promised me rest and peace, but could not give it me; a lyar he is, and ever was; my soul hates him, and is at enmity with him; the Lord preserve me out of his snares, and my house also for ever.

But though he had drawn out my mind, the Lord did not leave me; for I had many times a concern upon my mind, what would become of me: and if at any time I was drawn out into any mirth or laughter, I felt something smite my heart, which brought great heaviness over my spirit; but I knew not what it was, and I little thought it was the Lord, who was ever good and gracious, kind, merciful, and slow to anger, and not willing that people should run into destruction, nor perish.

I little thought he looked so narrowly to my ways; but since the Lord hath been pleased to open my eyes, I can look back and admire his worthy name, and the right arm of his strength, who hath early been my guide, and kept me, in great part, from running into the evil of the world, which greatly attends young people. But blessed be the name of the Lord, he took me by the hand, and led me when I knew not of it, in the days of my tender years; and if I had not hearkned unto the enemy, my condition had been well. But as soon as he had drawn my mind into pride, and to take delight in fine clothes, it soon became my burden; for in a little time after, the Lord, in the richness of his love, was pleased to fit and furnish his faithful servants, and painful labourers, whose

industriousness the Lord greatly prospered: two men of worthy memory, dear John Audland, and John Camm, in 1654. But when I heard the report of them, it struck a dread over my heart, hearing of their plainness. I began to think, how shall I demean myself to go to hear them? In a little time after, there was a meeting appointed by them, where my lot was to be, and dear John Audland was declaring; but as soon as I heard his voice, it pierced me; and when I came into the meeting, and heard his testimony, and beheld his solid countenance, Oh! how my heart was troubled within me, insomuch that I knew not what would become of me.

After meeting was over, I separated myself from my company, and travelled alone two miles, because no ear should hear me making my mourn unto the Lord; and out of the bitterness of my spirit did I say, "Lord, what shall I do to be saved? I would do any thing for assurance of everlasting life; and if the Lord will be please to accept of me upon any terms, I matter not what becomes of this outward body; if I could find out a cave of the earth that I might get into, where I might mourn out my days in sorrow, and see man no more," I thought I could have been contented; but it pleased the Lord to open the eyes of my understanding, and to lead me by a way that I knew not, and to begin the first day's work in my heart "which was the Spirit of the Lord to move upon the waters, and to divide the light from the darkness;" and when the separation was made, then could I see my way in the light, "which was the light unto David's feet, and was a lanthorn unto his paths;" and it will order every one's goings aright, if they take heed unto it.

It would be too tedious to go through every particular state; but my earnest cries were unto the Lord, to lead me the right way, and "to create in me a new heart, and renew a right spirit within me. Oh! let me be unto thee, O Lord, what I am, and not unto man. I do not take care for this outward body, do but redeem my soul from death, and out of this horrible pit, wherein I am held as in chains of darkness, and shall perish for ever, if thou dost not, out of

thy infinite mercy, have compassion on me, and bow thy ears to my cries, for I can do nothing else." For I can truly say, my heart was filled with sorrow, my sighing came before I eat, and tears was as my sorrowful meat; when I lay down, it was in sorrow, and watered my pillow with my tears, before I could take my rest; and when I awaked, it was with the dread of the Lord over my heart.

Oh! my soul can do no less than magnify the living God, who is worthy of praise, honour and renown, thanksgiving and obedience for evermore. And why so? Because he had condescended unto the lowest estate of his hand-maid, and bowed his ear unto my prayers, and had a regard unto my cries, and hath answered my request, and given me my heart's desire, which was to be led the right way. And Sion's poor travellers know very well, this is a beginning or a step in the way. For I can truly say, that I never coveted heaven's glory, nor to be made a partaker of the riches, glory, and everlasting well-being for ever, more than I desired to walk in the way that leads thereunto. And I did as truly believe, that the Lord would redeem a people out of the world, and its ways, and customs, language, marriage, and burying, and all the world's hypocrisy. I looked for this change before I saw any appearance of it; but all my fear was, I should not live to see it; the enemy always following of me with his temptations, to work me into unbelief, and to cast me down into desparation. Oh! my soul cannot but give the Lord God the glory, the honour, and the renown, for he is worthy of it for ever, and evermore.

And now, my dear children, this is for you to remember, and keep by you, that ye may always know the way to heaven's glory, and to enjoy true peace and satisfaction; it is a strait and narrow way; whoever thinks it is not, they are mistaken.—Therefore, my dear children, keep unto the daily cross all the days of your lives, and to truth's language. And more especially keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life; then will you be brought nearer and nearer unto the Lord, and grow into acquaintance with him; which was that my soul mourned for in the days of my tender years, which I cannot forget,

nor I hope ever shall, for I find the good effects of it from day unto day; it bows my spirit, and humbles my heart, and keeps me in a living remembrance of what the Lord has done for me: though the Lord has been please to give me the waters of a bitter cup to drink, and to feed me with bread of affliction, and suffer temptation upon temptation to come near me, and the enemy, the subtil serpent, the old dragon, who was more subtil than all the beasts of the field, following me with his lies, to persuade me that the Lord had no regard to me; if he had, he would not take delight to afflict me; 'for there is none like thee, said the wicked one, thou mayst look abroad, and see where thou canst find one whole sorrow is like unto thine.'

Then would I wander alone in some remote place, where no eye could see me, nor ear hear me, to make my moan unto the Lord, who hath sweetly comforted me, and refreshed my spirit many a time, and hath kept my head above the waters; blessed be the worthy name of the Lord my God, and the right arm of his strength, that hath wrought wonderfully for my deliverance; and cursed is the old dragon, who ever envied man's prosperity, and to destroy the blessed work of the Lord, as much as in him lieth. For after the Lord had done much for me, and in a good measure had redeemed my soul from death, and by high hand, and stretched-out arm, had brought me out of Egypt's darkness, and through the red sea, where my soul had true cause to sing praises unto the most high God, who lives for ever, and for evermore. Oh! let me never forget so great and wonderful deliverance, but for ever keep in that that bow my heart from day unto day, and humble my spirit before the Lord, who hath been pleased to do more for me than my tongue is able to declare. And although I can say, mine eyes have seen afflictions, and no afflictions seem joyous, but grievous for the present, yet afterwards it brings forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness.

And now, my dear children, my very aim and end is to make you a little acquainted with the work of the Lord in my heart, and also with the subtil devices and contrivances

of the enemy of your immortal souls; his way is to set baits according unto peoples nature, for therein he is most likely to prevail. And because I was of a sad heart, and very subject to be cast down, therefore did he with all his might endeavour to cast me down into despair and unbelief, persuading me, I should never hold out to the end. Then did I mourn unto the Lord, to preserve me to the end; for my affliction was very great, both inward and outward, and many things he cast before me, that seemed too hard for me to go through; when my mind was filled with sorrow, the enemy got ground upon me, and filled my heart with thoughts and imaginations, until my heart grew hard before I was aware of it, and I lost that sweet enjoyment and heavenly fellowship that I was comforted with in the night season, and in the morning light. I had great cause to magnify the worthy name of the Lord, who was pleased to comfort my afflicted soul; but when the enemy had gotten a little ground upon me, he set his baits so agreeable unto my nature, which was apt to be cast down. And when I had any thing struggling in me in remembrance of my state and condition I was in a little before, and now for a little time I had lost it; I had great cause to mourn unto the Lord, who was able to deliver me, as he had done many a time, blessed be his holy name, and the right arm of his strength, that lives for ever. Yet though he was able to do it, yet the enemy prevailed upon me a little farther: for when I was in my mournful state, making my moan unto the Lord, saying in my heart there is no sorrow like mine: and why none like mine? Because I had lost my beloved, and my loss was great; he that had redeemed my soul from death, and had done well for me; Oh! I could do no less but mourn for him. And in this time of mourning, which was a state very suitable unto my condition, had I been weary of that subtil serpent, who was too hard for me, in persuading of me I was discontented, a murmurer, and complainer, and I mad the Lord weary with my crying, and I should be shut out of his kingdom, for it was the murmurers and complainers that perished in the wilderness.

Oh! how soon was I caught by his subtilty; for he infused

in me, and persuaded me, it was in vain to strive any longer, for I should never inherit the kingdom of heaven. But a liar he was, and ever will be; my soul is at enmity with him, the Lord in whom I trust, preserve me, and my house for ever: as it pleased my heavenly Father, who had a regard unto me, to make way for me to escape: for in a little time after it was my lot to be at a meeting where a faithful servant of the Lord was, by name William Dewsbery, whose testimony was mostly unto the distressed and afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted: which state many were in, in that day.

1655.

A true messenger he was unto many. I was 21 years of age when I was in this condition; but after meeting was ended, I dreaded to go unto him, for I thought that he was one of a great discerning, and he would be sensible of the hardness of my heart; and if he should judge me, I should not be able to bear it; but yet I could not go away in peace, until I had been with him; who seeing me coming so heavily on, held up his hand, with a raised voice said unto me, 'Dear lamb, judge all thoughts and believe, for blessed are they that believe and see not.' And with a raised voice again said, 'They were blessed that saw and believed, but more blessed are they that believed and saw not.'

Oh! he was one that had good tidings for me in that day, and great power was with his testimony at that very time; for the hardness was taken away, and my heart was opened by that ancient power that opened the heart of Lydia; everlasting praises be given unto him that sits upon the throne for ever, who hath preserved me out of the snares and subtil contrivances of the adversary.

And now, my dear children, you have been brought up in the way of truth; it is made known unto you; and my soul cannot but bless and praise the Lord my God, who hath preserved me out of the evil of the world; therefore trust in his name, and believe he will keep you unto the end; which he will assuredly do, if you depart not from him: which I

hope you will not whilst you have a day to live; and my prayers are both night and day for you.

I can truly say, that when any of our family have gone out of our habitation, though upon outward occasions, my prayers hath ascended unto the Lord for their preservation; and unto this day the Lord hath heard, blessed be his name that lives for ever. For you may well remember the many dangers you have been preserved out of, that have been likely to hazard your lives, but the Lord of his infinite goodness hath hitherto preserved you all, that you may serve him. Therefore, dear children, forget not your duty unto the Lord, and the counsel that Jesus Christ gave unto his disciples, which was, to watch and pray, that you may be preserved out of all dangers, both inward and outward, which you may be liable to fall into, if you do not keep unto the guide of your youth: but if you keep unto him, he will never depart from you; and keep in remembrance your Creator in the days of your youth, then will he keep you in the hour of temptation, and he will take care of you; 'if you seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, other things shall be added unto you.' He hath spoken that cannot lie, therefore put your trust in him for ever. Then will my heavenly Father do for you, as he hath done for me; in the days of my tender years, he took me by the hand, and led me by a way I knew not, and made darkness light before me; and hath preserved me unto this very day in covenant with himself; everlasting praises and honour be given unto his holy name for ever, saith my soul.

Now, my dear children, you may remember since you have had an understanding, the many straits and difficulties the Lord hath enabled me to go through, for these many years, though but weak, and greatly afflicted with sickness, and very near the grave many a time: and the Lord renewed my strength again, to bear many a faithful testimony for him, and his blessed truth; many various straits and hardships hath the Lord my Redeemer brought me through; which when I look back and consider, I am filled with admiration, in consideration how my soul hath escaped to this very day. But this saying of Christ

Jesus often comes before me, "That greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world;" and said to his disciples, 'Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.' This hath been a comfort to me many a time, and I often remember a saying of a faithful servant and minister of Jesus Christ, whose name was Miles Halhead; when I was 21 years of age, and under great exercise, he steadfastly looking upon me, said, 'Dear child, if thou continue in truth, thou wilt make an honourable woman for the Lord; for the Lord God will honour thee with his blessed testimony.' And ten years after, in 1665, he came to my habitation, and said unto me, 'My love and life is with thee, and that for that blessed work's sake that is at work in thee; the Lord God keep thee faithful, for he will require hard things of thee, that thou art not aware of; the Lord give thee strength to perform it, and keep thee faithful to his blessed testimony; my prayers shall be for thee, as often as I remember thee.' And soon after that, a great exercise fell upon us; we were exposed to great suffering, and the Lord had opened my mouth in testimony but a little before; yet have been concerned, for fear my friends should suffer for me; not for myself, for I could truly say my heart was given up to serve the Lord, come what would come. But this was the least of our sorrow; loss of goods, beating and hurling to and fro, and dragging out of our meeting-house, and many other abuses, which the Lord made us able to go through, and sanctified us; and my soul blesseth the Lord, for that he accounted us worthy to suffer for his name's sake.

For in the time of suffering a selfish separating spirit did begin to break forth amongst us; which added to our affliction and sorrow, more than all our persecutors could do; though we went in great hazard of our lives to our meetings, the informers were so wicked and inhuman, and filled with envy and madness, that they swore it was no more sin to kill us, than to kill a louse; and that they would bathe their swords in our blood. But blessed be the Lord our God that liveth for ever, we were in no wise affrighted at these things, nor concerned at it, for we knew him, in whom we had believed, was able to deliver his

chosen ones that put their trust in him.

And now, my dear children, some of these things you know, your eyes have seen this when you were young and tender in the beginning of your days; and though but young and tender, yet the Lord kept you from the fear of men. And in this time of great exercise, there fell upon me another greater exercise and travail of spirit, which seemed so strange and so wonderful, that I could not believe that ever the Lord would require such a service of me, that was so weak and contemptible, so unfit and unlikely, my understanding but shallow, and my capacity but mean, and very low and dejected in my own eyes; and looking so much at my insufficiency, made me to strive so much against it; crying oftentimes within myself, 'Surely this is something to ensnare me, for the Lord does not require such things of me; seeing there are so many wise and good men that are more honourable, and fitter for such service than I; Oh Lord! remove it far from me, and require any thing else of me, that I can better perform.'

Thus did I reason and strive against it, till my sorrow was so great that I knew not whether ever the Lord would accept of me again. Then did I cry unto the Lord again, and again; 'Lord, if thou hast found me worthy, make my way plain before me, and I will follow thee; for, Lord, thou knowest that I would not willingly offend thee.' But for fear that it should be required of me to go to the great men of the earth, I knowing myself to be of such a weak capacity, I did not think that the Lord would make choice of such a contemptible instrument as I to leave my habitation, and tender children, that were young and tender, to go to king Charles, which was an hundred miles from my habitation, and with such a plain testimony as the Lord did require of me; which made me go bowed down many months under the exercise of it, and oftentimes strove against it; but I could get no rest, but in giving up to obey the Lord in all things that he requires of me; and though it seemed hard and strange unto me, yet the Lord made hard things easy, according to his promise unto me, when I was going from my tender children, and knew not but that my life might

have been required for my testimony, it was so plain; and when I looked upon my children, my bowels yearned toward them. The word that run through me was, 'If thou canst believe, thou shalt see all things accomplished, and thou shalt return in peace, and thy reward shall be with thee.' And for ever blessed be the name and power of the Lord, that sustained me in my journey, and gave me strength to do his will, and afforded me his living presence to accompany me, which is the greatest comfort that ever can be enjoyed; and this was my testimony to king Charles II. in the 11th month of the year 1670.

'This is unto thee, Oh King! hear what the Lord hath committed unto my charge concerning thee: As thou hast been the cause of making many desolate, so will the lord lay thee desolate; and as many as have been the cause of the persecuting, and the shedding of the blood of my dear children, in the day when I call all to an account, I will plead with them, saith the Lord; therefore hear and fear the Lord God of heaven and earth, for of his righteous judgments all shall be made partakers, from the king that sitteth upon the throne, to the beggar upon the dunghill.'

This testimony I delivered into his hands, with these words in my mouth, 'Hear, Oh King! and fear the Lord God of heaven and earth.' And I can truly say, that the dread of the most high God was so upon me, that it made me tremble, and great agony was over my spirit; insomuch that paleness came in his face, and with a mournful voice he said, 'I thank you, good woman.' My soul honoureth and magnifieth the name and power of the Lord my God for keeping me faithful to his blessed testimony, and giving me strength to do his will, and made good his promise, which was, 'If I could believe, I should return in peace, and my reward should be with me.' So the Lord blessed my going forth, and his presence was with me in my journey, and preserved my family well, and my coming home was with joy and peace in my bosom, everlasting praises, glory, and honour be given unto him that sits on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever, and for evermore.

And now, my dear children, this is for you to remember

the goodness of the Lord to his children, that faithfully follow and obey him with their whole hearts, though they may be attended with many weaknesses and are many times crying unto the Lord, 'Oh, my weakness! I am not able to go through this great work, neither indeed am I worthy; there are many honourable wise men that thou hast fitted for thy service, that are fitter than I am; and there seemeth so many mountains in my way, and so many difficulties appear in my view, that it appeareth wonderful for me to go through.' And so it was indeed, whilst I gave way to the reasoner, which I have done many a time, till my sorrow hath been so great, that I have not known which way to turn; for it hath dimmed my fight, and hurt my life, and plunged my soul into sorrow, whilst I gave way to the reasoning part. But it pleased the Lord to appear in a needful hour, and turned back the enemy of my soul's peace, and shewed unto me that he would choose the weak and the dejected, and them that were nothing in their own eyes, and that could do nothing, no not so much as to utter a word, but what the Lord giveth into their mouths, I mean in testimony for the living God, that the scripture of Truth may be fulfilled in our day, as fully as it was in times past and gone, that no flesh should glory in his presence. then did I freely give up to obey the requirings of the Lord with peace and comfort, and received the blessed reward in my bosom, as I have already said; but our exercise continued by our persecutors. But blessed be the name and power of the Lord for his infinite mercies, for according to the day, so was our strength.

A little time after, the officers came and demanded money for the king for our meeting together. My husband answered them, 'If I owed the king any, I would surely pay him; but seeing I owe him no money, surely I will pay him none.' They asked him leave to strain his goods; he said, 'If you will take my goods, I cannot hinder you, but I will not give you leave to take them; neither will I be accessory to your taking of them.' Then the officers seeing our innocency, for we were in our shop at our lawful calling, with our hands to our labour, and our children with us,

the constable leaning his head down upon his hand, with a heavy heart said, 'It is against my conscience to take their goods from them.' Then I said, 'John, have a care of wronging thy conscience; for what could the Lord do more for thee than to place his good spirit in thy heart, to teach thee what thou shouldest do, and thou shouldest leave undone.' He said, 'I know not what to do in this matter; if paying the money once would do, I would do it, but it will not end so; but it will be thus, whilst you keep going to meeting; for the rulers have made such laws, that never was the like in any age.' I said, 'John, when thou hast wronged thy conscience, and brought a burthen upon thy spirit, it is not the rulers can remove it from thee. If thou shouldest go to the rulers, and say, I have done that which was against my conscience to do; they may say as the rulers did to Judas, what is that to us, see thou to that.'

But the officers that were with him, came and pulled down our goods; but the power of the Lord smote them, insomuch that paleness was in their faces; and their lips quivered, and their hands did so shake, that they could not hold it long. Then they would force a poor man to take them, but he refused, until they forced him, and laid them upon his arms and shoulders; but he, looking much like a dead man, replied, 'You force me to do that which you cannot do yourselves, neither can I;' for he trembled very much, though we had not ought further to say unto them, after they came in, but could rejoice that the Lord had found us worthy to suffer for his blessed truth and testimony.

A little time after, they had a meeting to appraise the goods they took from us, and other friends; where there met together seven men called justices, and the officers and sheriff's bailiff, and many more of their confederates, a great room full of them; and I was at work in our shop; and seeing the constable carrying along some of the goods to be appraised, it immediately came into my heart to go after them; not knowing one word that I should have to say; which made me a little consider for what I should go; but it more and more rested with me to go; and when I came

within the door, I sate down like one that was a fool, and had not one word to say for a time; as near as I can count the time, half or three parts of an hour. But when I came in, they were greatly disquieted in their minds, and hurried in their business, that thy said many a time, that they could do nothing whilst I was with them; the justices calling one to another to cause me to be taken away many times, saying, 'We shall not do any business this day, but spend our time in vain, if this woman sit here.' And they many times tempted me to speak what I had to say, and be gone; but could not prevail with me. Then calling to the man of the house to take me away, solemnly protesting never to come to his house again, if he would not take me away. But the man had not power to touch me, but full of trouble said, 'Sir, I cannot lay hands on her, for she is my honest neighbour;' and turning him towards me, said, 'Pray, Neighbour Stirredge, if you have any thing to say, speak, that you may be gone.' Then one of the justices in great rage and fury solemnly protested he would never sit with them any more, if they did not take me away; oftentimes wondering at their folly for letting of me alone. Then he opened the back-door, and went out, as though he would be gone, but in a little time came in again, saying, 'What, is she here yet? I wonder at our folly.' Then the power of the Lord fell upon me, and filled my heart with a very dreadful warning amongst them; telling them, that it was in vain for them to be found striving against the Lord, and his people; their work would not prosper; for the great God of heaven and earth would be too strong for them. Therefore I warned them to repent, and amend their lives before it be too late; for the Lord will smite you in a day unawares, and in an hour not expected by you; therefore remember that the Lord hath afforded you a day of warning, before destruction comes upon you. This, and much more ran through me at that time; and the Lord was pleased, in a very short time, to fulfil that testimony on them. For, in a very few weeks, as they were making merry at a feast, two of them died on a sudden after dinner, and the rest very hardly escaped, about the year 1674.

Now, my dear children, I write not this, to rejoice at the fall of our enemies, but for you to consider of the goodness, and mercies, and dealing of the Lord with his people in all ages; and to keep in remembrance his loving-kindness and forbearance to the very wicked, that are always provoking him to pour down his vengeance upon their heads. Yet so great is his mercies that he always warneth the wicked, and gives them time to repent, and space to amend their lives, that the Lord may be clear in the day of account; which day will surely come upon all that draws breath in the air.

Therefore, my dear children, remember your latter end, and the day of account, and keep a bridle to your tongues; for he that knows not a bridle to his tongue, his religion is vain. And keep to the daily cross, which is the power of God to salvation. And if you will be heirs of the kingdom of heaven, and crown immortal, you must take up the daily cross, for no cross no crown; the cross will keep your minds in subjection to the living God; and being in subjection, and standing in awe that you sin not, this will keep you near unto the Lord, in a living acquaintance with him; then he will take delight to bless you more and more, to instruct you, and to counsel you in his way, which is pure and holy, and will not admit of any unholiness, nor any uncleanness.

Therefore, my dear children, keep clear in your spirits in the sight of God, and beware of the world, and the people thereof; be not in too much familiarity with them, nor let in the spirit, to mix with yours; that hath been the hurt of many who have been going right on their way, and have made a good beginning; yet for want of watchfulness, and keeping to the guide of their youth, the light of Christ Jesus, which is the way to salvation; and whoever comes in any other way, is a thief and a robber. The way you know, you have been trained up in it; and the concern of my spirit is, that you may keep in it, and be concerned for your children, as your father and I have been for you; and train them up in the way of truth, and keep them out of the beggarly rudiments of this world, that they may grow up in

plainness, and keep to the plain language, both you and they; which is become a very indifferent thing amongst many of the professors of truth. But in the beginning we went through great exercise for that very word, as Thee or Thou to one particular person. And for my part I had a concern upon my spirit, because I shifted many a time from that word; I would have said any word rather than Thee or Thou, that would have answered the matter that I was concerned in, but still I was condemned, guilt following of me; I was not clear in the sight of God, my way was hedged up with thorns, I could go no further, until I yielded obedience unto the little things; then I walked alone, as my manner was, and frequently used so to do, when things came as a weight or concern upon me, where I might be private from all concern, except my soul's concern; Oh! that desolate place where I used to retire alone, how many times hath my soul met with my beloved there, that had sweetly comforted me, when my soul hath been sick of love; and full of doubts for fear my beloved had left me, and forsaken me. But blessed be his name, that liveth for ever, he still appeared in a needful time, when my soul was distressed for him. And this is the way of the Lord's dealing with his children, that he may teach them to be humble, and train them up as children, that they may learn obedience in all things to do his will. And this is his end in chastising of his children, to make them fit for his service.

But I little thought in that day the Lord would have spared me so many years to bear a faithful testimony to his blessed truth and powerful appearance in the morning of the blessed day of the breaking forth of his glorious light and life unto many thousands that sate in darkness, whose state was miserable and distress, and many times past hope of ever seeing a good day, and at their wits end; horror, dread, and anguish was in the hearts of many. Oh! these were they that could receive and praise the blessed proffers of God's everlasting love and appearance, though it was in the way of his judgments. For I can truly say, that my heart and soul delighted in judgment; though one woe was poured out after another; yet blessed be the day in

which the everlasting truth was first sounded in my ears; which was in the nineteenth year of my age. Oh! let it never be forgotten by me, is my soul's desire: but more blessed be the name of the Lord our God, and the right arm of his power, that hath been made bare from day to day, and from year to year, for the carrying on of his blessed work, and the preservation of his children unto this very day alive in his blessed testimony.

But the greatest exercise that ever I met withal, was concerning this separating spirit that is gone forth from us, that first began to appear in these parts, in John Story, and John Wilkinson, about the year 1670, which I find a concern upon my spirit to leave a short relation of my great travail and exercises in this work and service for the Lord, his blessed truth and testimony, that he in the riches of his love had made my heart and soul a living partaker of, praises be given to his holy name for ever.

In the year 1670, which was a time of great suffering amongst friends, and from that time forward, as it is well known amongst friends and others, we went to our meetings in the peril of our lives, and our goods they took for prey. And in this time of great exercise did this dividing spirit begin to appear, and in a very crafty manner did ensnare the hearts of divers of the simple. And indeed there was too many that the Lord had reached unto in the days of the breaking forth of his wonderful power, whom the Lord had enriched both inward and outward, that had forgotten the days of their distress, and where the Lord first found them out and caused the offence of the cross to cease, and had gotten into ease and liberty. Oh! how did such fall in with them, to the grief of the souls of the faithful.

And in that day of great trouble, greater was our sorrow for the loss of our brethren, than for all our persecutions, or loss of goods, or all other abuses of what kind soever; for indeed, great was our sorrow on every hand, and my soul was mostly concerned for the Lord, and his blessed truth and testimony. Oh how did my heart pant after the Lord, and my soul travailed night and day before him, for

strength to stand a faithful witness for the living God, whom I had made a covenant with in the days of my bitter bewailings, when my soul lay in distress and horror; where the Lord first met with me, when I was bewailing myself in bitter lamentation, saying in my heart, 'Oh! that I could find out a cave in the earth, wherein I might go and mourn out my days in sorrow, and see man no more; or that the Lord would be pleased to accept of me upon any terms; or if my life would be accepted of for a ransom for my soul, I would be very willing to part with it.'

The cry many a time ran through my heart, 'O lord, what shall I do to be saved?'

Oh! the appearance of the Lord in that state was very precious to me, I very gladly entered into covenant with him, to serve him for ever, if he would redeem my soul from death, and from under the power of him that was too strong for me. And seeing the Lord in his infinite mercy was so good and gracious unto me, as to give me my heart's desire, how could I forget it? No; rather let my right hand forget her cunning, and my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, before I should forget to pay my vows and promises to the Lord, in the days of my distress.

And now to come to the matter concerning this libertine spirit.—In the aforesaid year, 1670, when they began their work, the priest's son bought him a new sword, and swore, he would bathe it in our blood; and said, it was no more sin to kill a Quaker, than it was to kill a louse. Thus they began their dreadful work, which is too tedious to run through the particulars: but they first nailed up our meeting-house doors, and set a guard before it; and it being one a day that the petty-sessions was kept in that town of Kainsham, four miles from Bristol, there being several justices there, they sent the bailiff and other officers, attended with a great company of rabble, who came in great rage with clubs, and other weapons; but the Lord was good and gracious to us, and gave us strength according to the day, and opened my mouth in a testimony, for the encouragement of friends, and in praise to God, for counting us worthy to suffer for his name and truth's sake.

And after me, another woman, to the encouraging of friends; and the power of the Lord was so livingly felt amongst us, that our enemies fell, that they could hardly speak to ask our names. But at length we were find 201. a-piece. But when meeting ended, we came away rejoicing. And indeed there was great cause for it; for the power of God was over all, to our great comfort.

But for all this, the clouds gathered blackness, and storms raised higher and higher, and dismal days appeared; and many set their wits at work, and consulted together how to meet in private, and out of the enemies fight. And it was but a little time that our meeting held together; for one that had been a great preacher of our meeting, was soon weary with standing in the street, at our meeting-house door; and was greatly offended with us, for not leaving our meeting-house and come and meet with him in private in his dwelling-house. And, there was a little remnant that could not conform to the will of man, but feared the Lord, and dreaded to deny him before men.

Then R. W. who was John Story's great associate, whilst the said J. S. abode in our parts, sends a messenger to tell us, that if we would come and meet with him, and some others in private, where, say they, we may sit together in quietness and stillness, and wait upon the Lord, and enjoy the benefit of our meeting; which will be better than standing here in the street, to be hurried and thronged together, and hardly any time of stillness to wait upon God. A very plausible bait the enemy had cast in their view, and indeed too many were taken in the snare. But when I heard this message delivered from the wise preacher, afore-named. Oh! the concern that fell upon me, in consideration of them that had been preachers amongst us many years, that should have been a strength to the weak, and encouragers of the people; and feet to the lame, and eyes to the blind; that such men should have no more courage, nor zeal, nor love to the Lord and his blessed truth. Oh! it became my great grief, and I sorrowed night and day; 'Lord strengthen thy weak ones, and make the little ones as strong as David; give us courage and boldness to stand as

faithful witnesses for thy blessed truth.' And blessed for ever be the Lord our God, he answered my request, and according to the day, was our strength renewed; blessed be that hand that never failed us, nor any that put their trust in him.

So they parted from us, and left us as it were in the open field to encounter our enemies; who the more triumphed, and made a by-word of them and us; and cried out, 'Here be the fools; the wise men are gone. Aye, said they, they have more wit than to meet so near the justice's house to aggravate him, and ruin themselves; they be wise men to save themselves, and that they have: but these are the fools, they will ruin themselves do what we can: a poor company of ignorant fools, that know not their right hand from their left; do you think to stand against all the powers of the earth? A company of silly fools.'

Thus they pleased themselves with such discourses, thus to lose ground, which was a grievous exercise to us, to hear any of our brethren, which should have been as valiants in Israel, and have gone before the little ones, like valiant champions to have borne the brunt of the battle; that our enemies might have seen their courage and valour for the Lord of hosts; that the Lord through his instruments might have been glorified, and his blessed name and truth honoured and exalted over all; who alone is worthy of all honour and praise for evermore.

But if any should say, 'Was this a discouragement to you little ones?' No; our fear and zeal towards God was increased; and I can say to the praise and honour of his everlasting name, my cries and supplications did ascend night and day unto the Lord, for strength to stand in my lot and testimony, and that I might be made able to hold out to the end. And for ever blessed be the Lord, he strengthened my weakness, and made the weak as strong as David, and afforded his living presence amongst us, to our great comfort. But still my exercise increased, which drove me to a narrow search, and a deep and ponderous consideration, which should be the cause of my great exercise; crying to the Lord, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me

to do? Wilt thou be pleased to make known thy will concerning me? Is there any thing lodgeth in my heart that offendeth thee? Oh! purge it out I beseech thee, search my heart, and try my reins, for I love to be search and tried. Lord, wilt thou be better pleased with us, to go and meet with our friends that are gone from us? Is there service there that we know not of? Or am I too forward, or overzealous for thy truth?' To this enquiry, the answer so suited my enquiring heart: 'Keep your meeting time and place; be valiant for my truth upon earth, and I will crown you with honour.' Oh! blessed be his eternal name, no greater honour does my soul desire, than to be preserved in his fear.

And another time in great exercise it often sounded in my heart, 'I will gather from far, from the east, west, north, and south, and they shall come and fit down in the kingdom, with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the children of the kingdom shall be cast out.' Oh! the concern that fell upon me, and the cry to the Lord, 'Save the children of the kingdom; Oh! gather from far, and bring near them that are afar off; but save the children of the kingdom.' This thing was my daily and hourly exercise; many times saying within myself, 'Oh Lord! save the children of the kingdom, or take me to thyself, whilst thy mercy is continued unto me; let me not live to be cast out of thy kingdom.'

Thus the Lord gently led me in these things, tending towards this service and testimony that he was pleased to lay upon me to bear; which was the very greatest that ever I met withal. For still my exercise increased, my inward pains grew stronger and stronger, my heart was troubled within me, my eyes were a fountain of tears, and I cried out, 'Woe is me, that ever I was born. Oh! what is the matter that all my bowels seem to be displaced?' Then the word ran through my heart, 'My indignation is kindled, and my anger is waxen hot against this people, and my controversy shall be with them; and the time is coming, that they will bring more dishonour to my name and truth, than is brought by open profaneness; and thou shalt be an

instrument to proclaim it in their ears.' Which made me to tremble before the Lord, crying 'Oh Lord! why wilt thou require such hard things of me? Lord look upon my afflictions, and lay no more upon me than I am able to bear. They will not hear me that am a contemptible instrument. And seeing they despise the service of women so much, Oh Lord make use of them that are more worthy.' And I often-times cried to the Lord to remove it from me, still crying out of my unworthiness. 'Oh! how unfit am I for such service.' The answer I received was, 'They shall be made worthy that dwell low in my fear.'—So we continued under our great suffering, a poor little remnant, as one may term it, was in the open field, to encounter with our enemies. But for ever magnified be the name and power of our God, his presence was our life and strength, and according to the day, was strength given. Whereof we had great cause to say, 'Good is the Lord, and his mercies endure for ever. And we had cause to praise his name, for that he had made us worthy to suffer for his name and truth's sake; and keeping us faithful to stand for our God, and confess him before men. For I can say to his praise, I was more encouraged in all times of persecution, wherein I might bear my testimony for the Lord, that had redeemed my soul from death, and raised me out of the pit of misery, that I rejoiced to do the will of the Lord; for it was more to me, than all that ever my eyes beheld, and to stand a faithful witness for him.

I was constrained in the fear and dread of the Lord, to warn them of the dreadful day of the Lord, and to call them to repentance for their unfaithfulness. Thus we went on in our continual exercise, and in the strength of the Lord, and by the assistance of his holy power, were borne up in it.

But now to come to what is most before me; that all may understand how the enemy works in a mystery, and under a fair pretence to betray the precious life, and from the simplicity of the gospel, which is foolishness to the wisdom of the world.

In this troublesome time, it came in my heart to visit friends in Wiltshire, were I heard much of J. S. his going

on. He had much reflected upon several women for bearing their testimony against that spirit; and I met with two good women that had been upon the service of truth, and had a good testimony. He grieved them, bidding them go home about their business, and wash their dishes, and not go about to preach. And said, that Paul did absolutely forbid women to preach; and sent them crying home. And furthermore, he counselled friends to use Christian prudence, and remember what is said in scripture, 'If you are persecuted in one city, flee to another.' So he would have them alter the day and time of their usual meeting. And there was a little meeting in a dwelling-house, and he importuned them to remove it, or alter the time; and the woman friend of the house was soon gained, not being so zealous for the truth as she should have been. Her husband being more faithful, would not be caught in that snare. She fell at difference with him, and said, 'Dost thou think God doth not reveal his secrets to such as J. S. more than we? Yes surely; and if the Lord is pleased to save us, and what we have, and make him an instrument, why shall not we receive his counsel?' A very subtle bait to catch the poor ignorant people in. Oh! this was a great grief to the sincere-hearted, it caused many to know days and nights of sorrow. But still, this testimony always lived in my heart, that God's anger was kindled against that spirit that had turned their backs on truth's testimony; and was not only fallen into that snare themselves, but endeavoured to ensnare many more. The concern of it began to come over me, insomuch that I dreaded to go to a meeting, for fear that testimony would be required of me; but the time was not yet come.

But there came a faithful servant of the Lord to our meeting, whose name was Miles Halhead, who was wonderfully endowed with the power of the Lord, and great discerning; he came to see me, and said, 'My love runs unto thee, and that for the work's sake that is in thee; for God will require hard things of thee; thou little thinketh what is at work in thy heart; the Lord God of my life keep thee faithful, my prayers shall be for thee, as often as I

have thee in remembrance; thou art as my own life, and sealed in my bosom, I cannot forget thee, so dear child, fare thee well. The Lord my God hath sent me forth once more, and when I return home, he will cut the thread of my life in two.' And so it was. But Oh! the goodness of the Lord, with that salutation, overflowed my whole heart, and melted my bowels into tenderness, and my eyes as a fountain of tears; saying within myself, 'What am I but a poor helpless creature, and am not worthy of the least of these great favours and mercies that the dear servant of the Lord is speaking of: and surely if the Lord be with me, why is it thus with me? I am under great exercises daily, and straights many:' Sometimes it seemed to me, as if the Lord had withdrawn himself from me, which caused great sorrow of heart. But in a little time after, our lots being cast at Bristol, where John Story was most of his time, the height of persecution being a little over, then he could preach one hour after another, whilst one word would hang to another, to the hindrance of several travailing souls that have been in travail, and pained at the very heart for a little time to ease their spirits, and discharge their duty, that all might have been comforted together. But in the room of that, a cloud of darkness hath come over, which hath made many to groan under it. But Oh! the dreadful agony which I have been in to come forth with that testimony that had lived with me. Many nights and days, and weeks and months have I gone on in sorrow and pain, and have eaten no pleasant bread. And many a time have I lain down in sorrow, and watered my pillow with my tears, crying out, 'Oh Lord! what will become of me, and what shall I do?' And the Lord said, 'A testimony I do require of thee.' Then I said, 'Oh Lord! if thou wilt open my heart to declare thy goodness, and what thou hast done for thy people, and to tell of thy noble acts, and thy manifold mercies, how ready should I be to do it; but these are hard things, who can bear them?

Thus I did reason with the Lord, till my burden became too heavy for me to bear. And when I have gone forth in my lawful concerns, and have seen any of them, pains did take

hold of me, and distress of mind, and anguish of spirit did seize upon me; insomuch that I sought out private places to mourn in, saying, 'What shall I do? Send me to a nation of a strange language, whose face I never knew, and make use of a better instrument for this great work; they will not hear me, who am a contemptible instrument, neither do I know whether any of them will receive my testimony.'

For there was not one that knew for what I went through such great exercises; for many friends have said, 'that I had something that lay weightily upon me; insomuch that I could hardly go to my feet; and they wondered that I did not give up unto it, and said, 'that I hurt myself, and the meeting too.'

Oh! I cannot but greatly admire the infinite mercies and loving kindness of the Lord, and his long forbearance with me, in that he did not cut me off in my disobedience to him, when I knew what he required of me, as well as I knew my right hand from my left, and would not obey him. But still I reasoned, and cried out, 'What shall I do?' And I thought that if any one had borne a testimony in publick before me, I could the better have borne it; but I to be one of the first, such a contemptible one as I, I thought I could not do it. But what mercy did not do, judgment did; for the Lord was pleased to lay his hand heavy upon me, and with his correcting rod chastized me; and I did feel more of the displeasure of the Lord for my backwardness to his requirings, than ever I did for my former transgression. For I may say, as true as ever Jonah was plunged into the deep, and his head wrapped about with weeds, so was my soul plunged into a gulph of misery; insomuch that all hope of ever finding favour with God again, was hid from me, and I left in sorrow to lament, as one without hope.

Oh! how did my heart lament, and my soul languish night and day; and I said, 'Oh! that the Lord would be pleased to shew mercy once more, and to raise up my life again, and redeem my soul out of this horrible put wherein I am held as with chains, and bring me to my former state again; and require what thou pleaseth, and I will obey thy voice, though I should be hated of all men upon the face of

the earth.'

And before I could take any rest, I made a deep engagement unto the Lord, to do whatsoever he required of me, if he would give me strength, and be with me. So when first-day morning came, I had a great concern upon me; and when I sate down to wait upon the Lord, the power of the Lord seized on me, which made me to tremble; insomuch that my bones were shaken, and my teeth chattered, and I was in a great agony; and standing up, with a dreadful testimony, and proclaiming God's controversy with the exalted and high amongst the professors of truth, and such as had departed from the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, wish such God's anger was waxen hot, and his indignation burned, and I warned them to repent while they had a day, and more to that effect, but as short as I could. Then a friend stood up with a great concern upon him, saying, 'A living testimony is the God of heaven and earth raising up amongst the poor and contemptible ones, that shall stand over your heads for evermore.' So he went on in great power and authority, and the power of the Lord was greatly manifested amongst us that day. Oh! glory be to his everlasting name for evermore, saith my soul, for his blessed appearance to us that day, and all other of his mercies at all times, who returned me an hundred fold into my bosom, after all my unworthy consulting against the motions of the spirit of so merciful and compassionate a Father, who after he had corrected me, received me into favour again; Oh! glory to him for evermore. For when I had cleared my conscience, Oh! the peace and comfort, and consolation that I received from the lord, was more to me than all the world, or the friendship of it.

So some time after, John Story and three of his party came to my house to rebuke me, and was very high, and spoke great swelling words, thinking thereby to discourage me. John Story asked me, 'What I had to lay to his charge, and what I had against him?' I told him 'What I had against him, I never received from man, nor by any information from any one; but what I have against thee, is from the evidence of God in my own conscience. 'The evidence of

God in thy conscience, said he, in a deriding manner, that is not sufficient for thee.' I said, 'it was sufficient for me; by what else should I try spirits with, but by the evidence of God in my own conscience.' So he said again, 'that was not sufficient for me.' My husband said, 'John, to what wilt thou bring us now? Hast not thou and all other friends directed us to God's witness in our own conscience, and now thou sayest it is not sufficient.' And he said again, 'it is not sufficient, unless thou couldst bring witness that I had done some evil action, and what could I accuse him of; or else what signifies it to have ought against him.'

I could have laid enough to his charge, of his manner of going on in time of persecution; but being willing to be short with him, I said, 'I have this to say to thee, that thy ways and manner in publick meetings, is much different from the apostle, who said, "if any thing be revealed to him that fitteth by, the first is to be silent." And thou wilt take up the whole time of the meeting, although there hath been many that have been concerned before thy face, and that greatly; so what thou doest, is not ignorantly, but wilfully.' He answered me very angrily, and said, 'If I do do so, what canst thou make of that? I did say, 'thou art out of the order of the gospel; for it is said, the church may exercise one by one; and thou doest not as thou wouldest be done by. And further I told him, that this was not his place to abide here a preaching, and burthening the souls of the innocent; but thy place is to return home into the north, and be reconciled to thy brethren, before thou go to offer thy gift.' So many great swelling words proceded from him, and his three friends who were with him, and so went away sorely displeased.

And their rage increased towards me, and many faithful friends, (many were concerned that had fitten under their dead ministry) but mostly against me, for discharging my duty, in obedience to what the Lord required of me, and committed to my charge, concerning that spirit which did for some time endeavour to lord over God's heritage; which made many sensible ones go bowed down many a time; my soul is a living witness, with many more, of what I have

here declared; which is but little of their persecution towards me, in consideration of what follows after. For the Lord was pleased to continue my exercise in that city, where John Story abode much of his time. And several more of that spirit oftentimes frequented thither in that time of exercise with that spirit. And the Lord was pleased to make me so sensible of them, that in the night season I had many a sore and hard travail upon my spirit, when I knew not of any of them by any information from any one. Then did I make my moan unto the Lord, crying in secret, 'Oh! what shall I do to go through such hard things? Oh! that I may be excused this day, or that thou wilt be pleased to keep me in silence this day; then should I be very willing to go to meeting to wait upon thee, and to fit under the shadow of thy wing with great delight, where thy fruit will be pleasant to my taste.' Then it would come up before me, the covenant that I made with the Lord in the days of my distress, when all the world, and the friendship of it, would not yield me one dram of comfort to my poor distressed soul. Then did I promise the Lord in that day, which was twenty years before that, that if he would redeem my soul from death, and give me assurance of life, I would serve him all my days, if he would give me strength, and be with me; for I mattered not what I went through for his name's sake. And it would often come up before me, that they that followed the Lord, and loved him most, did whatsoever he commanded them. Oh! I cannot but admire the long forbearance and loving kindness of the Lord, that he had not cut me off in my gainsaying, and unfaithfulness; for I never wanted the assistance of his Holy Spirit, in giving up to his requirings, blessed be the holy name of our Lord God, and the right arm of his strength for evermore, who alone hath been our keeper and preserver to this very day, glory be to his great name for evermore.

Now I shall give a little account of one meeting in Bristol, which was one of the greatest exercises that ever I met with, or ever went through since I had a remembrance. When I was going to the meeting, I had a great exercise upon my spirit, and knew not for what; but after some time

of waiting upon the Lord, I saw my service, for J. Story was there, who came into Bristol the night before; and several friends had warned him not to come and offer his gift, till he was reconciled unto his brethren; for if he did, they did believe that the Lord would concern one or another to bear testimony openly against him. But I knew not of it till afterwards, for if I had, I believe my service would not have been so hard and strange unto me. But whilst he was declaring a great cloud came over the meeting, and I was greatly exercised in my spirit; insomuch that the Lord constrained me to cry, 'Woe to that spirit that dimmed the glory of the Lord, and woe to that pot that the scum remains in it, for in it is the broth of abominable things, such as the Lord's soul loatheth, and the soul of his people also.' Oh! how it ran through me again and again, and I was pressed in my spirit to declare it, whilst he was speaking; but I was sensible what a disturbance it would be in the meeting; I would fain have forborne till he had done, but I durst not; for I was afraid to speak, and afraid to keep silent. For if I had been silent, I knew that I should have withstood the Spirit of the Lord in my own conscience. But I strove against it, by reasoning, and saying, 'Oh! that the Lord would be pleased to excuse me this day, and that I might not lose his favour, then I should have accounted myself happy. But all this reasoning would not do that service that God had for me to do that day. But when I found no way to pass it by, I stood up to clear my conscience, and discharge my duty in the sight of God. And when I considered the low estate and weak condition that I had been in that day, Oh! the Lord's strength sustained me, for according to the day was strength given me, glory to his everlasting name for evermore, saith my soul, for his blessed reward was returned into my bosom, and he renewed my strength, and raised up my life in dominion over all their opposition I then met with.

And thus reader, I have given this short account of the going forth and work of that spirit; since which I have seen a withering and decay come upon it, near twenty years

having since passed over my head.

Oh! the many unchristian-like treatments that have been brought forth by that spirit; and how have some of them writ and printed against truth and its good order; and how have they turned their backs in the day of battle, and have left their brethren in the hand of their enemies. Oh! how grievous have their actions been since the year 1670. Now let all consider, whether that testimony that God raised in my heart in that time of my great distress, and great bowings down, and bitter bewailings, when the Lord answered me for what my great exercise came upon me, was not true; for I can truly say, I went under the exercise of their backsliding many a time. And the Lord was pleased to exercise me, and to cause me to go through a vale of tears, and a land of drought, in order to humble me, and that I might bow to his will, and obey him in all things; for obedience is better than sacrifice, and to hearken to the voice of the Lord, is better than the fat of rams. And there is no hearing of his gracious voice, but by humbling under his mighty Power, and subjecting the mind unto his will; then doth he make known his mind and will, and then blessed are they that hear his word, and obey it; and blessed are they that know his will, and do it; Oh! blessed be his eternal name for ever, and for evermore, saith my soul, for all his mercies, and favours, and blessings, and good gifts, and tokens of his gracious love that he hath bestowed upon me, ever since I have had a remembrance. First, in keeping me out of the evil of the world in my young and tender years, and preserved me from falling into many, and various, and great temptations, of which I had a great share in the days of my tender years; and then for taking me by the hand, and leading me in his way, and also opened my spiritual eye, that I might see the way that led towards his glorious kingdom; and for his preserving of me to this very day alive in his blessed and glorious testimony; and all these his manifold mercies, which are all in my view at this time. And in the remembrance of them my heart is truly bowed, and with hearty thanksgiving do return unto my heavenly Father all glory, and honour, and

praise, and everlasting renown be given unto my God, and our dear Lord and Saviour Christ Jesus, who is sitting upon his throne, judging in righteousness, and swaying his sceptre in holiness; who is worthy for ever to be feared, honoured, and obeyed, saith my soul, at this time, and for evermore. Amen.

And now, my dear children, it further lives in my heart, to leave some of the testimonies that the Lord was pleased to lay upon me in that time of great suffering in Bristol, and near unto it.

In the year 1680, I was greatly concerned to go to the mayor of Bristol with this testimony on their sessions day in the morning, waiting at his door for his rising from his bed; I met with him going through one of his rooms, before he was fully ready, and said unto him, 'The God of heaven and earth hath constrained me this night and morning to come unto thee with this testimony; therefore do not lay it by thee, as a thing not worth thy minding, but read it, and well weigh and consider what is written therein; for could I have been clear in the sight of God in not coming, I had not been here this day.'

Which testimony was as followeth:

"THIS is to the mayor, aldermen, and officers of all forts, and all that have a hand in persecuting of the righteous saints and servants of the most high God, called Quakers, who are near and dear unto the Lord, as the apple of his eye; and the Lord hath said in the scriptures of truth, 'Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.' Now consider you people of all forts, who have the scriptures of truth so frequently amongst you; Oh! do you make such ill use of them, as not to take notice what is written there in; surely they were given forth for a better purpose; for the Lord our God, who is full of compassion, and bowels of love towards the work of his own hands, hath in the riches of his live provided a way wherein people might escape his wrath and fierce vengeance; I say, the Lord hath placed a measure of his good spirit in your hearts, that never consented to sin; the which if you would

give up to be guided by it, it would make you happy for ever; it would teach you to do unto all men, as you would all men should do unto you; this is a good lesson for you to learn, this would make you honourable in the sight of the nations, and beautify you in the sight of the people; then no rending, tearing, nor devouring, neither making havock, nor spoiling of our goods, no imprisoning of the servants of the most high God, for the answer of a good conscience; no beating and throwing of the ancient and feeble, because they cannot so hastily go out of the way, as your hasty wills would have them: Oh! the God of heaven will please for these things; and a day of reckoning will the great, terrible, and mighty Jehovah, who is the God of the whole earth, call for, and dreadful and terrible will he be in his pleading. Oh! who will be able to stand before him, who is like a devouring fire, and all the wicked, and all that forget God, shall be as stubble before him, saith the scriptures of truth.

NOW, Oh! ye rulers and people of all forts, read the scriptures, and see what became of the persecutors in days past, for they were written and left upon record for the comfort of them that live the life of them, and for warning of the wicked and ungodly. Now consider Dives in the days of his health, how he fared sumptuously ever day, and considered not poor Lazarus, that begged at his gate. Oh! how hard-hearted was he; but what became of him? And what a dreadful place of torment is prepared for the wicked and for the ungodly, wherein they are made to cry out when it is too late, for one drop of water to cool their tongues, and it shall not be granted to them. Therefore for the Lord's sake, and for your own soul's sake, repent, lest you perish to all eternity, if you repent not. Wherefore the call of the Lord is once more sounded in thee, Oh! city of Bristol, and to the inhabitants thereof: Oh! repent, repent before it be too late, and break off thy sins by true repentance, and thy transgression by shewing mercy: plead the cause of the innocent, and let the oppressed go free; and be not worse than them of old, who cried, Help, Oh! men of Israel, &c. But now there is a company of rude

boys, and rabble of, the basest sort, with the officers, thronging in amongst us, pressing of us together without mercy, and the officers themselves taking of us by the arms, and throwing us along until we can hardly recover ourselves; and pulling off the men's hats, and throwing them from them in great fury, and hale to prison many in a day. Oh! be ye ashamed, ye rulers, and all that have a hand in this work; Oh! dread and tremble before the great and terrible God that made you, and gave you breath, and being; for he is able to dash you in pieces like a potter's vessel, and to take away your breath, and to lay you as dead men before him. Therefore consider it before it be too late, and before the days of your calamity come upon you, and the arrows of the Almighty stick fast in your livers, and there will none to help you, nor to deliver out of his hands; for the Lord will assuredly visit this nation, and that for the treachery, and cursed oaths, pride and oppression of many therein, whose sins have reached unto heaven. And it is the determination of the great God of heaven and earth to send his destroying angel amongst them, and shall thin them; great will be your sorrow, pain, and perplexity, terror and amazement, horror, and vexation of spirit; alas! for the day will be great, who shall be able to stand in it, but the pure in heart, and them that have made the Lord Jehovah their choice, and love him above all things, as well in times of peace as in times of distress, such shall dwell with the Lord for ever.

And now, Oh you magistrates! consider what you are doing; and you that are fathers of children, Oh! dishonour not your grey hairs so much, as that you should be found nourishing such ungodly actions. Oh! consider your places, and wherefore the Lord created you, it was to serve him, and not to serve sin, nor uncleanness. And wherefore did the Lord our God, who is rich in his mercies, ordain means or a way whereby men might escape the snare, but that he would have all to do well, and live in his favour for ever. Oh! be you all awakened this day, and be you rouzed up, and sleep not in security, for destruction is near if you do not speedily repent. Oh! consider the sodomites of old, how

they were toiling, and nothing would satisfy them but the servants of the most high God, that he had sent to warn them; and instead of being warned by them, they the more proved the just and holy God, who willeth not the death of sinners, but had rather they would return and live; and therefore hath he sent his servants early and late to warn the people, that by taking warning they might escape the wrath of the most high God, that all are liable to fall into, that are adding sin unto sin. And truly I know nothing more likely to draw down the vengeance of the dreadful and terrible God, than to cruelly use his children, and to make them to groan under their oppression, as Pharoah did in his day; until their groans pierced the ears of the Lord, and he said, 'I have heard the groanings of my people, and I am come down to deliver them.' And truly our God is the same, as great in power, and as mighty to deliver at this day, as he was in that day. And truly if you do thus go on, as you have already done, your days will be shortened, and you shall not prosper. Therefore consider it in time, I intreat you, as you tender the good of your own souls, and your children, be not patterns of cruelty to succeeding generations, leave not your names upon record for such ungodly actions, and unchristian-like dealings, as persecuting your honest neighbours for keeping their consciences void of offence towards God, and all men; for it is because we fear the great God of heaven and earth that made us, and gave us our breath and being, and durst not betray our Lord and Master, as Judas did in his day; but mark what became of him. I say, because we durst not deny the Lord, nor wrong our own souls, therefore are we sufferers this day under your cruelty. And as I have already said, that the just and righteous God of heaven and earth, who will one day plead with all people, and not one shall escape from his tribunal seat without a just recompense of reward for their deeds done in their life time. I say again, he is no respecter of persons, he regardeth not the rich no more than the poor, he is just in all his judgments, and equal in his ways, ever blessed and honoured be his worthy name, and his honourable truth,

saith my soul, for ever, and for evermore. Amen.

These things have been weightily upon my spirit, and for the clearing of my conscience have I writ them, desiring your moderation may appear, and that noble Spirit may arise in you, that was in them of old, who tried all things, and held fast that which was good. However it be, whether you will hear, or forbear, clear shall I be in the sight of my God; who said to his servant in the days of old, 'If thou warn the wicked, and they turn not from their wickedness, yet thou hast delivered thy soul, but his blood shall be upon his own head.

'ELIZABETH STIRREDGE'

And it further liveth with me to leave a relation of our suffering, trials, and imprisonment in the year 1683, that if it may fall to any of your lots to suffer for truth's testimony, or for the answer of a good conscience in any case whatever, I mean in things relating to the answer of a good conscience towards God, which you may be assured to meet withal during the time of your pilgrimidge here. Well, I have this to say, and this testimony to bear for the living God, and his everlasting mercies, that amongst the many blessings, and favours and deliverances, that we are made partakers of from year to year, for these seven and thirty years; which blessed be the name and power of our God, he hath made me a living witness, and an enjoyer of his blessed truth; and amongst all the blessed seasons of his love, this was the greatest of mercies unto me, for the God of heaven and earth was with us at our downlying, and uprising; and whilst we slept, he kept us, and when we awaked, he was present with us, the right hand of his power upheld us, and his good Spirit sustained us, and made hard things easy unto us, and bitter things sweet. When we awaked in the night season, spiritual groans ascended unto him, and in the morning light, living thanksgiving and high praises was returned unto him that liveth for evermore; who was the God and Father of all our mercies and blessings, and gave us strength, courage, and boldness, to stand faithful unto our testimony, to the praise of the Lord. The terror of evil times did not affright

us, though our enemies determined our ruin and destruction, and pleased themselves in afflicting of us.

The Way and Manner of our going to Prison, and by whom we were persecuted.

ONE Robert Cross, priest of the parish of Chew-magna, in the county of Somerset (whither we removed some time before, and where we dwelt) who was a great persecutor twenty years before, but had left it for some years; until he began afresh with us, his rage being again renewed against friends, for their faithfulness to the Lord, and his blessed truth. He was greatly offended, but against me in particular was he enraged greatly; to that degree, that he said, 'If he could but live to see me ruined, and my husband for my sake, he cared not if he died next day.' And that which enraged him against me was, I being with a neighbour that lay very weak, and on her death-bed, there being several of the said priest's congregation, I had a testimony amongst them, declaring a day of mortality to them, which accordingly fell out to three or four in two weeks time, which was taken notice of; and the priest being told of it, was enraged as aforesaid, and contrived and made use of several instruments for the carrying on of his cursed work. He sent to the neighbouring justice, and threatened him, 'That it should cost him an hundred pounds, if he did not put the king's laws in execution against the Quakers,' as the justice told me himself, upon a time when they took me from a burial, and had me before them; the manner of which comes up before me at this time.

It being my lot to be at the burial of a daughter of one professing truth, where I had a testimony to the people, many being there of the priest's company, which greatly offended him. The next week after, the father of this young woman dying also; the day of his burial happening on the very day that several justices were met at their petty-sessions, near the burying-place of friends, they sent a

warrant, with some officers, into our burying-yard, to bring away preacher and hearers, if any one there was that did take upon them to preach, there being a great concourse of people, many coming in with the officers to see what they would do unto us; and a very great company with the corpse. And no sooner were we come into the yard, and the multitude, but the power of the Lord seized upon me, and made me to tremble, that I could hardly stand on my feet; but by taking hold on a friend that was near me, I said; 'There is a day coming, in the which the God of heaven and earth will be too strong for the stout-hearted amongst you; therefore repent, and amend your lives, while you have a day, and a time, for as the tree falls, so it lieth, and as death leaves, judgment finds, for there is no repentance in the grave; therefore hasten, hasten to repentance, and amendment of life, for the great God of heaven and earth will thin this nation, for the people are too many that are sinning against the Lord.' This, and much more ran through me, for my heart was opened, and my spirit greatly enlarged by the mighty power of the Lord, and drawn forth in bowels of love towards the people; for I saw the tears running down many faces, and many said, they would never be again as they had been. And the officer standing by me with a warrant in his pocket, he exceedingly trembled, and could hardly open the warrant without rending it, crying, 'Oh! that I had been twenty miles from my habitation, that I had not had a hand in this work this day; pray do not you take it ill of me, for I am forced to it; you must go with me before the justices; but I wish no hand in troubling you; pray do not be angry with me.' I said, 'do not be troubled so much, I am not offended, I will go with thee.'

So when we came before them (the justices) one of them was greatly enraged against me; he said, 'You are an old prophetess, I know you of old.' He might well say so, for he was one of them that I bore a dreadful testimony amongst ten years before. He greatly threatened me, and said, 'I should go to prison, and he would ruin my husband; but where is he? He cares little for you, I will warrant, else he

would have come with you, and not have suffered you to be sent to prison by yourself; you are a troublesome woman: parson Cross complains of you: you scatter his flock, and have done him more injury than all the Quakers ever did; you made an oration at the daughter's grave the last week, and now at the father's also; you shall certainly go to prison, that shall be the least I will do unto you. Thus he went on in an outrageous manner, and I stood before him, looking stedfastly upon him, and did not answer one word in all this time; but he continued, and said, 'You are a subtle woman, your tongue is at liberty when you are with your conventicle; but now you are dumb now you are come before us, I will send you to prison.' I said, 'I am not so much frightened at a prison, as thou thinkest I am; but if thou send me to prison, and shorten my days, because of my weakness, thou wilt but bring innocent blood upon thy head, and that will cry aloud for vengeance.'

He said unto me, 'Why do you break the king's laws then? And why do not you go to church? You are running headlong into Popery.' 'I deny the pope, said I, and his actions.' 'Do you love the king?' 'Yes,' said I. 'Why do you not obey his law then?' said he. 'I have broken no law this day, said I; I was at a burial, and it is no breach of law to bury our dead.' 'Well, said he, you say you have broken no law, will you keep the king's law for the time to come, and leave off holding conventicles, and preaching?' 'So far as the king's laws do not wrong my conscience, said I, I will keep them, but I will not wrong my conscience for the king, nor no man else; and I do not know whether the Lord may open my mouth again; but if he do, and unloose my tongue to speak, I shall not keep silent.' 'So, you can talk now, when you please; but, said he to them that sate by him, she will be dumb again by and by. I will ask her one question that shall make her dumb again. Well, you say you have not broken the king's laws, you were but at a burial, but I will warrant you held a conventicle amongst the people at John Hall's house, before you brought him forth; What say you to that?' I did not presently answer him, until he said again, 'Why do not you answer? I knew

she would be dumb.' Then I answered, 'I am no informer; Judas was an informer, when he betrayed his master.' Then he looked on them that were by him, and said, 'It ell you, these Quakers are the subtlest people that ever we have to do withal, there is no dealing with them; one while they will not speak at all, and another while such cross answers as this; I protest I will send her to prison.' Then he called the clerk to make my mittimus, and the officer was called for; then he raged at him, and said, 'You silly fellow, you have let all the men go, and have brought a troublesome woman here to trouble us; you should have brought two or three rich men to have paid for all the conventicle.' 'Sir, I did not know them,' said he. 'No, I will make you swear you did not know them; give him the book, make him kiss the book.' The poor man was so scared at it, that he cried, 'Pray, sir, do not you do it, I cannot swear.' Then I looked on the justices, and said, 'My soul is grieved to see how you oppress men's spirits, in forcing of them to wrong their consciences; do you not think that the just and righteous God will not visit for these things? Yes, verily, a day of reckoning will the great God of heaven and earth call for, and dreadful and terrible will it be to all the workers of iniquity.' Then the other justice that sate by, and had forborne meddling all the time, being a moderate man, who was not forward in persecuting his neighbours; he seeing the other so furious, said, 'Come, let us come to the matter in hand; this woman was at a burial, and there are many religions in the world, and all have their way to bury their dead, and we cannot hinder them: but come, officer, let us know the truth of the matter, was this a conventicle or no? If it was, there must be a place prepared for her to stand up over the people to preach; was it so?' 'No, Sir, said the officer.' 'What then stood she on?' 'Nothing but the earth of the grave.' 'And what said she?' 'I never heard the like in all my life, said he, she said there was a day a coming, in which the God of heaven and earth would be too strong for the stout-hearted amongst us; and proclaimed a day of mortality amongst us, and warned us to repent, and amend our lives; surely it made my hear to tremble.' 'How! What a

woman make your heart to tremble?’ ‘Yes, Sir, and I had no power to touch her, until she had said all she had in her heart to say.’ ‘How! said the angry justice, ‘you silly fellow, you an officer, and had a severe warrant in your pocket, to bring away preacher and hearers, and you let her say all she had to say; you are not fit to be the king’s officer: Send him away to prison.’—Then he that was the moderate justice, went forth out of the room, and sent one to me, to desire me to go forth; I not being forward to go, for that honest confession of the poor man, did me more good, as I thought, than my release at that time. The justice returning in again, said, ‘Pray neighbour Stirredge go home about your business.’ So I returned to my habitation again, and had the peace of the Lord in my bosom; everlasting praises be given to the Lord our God for ever.

But this wicked priest, after this burial, went from house to house, and threatened the people. ‘That it should cost them five pounds a-piece for going to hear the Quakers.’ And some being affrighted at his threatening, asked him forgiveness; others said they would go again. But still he continued his rage, for nothing would content him but our ruin. For after he had sent the officers to our meeting, which dealt roughly with us, by pulling and throwing, and threatening; all which did not content him. But a little time after, as he was preaching in his pulpit, he fell down as dead, whilst the words were in his mouth; as many of the hearers, being then and there present, declared unto me, that they thought he would never draw breath again. But after a great ado, and all means used, that they could make use of, he a little recovered again. ‘But,’ said the people, ‘we hope it will be a warning to him to leave off persecuting his neighbours.’ But it was not, for he was heard to say, ‘That if he could but live to accomplish that work that he had begun, he did not care if he died presently.’ So he seeing his neighbours not forward in answering his will to the full, he sends to Bristol for John Hellier, with more of his confederates, who was the great persecutor at Bristol, whom he thought did his work to the full; for they came in with many officers into our meeting

at Chewmagna, five miles from Bristol, where we were solemnly met together to wait upon the great God of heaven and earth; they rushed in amongst us, and arrested us all in the king's name, and left a guard upon us, and went to the priest's house to dinner, and staid near two hours; in which time we had our solemn meeting peaceably, where we enjoyed the presence of the Lord, to our souls' comfort; who never failed his children in a needful hour, but always gave them strength suitable to the day; everlasting honour be given to his holy name for ever.

So after they had fed to the full, and drank in abundance, they brought with faggots of wood from the priest's, with a hatchet, and a great axe, and commanded the people to aid and assist them. So they mustered up their forces as they came along; and the people seeing what posture they were in, cried out, 'What are you going to do?' 'Blow up the house, and burn the Quakers,' said they; then down they threw their wood at the meeting-house door, and cried out, 'Set fire on them, blow up the house.' Then the people cried out, 'It will burn our houses that are near; and you will not be so wicked to burn the people, will you?' Then they came in, in a violent manner, and laid hands on the children, threatening them to burn them; bringing some of them out, they said, 'We will make a warning, to all others, and make them repent that ever they were Quakers' bastards.'

Then they laid hands on us, hauling and dragging us along, beating some with a cane, and hewing off the legs of the forms, and taking other forms by the two ends, and so threw the Friends backwards that sat thereon; often calling to our neighbours to aid and assist them. Some of them replied, 'We cannot work on the sabbath-day.' So they continued the work until they wearied themselves; then bringing us all out into the street amongst many people, I said unto them, 'Where is your teacher?' 'What is that to you?' some replied, 'you shall be sure to suffer, if the rest do not.' 'But where is your teacher?' I said again: 'Let him come and see the fruit of his labour; this is his flock, and this is your sabbath-day's work, let him come and behold

the fruits of his labour, and see if he will be ashamed of it.' Then they forced us in again, and John Hellier caused his men to make our mittimus, and himself committed us to Ivilchester jail, where we were so cruelly used, as is after related.

John Hellier being the head man in this work, our headborough asked him, 'What he should do with us?' He replied, 'Have them away to prison presently.' The day being far spent, and the journey long, it being twenty and two miles to the county jail, he asked J. Hellier, 'How we should go; for here are many women that cannot travel on foot?' He answered, 'I will press some carts to haul them along.' I said, 'We are not ashamed to be carted for the testimony of our Lord and Master Jesus Christ.' 'But you shall be carted,' said J. H. 'as the whores are in Bristol.'

So they returned to their master the priest, and told him they had done his work effectually, for we were all committed to prison. He put off his hat, and thanked them, and said, 'It would add years to his life; now he should live in peace.' But take notice how short his days were. The headborough on the morrow morning went and told him, 'He must provide horses to carry the Quakers to prison on.' He answered, 'The devil should have us first.' He asked, 'What he should do to get us thither?' 'Drive them along like hogs,' said the priest. The officer was our neighbour, a moderate man, and what he did was sore against his will; he came from the priest's house to ours and told us what the priest said. So before we were carried to prison, he, the priest was walking in the Steeple-house yard, where he had a great deal of foolish discourse with some boys that were there at play, too tedious to mention. But the last words were, he bid one of the boys take a halter and hang himself; and then he fell down as dead. His family being called, brought forth a chair, and other things necessary, and lifted him therein, and used all means they could, there being many people about him: Some crying out, 'Do not you disturb the old man, but let him go quietly.' 'Ay,' said others, 'let him depart in peace, and do not you disturb him, that his neighbours, the Quakers, may abide

at home, and not go to prison.’ Some of the neighbours came into our shop with joy, and said, ‘Now you may abide at home, for Mr. Cross is fallen down dead in the church yard.’ ‘And he was going mad before,’ said the mother of one of the boys, ‘for,’ said she, ‘he bid my boy take a halter and hang himself.’ ‘Lord have mercy upon me! What wicked counsel was that of a minister,’ said she; ‘we were in good hopes that his falling down in the pulpit would have been a warning to him, but we see it is not.’ But after an hour and half’s time, he had so much life, as that he called them that were about him, rogues. So they carried him in his chair to his bed, where he remained some days, and died; but never sensible, as I was informed by several. But we were carried to prison before he died, where we had such entertainment, and hard usage, as follows:

Our keeper Giles Bale, and his wife, put us in the common jail, with three felons, that were condemned to be hanged, and would not afford us straw to lie upon, though we would have paid for it; they locked us up, and carried away the key with them, they living some distance from the prison, thereby to prevent the under-keeper from shewing us any favour; And the head-keeper’s wife said, ‘There let them be like a company of rogues and whores together; if I had a worse place, I would put them therein.’

* And truly that was a most dismal place, where we had neither stock nor stone to sit upon; nor any resting-place to lean against, but the black stone wall, covered over with soot, and the damp cold ground to lie upon. But before we lay down, three of our Friends, that were prisoners in the room adjoining to that we were in, put through the grates in unto us four dust, or chaff, pillows, and two blankets, and a little straw, whereon we lay down, like a flock of sheep in a pen, in that very cold winter, that we never had the like since I had a remembrance; where most of us took our rest very sweetly. But when I lay down in that dismal place, it came into my heart a consideration of these things; saying in my heart, ‘Lord, thou knowest for what we are exposed to this hardship, it is because we cannot betray our testimony, nor wrong our conscience, nor deal

treacherously with our own souls. And seeing it is so, Lord, be thou our comforter in this needful time; for it is thy presence that makes hard things easy, and bitter things sweet, and thou hast sweetened the waters of a bitter cup; Oh! thou Physician of value, that can strengthen both soul and body, be with us this night, and all the nights and days that we have to live in this world. Then the Lord was pleased to open my heart unto him, and to fill it with his living mercy, and comfortable presence, insomuch that it overflowed my whole heart, that I could have sung aloud of the goodness of the Lord, and of his mercies and blessings upon us. But I looking over my fellow-prisoners, and seeing them so sound asleep, I did forbear to open my mouth; but in the morning there came many people to the prison door, to see how many of us were dead with our hard fate; some of them were sure, as they

* This keeper and his wife soon after died, and their family came to ruin.

said, that I was dead, for I looked as if I would not live until the morning. But then finding us all alive and well, they confess and said, 'Surely we were the people of God, if there were any.' That being the first day, we had a meeting in the prison, and many Friends came there, where we had a very good meeting, and the good presence of the Lord was with us, and filled our hearts with joy and gladness; insomuch that I was constrained to praise the name of the Lord, and magnify his power, and to testify in the hearing of many people, 'That we were so far from repenting our coming there, that we had great cause to give glory, honour and praises to the Lord, God of heaven and earth, for that he had found us worthy to suffer for his name and truth; for his powerful presence was with us, and sanctified our afflictions, and made the prison like a palace unto us; and we would not change our state for all the glory of the world, if it were proffered unto us.'

This, and much more ran through me, which I shall omit for brevity sake: But, in a word, great was the goodness and mercy of the Lord towards us, from day to day; that I

have sometimes said, 'Surely the Lord is honouring his people; he is weaning of them from this world.' It seemed to me as if I had no habitation but the prison; then was the time for the Lord to reveal his secrets to his children, that he had tried and proved in such things; for it was faithfulness that rendered the faithful servant acceptable in his Master's sight, and caused him to say, 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful in a little, be thou ruler over much;' for I cannot believe, that him that is not true to a little, will ever be made ruler over much. No, no, therefore keep to truth in all things, and to the plain language, and teach your children so to do, and as I have said. In that time of great afflictions, and sufferings, and parting of many, wife from husband, and husband from wife, and both from tender children; then was the Lord pleased to reveal his secrets unto his children. And seeing the goodness of the Lord from day to day, and being made sensible of his gathering arm from day to day, a great concern came upon me for many careless ones, that had deprived themselves of that blessed benefit that our souls enjoyed with the Lord. Oh! in consideration of them, and their deplorable state, my soul hath often been poured forth before the Lord, crying, 'Oh! Lord, that they may come and partake with us of they great mercies, as we do from day to day.' Then it would oftentimes come up before me, the great dishonour they had brought upon the Lord, and his blessed truth, by their unfaithfulness, and unbelief. Yea, great dishonour indeed, they could not trust the Lord, as if he had no power or strength to preserve them. Then I cried, 'Oh! Lord, many are weak and feeble, and the cruelty of men hath been great and terrible, and desperately wicked; and thou hast suffered them to be very cruel, to the astonishment of many; insomuch that many a poor soul hath been tossed as with a tempest; and for want of keeping to that blessed guide and rock Christ Jesus, who alone was able to give them boldness and courage to go through the work of this day of affliction, many a poor one hath fallen, not knowing they should be deprived of so great a reward, that we have

and do enjoy; blessed be thy holy name, for ever. And Lord, thou knowest that my heart is pained within me, my soul is in travail, and my bowels are rolling towards the poor and the distressed, the tossed with tempest, and not comforted; the enemy of their souls is busy to cast them down, and to fill their minds with trouble and unbelief, always casting before them their unfaithfulness, and would fain keep them in bondage, and from returning unto thee by true repentance, that thou mayest heal more backslidings, and teach them to be more faithful for time to come. Oh! Lord, open my heart in prayer more and more, and bow thy ear to the supplication of thy servant, as thou hast done many a time; and accept of the prayer of thy servant, for them who cannot pray for themselves. Oh! Lord, if it may stand with thy blessed will, once more to afford them a day of visitation, and try them again. Oh! Lord, deal not with them according to their deserts; but, Lord, I pray thee, have compassion on the works of thy hands, and remember poor mortals this day; for surely many of them are greatly distressed, and compassed about with many temptations, and my heart is pained for them.’ And in this mournful state, the Lord was pleased to speak comfortably unto me in the secret of my heart, in a living spring of life, and said; ‘The time of the deliverance of my people draweth near, and nearer than many are aware of; though I have suffered their enemies for a time to triumph over them, yet too many have grown high and lofty, and forgotten the days of their distress and calamity, and what state they were in when I first found them out; as it were without hope: Then did I send forth my light and my truth, which many received with thankfulness of heart, and with a ready mind, and bowed thereunto, and yielded obedience for at time. But after I had confounded their enemies, and appeared for their deliverance, and enriched them greatly, then they forgot the days of their distress and poverty, and the many promises that they made unto me in the day when they made unto me in the day when they were sorely beset with many enemies, within and without. But since I have appeared for them, and confounded their foes, and

have done more for them than they looked for, or expected at my hands, how have they forgotten to pay their vows unto me, that many of them made unto me in the days of their distress? And how far are they gone into old Israel's sins? Nay, have not some so much lost their sense, as to put light for darkness, and darkness for light? But blessed are all they who continue truly humble, for my covenant is firm, for ever established, and never to be altered with my remnant that have been faithful, that have parted with all that I have called for, for my name and truth's sake; and who have had no helper in the earth but me, nor none to lean upon, nor to confide in, but the arm of my power; who could not turn to the right hand, nor to the left, unless I go before them: Oh! these are mine, and my secrets shall be with them, they shall be found worthy to stand in the gap, and to intercede for the people, notwithstanding their poverty, and the nothingness of themselves, yet they shall be as instruments in my hand, to proclaim my dreadful day, and the day of my vengeance amongst the people, that many may hear, and fear, and turn unto me by true repentance, that I may heal their backslidings, and receive them freely. And in order thereunto, I will bring a day of deliverance for my people, and many of them shall praise my name, and tell of my wondrous works, and what I have done for them, that others may be encouraged to be faithful to the residue of their days; for I have seen many bemoaning themselves in desolation, and sorely bewailing their lost condition; for many have been made desolate, by reason of the cruelty of the wicked one, and they being desolate, have mourned unto me, and I have seen the bemoaning of my people; and I have seen the travails of the faithful for the unfaithful; and for the cries of the poor, and the fightings of the needy, will I arise, and I will work a way for the deliverance of my people; for the time is near, that the prison shall not enclose them, but they shall come forth, and declare and publish my wondrous works; for I will work, and none shall be able to hinder; and many shall proclaim my dreadful day, and the day of my vengeance; that many may hear, and fear, and return unto the Lord by

true repentance.'

Oh! this was the glad tidings that livingly lived with me night and day in the time of my confinement: Oh! it was great satisfaction to my travailing soul, it answered the very petition that many a time I had put up in the night season unto the living God; everlasting honour, glory, and renown be given unto him that liveth for evermore, saith my soul. For surely I cannot but admire the wonderful loving-kindness, and mercies, and favours of the Lord our God, the high and holy One that inhabits eternity in condescending to the poor, and to the low, and the little; he hath revealed his secrets to many who have not thought themselves worthy to be made partakes of so great a benefit; but their greatest concern hath been for the redemption of their souls from under Satan's power; and when that was done, now Lord preserve me in thy fear for ever, and keep me from sinning against thee, that my soul may not go into captivity again.

This was the chiefest concern of my spirit in the time of my great afflictions in the passage out of Egypt's land, and through the wilderness, where I met with many straits, and great hardships, and many enemies; and many crooked ways, and by-paths that the enemy of my soul had cast up to catch my feet in; but the Lord in his infinite goodness, who never failed his children that sought him above all things, he provided a way for me to escape his snares, as he did his Israel in former days, glory be given unto his holy name for ever. This was part of the exercise during the time of my confinement with my husband, and many more of the servants of the most high God, in Ivilchester jail. And when the time drew near of our deliverance, when I came out of the prison, to go to the sessions held at Browton, I assuredly believed that the time was near (that lived in my heart) that the prison should not enclose us any longer, though it was altogether unlikely; for our persecutors were exceedingly wicked against us, although our grand persecutor, the priest, was at that time taken off in a very remarkable manner, as before-mentioned; notwithstanding, many remained, that were very cruel, and

acted cruelly and unjustly against us; and put by the jury that were chosen of our neighbours, and called another jury presently in the court, such as they thought most fit for their turns. Then the clerk began, and read an indictment, viz. 'That we were found, or taken at an unlawful assembly, in force of arm, in contempt of the king, and his laws, crown and dignity, to the terror of the people, &c.' And he said to the jury, 'Gentlemen, you have heard their indictment; if you find them guilty, you find for the king.' And a bishop that sat upon the bench with the judge, stood up and said, 'That the first Quaker that ever was in England, was hanged for being one concerned in the Popish plot.' I answered, 'That the first that was called a Quaker, was now alive.' He said again, 'He could prove by sufficient witness, that he was hanged for being one in the Popish plot.' Then the bishop being enraged, by reason he was contradicted, and bid us 'Have a care what we said, for them that had estates amongst us, it should cost them their estates, and them that had not, should lie in prison whilst they perished.' Such was their great rage and wickedness against us, that it was very grievous to hear them; but there was a secret cry many times ran through my heart unto the Lord; 'Lord, work for thy name's sake, and confound their wisdom, and rage, and bring down their proud and wicked spirits, and bring to nought their mischievous contrivance, that they have been contriving against thy innocent people; as they have been making themselves merry, and drinking wine to the full, and feeding themselves with the fatness of the earth, as Dives did, and have what their hearts lust after, and yet none of all these things will give them content nor satisfaction; no, no, but the destruction of a poor despised people: Oh! Lord, make thy power known this day, and that that will make most for thy honour, and the prosperity of thy blessed truth, do thou bring to pass this day, that it may be known that there is a God in heaven that can rule the hearts of the children of men, and make them to know that there is a God whom all men ought to fear, honour, and obey.'

And, surely, the Lord was pleased to hear the prayers of his children, and to answer the requests of them, in the days of their afflictions; for this jury whom they chose, as they thought most fit for their work, was long absent; but when they came with their verdict, the foreman could not readily speak, but looked much like a dead man. Then the bishop, in a rage, asked him, 'Whether we were guilty, or not guilty?' He answered, 'Guilty of not going to church, but not of a riot.' 'Of not going to church,' said the bishop, 'that is not the matter in hand: Guilty of a riot you mean.' Then the rest of the jury said, 'No,' my lord; 'Guilty of not going to church, but not of a riot.' 'You mean of an unlawful assembly then?' 'Yes,' said the fore-man. 'Why that is a riot in law,' said the bishop. Then I answered, 'We are no rioters.' Then the crier of the court shook his white rod over my head, and said, 'Be silent.' I said, 'No, we may not be silent, we are a sober people, and live a good life and conversation; we do unto all men, as we would be done by; I never wronged man, woman, nor child, nor I know none that have ought against us, unless for the answer of a good conscience: Here are our neighbours that can testify for us.' The crier continued shaking his white rod over my head, crying, 'Hush, and be silent.' Then one of the justices, a sober ancient man, said, 'Let the woman alone to speak for herself, she speaketh truth and reason, let more of them speak; you are many against them, and if they may not be suffered to speak for themselves, it is very hard.' That a little stopped the rage of the bishop, and judge; then they called to our keeper to take us away, and to bring us when they called for us again; so they went to their dinner, and we with our keeper. But no sooner were they gone, but a great concern fell upon me to follow them; I could neither eat nor drink, but was pressed in my spirit to go after them; and when I came, they were sitting down to their dinner, with a noise of musick playing at the going up of their dishes, which were very many of the choicest things. I went in amongst them whilst they were at dinner, but I did not see a fit opportunity, but waited till they had dined; and as they were rising, I came in with a great dread

and awe over my spirit. One of the great men came to me, and said, 'Good woman, who would you speak withal?' I said, 'The judge of the sessions.' He said, 'I am the judge; if you have any thing to say, I am ready to hear you.' But he not being the man that sat upon the bench that day, I said, 'Thou are not the man I am going unto.' Then he turned towards the judge that sat that day, and said, 'This woman hath something to say to you.' Then one of the justices laid his hand upon my shoulder, and said, 'Let this good woman have what she will to say, we will hear her.' But I getting near to the judge and the bishop, who sat at the upper end of the table, said, 'Forasmuch as you are all here, that sat in judgment against us this day, I have a concern upon my spirit in vindication of our innocency; we are well known amongst our neighbours to be a sober and an honest people, that live a good life and conversation; we do no wrong to any, we can do good to them that hate us, and pray for them that despitefully use us. I know none that has ought against us, but concerning the law of our God; notwithstanding all this, we are numbered among transgressors, and have been turned into the common jail amongst felons; our trades and families lie liable to be ruined, and all these things shall not befall us, but you shall understand thereof, for I am here this day to testify the truth of it; for which the just and righteous God will one day plead; and as sure as the day gives its light, and the covenant of the day and night cannot be broken, there is not a man here, nor any that draws breath in the open air, that shall escape the tribunal seat of God's divine justice, till a sentence of a just recompense of reward every one shall receive for their deeds done in their life-time, whether they be good or evil.'

And I can truly say, the dread of the Lord was upon me, insomuch that they were smitten and paleness appeared on their faces, and had not a word to say. But when I was going forth, some hectoring young man said, 'I thought it would be so, when this woman came in; I thought she would preach when the spirit moved her; but why would you suffer her (said he to the man of the house) to disturb

your guests?' Then he said, 'Get you down stairs, or I will throw you down.' I turned in again, and said, 'What wrong have I done unto any one here; I could have kept my conscience clear in staying away, I had not been here this day; but whether you will hear or forbear, I shall be clear in the day of account, of all your blood.' So I left them, and returned to my place, and had great peace with the Lord; but we were not called into court no more that day; but the morrow morning early; we were called to come into court, in order to finishing our trial, but the bishop came no more into the court, that we saw, or knew of; and the judge was very moderate that day; a great change indeed! He only called to the keeper to bring up the Quakers, and called some of us by name, and said, 'You that stand here indicted, the court fines you five shillings a-piece;' and never spake a word of payment of the money, but broke up the court (their business being done) and went their way, and our keep also left us, to our great admiration: Above fourscore prisoners that were before them that day, were freed.

After dinner, the crier came in amongst us where we were, and said, 'Neighbours and friends, I am glad for your release; you are the people of God; men would ruin you, but God will not suffer them so to do.' And said, 'Where is the woman?' I said, 'Here am I:' He said, 'The Lord bless you, I pray you forgive me, for I intended no harm, nor would not do any thing against you; though I shook my rod over your head, I did it in no evil towards you; so I hope, my honest neighbours and friends, you will forgive me.' We answered, 'Yes, freely;' and was very loving to him, and desired his well-being for ever. He went his way in much love, praying God to bless us, and we returned to our habitations with the peace of the Lord in our bosoms; everlasting praises be given unto the Lord our God for evermore.

Now, my children, the end and aim of my leaving this to you, and all upon record, is, that future ages may know that the great God of heaven and earth, that brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt's bondage, that made the

waters stand on heaps, and brought his children through on dry land, and overturned Pharaoh and all his host, he it is that is our God in whom we have believed, and his power is not lessened that he cannot save, nor his arm shortened, that it cannot deliver this day, as in former days, praises to his name for ever.

This, my dear children, you know is certainly true; but for you and all others to keep in remembrance these and all other mercies that the Lord our God hath bestowed upon us, ever since he gathered us to be a people, which is eight and thirty years ago; for I was in the nineteenth year of my age, when J. Camm and John Audland came first to Bristol, in the dread and power of the great God of heaven and earth; and I am a living witness that his powerful presence was with them, and made their ministry so dreadful, that it pierced the hearts of thousands. Oh! the dread and terror that seized upon my heart at the sound of John Audland's voice, and the sight of him, before I rightly understood what he said. But before the meeting was over, the spirit of the Lord moved in my heart, and in the light I come to see my woeful and deplorable state, which made me to cry to God for mercy; a day never to be forgotten by me. And now I have arrived to the seven and fiftieth year of my age. Oh! the many deliverances, both inward and outward, have I been made a living witness of. The many decrees that have been sealed against us, the many threatenings of ruin and destructions that have been sounded in our ears, how have we been as killed all the day long, and counted as sheep for the slaughter? And yet behold we are alive to this day, to praise the Lord. How have the enemies roared, both inwardly and outwardly, and have come with open mouth to devour at once? And how hath our God helped us? The great God of heaven and earth is he that hath been our strength in a needful time; and hath sustained his people by the strength of his arm, and hath borne up our heads above the waters, that they have not drowned nor overturned us to this very day; everlasting honour be given to the Lord for ever. But our enemies hath he overturned, and broken their bands in

sunder, and have made them to bow under his dreadful power, and hath taken many off in his displeasure, Oh! what shall I say in the behalf of all these his wondrous works, that mine eyes have seen; but more especially the inward work of regeneration? Oh! my tongue is not able to demonstrate the tenth part of it, that the Lord hath been pleased to bring me through; Oh! what shall I say at the remembrance of them, all which at this time is livingly come up before me; but bow before the Lord, and prize his mercies for evermore.

And now, my dear children, keep faithful to the Lord, and his blessed truth that you have been trained up in, and your eyes shall see for yourselves as mine eyes have for myself; be faithful to the motion of the spirit of Christ Jesus in your own bosoms, and do not you overlook the little things, for they that be not faithful in a little, shall never be made ruler over much. Therefore do not you exercise yourselves in any matter too high for you, but mind the motion of the spirit in your own hearts, and hearken diligently to the voice of the Lord, that your souls may live; and keep the Lord always in your remembrance, that you sin not against him; and remember to keep to the daily cross, which will crucify all the motions of the flesh, and keep you alive to God, and near unto him, and in so doing, you will know his counsel; and see the kingdom of heaven, and the righteousness thereof, above all things in this world, and other things shall be added unto you; for, I will assure you, this is the way that my soul hath travailed in, and have found favour with God. An done thing more that I have experienced, which hath been of moment unto me, that in all my afflictions, and pain, and sorrow of body or mind, I have not had an eye to confide in man, but have applied my heart to the Lord, and have poured forth my soul unto him; oh! thou Physician of value, that can cure both soul and body; thou that knows better how to administer to my necessity than I can ask of thee; from thee alone do I look for comfort, for there is none besides thee that can administer true comfort to me. And the Lord, in his due time, hath appeared to my comfort and

satisfaction, and hath established my goings, and hath kept my feet from falling, and my heart from going astray, unto this very day; everlasting honour be given unto his name for evermore, Amen.

And since I have seen the good effects of my labour and travail, I earnestly beg of the Lord night and day to do for you as he hath done for me. Oh! how hath my prayers ascended unto the Lord, in publick, and in private, and in my concerns, when my hand hath been at my labour, and on the highway-side. Oh! my children, let it not be in vain, for I can truly say, that you have been the children for whom many prayers have been offered.

Therefore consider it, when I am gone from you, and can no longer watch over you, for my time is much over, I have no long time here on this side the grave, but I shall be gone, and see you no more in this world, nor take more care for you, nor give more counsel; therefore have I written this little account of part of my travails out of Egypt's bondage, towards the land of rest and peace; which have been through great difficulties, and through many a sore combat with the enemy of my soul's peace, many a fiery trial, and through a vale of tears; but do not you be discouraged at it, for you know how wonderfully the great God of heaven and earth hath been my support in time of need, and hath borne up my spirit, and given me more strength than I could have believed, if it had been declared unto me. And now I seeing so many professors of truth, at this day, going on at such an easy rate, and so careless, and so indifferent, so slighting the cross, and so little regarding the travail of their souls, and so little concerned for their soul's good, and so slighting the testimonies of truth, and spending their precious time and season, that God hath put into their hands, as if Heaven's glory, and a state of eternity, were not worth the looking after; and as if there was no God to punish for these things, nor any day of account.

Oh! the consideration of these things hath been weightily upon my spirit for many month, an morning and evening hath my heart been afflicted, saying within myself, 'Lord,

what will become of such? I fear the visitation of many of them is almost over. Oh! how does my soul lament for them; and have the greater concern upon my spirit, to intercede with the Lord to preserve me and mine for ever. Oh! Lord, my soul is concerned, and my heart is bowed at this time in the sense and feeling of thy everlasting love, and mercies, and blessings, that thou hast bestowed upon me a poor distressed object, till thou took pity on me, and looked on me in the days of my distress, and spread a skirt over me. And now in consideration of this thy great love that thou shewest unto me when I was bemoaning myself like a dove, without a mate, or like a mournful widow, or like a sparrow upon the house-top, that is sitting alone. Oh! when it comes up before me, Lord, how is my heart broken, and how is my spirit melted, and how doth my soul love the Lord, and desire for evermore to obey his voice, and to bow to his sceptre, and keep covenant with him for ever; that I may be kept faithful all my days.

‘And now, Oh! Lord my God, seeing thou has been pleased thus to deal with me, and to have a regard to the low estate of thy handmaid, and hast heard my prayers, and answered many a time: Oh! Lord, if I have found favour in thy sight, this once more hear my petition this evening, and grant me my request; and Lord, thou that hast kept me all my life long to this very day, bless my children, by preserving of them in thy fear, cause them to remember thy mercies, and thy blessings from year to year, and from day to day; and cause them to remember what thou hast done for them, and their father and mother, in the days of their great affliction, when destruction and ruin were determined against us; and when we were almost past hope, how hast thou appeared, and confounded our enemies before our eyes? Lord, let these things never be forgotten by me, nor them, whilst we have a day to live upon the earth: But, Oh! Lord, I pray thee, bless and sanctify all these thy blessings and mercies bestowed upon us, and give us a thankful heart, and humble mind, and more and more united us unto thee, and cause us to walk worthy of the same. Oh! that my heart was but worthy enough; for methinks my

heart is not able to set forth thy praises enough: No, surely it is impossible for tongue to declare thy infinite goodness, and thy noble acts. but, Lord, we that have made our choice of thee, and have believed in thy Son Christ Jesus, have known him to be sufficient strength in time of need; and we that have known thy holy arm to be made bare, for the deliverance of us out of thraldom, and captivity, have known it sufficient to preserve us to this very day. Therefore, Oh! lord, strengthen my faith, hope, and confidence, that I may stedfastly believe that thou wilt preserve my children, when I am gone to my resting-place: Lord, keep my family, and thy people; let me not cease to pray for them, and their offspring, that I may do my endeavour for their entrance into thy blessed kingdom, so shall I go to my grave in peace. And now, Oh! Lord, I do wholly resign them into thy hands, as knowing right well thou art able to keep them through faith, and preserve all their days, and to do more for them than I am able to ask of thee. Oh! lord, whatever exercise they meet withal, Lord strengthen them, and bear up their spirits, that they may not be overcome with the temptations of the wicked one: For, Lord, thy power hath been sufficient to redeem my soul. So, Lord, once more do I commit the keeping of my spirit, with my children, and all thy flock and family upon the face of the whole earth, with whom my soul is at peace and in unity; and do feel the renewings of thy love at this time, which is the greatest comfort that can be enjoyed; therefore does my heart, soul, and spirit, and all that is within me, return unto thee, Oh! lord, all praises, glory and honour, with hearty thanksgiving, and pure obedience for evermore. Lord, accept of it this evening, as an evening sacrifice from a broken heart, and a contrite spirit, which thou never rejected; for surely, Oh! Lord, thou art worthy of it, from this time forth, for ever, and for evermore. Amen.'

This was finished the 13th day of the second month,
1692, by me,

ELIZABETH STIRREDGE, Sen.

☞ The last fourteen years of her life after this, she lived at Hempstead in Hertfordshire, wither her husband removed, with her and family, from Chewmagna, in the county of Somerset, in the year 1688. And did not travel much abroad in her latter days; except once or twice in Bristol, &c. and usually to the yearly-meeting at London, once a year; but laboured mostly at home, as she grew aged and weakly; but often as the Lord afforded her strength, visited the neighbouring meetings in the same county; and her service therein tended to the edifying and comforting of God's heritage, as many faithful friends in those parts can bear her witness. And great was her concern for the meeting she belonged to, which she frequented so long as she was able; may times going to it through great weakness; and many living and powerful testimonies, (especially towards her latter end), did she bear in it, exhorting friends to faithfulness; frequently declaring and setting forth the wonderful power that attended friends in the beginning, and which still doth all the faithful, of which she often spoke, and bore testimony to, in the beginning of her last illness, amongst her own family. And so departed this life, and laid down her head in peace with the Lord at Hempstead aforesaid, on the 7th day of the ninth month, 1706, in the 72d year of her age.

A
FAITHFUL
WARNING

TO THE
INHABITANTS OF ENGLAND,
AND ELSEWHERE:

With an invitation of Love unto all People, to call them to Repentance, and Amendment of Life; for by so doing, many have escaped the Judgments that have been to be poured down upon their Heads.

OH England! England! the sense of thy wickedness has been very heavy upon my spirit a long time, even many months, and years, and sometimes hath my mouth been opened in the fear of the Lord, to testify against the proceedings of the inhabitants of this land: many have been my prayers and tears unto the Lord in secret for this land of my nativity: and since it has pleased the Lord of his infinite goodness, that he has been pleased to renew his mercies and favours once more unto this land, Oh! prize it while you have time, and walk worthy of it, lest by your unworthiness you may provoke the Lord to anger: therefore hasten to repentance, Oh! you inhabitants of England, and take up a lamentation, and weep bitterly, and let it be for a lamentation indeed; and bewail your former state, and mispending your time that is so far gone over your heads; for your sins have reached unto heaven, as truly as ever the sins of Sodom did, which the Lord destroyed, and repented not: and truly if there had not been a remnant in this land, that the Lord in his infinite mercy and loving kindness has redeemed out of the world, and the wickedness thereof; and not only so, but they retain their

integrity, zeal, and faithfulness unto the Lord unto this day, whose souls have mourned in secret night and day unto the great God of heaven and earth, that he would be pleased to bow his ear unto the request of his servants, whose mournful state is well known to the Lord, or else I believe that this nation had been more miserable than it is. And truly I can say, that my heart is, and hath been for a long time, pained within me, and I have been concerned because of the abominations of the times, crying. 'How long, Lord, will it be ere thou wilt arise, and ease thy oppressed seed, that mourneth night and day under the sense of the great wickedness that lodgeth in this nation, which has grieved the souls of the righteous from day to day, as just Lot's was in Sodom: and these have groaned under it with great agony of spirit, and sometimes very earnest with the Lord, concerning this poor nation; and indeed I have been dissatisfied when I saw how things appeared in this land of late years: Oh! out of the bitterness of my spirit have I said again and again, 'Lord, be intreated for this poor land I beseech thee, and take pity upon the innocent ones therein; for, Lord, if thy tender mercies would have spared Sodom for fifty's or ten's sake; surely, Oh Lord! thou wilt spare this poor nation for thy people's sake, for thou art God, and changeth not; therefore am I encouraged to cry unto thee, hoping that thou wilt be intreated by thy servants.' And truly can I say, that I had satisfaction, and the Lord was pleased for to shew me that , that has come to pass in this land, sometime before it came to pass.

And now in the fear of the Lord, I have this to say to professor and profane, hasten, hasten to repentance and amendment of life, Oh! inhabitants of England, for the Lord has long strove with thee; he has shaken his rod over thee many a time, and he hath sent for this servants early and late, and has endued them with power from on high for to proclaim his dreadful day, and the day of his vengeance: and the everlasting gospel has been preached throughout this land; and he hath shewed his signs and wonders in the earth, as he did over Jerusalem of old: what could the

Lord have done more for thee than he has done, to gain thee to repentance? And thou art not fitted for thy latter-end: no, no; thy account is very large that thou hast to give unto the Lord, for thou hast requited the Lord evil for good; and for all his tender mercies and loving-kindness, and his forbearance and tender compassions; notwithstanding all this, thou art in thy sins and abominations, and going on in the broad way which leads unto misery and destruction, and the end thereof will be everlasting torment, world without end; therefore remember it whilst you have a little time lent to you, and how little none knows; therefore consider it, and lay it to heart, and remember that there is a God in heaven that ought to be feared; for he is a just and righteous God, that will do righteously with all people; he is not respecter of persons, he regards the rich no more than the poor, but every one that serveth him, and worketh righteousness is accepted of him, whether poor or rich: and this is that that will be required of you, a true repentance, and that with speed, and amendment of life; true brokenness of heart, and humility of mind, and that in the sense of his abounding goodness: Oh! do but look back a little, and consider, and see whether you can count the mercies of the Lord that he has bestowed upon this land, both spiritual and temporal: no, no, they are past numbering: well then, do you not think that the just and righteous God doth look for something at your hands; yes surely, Oh! inhabitants of England, a sacrifice of a broken heart, and a contrite spirit, and a trembling at his word, will be that which will engage the Lord for to continue his mercies to this land; Oh! wash and make you clean, put away the evil of your doings, cease to do evil, and learn to do well: cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double-minded ones. For this know, that the day of the Lord draws near, wherein he will be a swift witness against the wicked; and the ungodly must be turned into hell, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth for ever; therefore look to it, I entreat you, before it be too late; and fear the Lord, and dread his glorious majesty, for he will be

a swift witness against the wicked.

And thou, Oh city of London! what shall I say to thy inhabitants, that my spirit may be eased? Oh! fear, dread, and tremble before the great and terrible God, who can dash you in pieces, and lay you as dead men and women before him; he will pull down your crown of pride, and lay your honour in the dust: therefore hasten to repentance before it be too late, for the Lord has long strove with you, therefore look to it before it be too late, I intreat you, and before the Lord pour forth his vials of wrath upon this land, and his long forbearance comes to an end, and his decree be sealed, and the angel of God sware by him that liveth for ever, and ever, that there shall be time no longer. Oh! then it will be too late, and then it may be possible that you may cry and call to the rocks and mountains to fall upon you, for to hide you from the wrath of the lamb, his fury will be so great; and therefore whilst there is a little time afforded unto you, prize it; and prize the everlasting mercies of so great and gracious a God, that has blest this nation with so many spiritual and temporal blessings as he hath done: Oh! let not your unworthiness draw down his vengeance upon your heads, after all these his infinite mercies and favours bestowed upon us; my hearty desire is, that you may receive and embrace the love of God whilst it is proffered unto you, that by it your hearts may be seasoned and made fit to receive his blessings.

And this I have more to say to many of thy inhabitants, Oh England! be true-hearted one to another, and seek the good one of another; and come down to sobriety; let your moderation appear unto all people; and inasmuch as in you lieth, endeavour, you who have power in your hands, to suppress wickedness, that fruits of Christianity may appear, that this nation of England hath made a large profession of ever since I have had a remembrance and understanding of it, and I believe long before. Oh! come now, let fruits of Christianity appear, which will be better than many years talking of it; the Lord hath put a day into your hands again, wherein you may do good; Oh! make a

good use of it, whilst you have it, lest you provoke the Lord to take it out of your hands again, and leave you in sorrow to lament; then will your latter-end be worse than your beginning, and your account greater than ever, and your measure more filled up than ever; and by so doing, will be made fit for destruction. Oh! my soul's desire is, that wherever this may come, that it may take place upon the hearts of the people; for surely it is high time for people to be awakened to amendment of life, seeing their time is so far gone, that many have spent in vanity and pleasure, which will add to their sorrow upon their dying beds, when not one day more will be left them for to repent.

From one who wisheth well unto all people,

ELIZABETH STIRREDGE

T H E E N D .