

Introduction.

The following Christian experiences of Mary Peisley, falling into my hands, I thought well to collect and put them into order for the perusal of others.

She led an exemplary life, being watchful over herself, and zealous for the prosperity of Truth; her mind was so much to its centre, and her attention so inward, that she often drew others, by her awful sitting, into silence in Friends' families; and as her cup overflowed, she ministered to them as one having authority; so that it may be truly said, she was fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.

Ample accounts have been received of her services in both England and America, in which the Lord was pleased to bless her labour, and sanctify it to many.

She mourned for the obvious declension of our Society from its primitive simplicity in manners and conduct; often declaring that before it shone again in its ancient beauty, the rubbish must be removed;—that there must be a division between the precious and the vile, those who served the Lord, and those who served Him not; but that before this day comes, greater degrees of darkness would prevail among us as a people, and more of the night come upon us before the day of beauty and reformation would again revive in splendour.

And therefore she was fervently engaged, that the faithful everywhere might stand upon their watch, and discharge themselves as watchmen and watchwomen upon the walls of Zion, having their armour on and their lights burning, to be able to discover, as well as oppose, the approach of the enemy.

The latter part of her time she was attended with much bodily weakness and indisposition, which often rendered her unfit for travelling; these she called visitations of the mercy of God to her soul, in order to preserve her to Himself, and stain the beauty and glory of this world in her view; that her affections might be weaned from terrestrial objects, and fixed upon those things that are above—permanent and enduring to all eternity.

That the perusal of the following experiences may be blessed, and that the footsteps of this handmaid of the Lord may excite and encourage all to press into the path of self-denial, the sure way to sanctification and the rest of the righteous, in which she delighted, is, reader, the fervent desire of

Your well-wishing friend,

—SAMUEL NEALE

Chapter I

Mary Neale, late Peisley,¹ was the daughter of Peter and Rachel Peisley, and was born in the year 1717, at Ballymore, in the county of Kildare, in Ireland. She was educated in the Society of Friends; but a disposition to keep company, unrestrained by the cross of Christ, led her from Truth's simplicity in manners and behaviour. On reviewing her early life, she thus expresses herself:

“I count it an infinite mercy and high favour, that the omnipotent God allowed not the thread of my life to be cut, during the many years that I lived in disobedience to his holy will; and though often by the operation of his grace inwardly touched and convicted of my errors, and the veil so far rent from off my understanding, as to let me see that I stood on the brink of ruin, yet I did as often allow the enemy and adversary of my soul again to darken my understanding and benumb my spiritual feeling; and the tumultuous noises, pleasures and allurements of this world stifled the intelligence of the still small voice, which would have directed me, saying, ‘This is the way, walk in it.’ Our meeting also was favoured with a living and powerful ministry, which I often slighted. Thus have I, with my hard and impenitent heart, stoned his prophets; and by my unbelief and uncircumcised spirit, persecuted them that were sent to declare and proclaim the glad tidings of the gospel, to invite and call to those who were in captivity, held by the chains of sin, to come away to the glorious liberty of the Truth. I have to remember, as an inexpressible favour and mercy to my soul, that in the height of all my vanity and stupidity, I was not permitted to run into the gross enormities of the world;—I was kept from those loud, crying, hardening, black crimes, which had I run into, might have so highly provoked my Creator, as to have caused Him to say in his wrath, ‘You shall not enter into my rest.’

“A short time before my conversion I had a fall from my horse, by which I was apparently in danger of having my neck disjointed, and a sudden end put to my life. As soon as I arose on my feet and recovered my senses, the Lord by his grace and good Spirit showed me clearly that I was not in a fit condition to meet Him, the just and holy Judge of heaven and earth; and caused me solidly to consider the dismal consequence of being hurried off the stage of mortality, in an unprepared state; the impression of which never left my mind, until God, by his grace, had made me more fit for his kingdom;—the glory of which be given to his everlasting name.”

About this time two Friends in the service of Truth appointed a meeting within the compass of that in which she resided. Their awful reverent sitting before the Lord, waiting upon him for his presence and aid, struck her in an unusual manner; and raised in her mind a fervent inquiry after the revelation of the Father through his Son. She had often heard of the comforts of the Holy Spirit, the instruction of the light that comes by Jesus Christ, and the way of spiritual worship: but she still remained a stranger to the true

¹ Mary Neale died only three days after marrying Samuel Neale, and so is best known by her maiden name, Mary Peisley.

manner of seeking and breathing after it in her own experience. She has expressed how deeply her mind was affected, by the silent and humble waiting of the before-mentioned Friends, and by the operation of the universal spirit of grace shed in her heart, so that she was aroused to inquire for herself; and as she pressed to wisdom's gate her seeking mind was satisfied.

During this dispensation of inward inquiry, she was helped forward to diligence by the ministry of some of the Lord's messengers, who spoke comfortably to her state, and encouraged her in perseverance and well-doing,—speaking prophetically, that the Lord would raise up in that meeting some, who should bear his name among the gentiles, and be messengers of peace and glad tidings to the people, if obedience and faithfulness to the heavenly manifestations were kept to.

By a humble resignation to the Divine will, forming the vessel in what manner the heavenly Potter pleased, the work went forward prosperously. She appears to have been an instance of great fervency and devotedness to whatever the Divine influence dictated, watchful to hear the voice, and obedient to fulfill the command, though it might be in giving up that which was as a right hand or a right eye.

She left in writing “A commemoration of the mercies and tender dealings of the Lord” towards her at this early period of her life, when, as she stated,

“He saw fit to divest me of all things here below, that were near and dear to me, and left me no inheritance on earth but his own Providence; and like himself, when in the prepared body, and his immediate followers, he made me to have no certain place of abode: yet did he raise up friends for me where I least expected them, and when I was deprived of the care and help of my natural father and mother, he became a Father to me, and made others willing to act for me as though I had been their own offspring; and no sooner did one friend seem to fail me, but there were others raised up in a fresh quarter, where he would have my lot to be cast. Thus as a child was I given up to be disposed of according to his good pleasure; but my stubborn heart would often rebel against him, and presume to enter into expostulations with him, and reason with him thus: ‘Why am I come into this situation? Why receive I your blessings at a second hand, and must thank my fellow mortals for all the temporal good I receive?’ Thus ungratefully did I upbraid and murmur against my kind Benefactor, which drew down his wrath and displeasure, and caused him to hide his face and leave me to the buffeting of the enemy, who would have had no mercy on me, had not the ever-merciful God limited him and shortened his chain. Thus did I by times count myself the most miserable of all creatures, bereaved of all inward and outward comforts. The sorrow and anxiety of my soul were unspeakable, yes, inconceivable by all that had not felt the like. But the Lord tried me if I would walk by faith and not by sight, follow him through bushes and brambles, and in an untrodden path, to see if I could embrace religion with all its rigors and discipline, without its soul-supporting consolations; to see if I could love and follow him for the favours I had received without hopes of future: or if I could live on the commemoration of his beauty and excellency when he had drawn as it were a curtain between my soul and him, so that no ray of light pierced through to my benighted soul. Yet at times I was sensible

the Divine Arm was underneath, though invisible, which kept me from sinking into the pit of despair; even that hand of power that was reached to Peter when he began to sink in the storm, when he ventured to walk on the seas. During the time of this my probation, there was made me an offer of a place in a worthy family in the neighbourhood where I lived, which seemed to be much to my advantage as to the outward: this led me to seek counsel of the Lord, and to desire his direction in this undertaking. After having weighed it in my mind in the best manner I was capable of, I found freedom to make trial of it for a time,² where I was received with all possible kindness and respect, and lacked nothing this world could afford: but I lacked the consolation of my Beloved and the light of his countenance; all other enjoyments were embittered to me, and lacked the relish they otherwise would have had. And this I found to be a trial to me, to see if I could rest in the creatures without the Creator; which I could not do, blessed be the name of my God; who had opened an eye in me that could look beyond this world, and gave me to see the emptiness of all things here below, unless he filled them, and the danger that was in them, unless he sanctified them to us. This made me resolve I would not enjoy them without him, which brought upon me a great conflict and warfare between flesh and spirit.

“Having left my former place of settlement, I had no place to go to but my father’s cottage, which was very mean to what I had ever been used to: but this I resolved, by the blessing of the Lord, I would not endanger my soul, let what would become of my body. The seeds of ambition and self-love, which I thought had in a good degree been bruised to death, began now to struggle, and powerfully to exert themselves against the pure, lowly, humble Seed of life; and all they needed to overcome was, that my will should join with them; which the ever-merciful God kept me from, and raised strong cries in my soul to him, that he might be pleased to give me victory over my grand enemies, the flesh, the world, and the devil. And he was graciously pleased to hear and answer my petition, and have regard to my tears and sighs, and brought up his own royal Seed into dominion in my soul; and so he bruised the serpent’s head, that every thought, wish, and desire of my heart was brought into perfect subjection. Then could I say in truth and righteousness, and in sincerity of soul, ‘Not my will, but yours be done, O! God: let me possess this quiet habitation, this peaceable and happy state, and divest me of what else you see fit beside. May I be secure of your love and favour,—it suffices me; let worldly-minded men laugh at my folly for denying myself and the world; I can pray for them and pity their blindness.’

“Thus did the Lord in matchless love cast into the ocean of annihilation, these passions which, had they been permitted to reign, would have made me unhappy here and miserable hereafter. Now was my father’s humble cottage become so pleasing to me, that I did not envy the greatest monarch on earth; nor would I change with them if I might. How would the Lord often raise my heart in humble thankfulness to him, in that he fully supplied the demands of nature; and everything that would gratify a haughty aspiring mind, he as kindly denied. When I had a leisure hour to meditate in the fields, behold the fowls

2 At the widow Ann Strangman’s, of Mountmellick.

of the air and the beasts of the field, how contented thought I they are in their present state, who are to have no happiness but what they receive here; it teaches me that whatsoever station or situation in this life. Providence has been pleased to fix me in, I ought to be fully satisfied, seeing he knows best what is good for me, and that I only crave a passage to endless felicity. And when I find in myself that capacious mind which cannot, like the brute animals, rest satisfied with the enjoyments of this low creation or the gratification of sense, it helps to confirm me, that there is a part in me that was made for Divine enjoyments, and which struggles to be released from this cage of clay, that it may come to the full enjoyment of that, of which I now have but glimpses and tastes. When I behold the innocent fowls of the air fly from bush to bramble, wander up and down, carefully seeking every lost grain, the worms, little insects and wild fruits, for the sustenance of nature, it convinces me that I ought to labour willingly with my hands, and not to be a burden to the creation; seeing that my limbs were formed for activity, and that Adam in his angelic state, or state of innocency, was to dress the garden and to keep it. How freely now could I relinquish popularity and vain applause, which the generality of mankind have such an insatiable thirst after! but I am sensible there is no having general applause, without envy and calumny; for there is a set of mortals so wrapped up in pride and self-love, that they cannot bear to hear any one well spoken of but their own dear selves. And besides this, it is a dangerous breath of air which cherishes vain glory's root; it will never waft us to heaven, but rather clip the wings of towering virtue. On these considerations, I cried from the bottom of my soul, 'O! my God, give me the thorough knowledge of you and of myself, let me possess a mind rightly cultivated, with all my passions in subjection, and a total resignation of my will and purposes to your holy will, a mind truly humbled, satisfied with few things, filled with humble thankfulness; let me thus enjoy my happy and innocent solitude, and I shall not envy, nor desire, the glory of this fading, perishing world.'

—MARY PEISLEY

Her entrance into the work of the ministry was about the beginning of the year 1744, near which time she had unexpected domestic trials, which brought her very low in mind, from a sense of the singularity of her situation; but her trust being in the Lord, she was eminently supported. About this period she wrote thus to a friend:

TO A FRIEND.

“I doubt not but you are touched in some degree with a sense of my deep and heavy afflictions which are of various kinds. Many are the probations which I have passed through, and still am under. I can by no means set forth the wise, prudent and merciful manner, in which my tender and heavenly Father has dealt with me; by fortifying my mind beforehand, and likewise in supporting and upholding me under my trials. In the infiniteness of his wisdom and boundless mercy, he stained the beauty of this world in my eyes, wiped off the varnish and gilding, and let me see before they were snatched from me, that they were but momentary, fading enjoyments;

and the greatest and best of them were but short-lived blessings, and shadows that would vanish away.

Neither did his kindness end there, for he likewise showed me what was substance, the pearl of inestimable value; at the sight of which my soul was so transported, that I cried out in an ecstasy of joy, ‘Cause me, Lord, to possess this treasure, and for the sake of it divest me of whatever seems good in your sight;’—this was my covenant with the King of kings. So great was the goodness of my God, dispensed and proportioned in wisdom, that he did not at that time reveal himself to me in so full a manner as he has since done, at a time when I most of all wanted it. In my deepest plungings he has caused my soul to taste of joys and consolations, to which I was before a stranger. Nor would I have presumed to ask for the favours of patience and resignation and fortitude of mind, which he has undeservedly bestowed on me an unworthy creature.

—MARY PEISLEY

An opportunity presented for her to reside in the family of a Friend, within the compass of Mountmellick meeting, of whose daughter she had the care. In this station she continued for some time, until she apprehended herself thereby deprived, in some degree, of a full liberty to exercise the gift received, and to live to Him alone, who had quickened her anew in Christ Jesus. She wrote thus to a relation at this period.

TO HER COUSIN

Edenderry, 2nd of Second month, 1746.

Esteemed Cousin,

After the salutation of dear and unfeigned love, I may inform you that by the wonderful mercy of Providence I enjoy health of body, although I have been of late in the midst of infection, and have suffered more hardship by constant care and labour, than I ever knew, I suppose that you have heard that I have been for some time past at Ann Strangman’s, where several of the family have been ill of a fever; so that it unavoidably fell to my lot to be assisting at that time, as it so fell out that all the women servants were ill at one time, and others of the family; and before that happened, I was not without a large share of trouble and care, I being entrusted with the care and oversight of the family, which I find to be a great load and oppression to my mind, and a hindrance to my spiritual warfare, which I think far worse than my bodily hardship. But I am come to this result in myself, that if Providence do not make way for my task to be more easy, that I will quit it, as I am not bound to it: for I am resolved by the blessed assistance of Israel’s God, not to bury that talent which he has given me (in the earth,) nor to quit the occupying of it for any outward employment.

Better would it be for me to wander, as the prophets formerly did,—destitute, distressed and naked, than to sell an unfading inheritance, for any prospect of advantage here. For I am sure, to drudge for the sustenance of the body, as do the beasts, and to live for no nobler ends, than to eat, drink and sleep, such a life is not worth living for: not that I am against moderate honest industry, for I am convinced it is good for both body and mind;—but

I never experimentally knew the hurt and danger of inordinate care as at this time.

—MARY PEISLEY

About this time a concern attended her mind, to visit Friends of the three provinces; this she pretty generally performed in company with Elizabeth Tomey of Limerick, in sweet unity and concord. They met with low times and seasons, deep baptism of spirit; they travailed for and with the seed, and at times were set at liberty in the authority and power of Truth, to minister to the various classes of the people.

Of the quarterly meeting of Ulster held in Lurgan, she gives the following account:

“We attended the meeting of ministers and elders, where we had close work; but the power of the Lord upheld us above the fear of man. Next day had some encouragement to the faithful and well-minded, but could not that day reach the libertine spirit; however we waited for renewed strength from the Lord, to engage against the Goliaths, who defy the armies of the living God. The day after being first-day, we sat in a low humble depending state, until the Lord gave the spirit of supplication; after which his power was set over all, and testimony was borne to his name, and transgressors were shown their errors, in the demonstration of the Lord’s Spirit and power.”

After this journey she went to reside with a relation at Borris in Ossory, from which she writes as follows:

TO A RELATION

I am at times concerned for the whole bulk of mankind, but in a more particular manner for my kindred according to the flesh, and especially those who were my companions in my former vanities, as well knowing what the life I then led would have ended in, had not my God, in his infinite mercy opened my eyes, and stopped my race to ruin; and though I was in the broad way that leads to destruction, yet was I innocent of, and free from the gross enormities that are in the world; and because thereof the enemy persuaded me that I was safe enough. But alas! I found I was living as without God in the world, in forgetfulness of him, a stranger and unregenerate; in short, that I was an enemy to God, and under his just wrath and displeasure. And now I may say, that I am jealous with a godly jealousy, that you are yet in that unregenerate condition.

You will say, perhaps, you are not called to the same work that I have been called to, that is, to the work of the ministry, and have no need to know what I have experienced. If this should be suggested to your mind, it is of the enemy; for if you have not been called to bear a public testimony, you have I doubt not been called to holiness, without which we are told, “no man shall see the Lord.” You have the same pure holy God to fear, the same subtle unwearied enemy to war against, a soul as precious, and which must abide as long, as mine, either in happiness or misery; therefore it behooves you to be as strict in your life, and as holy in your conversation as any other; that so you mayst be a terror to evil doers, and a praise and encourager of them that do well. For I

am sure if we be lovers and true followers of Jesus, we cannot take pleasure in hearing his great name profaned, and taken in vain: and their company that are guilty of such things we should carefully avoid, as we would an infectious person.

It is, I think, impossible to be frequent in ill company, without being somewhat leavened into the same spirit, except we keep a strict watch, and have our minds armed with the pure armour of light and righteousness. This alone can make us proof against the fiery darts of the wicked, which insensibly pierce and wound the unwary soul. It is our interest and duty, all in our power, carefully to avoid temptations, for those that we must inevitably meet with, are enough for us, poor weak creatures, to grapple with. Take care of poisoning your mind with vain and idle books, for I know them, by experience, to be very pernicious; let your leisure hours be spent in retirement and reading the Holy Scriptures, with other good books. Remember you are the head of a family, and it behoves you to have a superadded care, for if your example be not good, you will have much to answer for. Watch over your sisters in love, and be not an instrument of bringing evil company in their way.

There is an evil that you are guilty of, which is visible to more than me, and that is your slighting and neglecting week-day meetings. If you had appointed a day to meet any of those styled noblemen of the earth, and you slighted and neglected the appointment for weeks, yes, months together, would it not be a great affront and indignity to them? Yes; and I am persuaded you would not do it, for fear of offending them; and is the King of kings and Lord of heaven and earth, less noble, less discerning, when He is slighted and neglected? I observe you have time and leisure to ride many miles to sports and diversions, such as hunting, horse-racing, and other sights; does not this show you are a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God, such as the apostle declares are “dead while they live.” Dear cousin, bear with my dealing thus plainly; I have no view in it, but the good of your immortal soul, and the ease of my own mind; and I sincerely wish that you and I may be prepared for our great and final change.

We have daily instances of the young and the strong being snatched away in their bloom as with their bones full of marrow: and why may it not be our easel we cannot promise ourselves one hour to come; the present time is only ours; and O! it is a dismal consequence to launch into eternity unprepared, where the worm never dies, nor is the fire quenched. If we are so fond of a few transitory pleasures in this world, how can we bear to be shut out from eternal felicity, and doomed to everlasting misery? I beseech you solidly to consider these things, and I pray the God of love and mercy to give you a wise and understanding heart.

—MARY PEISLEY

TO ABIGAIL WATSON

Borris, 6th of First month, 1747.

Esteemed Friend,

I received your kind epistle of the 6th of last month: I am thankful to the Lord that He caused you to remember

me. You desires me to bear with you; I would be very sorry to be in that mind in which I could not bear counsel or admonition from the least, meanest or youngest of the Lord's servants, who would do it in the spirit of love (as I am well assured you have done), much less from you, whom I look upon as a well-trained, disciplined soldier, on whom the Lord has put his armour and sent forth in the spiritual warfare, and have known the wiles and subtlety of that grand enemy;—one that has seen the mystery of iniquity, as well as that of godliness; which lies hid from all but those whose eyes the Lord opens. Such a one is surely fit to instruct a poor, young, raw, unskillful stripling as I am, and I will freely confess a coward too; for if my Captain does but a little withdraw Himself, I am ready to say with David, I shall one day fall by the hand of my enemy. Therefore I would beg of you to remember me, when it is well with you. It was not to please the ears of men that I first became a fool; nor are men to be my rewarders; it was for the sake of that peace, which the world can neither give nor take away; and for this do I still strive, and hope by Divine assistance I shall ever prefer before all other things.

I would have you and all my friends be free in speaking or writing to me, as Truth opens to you; for I doubt not but I have need of counsel, and to be stirred up to my duty; for I think myself far short of what I ought to be.

—MARY PEISLEY

TO ANN STRANGMAN, MOUNTMELICK, ON THE DEATH OF HER HUSBAND.

Dublin, Third month 14th, 1747.

Dear Friend,

This goes with a salutation of unfeigned love to you, with whom I truly sympathize in your present affliction. Yet you have not cause to mourn, as one without hope; for your late companion has left behind him a sweet savour in the minds of many of the sensible; and he being dead yet speaks, and his memory will live for generations to come. But this is your greatest joy, that you have been made acquainted with, and your soul espoused to Him, who can never be snatched from you, while you are willing to cleave to Him. He who has promised to be a husband to the widow, will I am persuaded be so to you, and doubly make up the loss, by a superadded degree of His own Divine presence, as you are resigned to His holy will in all things, which is our reasonable duty. All His dispensations are for good, though we are so short-sighted, and His wisdom is so deep, that it is many times beyond our comprehension. This is certain, that no afflictions are joyous for the present, but grievous; but as we know the Lord to sanctify them to us, they will work for us “a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory:”—such I hope and believe yours will prove to you.

And though your trial is great, you are yet favoured above many in being blessed with a fine offspring, who at this time look promising to be a comfort to you; and you are sensible the Lord has visited and reached to some of them in a near manner; and has so replenished you with the things of this world, that with His blessing you need not fear need or penury. But above all this, is to be prized, that the Lord has given you a heart, which I believe more strongly desires for yourself and children an inheritance in Christ, than all outward

enjoyments;—that both may be added to you, used in His fear, and to the glory of His name who gives them, is the sincere desire of your sympathizing friend.

—MARY PEISLEY.

About the eighth month, 1747, she returned to Mountmellick, to the house of her friend where she before resided. Her continuance at this place was but for a few months, during which time she was attacked with a disorder in her stomach, which occasioned great weakness, and brought her very low. In a letter to a friend she thus expresses herself.

TO A FRIEND

I gratefully acknowledge your unmerited kindness in the concern you show for my health. I am sensible it is our indispensable duty to endeavour to preserve life and health, by all lawful means that Providence is pleased to afford; were it not so, I often think that mine is not worth caring for. Instead of being useful to any, I fear I shall be a burden to the creation, and miss the end of my being. Surely none whom he has sent into life, and visited with His matchless love and kindness, is more weak and unworthy than I am; and were it so that He, by his divine power, was pleased to make use of me in any good work, it was all His own, of and from Him alone; I could have no part in it, but as passive clay in his hand. And blessed be his name. He is not limited, nor his power confined to any instruments. He that found me in a polluted state, can raise up and sanctify many more for his work and service, and that he may do so in these dark and perilous days, is the travail of my afflicted soul.

—MARY PEISLEY

During this dispensation she wrote as follows to her brother, who had frequently occasioned much anxiety and disquietude to her mind.

TO HER BROTHER

Dear Brother,

For so you are by nature to me; would to God you were so in a two-fold sense, that is, by adoption or new creation in Christ, which far exceeds all the ties of affinity or consanguinity, and will last beyond the grave, never, never to be dissolved. Mayst you happily experience this, before time to you here be no more; for which end Providence has, in matchless love and condescension, wonderfully prolonged your days, amidst imminent dangers and difficulties. May this be deeply pondered and wisely laid to heart by you, otherwise it will add weight in the balance against you, in the great and notable day of account, that hastens on us both. You know,

dear brother, it has often been my concern thus to remind you concerning the important business of life, and your neglect of it has almost discouraged me from further attempts: this may perhaps be the last; and I do with all the ardency my soul is capable of, joined with natural affection, earnestly desire that it may have the wished for effect.

I am in a very poor state of health, and with little human probability of my being restored. My disorder is attended with acute pain; but blessed forever be the name of my God, patience equivalent thereto has been administered. How it may be with me as to life or death, I cannot say; but this is my greatest consolation, and such a one as is beyond the power of my tongue to express, or pen to set forth, namely, that I have not spent my health and strength in the gratification of my passions, or sensual appetites, but in some degree in the pursuit of that which now stands by me, and will go with me beyond time,—a good conscience towards God; whose love I feel to flow in my soul in such a manner, as to admit of no doubt that He is my friend,—or in other words, that He is in me, and I in Him, and will be so to all eternity, if I forsake him not. Believe me, brother, when I tell you, at a time when dissimulation must vanish; at a season when we are best capable of knowing ourselves, and judging of all things in the clearest manner,—when the mists of the world are removed from before our eyes, and eternity presented to our view,—at such a time as this I may tell you, I am not afraid to die; nor is the sound of mortality and eternity frightful to my ears. No; I cannot look on death as a king of terrors, but as a welcome messenger, who comes with a happy release from all my trials, temptations and afflictions, to summon me to an eternity of unmixed felicity, to that which I have most loved and delighted in for years past, though favoured with but a glimpse and foretaste of it, while my soul is loaded with its companion, flesh; but what will it be when the face of the Divinity will be forever unveiled, faith turned into vision, and the full fruition come to? These are words of truth and soberness. I know there is a kingdom of heaven, because I already feel it within me,—Christ in me, as said the apostle, the hope of glory; and because he lives, I live also;—not merely an animal life which must perish, but a life hid with Christ in God. Without a new creation in Christ, it is impossible for us to enjoy God; or, in the words of his Son Christ Jesus, to see or enter the kingdom of heaven. Had we not bodies taken from the earth it would be impossible we should enjoy or live by the same; and if we have not a new birth begotten or formed of God in us, it is likewise impossible we should live to or in Him. More I might say, to illustrate this important truth to your understanding, if bodily strength would admit; but unless you center down in true sincerity and humility to the pure light of Christ in yourself, by which alone what is to be known of God is manifest in man, these things, with all the other truths of the gospel, will forever remain a mystery to you, as it has done to ages and generations, and to the wise and prudent of this world; but is revealed unto the babes, that are begotten and born of the incorruptible Seed and Word of God.

I conclude your affectionate sister in the hope, and O! that I could say fellowship, of the gospel.

—MARY PEISLEY.

Chapter II

About this time she felt a weighty concern to visit the churches in England; and having obtained the concurrence of her friends, accompanied by Elizabeth Hutchinson, she set forward from Mountmellick in the seventh month, 1748. They attended the Province meeting held at Carlow, and went from there to Baltibois, where they had a blessed helping meeting. The testimony went forth to those of other societies. They had a meeting at Timahoe, and went from there to Dublin; where they had refreshing and comfortable meetings, the Lord's eternal Truth being over all. "We were," she expresses in a journal kept of this journey, "comforted one in another, and enabled renewedly to bless the name of the Lord. The 27th of seventh month, we took ship for Whitehaven, and landed there on the 28th; on the 30th we went to Pardshaw, where was held the quarterly meeting for Cumberland: the public meeting proved a glorious one, and was a time of solid worship; the testimony of truth was exalted over all, and the everlasting gospel freely preached. After this meeting I had great consolation of soul, and we spent the evening in company with several Friends, in agreeable edifying conversation, and in much freedom and openness of spirit. Next day, being the first of the week, we went to their general meeting at Cockermouth; on the 3rd to Whitehaven, low and depressed in spirit.

Next day had a meeting there, in which I cleared myself; I was led therein to set forth the call and qualification of a true gospel minister; left it in peace of mind, but was much spent in body with the service thereof. The 5th, had a meeting in Broughton, where we were led to speak closely to some who had been visited in their young years, and were now grown lukewarm and indifferent. The 6th, had a good meeting at Isell, though small.

Next day were at Keswick, the service chiefly to those not of our Society; had some close things to deliver to those that were. The 9th, at Allonby, where came many Friends from other meetings, to whom Truth was freely declared.

From hence to Holme, where we had a silent meeting, and understood they seldom sat free from disturbers. The 10th, had a low season at Kirkbride, the 11th at Bolton, the 12th at Wigton, which was large but low as to the dominion of life; next day at a meeting at Moorhouse, we had things close and hard to deliver. At Carlisle we had a good open meeting, my mind being much enlarged among them; yet I felt a concern rest with me to have another meeting in that city, which Friends readily agreed to. On the 15th, we had a meeting at Kirklington, which was large and satisfactory; and another at Carlisle in the evening, in consequence of the concern already mentioned, to which there came a great number of town's-folk. When I got there I found myself so weak in body and poor in spirit, and the people so unsettled in their minds, that I almost feared I should not be able to answer the service of the meeting. I earnestly desired that the cause and testimony of Truth might not suffer, let me suffer what I might. I had not sat long, before I found a flow of doctrine open in my mind; I stood up in the fear of the Lord, and the people soon

became quiet and solid. I was strengthened beyond my expectation, and the meeting ended well; and blessed be the name of the Lord, I had great peace and satisfaction after it was over. Went from there to Scotby, and had a meeting; so to Ann Grenup's, and was at the monthly meeting in that quarter, where my mind was under much suffering; but as I waited, the power of Truth arose, and I found ease and liberty of mind; was led in a very close manner, the Seed had dominion, and the authority of Truth was over all. Went next day to Mosedale, and had a travailing season in that meeting; from there to Terrill, and had a poor meeting there; from there to Isaac Thompson's, being very poor in spirit and low in mind.

Next day we rested, spending the day much in retirement, which proved very helpful to me: and as I waited on the Lord to have my spiritual strength renewed, I felt a concern to have a meeting with the inhabitants, and one in the afternoon at Penrith on first-day. After I had well considered and weighed these things, the Friend with whom we lodged said, they were a people of no religion; which did not discourage me, for it immediately arose in my mind, that they had the more need of help, and that, perhaps, they might more readily receive the Truth, than those who were more bigoted to ceremonies. We went to Penrith next morning, when the Friends asked me if I would have an afternoon meeting; I replied that I could better tell at the conclusion of the first meeting. We went to meeting, and it proved a good one, for Truth had dominion and was over all. Then I felt strength to have an afternoon meeting appointed, which was large and to great satisfaction; some of the town's folks being at the forenoon meeting, and the town pretty large, the report spread, and the people came until the house could hold no more with convenience.

After this I spoke of the meeting which my mind was drawn to propose at Amenbridge, where a Friend said there had been none before. Friends seemed willing, but knew of no place to hold it in, except the house where we lodged, which was large enough, and would have done well for the purpose, but the Friend said he could not admit of it, for fear of his landlord, who was a priest. I said I could not force their hearts nor houses, but hoped, as I had laid it before them, I should be made easy; and if not, I did not doubt that if I went to some of those who professed not with us, I should be accommodated. He said, there was a town a mile off, that he thought would answer better for a meeting, and that their town's-people would go there; I told him I dare not go in my own will to have meetings where I pleased, but where Truth led me. He replied, if the folks of Penrith heard of the meeting, the streets, much less the house would not hold them; then, said I, we may go to the fields. This, I believe stirred him up; he went away, and in a short time returned, and told me not to be uneasy, I should have a meeting:—accordingly it was appointed to begin at six o'clock next evening at another Friend's house in the town, which proved quite too small. They made all the room they could in two apartments and a hall, but many who could not get in were at the windows. We had a meeting at Strickland in the forenoon, which had before been appointed. When I came to see and sit among the people at Amenbridge, they seemed so ignorant of our manner of worship and principles, that my faith almost failed of doing any service, or administering help to them. After some time of waiting for Divine aid, I stood up; and they appeared to me as still and attentive, while I was speaking, as ever I observed any assembly. I laboured among them until my

natural strength failed; and after meeting was over, I had great inward peace and comfort. Next day we waited for their monthly meeting at Aldstone, and paid a visit to a Friend's family, where we had a sweet consolatory opportunity; and the same evening went towards Northumberland.

“The 25th of eighth month we continued our journey, and had a very difficult and dangerous road, much of it mountainous; and though reckoned but fourteen miles, it took from nine in the morning till six in the evening, save that we stopped a little to refresh ourselves; my mind was preserved tranquil and easy. Next day we had a hard laborious meeting, but I was mercifully helped through to the ease of my own mind. The following day we went to Cornwood, where we had a meeting. The 27th rode to Allendale, and the way being rough and mountainous, it was dangerous. My companion was thrown from her horse, and I seemed in imminent danger,—the way being narrow, and a considerable precipice just by where my horse stood, which being interrupted by my companion's falling became very uneasy: but at length, through the merciful interposition of Providence, she was taken up, very little hurt; and they got me safe off my horse. We arrived wearied with fright and fatigue. In a short time Friends got together, and we had a comfortable good meeting; which amply made amends for all we went through. The 28th, we had a large meeting. My spirit was under deep suffering, before I went to it, and for some time after; but through Divine aid, I fully cleared myself. When I came to my lodging, I was under a baptism of spirit, and could not tell the cause. I examined myself, and brought things to the closest scrutiny, to know whether I had done or omitted anything contrary to Truth, but could find no condemnation. At dinner I felt the spirit of supplication, which I gave way to, and found my mind free and easy.

Next morning, the 29th, set out for Benfield; it was such hard weather, Friends would have had us stay, but as the meeting was appointed, I could not be easy so to do. It blew such a violent storm, that it was with difficulty we could sit our horses, or they keep their feet, being several times blown out of the path. It was fourteen miles over a black moor, where there was no shelter; our guides missed the way twice, once on the open moor. My companion, who was a young traveller, was discouraged,—stopped several times, wept and said she thought she could hold it no longer I encouraged her to hold out to the end, and told her there was no abiding there. By the Lord's mercy, my mind was kept quiet and still, and about seven at night we got safe to our quarters, where we had a hearty welcome. The meeting was appointed to begin at nine next morning; it was small, but greatly to my satisfaction. I was led in particular to some person, who was under a temptation to join in marriage with one of another society, and likewise to declare that I had no outward information.

After meeting, an elderly Friend told me that I had hit the mark to a hair's breadth; for there was a young man, who he knew was under such a temptation, and had been advised against it. Went that night to Newcastle-upon-Tyne, eleven miles, stayed there several days, had a good meeting on fifth-day, being 3rd of ninth month, though some states were hard to speak to, there being some deistical principles I believe cherished among them; and so close was the testimony, that they could scarcely bear to sit. After this meeting, a Friend told me I had spoken by revelation; but was so prudent as to say no more, as we

were to stay until after the next first-day, to equip ourselves for continuing our journey. In the interim visited the aged, who were confined from weakness.

First-day, Truth eminently helped with its ancient beauty and brightness, dispelling all mists and clouds; a glorious time it was to the comfort and edification of the church. The afternoon meeting was very full of Friends, and those of other societies; it proved to me a sweet consoling time, the spring of life being opened for my own help and furtherance in best things; but I had not anything to communicate to the people. On the 6th, went to Shields, and had a small meeting: from there in the evening went to Sunderland. The 7th, had a meeting in the forenoon, to an increase of comfort; praise be to Him who exalts his own testimony in the hearts of his children, and gives tongue and utterance to magnify his name and power. Had a refreshing season in the family where we lodged, the Lord breaking to us the bread of life for the nourishment of our souls; afterwards we had an evening meeting appointed, which was large and to good satisfaction. The 8th, had a meeting at Shotton; the 9th, at Durham; the 10th, at Auckland, which last was a good meeting. I felt a concern to have another there in the afternoon, of which I acquainted the Friend with whom we lodged; he pleaded many excuses. I told him, I apprehended it was not the business of a minister, to proceed contrary to the minds of Friends, especially one so young as I; and that as I had mentioned my concern, I hoped I should be easy; if not, I could but come back again. My mind was soon relieved of its burden; as the Lord my God knew my willingness to obey him, he required no impossibility of me. Next day went six miles to Raby, had a large meeting there, several Friends coming from various places to meet us; but that spirit was among them, that obstructs the spring of the ministry, and made it hard to speak; yet by Divine assistance, I was enabled to clear myself, and came away with peace of mind. My companion was so ill that she was detained from meeting two days.

“On the 13th, we went to Lartington meeting, and returned in the afternoon; next day to Darlington, and had a meeting there on the 15th; it ended well, though hard in the beginning. The day following went to Stockton; had a full meeting and came away in peace. The 17th, had a meeting at Yarm; it was small, several young people came from Stockton, and it proved on the whole to good satisfaction.

Next day, was at a small meeting, where I sat a pretty while in silence, and a state of mourning for the cause of Truth. I eased my mind among them, and came away in peace. On the 21st, had a meeting at Gisborough; and 23rd, at Mooresome. The 24th, was at the monthly meeting held at Castletown, where were many plain, honest, sincere Friends, and we were comforted in the Lord and one in another. Next evening at Hinderwell and Roxby. The 26th, went to Whitby, and that evening had a meeting with several Friends, who came to see us. Next day, attended a large meeting; my spirit was under great suffering, and continued so until the afternoon, though I had delivered in the forenoon meeting what appeared to be given me; but in the afternoon the power of Truth was in dominion, and every opposite spirit made subject; things were spoken to closely and clearly, and Babylon threshed as with a sharp instrument, that she could not get from under. Then was my spirit made easy, and my soul rejoiced in the Lord, who is worthy; and prayer, praises and thanksgiving, ascended unto Him that lives forever. Had the company of

several Friends this evening, which was spent in, I hope, profitable conversation. The 28th, had a meeting at Stentondale. The Friends in this quarter are but few, I think eight families composed the meeting; it was with these few a memorable season of humbling gladness.

“Came to Scarborough in the evening of the 28th, and next day had a large and satisfactory meeting. In a Friend’s family where we spent the evening, had a reaching affecting season, manifested by much brokenness of spirit.

The 1st of tenth month, had a meeting at Fickerington; and the 2nd at Kirbymoorside, which was large, and attended with the going forth of some seasoning instruction. Went after meeting to John Richardson’s; he is near eighty-four years of age, a man very remarkable for sweetness and liveliness of spirit, full of love, clear in his understanding, and his memory strong. He sat up till late with us, relating the wonderful dealings of the Lord with him, which was truly edifying, and such as I had never heard before. He was quite open with us, which I looked upon as a favour from the Lord; I wept much at parting with him, and when we took leave, he desired the Lord might bless us. Next day went to Malton. The day following, had a large meeting, and passed through a laborious exercise among them. The evening was spent to spiritual profit, in waiting for a renewal of strength, and imparting some of the bread handed to my soul to others, whom I visited in their families; left this place with peace of mind.

“On the 6th, I was at a monthly meeting at Bridlington; it was a season of suffering, my mind being very low after it, which caused an examination, but finding nothing to accuse myself of, was made easy. The 7th, we were at Hornsea meeting; the Lord’s eternal power broke in upon us, to the comfort and refreshment of our souls, and it was a time of solemn worship. Next day we were at a meeting at Oustwick, to our great comfort and solid refreshment.

The 9th, at Eastend. The 10th, had an evening meeting at Hull to profit and edification, through the aboundings of that life which enlightens and sanctifies.

“On the 11th of tenth month we went to Beverly, a town where no Friend lives, having felt a particular draft to have a meeting there; several Friends from Hull attended, and the people flocked in until the house was nearly filled. I stood up and began to speak, but people rushed in so, that I was under the necessity of stopping until they were settled; I then proceeded, and a glorious meeting it was, the Divine power and authority of Truth commanding silence throughout the multitude. Next day we went to visit a few at Skitby, who were lately convinced, with whom we had a good meeting, and some open, profitable conversation.

The 13th, we went to Northcave; Friends from several parts adjacent came there, which made the meeting large, but not open and lively; we had hard labour, yet it ended pretty well. The 14th, had a meeting at Howden; there were but few Friends, and some of the town’s-people; who being in the Ishmaelitish, mocking spirit, the true Seed did not reign among them. The 15th, were at Ratcliff; the 16th, at Thorn; the

17th, at Braithwaite; and the 18th, again at Thorn. These meetings were generally small, and low as to the life of religion, which caused laborious work for us to get down to the Seed, so as to minister to the states of the people. The 20th of tenth month, had a meeting at Beltoft, which proved satisfactory; some who were not of our Society attended, who were very solid and attentive; some were tendered, and several came in the evening, with a desire of having a meeting with us; but feeling no concern for it, I could not encourage it. On the 22nd, visited the meeting of Blyth in Nottinghamshire, which began at two o'clock. I was led very closely in it, had to remind them of the practice of our elders, and told them, if they would search from where that custom of deferring meetings until afternoon had its origin, they would find it was not in the Truth. The meeting ended well, in the sweet consoling love of the Lord my God. The Friend we lodged with not being at meeting, but engaged in his shop, I had some close discourse with him concerning his duty to God; at first he seemed to put it off, but was brought to acquiesce with what I said. Next day had a small, but good meeting at Warmsworth; had a loose, libertine spirit to speak to; which the authority of Truth helped me through with, to the enlargement of peace in my own bosom, and the exaltation of that power, which, when it rules, causes the righteous to rejoice.

The 25th being first-day, was at Pontefract meeting, which seemed very weak and dwarfish, as to the life of religion; their undue liberty in externals, manifesting that their dwellings were not with the humble Seed, that crucifies to the world, and tarnishes its beauty: had little to communicate, yet felt a revival of light and strength to my own state. I had a concern to have a meeting with those not of our Society; a great number attended, many of whom were light and vain, but while I was exercised in speaking, they were mostly quiet and attentive, and I hope the opportunity was to edification. The 26th, had a meeting at Selby, which was but small. That evening went to York, and attended the quarterly meeting, which began at five o'clock; it was a season of travail and exercise to a living remnant. Next morning at nine, the meeting of ministers and elders began; when the baptizing power of the Lord was witnessed by the faithful, and through the succeeding meetings help was graciously afforded, and the church was edified.

[Her written memoirs contained particular accounts of the meetings visited throughout England, which are omitted for brevity sake, having given the above specimen of her travels and baptisms; there is one extract however which has been preserved of her journal, which is too remarkable to be omitted: it appears to have been written when travelling in Yorkshire, at Knaresborough.]

Having been under deep baptisms and poverty of spirit, as I quietly rode along the Lord was pleased in mercy to break in upon my mind, by his life-giving presence and power; and it became the language of my soul,—‘Speak, Lord, and your servant will hear.’ After which, many things were divinely opened to me, wherein I greatly rejoiced, and was thankful to the Lord my God. Then I found a sudden but gentle rebuke, and heard as it were a voice, that said in the secret of my soul, ‘These dispensations you most delight in, are least pleasing to me and not so beneficial to your soul, as that pure poverty of spirit, brokenness and contrition of heart, which bring into humility of mind; and the reason why this is so little desired, and so unpleasant to the creature, is, because it can have no part therein, but is wholly and entirely excluded

and set at naught—can discover no beauty or excellency in it; and this is the reason I love the offering of a broken heart and contrite spirit, as it is most pure, and without any mixture of the creature. For, whether there be prophecies, Divine openings, revelations, consolations, joyings or rejoicings in the Holy Spirit, gifts of healing or tongues or utterance, in all these self can rejoice and have a share, being obvious to it, and bringing it honour.’ Then said I, ‘Lord dispense to me what is most pleasing unto you, and best for my soul, so long as my weak faith and patience can endure it; but when I am ready to faint, give me a little of the wine well refined on the lees, that my soul may rejoice in you, the God of my salvation.’”

The following letter was written from Bradford in Yorkshire, 2nd of eleventh month, 1748.

TO JOSHUA STRANGMAN

A few days ago your acceptable letter reached me at the city of York, which I read with a mixture of satisfaction and sorrow; satisfaction to find, that you still retains your love to the Eternal excellency; and sorrow, that the powers of darkness should still so far prevail, as to cause such strong struggles of soul, and sore conflicts of spirit, as you write of. But I have not the least doubt of your deliverance, and firmly believe your God will magnify and exalt his own Divine power in your soul, and make bare his holy arm for your salvation, by revealing it in you, an unfailing preserver in every needful time. This I write not altogether from myself, nor from the impulse of friendship and gratitude; it is from a degree of that assurance and humble confidence, which Truth has at this juncture communicated. It is reasonable to think by your conflict, that the time of your release is at hand; it was so with Israel of old when they were to be brought out of that dark land, their task-masters were harder, and their burdens made heavier. I believe there has no temptation befallen you, but what has been witnessed by your brethren who have trodden the same steps, even through the region and shadow of death, by the gates of hell, yes, out of the belly of hell have some called as Jonah did, and He heard them. His righteous ear is not grown heavy that He cannot hear; but for the sighing of the poor, and groaning of the needy soul. He will yet arise; and then it is that all our enemies are scattered, and one enabled to chase a thousand, and two to put ten thousand to flight.

Though it must be confessed it is a day of darkness, famine and distress, yes, thick darkness, that may be felt; yet blessed be the name of our God, he is as a Goshen to his children, giving them light in their habitations; and setting a mark upon them, who sigh and mourn for the abominations of the people. You seem willing to give me an idea of your spiritual state and condition, even by an outward representation; but I think I may say of a truth, I have both seen and felt it, even by sinking down below all that is of the creature, to the pure humble Seed of life; where the visions of light are seen, and the voice of the great oracle heard, distinct from any other sound. Here have I found you present, in Him who is omnipresent, and tenderly sympathized with your soul, according to my small measure. In this do I desire to have our friendship renewed, and fellowship kept steadfast, which is with the Father, and the Son.

I take kind your seasonable warning to watchfulness, which I surely stand in need of, in this time when

drowsiness and spiritual lethargy have generally infected mankind. You will, perhaps, like to hear an account of my spiritual progress and travel towards Zion, and of the states of the churches here, so far as my small sight can reach; and I may say, it has been a real grief and affliction to my mind, to see the desolation, darkness and insensibility that generally prevail; having been made to go mourning on my way, with this language in my soul, “Lord, to whom have you sent me? Where shall I find your flock and family upon earth? I see very few who like even to hear or speak of you, and surely if your love had the preeminence, out of the abundance of the heart the mouth would speak, or, at least, the soul would love to wait in silence for your Divine appearance.” But alas! many seem to have nothing further to inquire about, than from where we came? where we go? our names or parents, or if we be married? To which last question I often answer, I hope I have been honourably espoused to one husband; but they are quite ignorant of Him whom my soul loves, and of my meaning. Yet although it be thus, there is a living remnant in this part of the world, though under great suffering and oppression; with which I have been made deeply to sympathize, and have greatly admired the Lord’s goodness and condescending love; his forbearance and long suffering to a disobedient and gainsaying people, not willing that they should perish.

As to my own particular, I find the truth of that saying of the apostle, that “they who preach the gospel, live by it,” in a spiritual sense; and though the Lord has been pleased at times to cause his candle to shine upon my head, and clothe me with his royal robes, yet I often witness, a being entirely emptied, stripped and destitute almost of daily bread, and have had, as Mordecai, to go down and sit at the king’s gate, all which I see is for my good; for when a cistern is let dry, the earthy sediment is discovered, a fit time for cleaning it, that so the water may flow from it with greater purity. Therefore I strive to learn the great lesson, of being content in all states, and may say to the praise and honour of my kind Master, that he has (since I have given up to serve him) caused his peace to flow in my soul as a river: whose current is not long to be controlled by all the impediments which can be laid in its way. Blessed forever be his holy name, he has afforded me strength to discharge myself faithfully and honestly wherever my lot has been cast, both publicly and privately; so that I have no condemnation on that account, nor have I ever yet repented leaving all to answer his holy requireing, but do humbly thank him, that he enabled me so to do; and were crowns and diadems laid at my feet, I would not give His approbation for them all, for it is surely a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of an incensed and omnipotent Being.

Before I conclude I would say, beware of Esau’s crime; it was when his soul was ready to faint, that he despised his birthright; when he had been eagerly pursuing something he delighted in, (I observe it was not the Truth) he came to this unwise conclusion, “Behold I am at the point to die, and what profit shall this birthright do me?” He lacked patience and solid reflection, and afterwards had bitterly to repent when too late. Had he not resigned it none could have taken it from him, neither can all the powers of darkness, from you, if you resolve to keep it; this must be done, by cleaving to the Lord with all your heart, with all your soul, and all your strength, which that you mayst be enabled to do, is my fervent prayer.

—MARY PEISLEY

TO SAMUEL JUDD, IN IRELAND.

Mankinhols, the mountains, in Yorkshire, 23rd of eleventh month, 1748.

Dear Uncle,

In the bowels of unfeigned love do I salute you, sincerely desiring your growth and increase in that which is most to be desired by the children of men. I have thought of writing to you for some time past, but waited for better tidings, having been of late in a poor state of health by a violent cold which I got from lying in a damp bed. I strove with it, and kept travelling for some days, still growing worse, but was forced to submit, and was laid up for nearly a week. Kind Providence directed my steps to the house of an eminent physician, a rich and good Friend; where they were all ready to do everything in their power for me, and he skillful and free to administer what was suitable to my weak condition; so that my mind was quite easy and resigned to the Divine will, and I could not accuse myself of being the cause of it. At my parting from them I would have made him some gratuity for his care and kindness, but he answered in the humility of his mind with tears in his eyes, it was the desire of both him and his wife, that they might be found worthy to be the servants of the servants of the Lord,—in whose love we parted.

The night before last I thought myself the nearest to my final change, that I ever was since I received life; [occasioned by a large sulphureous fire in her bed-room:] the family were much frightened, and eagerly would have sent eight miles for a physician; but I positively forbade it, and told them I should soon be better one way or other. And indeed I was by the infinite mercy of God entirely resigned, and as willing to go as stay. I looked upon death but as a happy release from all my probations, dangers and troubles; I had no condemnation in myself, the accuser of the brethren being cast down, and a lively hope given me, that through the mercies of Christ my Redeemer, I should rest with Him in unembittered felicity forever and ever. It was the secret language of my soul to Him, who knows the intents and purposes of every heart, that my life might not bear a later date, except it was more fully to answer the end of my being.

Oh! may the eye of my mind be made more single, and my heart thoroughly fixed on Him who alone deserves it; that by dying daily, I may know Him to live, and being thoroughly emptied and unbottomed of [having no reliance upon] myself, let Him be all in me; that so in Him I may live, move and have my being, who is the saving health of His people, life in death, and strength in weakness: may this be the desire of all my well-wishing friends for me in their entrance into the sanctuary. Oh! how desirable is that pure fear, which brings to obedience, and exempts from all other fear, even of death itself, which is to the disobedient a king of terrors!

Many are the dangers and hardships we meet with by very bad roads and cold stormy weather, which I often think no worldly motive could move me to; but as it is in the service of the best of masters, His Divine arm is underneath to support under all, giving the rich reward of solid peace and satisfaction, which far excels all this world can give or take away! I have never yet repented my coming into this nation, but do humbly thank Him, who thought me worthy of such a call; and if my lot in this world should prove too hard for my natural strength, I shall have no cause to regret that my pilgrimage will be soon over, seeing the danger I am placed in here

in an enemy's country, having a continual warfare to maintain against three potent adversaries, the flesh, the world and Satan. And oh! how many seeming brave soldiers have cast off their spiritual armour, deserted their Captain, and shamefully quitted the field of battle; which makes me fear always, lest it should be my unhappy case! So that if I can live long in a short time by living well, it will be better than if I could live a thousand years twice told, to worse than no purpose.

Having poured out my thoughts freely as into the bosom of my friend, I shall strive to draw to a conclusion, desiring you may give my dearest love to your daughter and the rest of the family, with all my kind inquiring friends as if named, and accept a part yourself my companion joining, from your truly affectionate and much obliged friend and cousin,

—MARY PEISLEY.

From London she wrote to a friend after this manner:

TO _____

There are many hindering things to obstruct us in our journey, enemies within and enemies without; with the general lukewarmness, and indifference about religion, that prevails among the professors of Christianity of all sects and denominations, so far as I see. Their example, instead of inciting to zeal for the cause of God and the pursuit of virtue and piety, their deadness, dryness, carnality and insensibility, are in great danger of leavening into the same spirit. I find occasion for a strict and constant watch, with fervent prayer to the God of my life, for help, strength and deliverance from the flesh, the world and Satan, which war against my soul. I bless His great and glorious name, in that the Lord still continues, by the inshining of His Divine light, to keep me sensible of my weakness, frailty and manifold infirmities, and the need I have of looking steadily to my holy Head; and of the help of my fellow members, in the mystical body. I have often desired, when scarcely able to pray or breathe [in prayer] for myself, that He might be pleased to hear, and have regard to their good desires for my preservation; and I think I have often witnessed the benefit of the help of their spirits.

I have been through the north, south, east and west of this nation, at the meetings generally, great and small; there now remain several of the midland counties, which I believe will take me up most of this summer; and then I hope to see my native land in peace, which will be matter of comfort to me. A large share of suffering has fallen to my lot, in this land; but none of those things move me, neither count I my life dear, in comparison, that I may win Christ, the hope of glory. I have rejoiced to be found worthy to suffer for His sake, knowing it is such that shall reign with Him. Surely of all perils by sea and land, there is none so hard to bear, as that from false brethren, which I have not been exempt from: but through all, I am preserved in peace of mind, and restored to a far better state of bodily health, than I once expected; for which great blessings, with all other unmerited favours, I humbly desire to be made and kept truly thankful.

—MARY PEISLEY

TO TWO FRIENDS IN THE MINISTRY

Many things have occurred to hinder my writing to you sooner; not that I have any thing material to communicate, except what concerns my own particular, which I hope you are not altogether strangers to; if I may boldly lay claim to a part in the mystical body, whereof Christ is the head; members of which, I fully believe you are, and doubtless have had a feeling in spirit for a weak member suffering, though far remote in body, yet present in Him who is omnipresent. For I may truly say, of late, it has been a time of deep trial to my poor soul, its Beloved having withdrawn as behind the curtain; and not only so, but allowed the accuser of the brethren, to cast some of his most fiery darts at me, and roar upon me like a lion; yet was the Lord's good Spirit lifted up as a standard in the most needful time. I humbly hope, it was for the refining of my faith, and fitting for further service; because we can never so effectually or certainly speak of the wiles of Satan, and God's deliverance from them, as when we have seen them in ourselves. If I know my own heart, I am truly willing, to be emptied as from vessel to vessel; that so I may have no lees or dregs to settle on. I do not complain of the Lord's dealings with me, but rejoice that I am counted worthy in some measure to suffer; and desire I may be humbly thankful, that He is using means, such as comport with His infinite wisdom, for my preservation from the epidemical disorders, which abound in the visible churches professing godliness.

I travelled a week in the county of Suffolk in silence, was at six appointed meetings, and had not strength to open my mouth in any of them; a path I am ready to think more will be called into, if rightly subject to the Divine will; for the Church in many places groans under a lifeless ministry.

—MARY PEISLEY

She wrote the following letter to a Friend in the ministry, who had been instrumental in the Lord's hand to impart such help and counsel, as had a tendency to awaken her, when in the sleep of carnal ease and forgetfulness:

TO J. T.

Such a jealousy as possessed the mind of the eminent apostle, concerning the believers in his day, has laid hold of me concerning you; which was, lest he that beguiled Eve, should beguile you, from the simplicity that is in the Truth. As I was this day in my solitary retirement, it was brought to my thoughts to write you a few lines, and I reasoned thus with myself: What shall I, who am a poor weak child, say to one who was in Christ before me, and instrumental in the great Hand, to beget me in the Truth? I likewise remembered, the apostle travailed in birth for his little children,—made mention of them day and night in his prayers,—wrote them excellent epistles, and especially to his son Timothy, who was engaged in the weighty work of the ministry.

What excellent fatherly instruction does he give him, but none from the son to the father. Where is yours to me, in this the day of my great trial and exercise? Ah! where is that which should come upon you daily, the care of the churches, or at least the heritages of your God? I wish no other care may have intruded itself in the room thereof, which may have caused you to fall asleep, in this lukewarm, backsliding, degenerate age.

Be aroused, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, your soul's and the churches'. Consider what you are doing with these excellent talents, which the great Lord has committed to your trust. If you should cease to use them to the honour of His name, those who are as the stones of the street, will cry out against you; and I, if I keep my place, shall be a witness to the sufficiency of that gift which you have received. Do not again become a slave to the world. Consider the dignity of your high and holy calling, which is no less than that of a king's son, to be an heir with God, and co-heir with Christ. Allow not a sensual worldly tincture, to pervert your taste from that fountain of life, which your soul had once so; quick a relish for and thirsted after, even as the hunted hart does after the water-brooks. Bear with my freedom and jealousy, which proceeds from the universal love of God, that wishes well to all. I would not have you think I write from prejudice of mind; you know there is no cause for that;—nor yet from information. No, I never heard one word against you, since I left you.

I should be pleased to hear from you, how it fares with you; for I long to hear of your prosperity in the Truth, which would be a great comfort to my poor soul, that oft goes mourning, as between the porch and the altar, for the desolation of spiritual Jerusalem. Let us so run, as not uncertainly; so fight, not as beating the air; but keep under the body of sin and death, as well as the mortal body, bringing all into pure subjection, and obedience to the holy cross of Christ.

The following letter was to a relation:

TO _____

The one thing needful is only worth our care and constant pursuit; and surely there are many impediments and hindrances in this dangerous deluding world, that are often ready to turn us out of that narrow path, which leads to life. This has my soul experienced, by being drawn aside through unwatchfulness, and the prevalence of temptations; and I have found it hard work to return into the right path. I have many times thought, a soul rightly influenced, and affected with the love of God, is like the needle touched with the loadstone; that whichever way it be turned, rests not, nor settles, till it comes to its true centre; that is, while it retains the virtue of the loadstone.

Thus it is with the soul, that has been quickened and renewed by that efficacious power, which has been extended to draw our souls from earth to heaven; for certain it is, they have a natural tendency to sink into the earth, or earthly enjoyments. But unless we renewedly witness the visitations of that warming heart-melting love of God, which keeps the soul alive to Him, and brings into that holy fellowship, which is with the Father, and His Son Christ Jesus, by livingly feeling Him to be in us, and we in Him, all religion is but dead form and

empty show. As the branch cannot bring forth fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can we, except we abide in Him, and draw sap and nourishment from the pure root, bring forth fruit acceptable in His sight; who looks at the purity and sincerity of every heart and soul. He sees nothing in us, pure, amiable or lovely, but as His own work of grace is allowed to be carried on; that so Christ may be made of God to us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption; and to do all in our power to facilitate and help forward this great and glorious work, is the important business of our lives.

—MARY PEISLEY

TO JAMES GOUGH

Lancaster, Second month 9th, 1749.

Dear Friend,

I received your acceptable letter some weeks since; I likewise heard of your near trial, in losing your bosom friend and dear companion; in which trouble I have sympathized with you, and sincerely desired that this with all other of the Lord's dispensations may be truly sanctified to you, and tend to the bringing home and centring your mind on that which is immutable, and which cannot be snatched from you, so long as you cleave to Him, and are united to Him in spirit. May all these things be as seasonable warnings to us, the few moments we have to stay here, to turn our eyes from this transitory world, conducting ourselves, or rather being conducted by our Great Pilot, as passengers seeking the haven or port of rest; not entangling ourselves with the unnecessary incumbrances of this life, by which many have been drawn to perdition and error, and have pierced themselves with many sorrows. But as our worthy elders, who pursued their lawful affairs with moderation, acting from a principle of justice and honesty, to keep a conscience void of offence towards God and man; demonstrating abundantly by their converse and commerce among mankind, that they sought not to advance themselves or families to wealth, honour, and dignities in this world, but contrariwise, to promote their Master's kingdom, having a single eye to His honour in all they took in hand, whereby their bodies became full of Divine light, and in that alone were all the snares of Satan discovered, and power given to escape them. Ah! my dear friend, may this be our happy experience, that as the Lord has seen fit in his infinite goodness and mercy, to call us with a high and holy calling, we may walk in pure fear and watchfulness, so worthy of our vocation, as that we may be made and kept sanctified chosen vessels, fit for His heavenly use, and so become pillars in His house; that we may never go out, demonstrating whose servants we are, and what life we are governed by, even that which is hid with Christ in God, which deadens and crucifies to this present world, and the life and delights of it, and leads the soul to seek and obtain celestial joys, while in these tabernacles of clay, knowing that we shall shortly put off these bodies, and the soul appear naked and bare, having no advocate but Him who has been in us. Let us therefore use our utmost endeavours to make Him our friend, by yielding perfect obedience to His dictates and blessed manifestations, diligently waiting to know what His will is concerning us, that so it may be as our meat and drink to do His work, which He is pleased to count us worthy of, and to call us to.

Often is my mind brought very low under the sight and sense of the few in this day, who are made rightly willing to bow their necks to the yoke of Christ, whereby they might be made nothing to, nor of themselves, thoroughly emptied and unbottomed, that so Christ might be all in them. It is indeed lamentable to behold many up and down in the churches who are elders for age, and should be grown to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, bright way-marks and leading orbs in the firmament of God's power; instead thereof, the dragon by his tail has drawn them to the earth. Wells they are without water; dry withered fruitless trees, twice dead, plucked up by the roots, being rich in words and expressions of former experience, but out of the power of Truth, which alone can give a savour of life unto life, and death unto death, and a certain alarm unto the battle of the Lord. It often falls to my lot to sit in silence, as a fool, under suffering, and in deaths oft; for I believe it is the will of our God to have his people drawn from sounds to Him the living substance. May it ever be my care and concern, to keep with the precious Seed, whether in bondage or oppression, for it is only such can truly reign or rejoice with it; knowing the Lord to be my emptiness and fulness, having no other fountain, well-spring or treasure; for it is in this alone I can find solid peace, lasting satisfaction and safety, even in being nothing but what He is pleased to make me. And the longer I am exercised in the great work of the ministry, the more weighty and mysterious I find it to be,—the less capable and [more] unfit I find myself, that is of myself, to meddle, or do any thing in it,—and the more need entirely to depend on and wait for the coming and opening of the Word of life, (in which the state of the churches is felt and spoken to) and that is the very quintessence of a true ministry. Often are the secret cries of my soul to the Lord that he would cause true judgment to begin at the sanctuary, at the head and at the heart, that so right soundness might be found therein: then would the whole body be built up and edified in love. And blessed forever be the holy name of our God! I hope and believe there is yet a remnant preserved on the face of the earth, who prefer Jerusalem before their chiefest joy, and the peace and welfare of Zion more than their fives: but oh! they are too few.

Friends in a general way are very kind and tender to us, bearing with our infirmities and weaknesses of mind, which are many, though by Divine mercy I am much better than when I left home. May I be found worthy of being brought by the Eternal Spirit into the remembrance of the living body in my native land, when they are made glad in His holy house of prayer; for surely I have need of every help, considering the great engagement I am under in these perilous backsliding days.

—MARY PEISLEY

The following letter was written to a Friend in the ministry.

TO _____

Since we parted, you have been so much in my thoughts, with strong desires for your preservation and growth in the ever-blessed Truth, that I could not avoid saluting you by a few lines, in that love which seeks the peace and welfare of Zion, with the enlargement of her borders; which a remnant are at times deeply concerned for.

And ah! says my soul, may no other concern whatsoever, erase the remembrance of it from our minds, so as to hinder us from preferring it before our chiefest joy.

This is what will make for our peace here, and eternal salvation hereafter; which it is our business and interest to pursue, with the utmost vigilance our frail nature is capable of, seeing our adversary goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour; and not only so, but as a subtle serpent, working in a mystery of darkness, by which he has drawn down to the earth many bright stars, causing them to contend for the glory, honour and friendship of this wicked world, instead of the precious faith delivered to the saints; which powerfully works by love, to the purifying of the soul, and making them pure and holy, as He that has called them is holy. Oh! may my soul fear always, lest I, or any of my dear brethren and sisters in the Truth, should fall short of an admittance in the great and notable day that draws near quickly.

When I consider the very few bright shining examples that this age affords, who have disinterestedly devoted themselves to the service of Truth, and been kept unspotted of the world, having on the white linen which is the righteousness of saints; my fears are augmented, and my cries to the God of my life increased, not only for my own preservation, but that of his heritage in general. In a peculiar manner, am I concerned for those whom he has called to the weighty work of the ministry; that the eyes of our souls may be kept so single to the honour of God, as that we may minister suitably, from the Divine Spirit, to the states and conditions of the people, without partiality, or respect to persons; for in this case, (as says the apostle) if we have respect for persons, we commit sin. In order to avoid this heinous, dangerous crime, we had need to take notice of the wise caution frequently mentioned in the writings of our worthy elders and faithful ministers, in the morning of this latter day; not to be taken by the affectionate part with any, lest it should prevent seeing rightly the situation of the lowly seed of immortal life, and hinder ministering suitably to it, but minister life and strength to that which should be slain, famished, and brought to the death of the cross! O! may we fulfill our ministry, so as to be pure from the blood of all men, in the tremendous day of account, studying to show ourselves approved unto God, as labourers that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of Truth.

—MARY PEISLEY

TO SARAH BEALE

Lancaster, 11th of second month, 1749.

Dear Cousin.

I heard of the death of your worthy mother, who I doubt not is removed from a place of affliction, pain and probation, to the full fruition of unembittered felicity, endless joy and peace; whose loss to you, my relations, to whom she stood in the place of a parent, I am sensible is great, and perhaps more than you can at present conceive or imagine. For I know youth are apt to think the greatest happiness in this life, consists in having liberty to gratify their will without control, which till they know to be governed by the will of God, is one of

the greatest trials and dangers that can befall them. I well know by experience the disadvantage it is to lack the care and instruction of a good mother, which makes me the more to pity your case. Had not Infinite Goodness arrested me in my headlong race, it would have brought me to the gates of destruction and the chambers of death, terminated in my utter ruin both of soul and body, by bringing me to infamy here and eternal misery hereafter;—and all this by gratifying a vain and carnal mind, which hurried me so precipitately into youthful pleasures, that I had not time to see and consider the danger I was in.

And now my dear cousin, I have to reflect on the difficult station you are placed in, and the great duties that will necessarily fall to your charge in your tender age, as that of a mother to your younger sisters and brothers, a help and companion to your father, and a stay to his family: all which I have sincerely desired you might be rightly enabled honourably to acquit yourself in; and that must be by timely and carefully applying to the Fountain and original Source of all true wisdom; entirely disclaiming and renouncing all strength and sufficiency of your own without Him, who is power and perfection itself.

Let it be your care to gain the love and affection of the younger children and family; and yet keep an awe and an authority over them, as an elder and superior; and the way to hold that is, not to allow word or action of yours to be but what you could with pleasure have brought to light and discovered to mankind: otherwise instead of being their governess, you will become their servant and a slave to the fear of their discoveries of you. You can hardly think how much your prudent conduct and good example will contribute to the good and well-being of your brothers and sisters, both here and hereafter, and redound to your credit and satisfaction; and if they should not tread in your footsteps, when guided in the path of virtue, then will you be clear in the sight of God and man. And above all things be sure carefully to avoid and shun vain, profane and loose company of every kind, and all converse with them, and unprofitable books and writings;—both insensibly tincture and poison the mind, gradually leavening it into their own wicked nature, dropping malignant dews on virtuous tender plants. But let your communications be with the most solid religious Friends; and when such cannot be had, choose rather to be alone and conversant with yourself, attending on the reproofs of instruction and the manifestations of Divine light, which is the very way to eternal life; acquainting yourself with the Holy Scriptures, and the writings of learned and pious persons. Thus will you gain to yourself a valuable treasure of wisdom and knowledge, which possesses a mind rightly cultivated, and be made fit for converse with God your Creator and his saints on earth; having your body a sanctified receptacle for His blessed Spirit to make His abode in; which is the height of perfection and excellency that our nature is capable of. Let moderation and the limits of Truth bound you in all things, eating, drinking, sleeping and apparel; being adorned with a meek and quiet spirit, which is the ornament of our sex. Yet does not this lead to a dull inactivity of mind,—no, but rather awakens the soul to a sight and sense of duty; and to exert ourselves in the places Providence has placed us, that so we may not become burdens and drones in the creation.

These things, dear Sally, have I written in much love, and hope you will excuse my freedom, and accept them in the same from your affectionate cousin,

—MARY PEISLEY.

TO E. AND T. ECROYD.

Exeter, 26th of Sixth month, 1749.

My Dear Friends,

I have been with my dear companion Mary Weston, since the yearly meeting, through four of the southern counties; a fine well-cultivated country, whose fields seem to lack no improvement, being richly adorned with plentiful crops. These, with beautifully enamelled and fragrant pastures, with dumb eloquence abundantly praise and magnify the great Creator, setting forth to every intelligent mind the magnificence of His power, wisdom, goodness, bounty, and long-suffering to a race of degenerate unworthy mortals, whose tongues are filled with cursing and profaneness, instead of thanksgiving and praise for the unmerited favours of Him who makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust!

So far as I am capable of discerning, religion is at a very low ebb in this part of the world, among all ranks and societies of people. Perhaps you will say I lack charity, or upbraid me as Joseph did his brethren, of coming to spy the nakedness of the land. I tell you no, but to buy food for the sore famine of my soul, by obedience, which could I have had at home I would not have come here. Though I thus freely write my thoughts as they occur, I have no doubt but I am known by you, as well as Joseph's brethren were by him, though to many where I come I am unknown, and remain so.

I have far passed the limits of my letter, but feeling my heart enlarged in that love, which neither length of time nor distance of place can extinguish or impair, hope you will excuse the freedom, and accept of my salutation in the unchangeable Truth, in which I greet you with love unfeigned, also to your father, mother, and family, with any other inquiring friends, as if named, from your truly affectionate friend.

—MARY PEISLEY

A letter written to two Friends, to whom she was nearly united in spirit, runs thus:

TO _____ AND _____

I received your acceptable letter at London, and would have answered it before now, but for lack of leisure, and sometimes a fit frame of mind, being many times deeply bowed and dipped into suffering, with and for my fellow members, and the Seed of God, which lies loaded and oppressed in the minds of very many, even the professors of the blessed Truth, as a cart under sheaves. This makes the true ministers of Christ go heavily mourning on their way, often strewing their tears in solitary places, for the slain of the daughter of this people; yes, for His sake we are killed all the day long, and accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Surely, of all perils we meet with by sea and land, there are none so dangerous or hard to bear, as by false brethren: such are they who have lost the spirit and power of godliness, but retain the form; being clothed with a Pharisical

righteousness, they, as our Saviour said, sit in Moses' seat. What they bid, we may do; but their example is to be shunned: instead of coming up in their footsteps, we may justly cry, my soul come not into their secret; unto their assembly mine honour, be not you united; for their steps tend to the chambers of death, and their ways to the sates of destruction. O! the great loss we that are young have, for lack of steady elders to go before us, who might take us by the hand with this amiable language, "follow us, as we follow Christ." And as this is the lot of our day, we must strive to keep to our great Pilot, who is the alone safe conductor of His followers, through all the storms, difficulties, and dangers, that attend this pilgrimage and vale of tears. Though He may sometimes allow us to walk by faith and not by sight, yet as our eye is steadily looking unto Him, He will be found near at hand to help and direct; whose holy life (while in that prepared body,) remains to be an unerring pattern—He in whom there was no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth, who was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief Alas! how hard a lesson is this to our corrupt nature, poor, frail, weak creatures! Ah! what need we have of boundless mercy, and the mediation of a tender compassionate Saviour, a holy High-priest, that was tempted in all points as we are; and who well knows how to succour all the tempted, whose care is cast upon Him, the government of whose hearts is upon His shoulders, those who have surrendered their wills to his. These, and only these, are made truly free from the thralldom of sin and death—know an overcoming of themselves, the world, and the devil,—the only conquest worth our labour and constant pursuit. May we ever keep so near that holy, animating seraph love, as that we may witness it to fill us with a generous indifference to earthly and transitory objects; that so we may in reality, count all things here as loss and dross, in comparison of that excellent treasure which we have in our earthen vessels; the efficacy of which has at times given a disrelish to everything that would impede its pure arising in the soul. It is the constant care and work of our adversary to strive to blind the eye of the mind, which can discern the transcendent excellency of the eternal Truth.

—MARY PEISLEY

TO HER FATHER

Bury in Suffolk, 3rd of First month, 1750.

Dear and Honoured Father,

I rejoice to hear of the welfare of my dear brothers and sisters in the best things, and sincerely desire that the dew of heaven may rest long on all your branches—the blessing of the everlasting hills; that so you may be a sweet savour of righteousness to Him who has called with a high and holy calling, to be heirs of His kingdom, which is far beyond all the kingdoms of this world. O! may you and I press after it through all the crowds of opposition that may stand in our way, so as to touch the hem of His garment from whom alone healing virtue comes.

I have, by Divine mercy, been favoured this winter with an uninterrupted state of health; for which favour, with many more I am partaker of, I desire to be made and kept truly thankful. I have not had the least touch of my cough, which has been so afflicting for many winters past: it has been the most favourable season for travelling, the time of year considered, that ever I knew. I am just got through this county; I think of going next into Essex,

and from there to London, in order for a visit to the city, which I have not yet performed. A young woman has accompanied me through three or four counties; she is to leave in a few days, and my dear Mary Weston is to meet me, and take me home with her. You desires to know how I am horsed, which is as well as I could desire, a fine-going, sure-footed, free, pretty creature as ever I rode; it has no fault that I know of, except full much spirit, which is nothing to me now I am used to her.

It has been for some days past a very poor low time as to my mind; I have now got to a worthy family, with whom my spirit has this evening, in a little family meeting, been much refreshed and comforted. O! how good is bread to the hungry, and the water of life to the poor thirsty soul; and how pleasant is that fellowship which is with the Father, and His Son Christ Jesus;—surely it is beyond and above all the nearness of affinity or consanguinity outwardly; but where they both unite, they are the two-fold cords not easily broken. May we, my dear father, know an increase of this pure unchangeable love, and grow in it as we grow in years. From your dutiful and truly affectionate daughter,

—MARY PEISLEY

She mentions, that at the city of Cambridge, she had a meeting with a few professors, in number about five; where she was greatly favoured in her mind with the living presence of God; in whose light, she says, “I saw and was made to believe that there would be a people raised up in that place, who should stand for the honour of His name, and be valiant for Truth on the earth. This I was led to declare to the few present, though at this time in a place noted for contrary fruits. At Burford had a large and precious evening meeting, though in the early part it was a very suffering time, there being several priests, justices of the peace, so called, and rude people, in whom the prince of the air had dominion; but the Lord, whose power is above every power, manifested His own Arm, and made it bare for the help of His depending children, who have none in heaven but Him, nor in the whole earth in comparison of Him. His testimony was set over the heads of transgressors, and evil spirits were made subject to His power: everlasting praises be given to His excellent name!

“At another place where I had a meeting, the professors of Truth had heard of my being silent at several meetings, and were afraid of the cross and reproach of men, so took me a back way to the meeting, for fear (as I apprehended) their neighbours who were not of our Society should see us, and come there; yet Providence so ordered it, that a large number came to the afternoon meeting, to whom Truth was declared, in the wisdom and demonstration of the Spirit of God; after which I had to speak closely to the professors.”

TO HER FATHER

Wapping, 28th of Second month, 1750.

Dear and Honoured Father,

I have been in this city near a month, which has proved a time of deep travail, having been much shut up and under suffering of spirit; but I think it a blessing that my lot is cast with such tender sympathizing friends as my dear M. W. [Mary Weston] and husband; but I am soon likely to lose her out of this nation, she being prepared for an American journey, only waiting for the ship's sailing. I am glad for her and the cause' sake, that the Lord has so far prevailed by His love as to make her willing to leave all these near and dear enjoyments, and her good husband to give her up cheerfully. Her company has been a great comfort and service to me,—the Lord reward her for all acts of kindness and love to poor unworthy me.

—MARY PEISLEY.

TO PETER PEISLEY

High Wycombe, 30th of Third month, 1750.

My Dear Brother,

Live you in the pure fear of your God, which is a fountain of life, that preserves from the many snares of death, which the wicked enemy is laying for the feet of the youth. O! what need have we at all times to keep near the Divine light in ourselves; and to watch in the same against every appearance of evil, and above all, our own heart's lusts; seeing the devil our adversary goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.

Dear brother, I cannot but warn you in the love of God, to have a strict guard to your words, as well as actions; and at all times to speak the truth from your heart, whether it be for or against you: neither equivocate to excuse yourself in a fault, for that is next to, or one degree of, lying; but rather suffer blame, if you have omitted any duty, than provoke your Father and Master in heaven; for if you anger Him and make Him your enemy, you will never prosper in the Truth. And not only lying, but vain talking and foolish jesting grieve the Holy Spirit; therefore let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but such as is good for the use of edifying. Remember that for every idle word we speak we must give an account in the day of judgment, and all liars are to have their part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, except they know a true and sincere repentance.

But dear brother, I hope better things of you, and things that accompany salvation; nor are these hinted at as charges, but as cautions from one who has seen the workings of Satan various ways, and who sincerely desires your welfare and preservation every way, and therefore I must again in pure love entreat you, to watch against all vain and unprofitable thoughts, as well as words, and especially in religious meetings appointed for the solemn worship of Almighty God. If you allow the enemy to carry your mind from the pure gift in yourself, you will sustain great loss, and bring death, weakness, dryness, and barrenness over your soul:—Satan working in a mystery of darkness, filling the mind with vain thoughts, and lofty imaginations of self, which must be crucified and slain, before there can be a right resurrection of the soul in the Life of God, And though you

mayst frequently find it very hard to have your mind composed and stayed on the Truth, when coming out of a hurry or multiplicity of business, yet be not weary of striving, watching, and praying, according to the ability you have received; watching for the manifestations of the Divine light; that so you mayst see your state and condition, and from that sight and sense know how and what to pray for as you ought: for we know not how to pray acceptably, but as the spirit helps our infirmities.

I understand your master and mistress are kind to you, the former entrusting you with a share of his business, in which I hope you will acquit yourself with the same strict care and industry as though it was your own, yes, and more so; for we may make much more free in omitting or neglecting our own affairs, than when entrusted for others: and I have to say for your encouragement, it is my belief if you keep near to the Lord and are faithful to Him, He will do more for you than you can now think. This is the testimony of one, whom He has deeply tried in the furnace of affliction, yet who has found Him a God near at hand in every time of trouble, and besetment, and exercise: to whose protecting care I commit you with myself, body, soul, and spirit, and in His love I salute you, and remain your affectionate sister,

—MARY PEISLEY

TO HER FATHER

My dear and honoured Father,

In a fresh and renewed sense of that love, which is far surpassing natural affection, but joined with the latter, do I at this time tenderly salute you, my mother, and the family; greatly desiring your growth and preservation in that which as much transcends all temporal enjoyments, as light does darkness. May you be found in close union with the Eternal Spirit; wherein you may read and feel me in the life, and see my situation and standing in the ever-blessed Truth, and make intercession for me according to the will of God. It is here that we come rightly to discern one another, not by the sight of the natural eye, and report only; but the soul finds out the excellency of the soul, that is, the beauty which Truth has invested it with, by its own light; for, indeed, we have neither beauty, nor excellency, but what we derive from Him, who is the inexhaustible fountain and treasury of all the saints' jewels. If we take them to deck self with, when He is not pleased to have them exhibited, it is robbery;—a sin (I bless His name) He has hitherto preserved me from. But He has made me willing to pass along in my journey and pilgrimage as a fool, naked, bare, destitute of help, excepting as I received it from Him, who is the Helper of his people, to the astonishment of professors and profane. This has exposed me both to their censure and ridicule, with grievous mockings and scoffings, hard to be borne by flesh and blood. But He, to whom my eye has been, and whose honour I have sought and not my own, did not leave or forsake me, under my many and great trials; but the right arm of His power has been underneath in all my exercises and probations: so that my soul yet lives in the existence which is invisible and eternal, through all insults of the enemy within and without:—to His excellent name, who is everlastingly worthy, be all praise!

O! how is my mind filled with admiration, when I consider the multitude of His mercies and admirable preservations, in imminent dangers, both inward and outward, by sea and land, as well as His mercies to you my dear parents, brethren, and sisters, with others of my dear relations, who are near to my life, and who are brought to my remembrance at this time as at many others, with great sweetness; and for whom I bow the knee of my mind in reverence at this time before their God and my God, their Father and mine. To these my love flows freely in the blessed fellowship of the glorious gospel; to any of these dear children, co-heirs with Christ, who inquire for me, in that love that is immutable, you mayst communicate this account of my welfare, as freedom and opportunity permit; knowing these will rejoice to hear of my preservation in the Truth, as I do of theirs: and I trust by the permission and ordering of Providence, shortly to see some of their faces, and enjoy a sweet communion in that love, which first united our souls and cemented our spirits, making us witnesses of that incomparable fellowship which is with the Father and His Son.

I have nigh accomplished my great journey, and to my inexpressible consolation, possess that peace which surpasses the understanding of man; finding myself quite clear of the several parts of this nation that I have visited, which I look upon as an inestimable favour from Him to whom I am abundantly indebted. I have left but a few meetings and two small counties, which I hope to accomplish in about a month; but if it should be longer, I would not have you uneasy, as I am in the hands of a powerful and gracious God; to whose protection I commit myself, you and yours.

I had your letter at Leicester, three weeks since, which I was glad of, and pleased with your seasonably reminding me of the many obligations your family and I lie under to Almighty God; which cannot be too frequently remembered, nor gratefully acknowledged. O! how does it humble my mind, when I reflect that many accounted as valiants in Israel, who had enlisted under Christ's banner, but who for lack of keeping in the valley of humility, and near the Captain of their salvation, have suffered themselves to be wounded by their adversary, and have fallen as on the right hand and on the left, while I, a poor weak worm, who have no strength nor might of my own, am still preserved in the fear and love of my God, though dangers surround me on every side!

I am favoured with the agreeable company of a young woman from Worcester, who has been with me about six weeks; though she has not a gift in the ministry, yet she is one of those who travail in spirit, and who sympathize with the ministers, a plain, humble, meek-spirited woman, though in the possession of a plentiful portion, and that at her own disposal, being fatherless and motherless; three sisters of them live together in good repute; yet she willingly left her comfortable habitation, to partake of harder fare and difficulties with me, doing what was in her power to make her company serviceable and agreeable to me. I wish there were many such examples in this and our nation.

I shall conclude in that love wherewith I began, to self, mother, sisters, brothers, friends, and relations, as opportunity serves; which please to accept from your dutiful and affectionate daughter,

—MARY PEISLEY.

“In the latter part of this journey, I was seized with a violent intermitting fever, which illness detained me several weeks, and caused me to travel in great bodily weakness; yet the Lord was graciously pleased at times, to strengthen me for the service he had called me to, beyond my own and others’ expectation. I waited near a month for a passage to my own country, which seemed tedious to me, and some of the time at a public house at Parkgate, destitute of friends or acquaintance, but dared not repine at the will of Providence. In this journey I rode about five thousand miles, and attended five hundred and twenty-five meetings.

I landed at Dublin the ninth month, 1750, having been about two years and nine months absent. Had the company of my esteemed friend, Samuel Fothergill. We had a rough, but swift passage, and were in danger of driving upon the Welch coast, but the Lord was our preserver. My friends rejoiced to see me, as I did them; some were concerned at the state of my visibly impaired health.

In this city I felt great weakness of body and mind, being stripped, emptied and tried, as before the great Judge; by whom I was willing to be examined, and to bring my deeds to His Divine light, where my own weakness and manifold infirmities might be more fully manifested; it was several days before I was able to go out to meetings. Though my life was despaired of by several, I mended in my health faster than I expected, when I repaired to my father’s cottage, where all the needs of nature were fully supplied, excepting that which would gratify the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh and pride of life. Some were against my coming, fearing the journey would be too much for me, and the accommodation not suitable to my weak condition; but I bless the name of my God, who never permitted me to lack any good thing, since my first knowledge of Him. I had great peace in coming to my aged father, who much desired my company. Invitations I had, to stations of great affluence, but I denied them; and found the Lord my God deserts not the poor and mean of this world, but visits them in their lonely situations and humble retirements before Him: this I am a witness of, for He was often with my spirit in this time of weakness, speaking peace and comfort to my soul that could not live without Him. One day in particular, as I rode to meeting, being much better in health. His living word ran sweetly through my mind, thus,—“For this purpose have I raised you up, to show forth in you my power of preservation and mercy,”—which greatly rejoiced my soul, and caused me to praise His excellent name, who is everlastingly worthy, for all His mercies.”

She kept pretty much at home during her weak state of health, and about this time, wrote to a Friend as follows:—

TO _____

By the mercy of Providence, I am now much recovered. Ah! says my soul, may I answer the end for which I am continued longer among dreams and shadows, mingled with deceit. What soul that rightly knew its true centre, would desire to continue here longer than till it had performed the will of Him who sent it into life. This

is a state of infirmity and dependency, environed by the most subtle, potent, unwearied enemies; which loudly calls for the greatest vigilance, fear, humility and watchfulness that our nature is capable of. Let us therefore sink down in our minds to the lowly humble Seed of everlasting renown, where the visions of life and light are seen, and the voice of the great Oracle heard distinct from every other sound, in the silence of all flesh, freed from the noise of archers; where none can make us afraid.

—MARY PEISLEY

In another letter she says:

I often wonder, why the Lord and his people should show so much regard to a poor and unworthy creature, who am the least and last of his family, if fit to be esteemed of that happy number. My soul sinks low under the weight of obligations to Him, to whom I can make no returns, but of His own begetting, who measures not His mercies by our merit, for then would they be a scanty portion; but they are proportioned to His matchless love and kindness.

Chapter III

The summer following she accompanied Catherine Payton, who came to this nation on a religious visit, finding a draft to join her to Munster and Ulster. She set forward on this journey in the Fifth month, 1751, and they joined as companions at Waterford. They had many meetings among those of other societies.

They visited the towns-people of Sligo in Connaught, and felt much satisfaction; she thought they were well worth visiting, and said there seemed much more openness to declare the Truth among those of other societies, than among them that go under our name. After this journey, she stayed most of the winter with her father.

TO ROBERT BELL

Your epistle of the 19th instant, is now before me; and though I am not one of the dignified people, a scholar, or a woman of strong natural parts, yet find freedom to send you a few lines, divested of all the embellishments, which might proceed from the above endowments: having nothing to recommend me except a considerable stock of simplicity and sincerity, I am under no temptation to begin a correspondence to show my wit or learning. In the first place, I may let you know I am in health of body, except a cold, and fear this part prospers better than my soul prospers; as the former breathes in good clear air, has bread to the full, and I know of no enemies

that seek its life; the latter is in an enemy's country surrounded with treble danger, in a land of infection, where fogs of sense and damps of spleen are at times ready to suffocate and stop the breath of life; and had not the sovereign medicine, the balm of life, been applied, it must inevitably have perished long before now.

When you mention the honour done to yourself in conducting your friends, I would gladly hope you mean the honour your soul received in feeling the love of God among His saints; for surely all other is from beneath, and therefore ought to be condemned by every noble-hearted Christian, who seeks and aspires after that which is from above only. As to what you observe concerning spoiling the feast, it brought me to recollect an observation I the other day made, on beholding a considerable number of bees resort to a rosemary bush in full bloom: I stood with attention to see and hear these little busy active creatures, and at length singled out one that I might more particularly observe its manner of proceeding, in order to accomplish its design; which I apprehend to be a provision for the approaching winter, though at a considerable distance, it being now the middle or early part of the season; yet their diligence seemed to be as though it was the last day:—but to proceed with my remark. The one I fixed my eye upon swiftly fled from flower to flower, perhaps to the number of ten, only just stayed long enough on each flower, to find there was not the sweets it wanted; and then quickly fled to another, not spending its time idly, buzzing about the empty flowers, nor did it sting or stain, at least not obvious to my naked eye; indeed I thought, could it have left some private mark easy to be discovered to its fellow-labourers, without defacing or hurting the empty flowers, it might save many the trouble of lighting thereon: but this was not to be the case, they were all on an equal footing, each to try for themselves. Nor were they discouraged by their fruitless endeavours, but persisted in close labour, until they found what they wanted: life seemed precious to them, for the preservation of which they bent all their endeavours. If you can draw encouragement or instruction from these broken hints, my end is answered. I have sometimes seen these above-mentioned creatures rest on a loathsome dirty sink, and have been ready to think it was not bare curiosity, or to stand as idle spectators on the meaner insects that resorted there; no, I believe they extracted some of their materials for completing their work. This I think I know, the laborious faithful Christian, draws instruction, warning and caution from the worst examples.

—MARY PEISLEY

TO ELIZABETH CARLETON

*Paddock,*¹ *11th of Tenth month, 1751.*

My Dear Friend,—Be assured that it is not because I have forgotten you, that you have not heard from me sooner,—no, you have been much in my thoughts, and that with considerable love and sweetness; but various cross occurrences have happened to prevent me telling you so till now, among the latter of which was, a bad sprain in my right thumb, which rendered my writing impracticable. I received it by a violent fall from my

1 Paddock was a farm in the occupation of Mary Peisley's father; it was situated near Mountrath.

mare the fifth-day before I got home. This, with the enclosed, is the first I have been able to write, which was not performed without some pain and difficulty; but I have the utmost cause to be truly and humbly thankful, that some of my limbs were not broken, or my life suddenly taken away. O! how wonderfully kind has God's protecting Providence been, to one of the most unworthy of all His servants.

Dear Elizabeth, I have often considered your lonely situation, and compared it with my own; but mine is abundantly more so than yours, not having one of my own sex in all this quarter, that I can make a friend or companion of. But I am greatly satisfied, and contented with the will of a wise Providence, in this and all other of His dispensations; as it gives me a better opportunity of communion with myself and Him, who is the chiefest among ten thousands. This is indeed an employ best becoming the nature of my being, and the highest use of my intellectual faculties; and if I could not repose myself in the quietude of my own mind, and serenity of my conscience, with the refined pleasures arising therefrom, in vain would I rove in these regions of woe, to seek happiness. But I bless the name of my God, who makes the lonely cottage more pleasing to me, than a palace can be to those dark souls, who live as without Him in the world. Of a truth, the heaven of heavens cannot contain the Beloved of our souls. He delights to be in the habitable parts of the earth among the children of men, even with the empty, the poor in spirit, the contrite ones, the temples of whose souls He has caused to be emptied, swept and garnished with His own righteousness: and as He has made them clean. He loves to visit them, and sup with them, and they with Him. O! unparalleled kindness, matchless love, and astonishing condescension of our heavenly Father, and noble Benefactor, to the despised children of His kingdom, whom He has chosen out of the rudiments, customs, and fashions of this world. "Fear not, little flock," said He,—“it is your heavenly Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

I had not the least thought of writing after this manner, when I began, but have just let my pen run as matter opened in my mind, and thus enlarged my letter beyond my expectation, as love has enlarged my heart, without premeditation, form, or connection: if it conveys to you the least comfort or satisfaction, the end is answered; for I have been ready to think you need consolation, and say unto you, in the unalterable love of the gospel,—Trust in that God, whose truth and righteousness never fail: He will arise in his own time, and expel darkness, and dissipate sorrow!

—MARY PEISLEY

TO A YOUNG MAN, THEN UNDER THE BAPTIZING POWER OF TRUTH.

There is one caution that has dwelt for some time on my spirit to give you in pure love and good-will, that is, that you may be particularly nice in the choice of your friends, now in your setting out in a new and spiritual life, which is a point of great wisdom. Have special care of being too readily taken with strangers, and of giving your sentiments in word or writing of persons or things not well-known. This you will find, when duly considered, to be a hint of singular service. Wait for the freedom and direction of Truth, before you enter into converse or familiarity with any, though it may be on religious subjects; for there are many more talkers of the

Truth, than walkers in it. This you will find, as I have done, to tend greatly to the health and well-being of your precious soul; for there is a set of mortals, whose very breath diffuses poison and infection to the mind; their throats are as an open sepulchre, the poison of asps is under their tongues, they flatter with their lips: I might enlarge on this subject, but a watch word is enough.

—MARY PEISLEY

TO A FRIEND

Paddock, 30th of First month, 1752.

Respected Cousin,

Yours of the 30th is now before me, which I have read and considered in the best manner I am capable of, with desire that I may draw from it whatever instruction it can possibly afford me. I have renewed occasion to see and admire the kindness, love, and benevolence of my dearest tender Father and best of friends, who has hitherto supported my mind under a multiplicity of uncommon exercises and trials, both inward and outward, for a series of time to the alone honour of His most excellent name. I write not this boastingly; no, my spirit reverently bows towards its true centre, in a deep sense of my own unworthiness of the least of all the Lord's mercies and truth that He has showed to me; and, blessed forever be His power, is still manifesting, and I trust will continue so to do during the short time allotted for my continuance here. He it was, the Beloved of my soul, whose I am and serve with my spirit in purity of conscience, that fortified my mind for the reception of your letter; which came to my hand at the close of our week-day meeting, which had been to me a time of favour; wherein my will was so far annihilated and spirit subjected, as to feel no desire of being anything, either in the Church or the world, but what might contribute most to His honour, not my own, who had sent me into life for a purpose of His glory. Oh! says my poor soul with the utmost sincerity, may the glorious end be answered, then come life or death, prosperity or adversity, shall I not bid welcome to all the dispensations that are sent to effect it; yes, surely, and be willing to be anything or nothing, do or suffer for His name's sake, who has deeply suffered for me.

I shall now endeavour to obviate your false surmises respecting me, with no other view or intent, but to prevent the evil tendency your entertaining them may have in destroying that union and fellowship which ever did and ever will subsist between the true members of the one mystical body, so long as they keep their places and act under the direction of the Holy Head. But really when they quit this beautiful order and harmony, they are subject to hurt and trouble one another, which I have found by sorrowful experience. Ah! may such crooked, decrepit, weak, members, who have made themselves so by acting in their own wills, be timely reinstated and brought into union with the body and subjection to the Head! As to the path which my feet were turned into, out of the broad way (in which you were made an instrument in the hand of God, and I hope I shall remember your agency with gratitude so long as you keep in the Spirit in which you began—may you nor I never seek to be made perfect by the flesh) —I bless the name of my God I find by experimental knowledge that I am still

in the same strait and narrow way which leads to life eternal, nor are my trials and self-nothingness diminished but augmented, though custom has rendered them more tolerable to bear. But I hope you would not have me always remain in a state of infancy and weakness as to religion; no, I desire to grow from stature to stature, and from one degree of strength and faith to another, till I come to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: in malice I would always be a child, but not in knowledge. Yet I hope I have kept to the simplicity in innocency, honesty and plainness of speech, not boasting myself in another man's line; and though the terms in which I convey my sentiments may differ from yours or another's, yet it is to me free, easy, and natural, such as I am accustomed to in my common converse,—not laboured, strained, borrowed or picked up as you term it,—and I think intelligible even to weak minds, and those who with myself may lack the privilege of a liberal education; for indeed I lay claim to no embellishments, neither natural nor acquired, but such as I have been assisted to bring from the school of Christ.

True it is I have been careful in the discharge of my ministerial function, to convey the Word as much as possible free from the workings of my own spirit, or mixture of the creature, seeing clearly that in these things Satan would transform himself as into an angel of light: setting sound for substance, and passion for power. And as I dare not add to the Word of prophesy, neither do I think it right to diminish anything from the beauty of the gift I have received by disagreeable tones, unbecoming gestures, unprofitable tautology or vain repetitions; yet have fervent charity for them who through unwatchfulness fall into these errors, well knowing how hard it is to steer clear of them; and in beholding the weight and the importance of the work (in the light of Truth) and the many mistakes we are subject to, have oft cried out in the secret of my soul, O Lord! who is sufficient for these things; surely only such as you make so by your own Divine wisdom! But I bless the name of my God, who has condescended to rectify my spiritual senses in such a manner as to fit me to relish the true spring of ministry through his meanest instruments, with all the tinctures it may carry with it of the pipe or casket through which it is conveyed. The patriarchs and prophets all spoke with profound judgment, sense and connection, and several of them were noted for their elegancy of speech, as were many of our worthy ancestors, insomuch that they came under the censure of being Jesuits, men noted for their subtlety and learning; and. Christ our Lord, chief Speaker in his Church, and holy pattern to his people, was observable for his wisdom and excellency of speech, so that it might well be said of him, sure “never man spoke like him” (of Divine and heavenly truths), insomuch that it drew this remark from the unbelievers, “from where has this man this wisdom and learning?” They were such as were strangers to that Source from which he derived his wisdom, that thus presumptuously questioned the eternal Son of God! And shall any now in like manner dispute the unsearchable wisdom of God in the distribution of his own gifts for the edifying and building up of his Church! who gives to one the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge, by the same Spirit, to a third faith, and so on, as the learned apostle has elegantly described.

But said he, “I show unto you a more excellent way,” that is charity, without which he beheld himself, though endowed with all other gifts, but “as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal,”—and indeed he gives a beautiful description of it, well worthy the observation of you and me: “it thinks no evil,” said he, and I believe it is because it would do none. I could write more on this subject, which for brevity sake I omit. I know not that

I have given any just cause of offence to Jew or Gentile, nor to the Church of Christ, and I thank Him who helps his children, I can and do forgive injuries; I am not for war, except against the three common enemies of our happiness. Your manner of writing would have given me much trouble, had I not seen your willingness to judge me before you had entered into the merits of the case, which is the most favourable construction that I can put on your hints. For such has been my unwillingness to contend, that I have repeatedly received the most false accusations and bitter reflections without any answer or reply, when I might have justified myself.

—MARY PEISLEY.

TO THOMAS GREER.

Paddock, 28th of Second month, 1752.

My Dear Friend,

As you are often the subject of my thoughts, I make you so now of my pen, and inform you that I read your favour of 5th of eleventh month, which was satisfactory to me, as it always is to hear from my friends. I observe your cordial advice, respecting which I take kindly, and have strictly adhered to it; let them be doing, it seems my place at present to rest still and quiet, having committed my innocent cause to the Author of my being, with sincere desires that He may work as will contribute most to his glory, and the good and preservation of his heritage, let me suffer what I may. I confess they have touched me in a tender part, by endeavouring to asperse my character but it is not my life, which is hid with Christ in God; had that been in the applause of men it would now be in danger, if not lost. But oh! how inestimable a blessing it is to have a treasure laid up in heaven, where neither moth nor rust can corrupt nor thieves break through to steal! May you and I labour for it with all the powers of our souls; for I am sure we have seen it in the glorious light of Truth, to be a pearl Worth selling all for; and in that light and sight have we clearly discovered the emptiness, nothingness and insufficiency of all sublunary enjoyments, to make us truly happy here, or contribute to our well-being, hereafter, but as they were sanctified to us and consecrated to His service that gave them. Yes, have we not begged and requested that He would not give them, except on these terms, seeing clearly there was a curse in these very blessings, except his blessing fetched it out. Well, my dear friend, do we still retain that rectified sense of things which Truth has given us, or is not the god of this world endeavouring to blind the eye of our minds, so that we cannot make a right estimate of things celestial or terrestrial? for as the one heightens in our view or opinion, the other consequently lessens and seems of but small value, which verifies the truth of that memorable saying, “you cannot serve two masters,” and that of John, “if any man love the world, or the things that are in the world, the love of the Father is not in him,” that is, it is not prevalent in his soul, for when it is, as I before wrote, all things else are of little value in comparison of it. But why write I thus to one who knows all these things as well as I do? I think it is not merely the result of my imagination, for I am oft so shut up that I can neither speak nor write of religious matters; and not only so, but I have felt my mind clothed with a little pain and concern for your welfare and preservation, as for my own, and cries have been raised in my soul to the God of my life on your behalf, that He might condescend safely to pilot you from that dangerous rock whereon

so many well-fitted vessels have split, namely, the inordinate pursuit of the worlds You know right well the havoc this gilded bait has made among the lambs and sheep of Christ; therefore let me entreat you as a sister, in love, that you wait daily for that Power which alone can bring to silence all flesh, and capacitate you to hear the voice of the true Shepherd distinct from every other sound, and if you follow it, it will lead you out of the reach of the paw of the lion and the bear, and deliver you from that uncircumcised philistine spirit, which bears rule in the hearts of the children of disobedience. It is by hearing and obeying, our souls must live to God. I would not multiply lines on this subject, a word is enough for the wise.

May God Almighty keep you in the unity of His spirit and fellowship of the saints, and build you up in the most holy faith. I have some thoughts of sending this by my highly esteemed and much beloved friend William Brown, or his companion Samuel Neale, if they go your way soon. I am persuaded if you retain your spiritual senses in their proper rectitude, you will prize the company of the former, as a father in Israel, if it be proper to give any man on earth that appellation. May his labours of love be blessed among you. I must conclude being in haste, your real affectionate friend,

—MARY PEISLEY.

She wrote to another of her friends, thus:

TO _____

It is not forgetfulness of my near and dear friends, that makes me slow in my answers to them, nor yet because I have not a singular pleasure in hearing from them; their converse by letters or otherwise, is, next to the Divine good in myself, the greatest satisfaction in this life; but you know, that even all of this kind, must be through Him, who is the Source of all good, and can command the clouds, that they shall or shall not rain. He can stop both the upper and the nether springs, and cause a famine in the land, and who shall say, what are you doing? It is the Lord that works in and for His people, and who shall let or hinder him from doing it His own way, and after the manner that He sees best? He is about to try His people every way, even as He did Israel of old, by famine, captivity, and sore distresses, because of the hardness of their hearts, and stiffness of their necks, in refusing to return to Him, who had done such great things for them and their fathers. This is the case, my friend, of people in this day, who are gone into captivity, and refuse to return at the command of the Lord; who has long waited, and loudly called, immediately and instrumentally, to them to return. And for this reason, a little remnant, who like David, prefer Jerusalem above the chiefest joy, have hung their harps as upon the willows, and dare not sing the songs of Zion, neither can they in a strange land, for such as desire it from them, who are of the number of those that spoil them, and yet require of them a song, or mirth. May all do as Daniel did, in their private chambers, set their faces towards Jerusalem, oftener than the morning; and not be afraid to suffer for the law of their God.

It has been my lot, since my return from England, to be much shut up as to word and doctrine, and to sit in

great emptiness and poverty of spirit, among a people big with expectation of words, and who have too much departed from the light and life of the pure Word in themselves. And of late, since this expectation has been disappointed, and their hopes frustrated, the Lord has often made use of me in his hand, as a sharp threshing instrument, and put such words in my mouth for them, as they could hardly bear; so that on all sides, the poor creature is greatly despised and rejected, by the high and lofty professors and pharisaical righteous, who can speak their own words, and work their own works; and indeed I am well content so to be, and expect no better treatment, than our blessed Lord and his disciples have met with in all ages: we are not greater than our Master, if they persecute him they will also persecute us. I only wish we may be found building on the same foundation, and then the gates of hell will not prevail against us.

—MARY PEISLEY

TO R. SHACKLETON²

Paddock, 28th of Eleventh month, 1752.

Dear Friend,

I have often a secret pleasure in spiritual converse with you and others of my friends, when my hands are employed about my lawful business; in this I believe I have the advantage of you, your occupation, though honourable, being such as while you are engaged in it, must, I suppose, employ your thoughts as well as hands: may your heart often be secretly inclined to withdraw yourself from it and all other engagements, to seek that which will stand by us, if we make choice of it, when all things here, as to us, will be at an end.

Though I saw you lately on a solemn, I will not say sorrowful, occasion, because I think the nearest friends of the deceased could hardly regret her being taken from pain and trouble to her everlasting rest, I had no opportunity of more than just speaking to you; yet I thought you looked like a child that had lost a mother, or a young soldier who had had his leading officer taken away, and he left to consider how he should make the next step to preferment. You writes of expecting to be nursed at Kilconner, I think it seems high time for you to be weaned, and come up to more manly stature than that of a sucking child. Remember, dear friend, that many of our elders are taken away, and some others by the course of nature cannot be expected to continue with us long, so that the affairs of the church are consequently likely to fall into the hands of a younger generation; the

2 The compiler of the *Memoirs and Letters of Richard and Elizabeth Shackleton* remarks;—‘About this time a little band, young in years, but increasing in the experience of those things which belong to peace, became closely united. Among these, Mary Peisley, Samuel Neale, Elizabeth Pike, Richard Shackleton and his wife, and Elizabeth Carleton, often met, and were a strength and encouragement to each other. Their union is expressed thus, in a letter from Richard Shackleton to Samuel Neale; My cry was today, dear friend! For us who are young, who are known by one another to have good desires begotten in us for the blessed cause, that we might be preserved, and plentifully filled with Divine wisdom, of which I saw a great necessity,—that the Lord would take us, being children, and teach us himself; and that we might be drawn into near unity with one another.’ ‘Samuel Neale, who had been forgiven much, loved much; and having been obedient to the heavenly vision, became a vessel of honour, replenished with good, and pouring it forth for the refreshment of others. He was one, who, remembering the trials which attend youth, compassionated them; and in advanced life, his winning affability towards young persons, his fatherly love and care, his heart and house open to receive them, made a deep impression on their minds, from which many received lasting advantage.’

consideration of which often deeply bows my spirit in humility and fear, and causes frequently that cry to be in my soul, when my Master is putting me forth in his work and service, that was uttered by the young prince Solomon, from a sense of the weight of his calling and his incapacity to perform it without Divine assistance—he cries out “Lord give me wisdom,” or to this import: may this be the language of our spirits while of the church militant on earth. There seems to be a renewed visitation of Divine love in this quarter, extended even to the outcasts of Israel and dispersed of Judah; it looks to me at times as if the Shepherd of Israel would leave no labour of love untried, for the bringing home of the lost sheep. I wish it may not add to their condemnation in the great day of account, for having slighted such unmerited favours. I am, through the mercy of a kind Providence, much better in health, I hope both of mind and body. I judge of it by the symptoms I feel, namely, a keen hunger and thirst, and when food is administered, a good relish for it; it being received with pleasure and thankfulness lies not undigested, but leaves an activity and willingness to labour for more, from a sense that the manna gathered yesterday will not serve today. Yes, I feel a willingness in my soul either to do or suffer for His great name sake, who has both done and suffered much for me. I write not this boastingly; no, it must forever be excluded, with all glorying save in the cross of Christ, and in my infirmities, which are only mine; I write it to the praise and honour of Him who has called me from darkness to light, and is the repairer of breaches, and the restorer of paths to dwell in.

I remain your real well-wishing friend,

—MARY PEISLEY

**TO A PERSON UNDER RELIGIOUS IMPRESSIONS, WHOM SHE WAS MADE
INSTRUMENTAL TO HELP.**

Does it not behove me to study your preservation, as I am unavoidably led in the wisdom of truth to do? It was for this end that I was chosen of the Lord at this time for your friend. I see it clearly, and feel it perfectly; you are to tread the same dangerous steps that I had to stumble over, with this advantage, that she who has gone the road before you, is made willing to lend you her hand, and to point the snares and traps that lie in the way. And now it is in my heart to give you a short account of my own experience, in the work of religion. When my soul was first thereby awakened to a life of righteousness, I saw such beauty and excellency in the Truth, that I thought no temptation would ever prevail upon me to turn aside in the least degree from what I knew to be my duty and interest in the Truth; and all my passions seemed so subjected and engrossed in admiration and contemplation of the one great and good object, and. His wonderful works in me and the whole creation, that I seemed to have no life in or relish for any other employ. Nor could I hear with pleasure any converse that did not savour more or less of the Spirit of Truth; and even such as did, I delighted more in the feeling sense of it in my own heart, than the hearing of it from any mortal: and to hear any speak of it, that were not in the life and power of it, was the greatest pain to my spirit that it could be tried with.

All the wisdom of men seemed foolishness to me without this, and it is really so in the sight of God and all

good men. Alas! this state lasted not long, till my trials came on quickly, and all my fortitude was proved; nor will I, nor dare I, ascribe my preservation to my own watchfulness, stability, prudence or wisdom: no, it must be forever attributed to the watchful eye of the Shepherd of Israel, who sleeps not by day nor slumbers by night. The enemy of my happiness strove to draw me from the true light, and to set me upon acting by imitation, rather than from the sense and judgment of the Truth in myself; and here self began to plead, what need is there for me to be more mortified, in this or that particular, than others of my fellow-labourers, who are greater ministers, and have seen farther into the liberty which Truth allows of, they being persons of far greater abilities than I, and some other weak persons who make scruples of small matters? and what is there in this, that or the other trifle of dress or behaviour? Thus did the enemy work as in a mystery, to deceive my poor proud heart, that liked well this doctrine of his, and would have reasoned the secret, gentle dictates of Truth out of my mind; not considering that the enemy was leading me to imitate the weaknesses of my fellow-mortals, and to overlook their virtues.

Thus did he strive in another shape and form to open that eye in me, which had been shut to all the glory of the world, in every kind and degree of it. All this, and much more did the implacable enemy of my peace whisper in the ear of my soul, and caused his agents to speak to my outward ear; yes, even some of the Lord's servants, who were taken by the affectionate part, would have persuaded me from the cross, as Peter would have done his Lord, when he said, "far be those things from you;" but what was His reply,—"Get behind me, Satan, you savour not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." Nor is there any mortal, that rightly and truly savours the things of God any longer than they are under the immediate influence of His own Divine grace, and that in a greater or smaller degree as they partake of it; let us therefore cast this part in all the disciples behind our backs, and look to Him with a single eye, who was never overcome in battle. He it was, who let me see that no mortal could be a perfect pattern to me, in all things; and that He would lead me in a manner different from most others, both as to my gift and conduct. And though the manner in which Truth led me was often misconstrued, and wrongfully censured, as the object of pride, singularity, temper, etc., my God knew it was in obedience to Him, and in refined love and charity to my fellow-mortals, which would not nor dare not, draw the hearts of the people from their true King, as Absalom did, who perished for the same. And those innocent practices in converse and behaviour, which I saw used by others of my sex and condition, whom I preferred before myself, were to me forbidden, though they might be to them lawful, and for what I know allowable: especially towards the other sex, I found it my duty to act with the utmost caution; if I found no danger on my side, yet I saw it needful to consult the good of those with whom I conversed.

And had I not been obedient in this particular, I am sure I should not have been preserved till this time, to have been your friend in the Truth, as I am this day; my own affections and the affections of others, would long since have stolen me out of his hands, who has an absolute right to dispose of my body and spirit, "which are His." Such was the prevalence of the general love and esteem, that I met with for a time, which naturally drew my mind, and the prevalence of the love of God, which powerfully attracted my soul towards Himself from all fading objects, that between these two powers, my mind was, at times, in that position that Absalom's body was, when he hung in a dying condition in the boughs of a tree, as between heaven and earth, scarcely knowing

which power would have me: but as there was a faithful obedience to the voice of the true Shepherd, I found the power of Saul grow weaker, and that of David stronger.

—MARY PEISLEY

TO RICHARD SHACKLETON

Borris, 13th of Third month, 1753.

Though I am poor, low, distressed and afflicted, having more need to be ministered unto than to minister to any, yet as you have repeatedly desired to hear from me by word or writing, I now feel a secret draught to let you know a little how it fares with me; though the source or cause of my sorrow must forever be concealed from all mortals, and pent within the narrow confines of this troubled breast: save when admitted to pour out its complaints in the bosom of my never-failing Friend and blessed Redeemer, all other counsellors are denied me,—may He condescend to direct my steps in righteousness, and then all will be well. Let it suffice to say, that I have just been in silent and solid retirement, considering my awful calling, and comparing my life to that of the Captain of my salvation, who was made perfect through suffering; and shall I dare to say my life bears some faint resemblance to His? yes, surely, as well indeed it may, who am called to be his minister. He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief: so am I, a woman of a sorrowful spirit, that have moved my lips in prayer, when my tongue could not set forth the anguish of my soul, pouring it forth in broken accents, sighs and groans,—not for riches, honour, name or fame, nor yet a mortal earthly love, or for a first-born son after the flesh; but for divine wisdom, heavenly instruction, and ability to bring forth fruits of righteousness to the praise and honour of Him who has called me to glory and virtue. Was my Lord despised and rejected of men? So am I;—Hannah like, I have been misunderstood, even by the high priest; but not by the great One of our profession, who knows and regards His own, gently whispering in the ear of their souls, “Fear not worm Jacob, I am with you,” etc. My Lord was betrayed: so have I been by a professed disciple. He was left alone in extreme agonies,—none to aid Him, or to make his complaint to, but the Father alone. So have I. Let me not longer dwell on this copious subject, than I find the strength of His love to comfort my mind, and then I might forever dwell on it, and find new wonders in it. O! the length, the breadth and the unfathomable depth of it!

I observe your complaint of poverty, which was no incitement in me to do the same, had it not been my state, and I thought it might not be discouraging to you, to know that you share the same lot with your brethren and sisters. Do you seek great things for yourself? seek them not; for the Lord has said, that He would bring evil upon all flesh; but if we have that promise which was given to Baruch, “your life shall be given you for a prey wheresoever you go,” may this be our happy experience to save our spiritual lives; this seems to be the ultimate of my wish, expectation or desire, in this calamitous day and time we live in as to religion. The priests, the Lord’s ministers mourn, the virgin daughters of Zion are in bitterness, saying with Baruch, “the Lord has added grief to my sorrow.” Well, let me not dwell longer on this theme, but hope for beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness; how does this holy anchor keep my

troubled soul from foundering on the quicksands of despair.

Tomorrow, if Providence permit, I am to go to Mountmellick, where I believe my concern for America will be made public. Oh! how complicated are my exercises;—but do not think from what I write that I go murmuring and whining after my Captain. Oh! says my soul, may I always count it an honour to be found worthy of His commissions; yet, Oh! this self does not like the repeated strokes of the hammer, which the vessels of beaten gold in the Lord's house must undergo! Where will my pen carry me? shall I a worm presume to think myself one of these? yes, surely, I have passed seven times through the furnace of affliction. I wish there may at last anything remain that is of the pure solid weighty gold! But let me say before I conclude, that there is a secret faith lies hidden in my heart, that when this bloody baptism is over, my God will cause me to go on my way rejoicing, I know I must, as my Master did, descend before I ascend. Do not forget me when you are in your best clothing;—my dear love is to yourself, wife and mother; in which I remain your assured friend,

—MARY PEISLEY

The religious concern just mentioned, which had at times, for years rested on her mind, to pay a religious visit to the churches in America, continued to impress her with additional weight; the baptisms she passed through, to fit her for this work, she thus further describes:—

“The Lord was pleased to bring me exceedingly low, both in mind and body, the latter so much so, that my life was despaired of by myself and others; and such was my exercise of mind and pain of body, that life seemed a burden, yes, I was ready often to wish my body dissolved, that I might be with Christ. Yet when death looked me in the face, unaccompanied by that which alone can render it supportable to human nature, namely, an incontestable evidence of eternal rest to my immortal spirit, it appeared to me a gloomy prospect, and the cause of its being so I believe was, that my time was not yet come. For I knew not that I had willfully offended the Divine Being, that should cause him to withdraw His life-giving presence, and allow my mind to be clothed with a thick cloud of darkness. During this time of trial and deep exercise of body and mind, the Lord my God was pleased to extend His mighty Arm of power, and reduce my spirit to a calm, so as to make His holy voice intelligible to my weary distressed soul, and to inform me that He would raise me from that low and dark state, and cause me, in his love, to visit the churches in America the next year. And although this seemed to clash with my temporal interest, as well as natural inclination, there was at the same time when I heard the call, an entire resignation wrought in my mind, so that I could say indeed and in truth, “Your will be done in all things,” which was to me a confirmation that the thing was of the Lord, verifying that saying of David, when addressing the Almighty, “In the day of your power, your people shall be willing;” and such was the prevalence of it, that it removed those things which had been like mountains in my way, and caused them to be cast into the sea of annihilation. This journey had been before me, by distant views, from a short time after my receiving a gift in the ministry. There were many difficulties seemingly insurmountable in my way, which the Lord in his own time was pleased to remove; so that I may say of a truth, I was brought through the furnace of affliction to

perform this journey.”

She corresponded with her friend Catherine Payton, who felt a like concern to visit the churches in America, and great was the sympathy they had with each other. Mary Peisley left home the 22nd of the third month, 1753, attended the quarterly meeting at Edenderry, and went from there to Dublin, where she met with considerable trials by opposing spirits, of which she says she had a previous sight, and thus writes:

“I felt the power of darkness at work, so as grievously to oppress my spirit; but by degrees it was cast down, and the pure light prevailed. The design of the enemy was, to prevent my intended journey by raising contention; which, blessed be the name of God, he was not able to do. I left Dublin in the fifth month, in love and unity with my friends, and good desires for my enemies, if any such I had; and landing at Liverpool, got safe to London. After attending the yearly meeting at London, I went to the yearly meetings of Colchester, Bury, Woodbridge and Norwich; all which were attended with a good degree of the life and power of Truth, and an honest labour for the good of the people.”

TO JAMES PIM

London, 24th of Seventh month, 1753.

Dear Cousin,

Yours of the 22nd ult., I received at Norwich, which was satisfactory to me, and the contents observed; being what is necessary for me and all that would be Christians in reality to be found in the observance of; and especially in these perilous days, wherein so many bad examples abound, and many strange voices are to be heard to allure from the voice of the true Shepherd; who says in the secret of the soul,—“This is the way walk in it;”—a way of mortification and self-denial, a way to which corrupt nature is above all others most averse, and seeks to shun. I need not dwell on this subject, you know it better than I can inform you, I shall therefore proceed to give you some little account of how it fares with me. As to my health I am through Divine favour much better than heretofore, and as to my mind I do not remember ever being more empty, stripped and destitute than of late; yet at times witness a little strength to perform the duties which I believe are required of me, and am forced to walk by faith more than by sight, having at times scarcely light enough to see where to set a foot in the spiritual journey, and then if faith fails, I am obliged to stand still. Yet in all these low times and trying seasons, I have not hitherto been permitted once to doubt of my being in my place in coming here, or in the little turn I have taken in this nation; though it did not appear to me till a short time before I went, and the impulse for it very gentle.

I found it difficult to get clear of that great city, Norwich, or rather the inhabitants of it, both Friends and others. I was obliged to make a visit to a large congregation of the people called Methodists at their place of worship,

who behaved with great moderation, and some of them discovered a Christian love and tenderness; their speaker left the assembly to us, sat quietly by us all the time, and bid us act according to our freedom, which led us to silence for near an hour, a thing I believe very uncommon to them, and indeed it was remarkable the stillness which they were brought to, more so than many meetings of Friends that I have been in: and in some conversation with their preacher, so called, he assented to the truth of the necessity of silence in their places of worship.

Eighth month 2nd.—Here I dropped my pen, in order as I thought to give you some account of our embarkation, but am still at a loss about it; my companion has been very poorly in health most part of the time since I left her, and is in no way fit to go to sea, being very weak. And was not this the case, I cannot find my spirit clear of the inhabitants of this city, nor my way open to leave it. I have been a good deal tossed about my stay, considering the season of the year is passing over; but I am now through Divine favour resigned to stay the Lord's time, which I have a secret hope he will show us. I had for a time lost sight of Charleston, but I think I have again had a review of it, to which port there is likely to be a passage at any season of the year. Dear cousin, I wish I may be found worthy a place in your remembrance, when admitted to intercede for yourself and the flock and family of our God. I am sure you are often near to my mind in the uniting love of our heavenly Father, in which I conclude your affectionate cousin,

—MARY PEISLEY.

TO ELIZABETH CARLETON, DUBLIN.

London, 28th of Seventh month, 1753.

Dear Betty,

Having this morning a little leisure from the necessary cares for my journey, retired alone to meet the beloved of my soul and to converse with Him, in whom my spirit delights; who was pleased to appear in his ancient goodness, as a morning without clouds with a fresh shower of celestial rain to my thirsty soul. At this season you and many more of my near and dear friends in my native land were sweetly brought to my remembrance, in the soft sympathy and union of spirit, which neither length of time nor distance of place can wear out, nor any evil power, men or devils dissolve, as there is a keeping to Him who is the Author of it; though there may be for a time an interruption, which is indeed painful to the right-minded, and rejoicing to our enemy, who seeks daily to effect this work, because he knows our strength lies in unity. I have no answer to my last, save what I saw in a letter to my companion, but I would not have you attempt to write to me, or any other, without a proper opening so to do, I mean on religious subjects; for I think I have seen more clearly of late than ever, the danger and hurt of it, and have been made to look upon the practice as next a-kin to a false ministry, if not worse; because it remains for review, and may with the better connection be packed together as to form of sound words, yet without sense or feeling of what we write, and therefore can convey none to those who read it: though it may sound and tinkle to the outward ear, it is a waster of strength and a diminisher of life; one of the

ways of stealing the word, which the Lord our God is against, and will plead with His people for. This my dear friend has made me keep silence to those who are near and dear to my life, and with whom I truly sympathize in the fellowship of the gospel, and travail as in birth, with pangs of spirit unutterable, that Christ may be perfectly formed in them, and they found complete in Him, lacking nothing of what he would have them to be; which experience I have found it hard to attain to, yet think I may say with David, in reverence of spirit before Him, who works all my works in me and for me, and who shall forever have the praise,—“my heart is not haughty nor my eyes lofty; I have not exercised myself in things too high for me; I am as a weaned child.” Weaned indeed I am, and strive to be, from all that is near to my nature or desirable to the creaturely part, shutting out of my thoughts those that are most pleasing to them, save when I can remember them for good, that is, when they are brought to my remembrance by the pure Spirit which is without mixture and thinks no evil. And as to the use of my natural faculties, I think I never knew them in greater subjection than at this season; it seems as though I was not to have the use of them, even in civil affairs, but by Divine permission, and in such a degree as He pleases who gave them.

And as to my public appearance, I never knew it to be in so simple a manner in my own view, finding it my duty at times to rise and speak without a word in my mouth but as it is immediately given; so that there is no room for me to be exalted with gifts, nor do I desire it, if so be I can but witness a degree of the power which first put me forth, and caused me to stand trembling before the people; which, blessed be the name of my God I am at times a witness of, though in this appearance can only be acceptable to them who abide in the same: to the worldly wise I am but a fool and my preaching foolishness, with which I am content, and only wish to be enabled to bear the cross, it being the way to the crown. If you have freedom shall be glad to hear from you before we leave England, with as full an account of Friends and affairs of Truth as time and ability will permit.

Yours as usual,

—MARY PEISLEY.

Chapter IV

“Before my leaving Ireland, I had a sight of Charleston, South Carolina, being the port for me to land at, this continued until I returned to London, when I lost sight of it, which made me willingly conclude I might go with some Friends I was nearly united to, for Philadelphia; and accordingly I went on board some vessels bound for that port, but could not see my way in any of them. On more deeply centring to the Root of life, in humble resignation to the Divine will, I found it my duty to continue some weeks at London; the not being clear of that city was, I believe, the cause of my not seeing my way clear to Charleston, I therefore concluded to stay the Lord’s time, and when I found my spirit clear, took my passage

with my dear companion Catherine Payton, for that port. Before my leaving London, I had a large and comfortable farewell meeting at the Peel; for which my soul, with many more, had renewed cause to bless and praise the name of the Lord. Several Friends accompanied us from London to Portsmouth, where we took shipping and landed at Charleston. We had a favourable passage, save hard weather towards the latter part of the voyage; but by the infinite mercy of Almighty God, we were preserved from any terror or amazement, and our health continued beyond expectation, save the sickness occasioned by the sea and heat. We had meetings on board every first-day, when ability of body and the weather would permit; which the passengers and ship's crew attended, to whom the way of life and salvation was declared; but many of their hearts being hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, the word had not that entrance, which could have been desired."

TO HER SISTER RACHEL PEISLEY

On board the Alexandria, 1753.

Dear Sister,

As you have been of late frequently brought to my remembrance, with the rest of my family, I take this opportunity to salute you by a few lines, heartily wishing your welfare every way; may this find you in true peace of mind, health of body, and in the pursuit of the knowledge and favour of your great and good Creator.

I heard by letters from father, of your being but poorly in your health for some time after I left you, and again of your being recovered or better; which I was glad of, with this proviso, that you might improve your time to the glory of Him who gave you a being, and lengthened your days for that purpose, if you are spared yet a little longer:—I say a little longer, for it is but a short season till we must all be numbered to the silent grave. May we therefore, while time is afforded, learn that point of great wisdom, which the Lord our God willed to find in his people in former ages, when He speaks after this moving manner by the mouth of His servant,—“O! that my people were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end.” For what purpose were they to consider it, but that they might be fitted for it by a life of purity and piety? Remember, dear sister, that it is the pure in heart who shall see God to their comfort.

I have often thought of late, that the Almighty by the dispensations of His Providence towards you has designed to awaken your heart to a more lively sense of your duty towards Him. I believe the late trial you have had in the loss of a dear brother, touched you as to the quick, and caused you to consider the emptiness of all things here, and the great advantage there is in having peace of conscience on a dying-bed. Do not think me hard-hearted, dear child, in reviving in your memory this solemn afflicting scene, which perhaps self-love may suggest to you you had better forget; but allow me to say, this is not answering the design of Providence; not that I would have you mourn as one without hope, or afflict yourself needlessly, without a resigned will to Him who has an absolute undoubted right to dispose of all His creatures according to His good pleasure. But I well know, while I thus write, that this happy resigned state of mind is a gift of the Lord's own preparing, and not

in our power to command; yet it is our duty to wait and pray for it, with every other virtue or grace we stand in need of; but especially such, as the lack of, most oppresses us. This should be the constant prayer of our hearts, till we have obtained it; and this solicitude of spirit our Lord encourages us unto, by several parables and instances of His condescension in hearing and relieving such as continued to follow and beseech Him in true faith. In one parable He said to His followers, “Which of you, if a son ask bread will he give him a stone, or if he ask a fish will give him a serpent? If you,” said He, “being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him.” But this asking must be with frequency and fervency of spirit, from a sense of our need of it; otherwise our prayers will be cold, languid, insipid and unacceptable to the Almighty. I have considered your natural disposition, and what weaknesses, if not sins most easily beset you. I know you have something cheerful in your temper, with an aptitude to converse, both which are good if properly subjected by Truth; but remember, dear sister, for every idle word we speak, we must give an account in the day of judgment; and that vain talking and foolish jesting grieve that Holy Spirit, by which we should be sealed to the day of redemption. Let not the example of others draw you from your allegiance to your Creator, and a strict attendance to, and meditating in. His law written in your heart, as well as the sacred Scriptures of truth.

I conclude this with the salutes of true love to yourself and the family, where I expect this will find you.

From your affectionate sister,

—MARY PEISLEY

TO HER SISTER ELIZABETH PEISLEY

On board the Alexandria, 1753.

Dear Sister E. P.

As I have a little leisure at sea from other duties, I find my mind engaged to communicate a little of that love which I feel to flow in my heart towards you, from the true root of it, as well as from natural affection, both which are united in a stronger manner than I shall attempt to set forth by my pen. May Infinite Wisdom and Goodness condescend, in the riches of His mercy, to continue and strengthen the bands of that love, by drawing and keeping us in a strict close union with Him, who is the Author and Fountain of love, light, and life; and as we abide in Him, we shall have fellowship one with another, and in that fellowship remember and pray for each other, as well as sympathize one with another in our trials and afflictions, whether of body or mind. This, dear sister, I know you have been made capable of, by the pure life of Truth being raised in your soul; may it be tenderly cherished in you and me, by strictly watching against everything that has a tendency to grieve, deaden, or oppress this pure Seed of life; and carefully waiting for the dew of heaven or spiritual manna, by which it is nourished and refreshed, as well as that Divine instruction by which we can become wise unto salvation, please God, and bring glory to Him, which is the glorious end of our creation. And in order that it may be so, I advise in much love, that you allow not your mind to be too eagerly or intently fixed on earthly things, though

it may be the duties of your place and station, which I would have you by no means neglect, nor do I believe your careful diligent disposition would admit of it; but what I wish for you is, that you may do it as to the Lord with a single eye to His glory, and desire to please Him in every undertaking; and that must be, by setting Him always before you, as David expressed it, that he might not sin against Him. When your hands are employed in the lawful affairs of this life, often lift up your heart to the Lord, by secret exclamations and fervent desires for His preservation; yes, my sister, let Him have your whole heart: by this means you will cheat the world, if I may use the expression, and frustrate the designs of the enemy, saying with the Church of old, “though I sleep my heart wakes;” that is, though I appear not to men to pray, but am engaged in my lawful business, yet my heart is awake to the Lord and converses with Him in heaven by prayer, meditation, and fervent exclamations; and whatsoever you do, do it not merely to please men, further than it is your duty so to do, but to please and honour your great Creator; otherwise you will have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.

I would not have you omit seriously to peruse the Holy Scriptures of truth, with care and attention; that so you may remember, understand, and digest them, seeing they are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith in Christ; that is, that you may have the holy precepts contained therein so riveted in your mind and memory, that they may be cast upon your thoughts at every needful time of temptation; in which the Holy Spirit will not fail to aid you, as you are thus willing to become a co-worker with it.

It gave me much satisfaction to hear you gave satisfaction to the family, and that you were pleased with their conduct towards you, which led me to hope you may make some leisure time to put in practice the above advice, otherwise it cannot properly be called a good place, that is, further than it has a tendency to advance you in piety and virtue: the time will come when it will be seen to be so, if not now.

My heart has been enlarged in counsel to you beyond my expectation; which makes me ready to draw this pleasing conclusion, from the openness and freedom which attend my mind while I write, that your mind will be prepared to receive it in the same love and good-will in which it is communicated, which I wish may ever attend both you and me. Need I ask any excuse from my beloved sister for writing to her so freely, just what occurred to my mind for her? surely no,—her Christian spirit, humility and good nature, will plead my excuse; not doubting but that the grace of God will do even more than I can write. May He who is able to keep you from falling, preserve you steadfast to the end, and give you an inheritance with them that are sanctified: so wishes, so prays your affectionate sister,

—MARY PEISLEY

“In Charleston the discipline was quite let fall, and I found it my duty to endeavour to revive it. Herein I met with open opposition and evil treatment, especially from one of my own countrymen, who was of a libertine spirit, and had been under the censure of Friends in his native land. But the Lord was pleased to manifest his spirit, so that he could not frustrate our endeavours. In this province we met with many difficulties both of body and mind; the former by long journeys, in a very thinly inhabited country,

through unbeaten paths in the woods, dangerous creeks and swamps; with wild and venomous creatures around us, and with such food and lodging as we had never been accustomed to: yet the Lord our God was pleased to make it up to us by His comfortable presence and good Spirit, and to afford us the blessing of health, at a time when the greatest part of the inhabitants suffered severely with fevers and agues; for which unmerited mercy my soul at this time bows in humble thanksgiving, and returns Him the praise of His works, who is everlastingly worthy.”

The following is part of a letter written to her uncle:

TO SAMUEL JUDD

Mulberry-on-the-Wateree, 7th of Twelfth month, 1753.

Dear Uncle,

It has dwelt on my heart for some days, to give you a short history of a long travel; and first, may acquaint you that through the matchless mercy of a never-failing God to His poor depending children, we have been preserved in a good degree of health, at a time when most faces gathered paleness, through indisposition of body. I do not remember that we have been in a house or family since we left Charleston, but one or more were ill of a fever or ague, so that it seems like a universal contagion which has overspread the inhabitants of this quarter. We came here from Charleston, taking no meetings in the way, except in the families where we lodged, the distance being 150 miles, through woods and swamps, where our lives seemed in jeopardy every hour; yet through mercy our minds were so supported above fear, as to go on with a good degree of cheerfulness of spirit, trusting in that holy Arm of power, which has hitherto wrought deliverance for us. I have sat down by a brook in the woods, ate my Indian corn bread, and drank water out of a calabash, with more content and peace of mind than many who were served in plate, etc.; and at night have slept contentedly in my riding clothes, on a bed hard enough to make my bones ache, and the house so open on every side as to admit plenty of light and air. We have such variation from heat to cold in the weather, as must of necessity be exceedingly hurtful to the constitutions of the inhabitants: for my part I cannot but esteem it next to a miracle that our health is continued to us. I have compared my passage through these woods to my pilgrimage through the world, and indeed in some things it bears a just resemblance. The path we rode through was exceedingly narrow, and sometimes so closed as not to allow a footstep to be seen before me, and caught by boughs on one hand, and bushes on the other, obliged to stoop very low, lest my head or eyes should be hurt. This I compare to the entangling things of the present world, which are ready to catch the affections on every side, and blind the eyes of the soul; my clothes are a little ragged by these pulls, but through care not quite torn off.

Oh! says my soul, may I not be wholly stripped of the white robe, which is the righteousness of saints; for surely I have never been in more danger than now; the sense of which leads me earnestly to desire, that I may have a place in the remembrance of those, whose prayers ascend with acceptance to the throne of grace. I have not given the foregoing account of my bodily hardships, by way of complaint or murmuring; no, when I

consider how much more very many, much better than I, have suffered for the cause of religion, and especially the good Shepherd, who laid down His life for His sheep,—every cause of complaint is removed; remembering that the disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord. Yes, it is cause of rejoicing to my soul, when I can find my feet in the footsteps of the tribulated flocks, who trod this narrow and tried path to eternal blessedness. In this way of life I am exempt from many dangerous temptations, which ease and supineness are inlets to. On my hard bed, I am free from the fault of wasting too much of my time in a state of inactivity and death. At my plain meals, I am freed from many of the temptations and evils, which attend high and voluptuous living; and am often made to remember that excellent advice of a great apostle to his son in the faith, “endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.” And surely such as are sent out to war before the face of their enemies, may expect it in an especial manner. But what above all other considerations, reconciles me to every dispensation of Providence, is, the sight and sense which Truth gives me of my own unworthiness of the least of all the mercies I receive, either spiritual or temporal; for indeed I see myself to be so exceedingly weak, and capable of so little service, as not to merit the meanest food that is set before me, yet have never been allowed to doubt, but that I am in my place, in coming here:—but my great fear is, lest I should not keep my place in the Truth, now I am here; seeing so many things to draw me from it. I hope if you or any of my friends have any word of exhortation or encouragement for me, you will not withhold, but let me have it freely.

I think it very long to hear from my friends and family, having been of late a little tossed, especially in the night by dreams about my father’s family and some others; whether it be the work of the enemy to perplex my mind, or a foresight of the worst of trials, (except the loss of the favour of heaven) I cannot tell: but when I am assisted to look beyond this transitory scene of uncertainty, I can welcome tribulations, and rejoice in such adversities, as have the least tendency to draw my mind nearer unto God; which I well know must be by being weaned and redeemed from earth and earthly satisfactions. Alas! while I carry about with me this frail tabernacle, its affections and desires will bend towards its original dust, when from under the immediate influence of that holy Power, which alone can redeem it from the thralldom of sin and Satan. What need then have I, and all who have been made partakers of the powers of the world to come, humbly, diligently, and chastely to wait for the enlightening and enlivening incomes thereof to our souls, that so we may go on to perfection!

I have hitherto passed over our exercises in Charleston. It seems like a city of refuge for the disjointed members of our Society, where they may walk in the sight of their own eyes, and the imagination of their own hearts, without being accountable to any for their conduct, and yet be called by the name of Quaker, to take away their reproach. We did not meet with one in that place that kept to the plain language, except one young man. We lodged at the house of one that had married out of the Society, which we went to with fear and reluctance, having first tried all means to avoid it. Here we were greatly straitened; but I think we were providentially cast there for his wife’s sake, who is under convincement, a tender-hearted, good-natured woman, and exceedingly kind to us; and he well esteemed for a fair reputable trader. He received us with much civility and hospitality, which yet did not blind our eyes, or prevent our telling him the truth; I have gone so far as to acquaint him, that I was ashamed to walk the streets with one under our name, who deviated so much from our principles as he did; which he always took well, and would acknowledge his faults.

We were often visited by those of other societies, and had much kindness showed us by them. We had freedom to make a few visits among them, and had service for our Master in some of their families. We likewise paid a religious visit to every family professing with us, in that place, and had very close work, but with the most authority of any service we have entered on; and by this and such like labour, I understand we have driven several from the meeting, who could not bear sound doctrine, though ever so private. Whether there be any sound members added, by our labour, must at present be left; however that be, I say. Amen, to these leaving the profession, whose lives and conduct are a scandal to it, and I wish to be made more and more instrumental, in the hand of my God, for division in the Society, between the precious and the vile; let me as a creature suffer what I may, by evil report and false brethren, which I have had, and still expect a large share of, in the way my Master leads me; for of a truth it was His Spirit, if ever I knew it, and not my own, that led me to this close work. One appeared in open opposition, at a meeting appointed for conference, in order to take steps for reviving the discipline among them; he attacked me in particular, but I had then little to say to him, and what I did say, was in great mildness; he arose in a violent passion and left the room; since which we have seen no more of him at meeting or elsewhere.

—MARY PEISLY

Her account thus continues:

“At Neuse, in North Carolina, we had a large and comfortable meeting, in which I thought it might be truly said the Lord’s power was over all; and that even devilish spirits were made subject to that power, by which we were assisted to speak. In this province likewise, we met with abundant hardships and sufferings of body, as we were drawn in the love of God, to visit many of the back inhabitants, where I suppose, no European had ever been on the like errand, by lodging in the woods in cold frosty weather, on damp ground with bad firing. I got a rheumatic pain in my jaws and head, by which I suffered much, and often lost my rest after hard travelling, yet through it all, the Lord was pleased to support my spirit in a good degree of cheerfulness, without murmuring or repining; though my weak constitution often deeply felt the effects of those bodily hardships: yet by the goodness and healing virtue of the Lord, I was often made to forget my bodily infirmities, and to see and feel that His strength was made perfect in weakness.

“Between Pedee and Newgarden, where is a large tract of country, we rode two days and a half, and lay two nights in the woods, without being under the roof of a house. In these parts I seemed to have a hope that Truth might yet spread; because many of the people showed a love and esteem for Friends, and a dislike to the priests. We were often kindly entertained, according to their ability, at the houses of those not of our Society, though sometimes at our first entrance they would look strangely at us, because they understood not the lawfulness of women’s preaching, having never heard any,—thus did we pass for a sign and wonder; some would say, when invited to meeting, that we were women who ran from our own country, for some ill act,—not being acquainted with the supernatural power of love, which had influenced our hearts, nor the rules and discipline of Friends. Through Divine favour I have not heard of

any of them who went away dissatisfied, from meeting; may the praise of all the Lord's works be rendered to Himself, who alone is worthy.

“In the upper part of this province (North Carolina) there is a large body of professors, and I hope some valuable Friends; but too many I fear,—yes, I think I sensibly felt,—are trusting in a profession, without a possession of the living virtue of Truth. We were at their quarterly meeting, which was large; but the power of Truth was somewhat low, at least in me, who suffered much under a loose unsanctified spirit. My companion had the chief service in the public meetings, and was led, I believe, to speak pretty much to the state of the Society; my chief labour was in the meeting of ministers and elders, in which we endeavoured to strive for some regulation in the discipline, particularly that they might have their meetings for business select, and not set open for the people, which they were then in the practice of. The weighty part of Friends joined us, and seemed to conclude they would strive for an amendment. I also proposed their holding a meeting for the elders to confer in, before the ministers joined them, in order to their hearing a more full and perfect account of the state of the ministry in each meeting, and to have them both held before the quarterly meeting. This was agreed to, and the meeting ended in a lively sense of Divine love, which makes true unity and concord among brethren, for which my soul was thankful. I laboured with considerable openness at several of the particular meetings, before the quarterly meeting; my companion being gone on a visit southward of these parts, as far as Bath-town.

“In this journey she had the trial of having a woman Friend, who accompanied her from Perquimons, removed by death; her remains were brought to her husband and children, in eleven days from the time she left home, being then well to all appearance. We attended at her funeral, which was on the whole solid and satisfactory, though somewhat interrupted by one, who as he thought, would preach the burial sermon. From there we passed to Virginia, and found things in the south-side exceedingly weak and low, the meetings very small, and in many places the discipline sadly let fall; Friends were very kind and hospitable, but from the poor seasons we had in spirit, their hospitality sometimes lost its true relish yet there is a seed in these parts, with whom my spirit had true unity. We spent near two months in this colony, in much inward suffering, and under some bodily hardships, their way of living differing from what we had been accustomed to. One thing which Friends here, as well as in North Carolina, Maryland, and some other parts of America, were in the practice of, gave us considerable pain, and we apprehended was in part the cause of Truth's not prospering among them, as otherwise it would, that is, buying and keeping of slaves; which we could not reconcile with the golden rule of doing unto all men as we would they should do unto us.

“At West River, Maryland, I was concerned to write an epistle to the yearly meeting to be held at Curies in Virginia, which had been on my mind for some time, my companion united therewith, and subscribed her name to said epistle, which was as follows:

To the living, solid remnant of Friends, at the Yearly Meeting, to be held at Curles, for the colony of Virginia, in the sixth month, 1754, and especially such as Constitute the Select Meeting.

Dear Friends,

In a good degree of that universal, unchangeable, enlarging love, which drew us from our native land, and near enjoyments, to make you a religious visit, do we at this time tenderly salute you, and hereby inform you, as we have done some of you heretofore verbally, that our hearts have been pained, on account of the state of the Church in your colony. And though we cannot accuse ourselves of withholding any thing from you, either in public or private, which was given us to deliver, we apprehend it our duty to stir up in your remembrance, some truths already known, and we hope, weightily felt by some of you.

First, we recommend to your solid consideration, when solemnly assembled, the exceedingly low state of the ministry and discipline in most, if not all, the monthly meetings in your colony. Sink down to the pure gift of God in yourselves:—ask of Him, with a sincere desire to be informed,—Lord, what is the cause that we flee before our enemies, and are taken captive by them? for thus we believe it is with some, whether they are sensible of it or not; and as this is the case, we hope and believe, the Lord will let some of you see, and feel, that the shortness has not been on His side, and that He has not forsaken His people, but they Him; and who will also give power to amend your ways and your doings. For we cannot—we dare not suppose, let our spirits be clothed with ever so much Christian charity, that all who have been called, and even initiated into the true Church, have stood faithful, and kept a single eye to the glory of God; no, no, if that had been the case, what a bright shining people would you have been before this day,—yes, as a city set upon a hill, whose light would have diffused itself to those who were without, and have caused many to flock to our Zion for rest and safety, as doves to the windows, and not as birds of prey to tear and devour, as is now too much the case. For we fear many come in among you with unsanctified spirits, to make a profession of the Truth, which is now easy, without a possession or sure inheritance in it; in which increase of number, some have seemed to glory, when in truth they have but increased ungodliness in the Church, by adding chaff instead of the solid, weighty wheat, which alone will be gathered into the Lord's garner; but the chaff of all kinds, will be burnt with unquenchable fire. Where then will these light, chaffy unsanctified professors appear, or what will they add to you, except it be an encumbrance and a clog to the small handful of solid Friends among you, who we believe are too much oppressed and borne down, yes, who He as hid and buried, under this light windy spirit.

Arise, we beseech you, in the name and power of your God, and exert yourselves, in His pure wisdom and strength, for His cause and Truth on earth. Victory is on the Lord's side, and will be yours, if you faithfully follow Him, in the way of His requirings; and not fearing the faces of men, but strictly regarding the still, small voice and gentle motions of the blessed Spirit of Truth. As this is the case, one shall chase a thousand of these light frothy spirits, and two put ten thousand to flight; though you may, yes, must, be little and low in your own eyes. And we earnestly desire, that such as have been called to, and in some measure qualified for, the work

of the Lord, and through a desire of some kind or other of filthy profit, of which there are many, are become formal, blind and unfaithful, may repent, and do their first works,—seeing from where they are fallen,—lest the Lord come to them quickly, and remove such candlestick out of its place; whose candles are already put out by the baneful breath of the spirit of this world, with which they have universally mingled, and in which they are held captive. Arise from this state, if possible, and shake yourselves from the dust of the earth, with which some of you are laden, as with thick clay. But if you are so benumbed, hardened and stupified, through the deceitfulness of sin, that this cannot be, yet cease at least to pervert the right way of the Lord, by meddling in things with which you have no business, that is, putting yourselves forth in the ministry or discipline, when Christ the true Shepherd, has not put forth therein. Remember what befell him, who stretched forth a hand to the ark, even when it tottered and seemed in danger of falling; the same event will happen to the spiritual lives of all those, who continue for a series of time, to mock and deceive themselves and the people with a sound of words without life or power, which however sound in themselves and well connected, are but as a dead letter, which kills instead of quickening the soul. Let this certain self-evident truth be weightily considered by you, namely, that nothing but life and light should move to act in the church of Christ; not pity for the people, nor inclination to gratify their longing desire after words, nor any other human passion or consideration, should move us thus to tempt the Lord, and take His holy name in vain, in the worst sense of the expressions; for those who do so. He has declared He will not hold guiltless.

And dear Friends, we apprehend that a great part of the weakness and unfruitfulness which appears in the ministry among you, proceeds from a lack of a right sound discipline, established and conducted in the wisdom of Truth; which discipline is certainly not only as a wall of defence against the encroachments of many dangerous enemies, but is as a hedge to shelter from the various baneful blasts, destructive to young and tender plants, which should be sheltered as well as watered, primed and dug about, by wise judicious elders or fathers and mothers in the church. But alas! how do the few who are on the right foundation, stand as alone, exposed to the darts of their enemies, and to piercing blasts from every side, unpruned, and in a great degree unadvised; can such be expected to bring forth plentiful crops, of full, ripe, well flavoured fruit? No, rather the savour of the wild grape is to be feared, because the trees are left in a great measure without cultivation.

Now as the hedge is thus sadly taken away, and the wall greatly broken down, we are sensible the reparation must be by gradual steps, yes, by laying a single stone at a time, and planting a tender twig. And those who are engaged in this necessary work, will find, as Nehemiah did before he went to repair the walls of Jerusalem, sadness of countenance, before they can entreat the Almighty for liberty to engage in the work. Nothing short of a heart truly touched with love and zeal for the good of the Church of Christ, can adopt this language, “Here am I, send me;”—or, “Qualify me and let me go.” May it be yours, O! you beloved tender plants of the Lord’s right hand planting; and when it is, stifle it not, but go on in the strength of the Lord, not saying, “Here am I, and I will go in the strength of my own spirit, will or wisdom.” No, we give our testimony for our Lord and Master, that these forward unsavoury spirits, will never profit the people, nor bring glory to God. But you who are of the former rank, though you may meet with many discouragements, as Nehemiah did, yet if you trust in the Lord with all your hearts, and singly eye His light in yourselves, not conferring with flesh and blood, nor seeking your

own honour, but the honour of Him who sent you into life; it is our testimony to you, for your encouragement, that the Lord will bless His work in your hands, and richly reward you for it, though you may have a long and painful travail, and sometimes as in the night season, before you come at the right place for building; and when you come there, you will find much rubbish to be removed. This we apprehend must be the first work, before one stone can be properly laid on the right foundation, i. e. to have all unsanctified spirits, both of your own and other societies, excluded the privilege of sitting in your meetings for business; otherwise we believe it will be building with the rubbish, which will never stand to the honour of God and the good of his people.

Our minds are so sensibly affected with the pernicious tendency of that evil custom, of allowing your meetings for the discipline of the Church to be thus mixed, that, believing it to be the mind of Truth, we cannot help advising that you use your Christian endeavours for an alteration, by making a minute against this disorderly practice, and strongly recommending the putting of it in force in the several monthly meetings throughout the colony; for which you have authority from the universal practice of Friends where the discipline is rightly conducted, as well as from the original institution of such meetings.

And now having in a good degree eased our spirits of what seemed to rest upon them on your account, we conclude in that love which seeks the preservation and good of the heritage of God, and exhort you to be sober, be vigilant, and of one mind; and desiring that the God of peace may be with you in this your annual assembly, we remain your friends in the Truth.

—MARY PEISLEY & CATHERINE PAYTON

West River, in Maryland, the 4th of the Fifth month, 1754

“At this meeting of Friends at West River, we were falsely accused of speaking from outward information,—when in truth it was from the opening of the word of life,—this we were frequently suspected of, and charged with, by unbelievers, who knew not the intelligence of the Spirit, though they made professions of it.

“We passed through the western side of Maryland, called Sassafras bay, and took meetings in our way; but after entering Pennsylvania, we had no openness to appoint meetings in that province, the Jerseys, or Long Island, except one; but we passed on in a pretty direct line, falling in with some meetings as they came in course, till we got to Rhode Island, the day before the yearly meeting: this was held at Newport. It was large, and was attended with a good degree of Divine power, peace, and concord. At this meeting we found our minds engaged to labour for some regulations in the discipline, which was sadly out of order; in particular, that unwise practice of having meetings for discipline mixed with the world’s people, and such as were proper subjects to have it exercised upon, which seemed to be the first step necessary to be taken. We prevailed so far as to have a minute made against it, and sent to the several quarterly and monthly meetings, as the result of the yearly meeting; this gave us an opportunity as we fell in with them, to strengthen Friends in having their meetings select.

“It was remarkable that we fell in with so many of them in the course of our labour and service, I write this for my own instruction and that of others, as an incitement to follow the leading of Truth and the way it points out to us, though the cause may not immediately appear, and indeed on all accounts I have seen it best so to do.

“One mark of providential care, which occurred in this journey, is I think worthy of remembrance; when at New York, some Friends of that city and others, seemed inclined that we should go by water to Newport, in a sloop that was to sail next day; accordingly we went to view the vessel, and found her very small and inconvenient, having no cabin that we could well sit, stand, or lie in. They seemed to think we might make our passage in twenty-four, or at most, forty-eight hours. We sat down quietly in her, to feel if there was freedom in the Truth for us to go, a practice I like to be adopted on such occasions; when it appeared to me, that if we sailed in her, we should meet with greater difficulties than if we went by land to South-hold, and from there to Newport by water. I told Friends that I had more freedom to go by land, and they readily agreed to it: we went as proposed, and had some meetings to good satisfaction, among the Presbyterians at and near South-hold, and fell in with a small meeting of Friends in the way, having also some seasoning opportunities among ourselves, wherein the Divine presence was manifested to our mutual comfort. We waited some days at South-hold for a fair wind, went on board a vessel, and landed the same evening; the sloop which it was intended we should go in, arrived only the same day, having been eight days on her passage from New York.

“At Philadelphia, the 23rd of the Fifth month, I received the sorrowful tidings of the death of my dear and tender father, who departed this life in much peace and quietude of spirit, on the 23rd of the Second month last, according to the account I received from those who were present; he having been favoured with his understanding and a sense of his change. This was of a truth sore and hard to bear, and I have great cause to bless and praise His great name, who supported me under this trial beyond my expectation or desert, as well as prepared my mind for it, by a foresight of it, both sleeping and waking. For I saw, in a dream, my father in the agonies of death; and in the time of his illness, day after day, I felt such a sympathy of soul as is not easily expressed; and after that, I was sensible of a stop in my mind from thinking of or writing to him, which convinced me that he was gone: thus I fully expected this account.

“We attended a Quarterly meeting at Hampton in New England, where we had to testify against an unruly separate spirit, though we had not seen or heard of it outwardly, as I declared to them; there was nothing to convince us of it but the Spirit of Truth; this they would not believe, though they were high pretenders to revelation. They abundantly convinced us, before the Quarterly meeting was over, of our being right, for such was their outrage that they used the utmost of their power to prevent us from speaking in the meeting, to ease our minds, by noises both within and without the house; but Truth gave us the victory, and set our spirits over them.

Chapter V

“After we had spent some time in this quarter, and visited Friends generally, eastward of Boston as far as North Yarmouth, on my return I found my mind secretly drawn towards a separate people, at Hampton in New England; but as it was a service likely to be attended with more than common difficulties, I waited to have a more clear sign and stronger evidence of my duty,—which the Lord was pleased to give me in His own time,—He knew the sincerity of my heart, and that I had no will to disobey Him. We passed the place fourteen miles, before I received such a satisfactory evidence as I had wished for; in which I believe there was wisdom, as some Friends might perhaps have judged me as being too forward on entering on a service of such weight and difficulty.

“At Newberry, where were Friends from several meetings, I found my mind so strongly drawn, and with such weight towards this people, as rendered me quite unfit for any other service, it seeming impossible for me to think of any thing else in that meeting, except laying my concern before Friends there; this I was fully persuaded was what Truth pointed out to me. Accordingly at the close of the meeting, I requested the most solid, concerned Friends to stay; when I told them how it had been with me, they readily agreed to my going, and several gave up to accompany us. My companion at first seemed affrighted about going, and wept considerably; I left her quite at liberty to stay or go, and in the morning she found her way open, and she had good service. They received us with much seeming kindness, particularly one who appeared to be like the head of them, and was the person whom I chiefly wanted to see. He spoke many fair words to us before the meeting, and told us that he looked upon it as a favour from the Lord, that we were sent to them; but after meeting, when I came to tell him my mind freely, and deliver the message which I had to him, he soon changed and treated me roughly: declaring that I would not find mercy with the Lord, until I repented of my proceedings against him and them at the Quarterly meeting at Hampton. We had a seasonable opportunity to ease our minds, in which our Master was with us by His Spirit and power. I was made sensible that there was in that place a people, sincere in their searches and endeavours after religion, which the Lord regarded, though under many delusions and mistakes.

“In this quarter (New England) close and hard work fell to our lots, among those who called themselves of our Society; this work was difficult to be accomplished, because many thought themselves whole, while in reality they needed a physician, manifesting an unlawful familiarity with the world. Unbounded curiosity in the people caused meetings to be thronged, so that in hot weather it was exceedingly hard to sit them, and much more trying to speak in them but He who searches the hearts of all, knows their intentions, disappointed these wrong spirits, by closing our mouths in silence one meeting after another; which greatly displeased the people, and drew upon us great reproach, lies and slander, all which we were enabled to bear patiently, and to rejoice in, for our Master’s sake. We were led to endeavour to separate those under our name from others, and at times some of the ruling members from the rest, to whom we had very close things to offer, feeling that the declension which so glaringly appeared in the Society, had

reached in many instances even their borders. This seemed a very hard task to get accomplished because of their being so connected in marriage, etc., and the discipline being so sadly let fall, that they knew not who were or who were not proper members.

“In some places we had to visit particular families, before we could cast off our burdens, as in Boston; where I was led to find out some hidden works of darkness, the workers whereof ought to be cut off from the name and Society of Friends, in order to clear it and them from the scandal they brought on it. There was one young man in particular, with whom we had to treat on his being likely to marry with one of another society; it arose in my heart, while we talked with him, that he was deeply tinctured with deism, a disbelief of the Scriptures, of the coming of Christ in the flesh, and His second appearance by His Spirit. I told him my opinion of his state, which he acknowledged to be true; he spoke in defence of his opinion. I told him the ground which his unbelief sprung was leaning to his own understanding, and departing from the Light, which alone can convince of God and godliness.

“I left some parts of this country not quite clear in my spirit but under a weight, and particularly Newport; I was given up in my mind to return to it, but could not then find my way open; I was advised by a Friend to leave it for the present; I did so, and travelled under great exercise of spirit through Connecticut, but without condemnation.

“At Oblong, I had a sight that my dear companion Catherine Payton and I were to separate, for the work’s sake: I had been at times much straitened in my service by preferring her and her gift; for I was greatly afraid and jealous over my own heart, lest self should have any part in our separation, from a desire of appearing greater than with a companion. Another thing which appeared to me with considerable weight, was her youth, and the many dangers that might attend if not rightly suited with a companion. These and many other considerations, would I believe have prevailed, had not the Lord laid his “hand upon me, in a remarkable manner, on this wise. My mind was stripped of ability for service, and deeply bowed to the Centre of all strength for instruction; in which state I had a desire given me, to be at Philadelphia, and to go there pretty direct without appointing many meetings. Accordingly I desired that not more than two meetings, which lay in the way, might be appointed; but my companion and some other Friends, encouraged the appointing of more. I became passive, though I found my exercise for meetings in those parts, was at that time taken away: which afterwards more clearly appeared, having been silent in all, except one I found freedom to have appointed; neither was my companion capacitated for the service in the last meeting, which was at Long-reach on the Main.”

[It was with the concurrence of Friends that she and her companion thus separated for the work’s sake.]

From a very concise account kept of her gospel labours in this land, she appears to have been closely engaged in visiting meetings mostly in the province of Pennsylvania, from the tenth month, 1754, to the spring of 1756.

Within this period she wrote the following letters, which have been preserved.

TO SAMUEL FOTHERGILL

Wright's Town (in America), Second month 27th, 1755.

The freedom and candour of your very acceptable favour has had the happy tendency to set me upon the strictest examination of myself, which my deceitful heart was capable of; a task to which it was much disposed before the receipt of yours,—it being with me a season of emptying and cleansing,—a state and dispensation, which I pray with my whole heart, that neither you nor I may ever get above, and especially so when we are much engaged in our Master's work; for it seems to me next to impossible that we should escape some little spots and stains, though we may be ever so careful of our clothing, and wrap it ever so closely about us, it will get a little soiled by being used every day. I am sure mine does so, and if I should hinder my Master from stripping it off, and washing both them and me, I should before now have made but a very mean appearance in the sight of Him who sees through every false covering, the veil of flesh and all its seeming excellencies; for He beholds no beauty nor comeliness in any thing that is not derived from Himself, who is the only unmixed fountain of light and purity.

And what does it signify, my dear friend, if we appear naked and empty in the view of a set of mortals, who are unacquainted with the Lord's ways and doings? I think I have beheld in His light, and been informed by the instruction of His pure Spirit, that I have never been more amiable in His sight, nor attracted a greater degree of His love, than when my spirit has been quite unclothed, not only of my own righteousness, but also of the rich jewels of His grace, and have wandered about as in sheep-skins and goat-skins, destitute, afflicted, tormented, in a spiritual as well as a natural sense; nor have I ever had such near fellowship with the martyrs, apostles, and fellow-sufferers of Christ, as in this state. My health, through Divine favour, has been continued to me since our parting to this time, except some bad colds occasioned by the sudden changes of weather. As to my labour or services in the Church, I can say little; I think them very mean and low, yet hope I shall endeavour to be faithful according to my measure. I desire your care and good wishes for me, and as much freedom with me, as Truth will allow of; which I know will always be well received, while I remain in that charity which bears all things.

—MARY PEISLEY

TO RICHARD SHACKLETON

Philadelphia, 13th of Twelfth month, 1755.

Your acceptable letter, perhaps might have been acknowledged sooner, had I not a hope or expectation of seeing you before now:—hope did I say? alas! I should have none, but in doing and suffering the will of God; all other seems forbidden, and are through Divine favour, pretty much restrained. My stay being prolonged in this

country, has been altogether unexpected to myself, and I have been held in such uncertainty for some months past, as not to be able to give my friends any information respecting future movements. I have stood as a soldier waiting for the word of command, to march whithersoever my holy Leader may be pleased to direct; and I may say to the praise of His great name, that He is not a hard Master, but good and bountiful every way. For though I have, as recited, been kept as a day servant in a kind of undetermined state in regard to our stay; yet I may say of a truth, that I do not remember ever to have had such a degree of steady peace, and holy unmixed quietude of mind, so long together, amidst many close deep trials and exercises in religious duties,—some have been of such a nature, as I had not been tried with before, and which required the utmost fortitude, wisdom and patience. There is here the old pharisaical spirit, which I have heretofore had to war with, and it seems to love me no better than usual.

I shall now proceed to give you a narrative of the manner of my stay; to do which, I must begin with an unlooked for prospect set before me the summer after our landing, and which has rarely, if ever, wholly disappeared. How it may be, I cannot at present foresee: but this I know, that it has proved as ballast to my mind, with respect to going homewards this fall; as also a means to separate me and my dear companion, which I believe was in the wisdom of Truth. It was presented before last fall, with a draft to this city; so that I was ready to conclude I must have gone before my visit to this continent was ended, I mean to one or more of the West India islands. I waited some weeks in this city, wrapped as in a thick cloud as to any light which way I should turn, whether home or elsewhere: to appoint meetings any where on this continent I dared not, till the light went before me; having attended some that were forwardly appointed without my directions, till I was become as a sign and wonder to myself and others. At length I felt my way opened, to finish my journey on this continent separate from my former companion; which I was assisted to perform with some degree of satisfaction to myself, and I hope some little edification to the churches. In the latter part of this journey, it pleased my good Master to bring me under the most severe baptism and crucifixion, that ever I knew in the course of my religious experience, partly on my own account, and partly on the account of some, to whom I had been made a minister and instrumental to help into the way of life and salvation; who, looking at the creature more than the Creator, (who is worthy forever,) became entangled, as a lamb caught in a thicket. It was then that I felt the depth, and true meaning of that emphatic saying of the holy apostle,—“My little children, for whom I travail in birth till Christ be formed in you.” And oh! the pangs and throes, the sighs and groans, which a mother in Israel has to pass through and put up; and what if I say, it is something like the suffering which the Captain of our salvation passed through, in bringing many sons and daughters to glory. It is with the utmost reverence and fear that I make the comparison, between Him and His ministers, who are to fill up in their bodies that which is behind of His sufferings. But I seemed to myself, and was as one nailed to the cross, day and night, for weeks together, with this desire or prayer fixed in my heart,—“Let me not come down from the cross, till the glorious design be fully accomplished; that so your will may be done by me, in me, and upon me, in time and in eternity;”—and truly the baptism was not removed, until this became the happy situation of my mind,—that to live or die, to be in health or sickness, in prosperity or adversity, in Europe or America, in France or Spain, to pass through good or evil report, in the will of God, seemed just the same to me.

I write not these things boastingly, but to the glory of God. You and others know what I am by nature, that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing. This was the necessary preparative for the fore-named state of peaceful serenity of conscience, in a situation to which nature is above all things most averse,—namely, daily dependence and uncertainty, being indebted or obligated to another for support, having nothing that it can call its own, save weakness and infirmity; and this is that glorious mystery, and seeming contradiction, which the holy apostle speaks of, in having nothing, and yet possessing all things. In this situation of mind I entered this city; and having looked around me every way, with resignation to turn as I might be drawn by the power of matchless love, and hoping from the looseness which I then felt from all parts of this continent, that I might be permitted to return home with my brother, (who I had heard was in town, and likely to sail soon,) even if my companion could not go with me; yet it was with this prospect, that I might probably have to return to this country, if life was spared, and I knew not how soon. On coming here, I found that my brother was gone, and my companion not clear of this continent; so I concluded to wait for her a few weeks, or if it might be months, she expressing uncommon concern at the thoughts of being left behind.

During the time I waited for her, some Friends proposed to accompany me in visiting part of the families of Friends in this city, a service which had several times been presented to my mind in the course of my journey, yes, before I left London; and when the proposal was made, I found a perfect freedom to join with it, it being with the concurrence of the monthly meeting, little supposing I should be held to it in the manner I have been; but it is a service which the Lord has been pleased to bless in a remarkable manner. I have been in 160 families, and attended six meetings every week while in town, as health permits; besides visiting the sick and afflicted, and taking some excursions to the country. My companion when she came to town, being sometimes poorly in health, proceeded but slowly; we now go together, having tired most of our companions, besides a couple of men Friends, who go to show us the doors, and be witness to our labours; there are nearly as many yet to visit, as I have been with.

Whether I shall go this winter, or ever, to any of the islands mentioned, is at present hidden from me; but had not the prospect afresh opened after I had been here some time, I think I dare not have admitted the thoughts of staying this winter. But I have been blessed with seeing, yes, have been made instrumental to help back some of the before-mentioned lambs to the fold, one, in particular in this city, who I hope may be made a serviceable instrument.

I have now given up expectation of seeing my native land before the spring; at which time I hope to have the company of our beloved friend Samuel Fothergill on ship board: he is now in the city, also John Churchman and several other Friends on the affairs of the Society. It is a difficult time to Friends in these parts, who are concerned to keep up their Christian testimony against wars and bloodshed: and especially to such as are concerned in state affairs. I have had my health better than common in this city, for which blessing with all others that I am an unworthy partaker of, I desire to be humbly thankful.

—MARY PEISLEY.

[It appears that Mary Peisley, with her companion Catherine Payton, and also Samuel Fothergill, (then in America on religious service,) were made instrumental of much help and comfort to Friends in Pennsylvania, and some neighbouring States, who were under great alarm from the inroads of the Indians, some of whom had been engaged by the French in the war then existing between England and France. These Friends were earnestly and affectionately concerned to promote peace, and to exhort Friends to remain faithful in the support of their Christian testimony; to abide in their tents, and not so much as to look outward, but to avoid and keep clear of everything contrary to the peaceable spirit of the Gospel of Christ, and thus to show themselves His true disciples.]

TO JOHN PEMBERTON OF PENNSYLVANIA

Respected Friend,

I have read and considered your letter, and cannot help thinking that the temper of mind you discover deserves some encouragement, which I am willing to give as far as is in my power. In the first place, I would remark to you, without the least intention to lessen parental authority or filial obedience, so far as they are either lawful or expedient, that many parents of this age have bent their thoughts and desires too much to earth, to have a clear and distinct discerning of the times and seasons in a spiritual sense, and of the sacred purposes of Him, whose wisdom is inscrutable, and whose ways are past finding out by all the penetrations of finite understandings, uninfluenced by His own eternal light:—even then, we see and know but in part while here. But some of us have believed and seen in the visions of light, that the day of gospel light which has dawned will rise higher and higher; notwithstanding that some clouds may at times have intercepted its beauty and brightness, as has sorrowfully been the case among us, a people who have been highly favoured. And though I have not the least intention to derogate from the real worth of those honourable sons of the morning, who were made instrumental, in a great degree, to break down the partition wall, which carnal selfish men had erected, between the people and the Sun of Righteousness; yet I am not afraid to say, and give it under my hand, that it was and is the design of God, that His people in future ages should make an improvement on their labours, and carry on the reformation even further than they did. And notwithstanding a night of apostacy has come over us as a people, (as day and night naturally succeed one another in their season, and God keeps his covenant with both,) yet am I of the judgment, that that day has begun to dawn, in which the Sun of Righteousness will rise higher and higher, and with greater lustre than heretofore. But if those who are called of God to be the sons of this morning, look back to the night, and to them who have slept and been drunken in the night, (by sipping of the golden cup of abominations,) or even to the latter day,—they will frustrate the designs of Providence respecting themselves, though not respecting His own work. For it is His sacred determination to be glorious in heaven and glorified on earth, though these who would be called His Israel be not gathered. And I am of the faith, that where the gospel has first been preached to them, as it is fitting it should, such as neglect to embrace it, thereby rendering themselves unworthy of so great salvation, will be left, and the feet of the messengers turned another way, even to the highways and hedges, with a power of compulsive love, which will prevail on the halt, the maimed, and

the blind, to come to the marriage of the King's Son; and by coming they shall be made strong, beautiful, and lovely, as a bride adorned for her heavenly husband, who shall not look back to those things that are behind, but press forward toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus,—following no man's example further than they follow Him.

And what if I say in the faith that is given me, that God has designed to carry some of this generation, in these parts of the world, higher and further in righteousness than their forefathers were carried, even such as were honourable in their day, and are fallen asleep in Christ. Therefore let them take heed that they limit not the Holy One of Israel, nor circumscribe the leadings of His blessed unerring Spirit, by looking too much at the example of others; for this has been a means of stopping the gradual progression of many glorious, well-begun reformations. Instead of going forward, they have looked back, and even sunk below the standard of the first reformers. Such as will be the happy instruments to labour for a reformation in this degenerate age, must differ in their trials from the sons of the former morning, and will find them to be of a more severe and piercing kind:—theirs were from the world, and such as they might justly expect therefrom,—not exempt from false brethren; ours will chiefly arise from those under the same profession, clothed with the disguised spirit of the world, and that among some of the foremost rank (so called) in Society: and what if I say, (though my natural eyes may not see it,) that God will divide in Jacob and scatter in Israel before that reformation which He designs is brought about, in His Church.

In regard to the matter proposed by you, I shall answer briefly, without entering into the debates on either side, and say, that I am of the judgment, that if you stand single and upright in your mind from all the false biases of nature and interest, stopping your ears to the artifices and pretexts of self-love, with all the fallacious reasonings of flesh and blood, and the subtle whisperings of an unwearied enemy, you will find it more safe to suffer with the people of God, than to enter on, or undertake doubtful things, especially when you consider the use which has been, or may be made of that tax [for the support of war.] I had not the least view, when I took up my pen, of enlarging in the manner I have done: but I felt my mind unexpectedly opened, and feel a perfect freedom to allow you to show this to such of your acquaintance, as may be in like situation with yourself, that is, undetermined: not however that I want to expose this, with any other view than to strengthen the minds of the weak and wavering, and if it might have the same service, I had rather my name should be concealed.

In a degree of that love, which seeks the good of all, I conclude with respects to you and the family, in which my companion joins, your well-wishing friend,

—MARY PEISLEY

TO ELIZABETH CARLETON,¹ DUBLIN.

Stanton, near Philadelphia, 4th of Seventh month, 1755.

¹ She was married to Richard Shackleton the 17th of tenth month, 1755, his second wife.

Dear Friend,

Your kind favour of the third month I received last week, and feeling a draft of love with a desire to salute you in it, I have taken up my pen, not knowing what may be given to add, save that I find an inclination to acquaint you a little how we have fared, as Truth may open my mind so to do, if I am near enough to it to be aided by it. And in the first place I may inform you, that I think I have nigh finished the most dangerous painful journey that ever I undertook;—dangerous and painful indeed it has been to both body and mind beyond expression, or conception of such as have not trod the same trying steps, through paths not much frequented, where few foot-steps of this generation appear; and those ancient worthies seem almost worn out of the minds and memories of many professing the same eternal way of Truth which they did. But alas! how widely distant and sadly removed are some from it, and many have even lost the marks of the meekness, humility, Christian zeal and charity, with a patient suffering for the cause of God, though filling their seats in the visible Church. And here I am stopped from a humbling sense of my own weakness and unworthiness to be compared in the least degree to the valiants and nobles of the morning of this latter day; yet I have been ready to conclude at times, that the trials and sufferings of a remnant, who are honestly engaged to be faithful in their measure according to knowledge, are more trying and dangerous in their nature, than what those sons and daughters of the morning had to meet with and pass through. The latter had the winter and storms of adversity in the outward to meet, which had a tendency to drive to the Rock of Ages, where they found the warming rays of the Sun of Righteousness in the day of God's visiting power and summer season of His love and ingathering virtue:—their enemies were outward, that is, from the world, where they might expect them, open and manifest to the eye of reason. But ours are often secret enemies, hidden, and concealed from every eye and understanding, but that which Truth opens; and they often secretly smite in spirit and fight against the testimony of Truth which is delivered in the plainness and simplicity of it, and which comes not with enticing words of man's wisdom, calculated to tickle and please the curious outward ear, while the soul is starved, that immortal part which cannot feed on chaff or wind, but which seeks in the ministry solid, sound, plain, substantial truths, such as agree with the experience of true believers, and the present state of their minds. This kind of doctrine is too much out of use in America, as well as Europe; and instead of it, a sound of words which abounds among them,—words sound in themselves, but destitute of life and power, not suiting the states of the people (who want not to be amused with words, but aroused from their sins), nor proceeding from a feeling sense or experience of what they speak.

I have dwelt much longer on this disagreeable subject than I expected when I began it, or may seem necessary to you, who are not (that I know of) concerned that way; but when it is considered that I have painfully felt it as one of the greatest sores and wounds in the Society with which I am embodied, it will not be wondered at that my thoughts and pen run upon it when relating to a friend how I have fared. And now to return to the subject matter of comparison; we are in the summer and warm sunshine of worldly prosperity, peace and plenty, which has a natural tendency to draw from the Rock, and lull to sleep in the present, mean, miserable, and transitory enjoyments of this life; while as regards the inwards, it is a winter season, a day of darkness, gloominess and sore distress; yes, famine, faintness and weariness of soul sometimes seize those who are made to see and deeply feel the state of the Church in general; though in some respects there is cause of rejoicing, and we have

been favoured to see a little of the fruits of our painful labour, and perhaps more may yet be discovered in the Lord's time.

I told you that I thought I had well nigh finished my journey in this country, and so I hope it is; for I hardly think I shall have to appoint another meeting while in it this time; yet I cannot see when I shall be fit to leave it. My companion has not quite done her journey; and except I really believed it my duty, I cannot think of leaving her behind. Through mercy our love for each other is not decreased by our separation, but much otherwise; and it is no wonder that we should be made more near and dear to each other, considering how much we have been led to the same track of suffering since separated, as well as together. This indeed must be the case with all them that know a growth in the Truth; their love in it for each other will increase, though the ties of natural affection may, by length of time and absence, in some degree be weakened. This I think I have known respecting some in my native land. I hope I lack not natural affection, but my love for them in the pure innocent life of Truth has been much strengthened; though I have neither a will nor power to say so much to some of them by writing; they are as epistles written in my heart by the handwriting of Truth, which alone will stand the test of all events that may happen in the ordering of it. Dear Samuel Fothergill and Joseph Dickson have been great helps and comforts to us in their work and service, and are nearly united in spirit, particularly the former, whose tenderness and regard towards me I cannot but admire with love and esteem.

I shall now conclude with the salutation of true love to you, your family, etc., and as many of my friends as you may be free to communicate it to, with the intelligence of my health, which is as well as I can reasonably expect.

Your friend in the Truth,

—MARY PEISLEY

After her return from America she attended the National meeting in the eleventh month, 1756, and returned a lively account of her journey.

TO ELIZABETH SHACKLETON

Russetdown, 28th of First month, 1757.

Dear Friend,

My bodily health is through Divine favour bravely restored for the time, considering the violent disorder which I have so long laboured under. When wise Providence is pleased to prolong life. He appoints means for the purpose: may the lengthening of mine (if it be so) be to His honour, who gave it, to which I can subjoin this desire to Him,—“O! may I breathe no longer than I breathe to you!”

I can say but little as to my better part, save this,—that I am still in the warfare, and have had of late sore

struggles with some of the old inhabitants in the promised land, which yet remain unsubdued: but I hope by that precious faith, which is the gift of God to the saints, to wax valiant in fight against them. But of this excellent gift the enemy of my happiness strives to deprive me:—may you my beloved in Christ, and I be helped to keep it to the end; for it is the end that crowns all, and the crown is at the end of all things here.

What ailed your dear husband that he could not add by way of P. S., some humbling admonition as usual? there was room enough in your letter. I had like to have said, ‘Brother Richard, where are you?—an important question indeed when proposed by a heart-searching God to the sons of Adam, who have been placed in Paradise, that is, a state of happiness and glorious government of themselves and of the creation, to dress the garden of the heart, and to keep it from all venomous beasts of prey,—an awful task indeed!

I am, your real friend,

—MARY PEISLEY

In the second month following, she laid her intentions of marriage with Samuel Neale before the monthly meeting of Mountmellick, to which she belonged, after which she found a concern to join in a visit to the families of Friends throughout that monthly meeting.

This service she was enabled to perform; and her friends give the following account of her last public testimony at the next monthly meeting:—“At our women’s monthly meeting, held at Mountmellick, the 13th of third month, 1757; in which this our dear friend gave us her farewell visit, which we hope will not be easily forgotten by us. She found freedom, she said, to speak a little of her call to the service of visiting families, and that she met with discouragement at first by some; but afterwards, some judicious elders and a travelling Friend encouraged her. But the peace and comfort of her own mind in the discharge of her duty, exceeded all she had met with in her life before.

She was drawn forth in a wonderful manner, and often had to advise us to stand fast in this day of great declension,—to stand fast in that liberty wherein Christ makes free, that so we might be God’s free daughters as male and female are all one in Christ Jesus;—that we as a people were the bidden guests, and if we make excuses too long, our excuses at length would be taken, and then the Lord would send to the highways and hedges, and compel others to come in, even by that which has invited us: for His table must be filled with guests. That a glorious day would yet come, wherein the Lord would bring from the east and from the west, and from the north and south, and thousands and tens of thousands would be brought to sit down with Him in His kingdom; and that the invited unfaithful children of the kingdom would be cast out: for the Lord was able to raise up children of them that might be compared to the stones in the streets.

“She also had to declare, that she saw (and that in the light) that the fields were already white unto harvest, and the faithful labourers but few; so she desired that all might do their day’s work in their day,

and mind the things that belong to their peace, before it should be hid from their eyes. And she saluted a remnant, whom she desired to remember her; that when they were absent in body, they might be present in spirit. An extraordinary power attended her ministry and prayer, which united the spirits of some to her in that bond of peace, which we trust will never be broken.”

After this visit she returned home, and on the 17th of third month, 1757, was married to our aforesaid friend [Samuel Neale] in the meeting of Mountrath. [For the remarkable events of the succeeding and closing three days of her life, the reader is referred to the Journal of Samuel Neale.]

Chapter VI

The Testimonies of Richard Shackleton and his wife Elizabeth, concerning Mary Neale, late Peisley.

She was a shining pattern in a solid circumspect life and conduct, enabled to be so by following her great Pattern our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Her soul loved and sought after retirement: she delighted in meditation on things appertaining to God’s kingdom; and her speech, behaviour, and manner of speaking, to an intelligent person, would often betray that she had been with Jesus.

And as her deportment was apparently seasoned with a holy awfulness, evincing whose presence she was in, so it tended much to inspire others who conversed with her with a degree of like awe and watchful fear. She was one of great inwardness of spirit, and diligent in giving heed to her Spiritual Guide, not only in matters purely religious, but in concerns of a more external nature. From this inwardness of spirit and habitual acquaintance with her own heart, was produced a deep humility and self-abhorrence, which were very conspicuous in her to those who knew her most intimately.

She laboured hard, travelled much, and suffered deeply in the service of Him, who had sent her into His vineyard, and was eminently honoured and dignified beyond many; yet she thought of herself after all but as an unprofitable servant, who had only done what she ought, and sat down thankful and contented with that degree of peace which her Master was pleased to reward her with, and was satisfied to be stripped and to want, as well as to be clothed and to abound.

Her ministry was deep, clear and reaching her conduct and conversation were of a piece with her ministry; her life and doctrine went hand-in-hand as becomes a minister. She laboured faithfully according to the ability present, whether little or much, and carefully followed the leadings of the Spirit, in the exercise

of her gift, willing as a mere instrument to be made use of as a sharp threshing weapon, as well as a watering-pot in the hand of her Master; for she sought not to please man, but the Lord, not courting, but shunning popular applause, and zealously appearing against what she thought wrong in any, without respect to person; being neither moved by the smiles or frowns of mortals, from performing what she apprehended to be her duty, with a single eye to the honour of her Lord and Master,—so that she apparently had her building upon that immovable Rock, which has been the foundation of the righteous in all generations, and which remains to this day and forever.

—RICHARD SHACKLETON

It has been on my mind, for some time, to write a few lines concerning my knowledge of my dear deceased friend, Mary Neale, with whom I have been nearly united and intimately acquainted for several years; and I can say of her, that she was a tender nurse and help-forward of the true-born children of the heavenly Father; for whom she could say with the Apostle, she travailed in pain, that Christ might be formed in them, and they might be complete in Him; by her living baptizing-ministry, which she had received from Him, who makes His ministers as a flame of fire, she was often made to administer consolation to such. Those who too much neglected their own mercies, the repeated calls of Wisdom in their hearts, and labours of her children from one time to another, she was often concerned to call and invite to return; she deeply mourned in secret on their account, having seen the danger they were in, and as one of their friends, she warned them faithfully thereof, in order to be clear of the blood of all men.

In her conduct and conversation she was an example of steady piety and solidity; and as she was sensible of her own insufficiency to keep them, she was concerned to be much inward in her mind with Him, who was more to her than all the world; and her desire was, that she might breathe no longer than she breathed to Him. She was a woman that sought true wisdom and found it, and who got understanding, in which she was deep, sound in her judgment, and skillful in speaking to the state of the auditory, among whom she had the Gospel to preach, which she was careful to adorn by a circumspect life. Her being so suddenly taken from us, has been the cause of sorrow on account of our great loss; but, as her work was done, and cut short in righteousness, and her spirit ascended to receive a happy reward for her faithful, constant, diligent, and undaunted labours in her great Master's cause, we desire to be given up to His will, and to be enabled to pray to Him, that a double portion of the same good Spirit, that was her guide, may be poured upon others; that there may be still witnesses to the same everlasting Power, which is unchangeable, though all men should forsake it!

—ELIZABETH SHACKLETON

Extract from James Gough's Memoirs

“We went, next day, some miles out of our way to see our dear friend, Mary Peisley, being at that time in affliction. She had been a gay young woman, but in the youthful years of her gaiety, she was favored with a powerful and prevailing visitation of Divine love; and giving up faithfully to the heavenly vision, she became a vessel of honour in the Master's house, receiving a gift in the ministry, and being reverently, watchfully, and livelily exercised therein, to the edification of Friends, where her lot was cast, she was indeed a useful member and a shining ornament of the Church. I am ready to conclude, that none in our day, from the time of this, the effectual visitation of Christ in her soul, adhered with more steadiness to His guidance through a variety of probations. She was, most part of her time, a member of the same monthly meeting with myself: —often were we together in public meetings, often on family visits. She visited Friends in England, Ireland and North America, pretty generally; and soon after her return from her last journey, married our friend, Samuel Neale, and in a few days after, departed this life. I attended both at her marriage and her funeral, and am satisfied that she is gone to enjoy forever the reward of a well-spent life, very much devoted to the service of God, and the promotion of Truth upon earth.”

The Testimony of the Monthly meeting of Mountmellick, in the Kingdom of Ireland, concerning our dear friend Mary Neale, formerly Peisley, deceased.

She was educated in our Christian profession, yet, in her younger years was a lover of gayety and vanity; till it pleased the Lord to enlighten and enamour her soul with the beauty of His blessed and glorious Truth, whereupon she gave herself up to serve Him with full purpose of heart.

Being called into the work of the ministry, she readily obeyed, yet with fear, being particularly careful not to be too forward; so that her offerings were like fruit in its right season, to the honour of the Lord and the consolation of His heritage; yet she rather feared than sought applause, was ready to give way to others, and rejoiced when the Lord's work was well done by any. She was a diligent labourer in spirit for the subjection of self and the prevalence of Divine Life; and as she was very careful, when a necessity was laid upon her, to raise up in that Life, so she was likewise to drop anchor, and sit down in it, more delighted in the pure silence of all flesh, and to hear the voice of her Beloved therein, than in any excellency of words; the reverent solidity and patience of her own waiting upon the Lord in religious meetings, being like a check to the forward, as well as a good pattern to the believers in general, both in a public and private capacity. She was, when out of meetings, of a uniform conduct, retired in spirit, awful and weighty in her deportment; her words few and savoury, administering grace to the hearers, consolation to the feeble-minded, instruction to the ignorant, and reproof to the unfaithful; seeking much to have her citizenship in heaven, and on every occasion to draw the minds of others thitherward. In Friends' families often drawn forth in the pure love of God, particularly to the youth.

In the discipline of the church, of singular service, waiting for wisdom to discern, and fortitude to support, what tended to Zion's order, peace, and prosperity; not biased by the favour or frowns of any therein, so that (though but young as to the time of her ministry and services) she stood in the authority of Truth, like an elder and a pillar in the Lord's house, bearing the weight of opposition, and assaults of opposite spirits without giving way; that Divine Power being her shield, and the munition of rocks the habitation of her soul.

Under a lively concern for the welfare and honour of every part of the Society, she was, at times qualified to impart tender and suitable counsel to her brethren and sisters engaged, in these perilous times, in the weighty work of the ministry and discipline, to have a single eye to the glory of God, to prefer His service before their own, and get their day's work well done in the daytime. In this, she freely gave up herself to spend and be spent, and to pass through various perils of the nearest and most exercising kind, by sea and land, often under great weakness and hardship of body, as well as pain of mind. Twice she visited the meetings of Friends through this nation; once through England, and since that, through the American continent: and by accounts received, we find her services abroad corresponded with the testimony here given of her.

Since her return from her American journey, she, with some others, visited the families of Friends through the nine meetings of this Monthly meeting, as she had done awhile before her said journey. The weight of that service laid chiefly upon her, and we believe she discharged herself faithfully therein. It was finished on the 14th of the third month last; and on the 20th, she was, after an illness of about fourteen hours, removed by death to the sorrowful surprise of many, in a sense both of our own loss and that of the Church in general, in the sudden removal of this worthy instrument in the Lord's hand who, we believe, was well prepared to live with Christ in His kingdom, with whom her life was hid while here. She was, indeed, a true burden-bearer, a valiant warrior, that turned not her back in the day of battle, very nearly united in the celestial bond to such as loved Truth above all things; and has left very few among us like her, in respect to faithful and diligent application to the great and primary end of our existence.

On the 24th of the said month, her corpse was taken into the meetinghouse in Mountrath, where a solemn meeting was held on the occasion, and several testimonies borne, many Friends from adjacent meetings attending; after which it was decently interred in Friends burying-ground in the said town. She died aged 39 years, a minister about twelve years and six months. We conclude, with fervent desires, that the sense and remembrance of her life and labours, may stir up her survivors to follow her as she followed Christ, in that holy path which none but the redeemed can walk in, (there never having been more need than now when the church is greatly stripped of bright ornaments and useful instruments, and when so many are indulging themselves in undue liberties,) that in the revival and increase of righteousness, the Name of our God may be glorified, who is worthy both now and forever. Amen!

Signed in, and on behalf of our Monthly Men's and Women's meeting, held at Mountmellick, the 1st of
fifth month, 1757,

—BY FIFTY FRIENDS.