



The
*Virtuous
Woman*

Jane Roberts

The Virtuous Woman

By
JANE ROBERTS

(originally published as "Woman:
Married and Unmarried")

together with an Addendum
SISTERS IN MODERN
TIMES.

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*“Who can find a virtuous woman? for her
price is far above rubies.
Many daughters have done virtuously,
but thou excellest them all.
Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain:
but a woman that feareth the Lord,
she shall be praised.
Give her of the fruit of her hands;
and let her own works praise her
in the gates.”*

—Proverbs 31.

PREFACE

Brother Robert Roberts, the first Editor of The Christadelphian, wrote in his autobiography “I can see how much God has favoured me in the wife He guided me to, though it is not permitted to a husband to say much in praise of his wife. There are not many women who have a real and spontaneous taste for spiritual things. There are not many men either, but the proportion of women is smaller. It must be this that Solomon refers to when he says, ‘One man among a thousand have I found, but a woman among all these have I not found’” (My Days and My Ways)

Our brother and his wife have long since been laid to rest, but their influence remains. Nearly all the works of Brother Roberts are still obtainable, but ‘Woman Married and Unmarried’ by Sister Jane Roberts, has been out of print for many years. Sisters who have been able to borrow a copy have naturally felt that they would like to have one of their own. With this in view and also bearing in mind the large number who have not yet read it, it has been decided to reprint it, but under the more euphonious title of ‘The Virtuous Woman’. To bring the subject up to date a new section has been added, dealing with sisters in modern times.

The world is now in a state comparable to the days of Noah, and all of us, brethren and sisters alike, must feel the need for constant watchfulness lest we fall away from the high standard required of us

We are confident that Christ is at the door. Soon we shall have to stand before him to give an account of our probation. It is our earnest prayer that this publication will be a means of strengthening our sisters, especially those young in the Truth, and assisting them to walk now that they may be approved in the day of our Lord’s return.

* * *

It has been almost thirty years since this work was first reprinted under the title of ‘The Virtuous Woman’. Think for one moment of the sweeping changes that have occurred in the world since that time—particularly with regard to the ‘changing role’ of women in the world. With this change has come increased pressure on the sisterhood to follow the lead of women in the world. It is important that the sisters, as well as the brothers, assume their ecclesial and family responsibilities as set forth by the Word of God. These articles are designed to encourage you sisters in the Way—therefore it is important that they be made available to all.

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THE VIRTUOUS WOMAN

CHAPTER I.

EARLY DAYS

MUCH has been written concerning the position of woman by those who look at her from a merely secular point of view, from her advocates of the American school down to the latest London critic in the *Saturday Review*. Her rights have been discussed: they have been advocated, they have been vindicated, or they have been denied according to the temper of the writers who have taken her case in hand.

But to the woman professing godliness, these utterances amount to nothing for practical guidance. She may, sometimes, allow herself to be entertained by them, but she will not take her cue from such sources, lest she be led astray. To her there is but one standpoint from which to view her own position, and from which to judge of what is becoming and dutiful. To the Scriptures of truth she must turn for guidance. In them she must find her “model,” her manual for direction in all the affairs of life, her book of fashion, and her instructor in true etiquette.

The world’s etiquette is mostly the beautiful form of emptiness, or worse. A godly woman’s etiquette will be without dissimulation. Her love will be genuine, springing from principle rather than the impulse of partiality, which will render the service of her hands more graceful, engaging, and acceptable than all the elegant posing of her deluded sisters in the flesh. Having, by the belief of the glad tidings and union with Christ in baptism, placed herself under law to him, the object of her greatest solicitude will be, in all cases, to ascertain the will of Christ concerning her ways. It matters little to her, and ought really to affect her little, what any outside of his law may think of her; and, indeed, she must not even allow the opinion of her brethren and sisters to unduly influence her conduct. “Christ first, must be her motto, and the desire to please him must be the guiding principle of her life. She must make up her mind to encounter

DIFFICULTIES.

Her path through life will be beset by many difficulties peculiar to her position. She is not at liberty to please herself at all times, nor to follow the frivolous pursuits considered appropriate to the world around her. Espoused to one who forbids the dissipation of her mind with the vanities of a world lying in wickedness, she must act in faithfulness of her adopted standard at the risk of unpopularity with her sex.

Christ requires her to be highly adorned, but not with the quality of ornament in vogue with this present evil world. She expects shortly to be called forth to the celebration of the nuptials; and as the bridegroom she is to meet is none other than the King of kings and Lord of lords, she should be supremely anxious to array herself according to his expressed desire, that she may be well-pleasing in his sight in the day of his appearing.

To accomplish this will take much of her time. Her neighbours and acquaintances in the world require all their time for the conducting of their affairs pertaining to this life, so the woman who has for her aim the attainment of the world to come, must, at the onset, agree to forfeit some of the world's respectability and esteem, her time and money being devoted to other things than those the world considers all-important. She must consider it a settled matter that she cannot serve God and mammon. She cannot please the world and please him also who hath called her to his kingdom and glory. Her absent Lord and Master has left this on record, and it is her peril that she call his word in question.

YOUNG SISTERS.

To the young sister, who has been so fortunate as to receive the truth in the morning of life, it will be of the very highest importance that she begin at once to equip herself for the good fight of faith. Upon no arm of flesh must she entirely lean. She has entered upon a course of trial, though, at the first it will not, probably, appear so to her. She has just received the truth with much gladness. All appears joyous and bright, and her only desire is that the Lord would come and permit her to realize the glowing visions of which she reads, when the saints will take the kingdom and reign with Christ upon earth. This time will come, and is longed for by every son and daughter of the Lord Almighty, but the young sister must remember that this honour is reserved for *saints*. Her saintship will have to be developed by her obedience in the truth, and it will all depend upon her faithfulness to him who has called her to be a saint, whether in the day of judgment she will pass into the ranks of that honourable company or not.

She will not have gone far in the straight and narrow way before her difficulties begin. It is designed by God for every one adopted into His family that they shall be tried. His people are to be prepared people—like polished stones—like gold tried in the fire. As years advance, cares and responsibilities and troubles increase, and the young sister must not think that she will prove any exception to the rule. If she be a faithful sister, she will not. In whatever position in life she may be placed, she can labour for Christ, and she can suffer for his sake. His will and desire con-

cerning her is that she should do so, and continue to do so till he calls her to the high destiny he has promised. His words are, "Who-soever taketh not up his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me." The *taking up* of the cross would imply a voluntary act—not merely the enduring of something inevitable; but the deliberately doing of something that will bring endurance in some shape or form, and *that* for Christ's sake. Each particular condition of life will present opportunities for this cross-bearing.

DRESS.

An engrossing concern with young girls naturally is their appearance and dress; and excess in mere outward adornment is among their besetting sins. The young sister is at liberty to adorn herself; but she must be careful to have her ornaments chosen and adjusted according to the fashion book inscribed by the spirit. This requires that she be richly adorned with *good works*, and modestly attired as regards dress. If she be rich in good works, she will of necessity cripple her ability to gratify the fleshly desire to be richly-apparelled outwardly—which desire, if indulged, would cripple her ability to adorn herself spiritually. If she be moderate in her expenditure upon herself, she will doubtless be able to have something to expend in the service of Christ. He asks of her the first place in her affections. If she loves him, and at all appreciates the high destiny to which he has called her, she will make it a rule to let his claim have her first consideration in all matters. To begin early in life thus to train herself, will make many things easier of accomplishment in years to come, than if she should live the best part of her life, and then begin to try to crucify the natural desires.

READING

Nothing will so much assist her in her determination to consecrate herself to Christ, as the daily reading of the scriptures. Other reading wisely selected may have a useful place, but the reading of the scriptures she ought to regard, and practice as an imperative duty. Let her at all hazards read some *every day*; this will to some extent be keeping company with Christ himself, for he is the great theme of the sacred book. He is the beginning and the ending of it. To him all the types and shadows point. In him is centred all the hope of the future glory foretold by the prophets. He is the burden of their theme. In the narratives concerning his sayings and doings while on earth, there is the opportunity of making close acquaintance with him whose meat and drink it was to do the will of Him who sent him, and in the study of his

gracious words, may she hope to be purified and assimilated to his divine character, and greatly aided in her resolve to devote herself to the knowing and doing the will of her Father who is in Heaven.

She cannot keep him company personally like the sisters who ministered to him in the days of his flesh; but she will know that there are many ways in which she can keep him company so long as he has brethren and sisters, and his own truth in the earth to be countenanced, and encouraged, and served; and she will remember that he has said, that whatsoever is done faithfully to one of the least of his disciples, he regards as done to himself. She will therefore have plenty of ways in which to show her love to her absent Lord, by the keeping of his comandments. She will want as much time as ever she can command for gaining the knowledge of himself, and the Father's glorious purposes concerning him, which the scriptures reveal in all the manifold aspects in which he is therein represented, and to perform the duties she owes to him.

The young sister should be on her guard against indiscriminate reading. The torrent of books that pours in our day from the press, exposes the young mind to a mental dissipation that is disastrous spiritually. Specially would I mention novel-reading as a thing to be avoided. Its effect is blighting in a spiritual sense, in depraving the mental appetite and throwing a shade over spiritual things. A certain pleasure is connected with it, but it is a hurtful pleasure which sisters are wise to deny themselves. Its indulgence will hinder the work of the truth in their minds.

COMPANIONS.

In nothing is a young sister more exposed to danger than in the choice of company. She will do well to be on her guard, and choose only those whose aims are the same as she herself has chosen. Let her avoid frivolous company, whether professedly in the truth or not. All are not Israel who are of Israel, neither are all wise who profess the truth. She should cultivate sobriety without being morose. Let her discourage levity and light talk as spiritually hurtful, and when possible avail herself of the society of sober-minded brethren and sisters, with whom intercourse will be profitable and instructive, remembering the words of Solomon, "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise."

Let her be specially mindful of the allegiance she owes to Christ in the choice of a companion for life. It is natural and right that her thoughts turn in this direction, and a truly holy relationship may come of it, but let her be sure to encourage no advances outside of the truth, nor be won over by promises to

consider the truth when a union has been effected. The snares that encircle a union of this sort (which would be a virtual allying of herself with the world) are more dreadful and numerous and intricate than a young girl dreams of. "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers" is an apostolic injunction, and uttered for our benefit, as the mind of Christ. Even in the truth, let her be careful that the brother with whom she would keep company in view of a life-long relationship, is thoroughly in love with the truth, and bent upon a faithful obedience to it, and let them together beware of the tendency of the young mind to overlook the obligations which the possession of the truth imposes, and to make the profession of it a mere garb or occasion for serving the flesh.

I have know cases in which the truth has been thus associated, with the result of the flesh triumphing to the suppression of the things of the Spirit. As she prizes the successful issue of her earthly career, let the young sister take all heed in the beginning of the journey, that in this matter she take no false step. She ought in this, as in all matters that affect her well-being, to seek and earnestly desire guidance and direction from God. He has caused the promise to be placed on record: "In all thy ways acknowledge the Lord, and he will direct thy path." Let her confide her cause to Him, and go forward in trustful confidence.

When she enters the married relation, her duties and her dangers are to some extent different, and will form the subject of another chapter.

CHAPTER II.

THE MARRIED STATE.

THE relations of the married state are very different from those considered in the last chapter. Paul recognises this difference in saying "the unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord that she may be holy both in body and spirit; but she that is married careth for the things of the world how she may please her husband." This may have had special applicability in Paul's day, when the outward circumstances connected with the profession of the truth (with regard to persecution) were of a kind to gender greater consecratedness in those unburdened by social ties. It would also be specially applicable where sisters were fettered by union with unbelieving husbands. Doubtless it is on all cases more or less true that the single have advantages peculiar to unmarried life. Still, single life is not always necessarily spiritual in its tendency.

That the married state is such is not incompatible with faithful service to Christ, Paul allows in his advice to young widows (1 Tim. v. 14), also in many other allusions to the same matter in several of his epistles, Peter also adcknowledges the same in his exhortation to husband and wife in the truth to walk together according to knowledge, "as being *heirs together* of the grace of life." The married state doubtless entails "trouble in the flesh;" but with double sorrows, we may count upon double joys where there is union and fellowship in the truth. It is the natural relation of man and woman and does much to broaden the sympathies and break down artificial views of life.

To the married woman, the possession of the truth is an inestimable boon; not that *the knowledge of it merely* will benefit her; but the possession of it in the sense of an in-dwelling principle, will be of incalculable value in guiding her affections and sustaining her in the trying and difficult circumstances that are sometimes the peculiar experiences of a wife.

THE ILL-MATED.

In the ordinary walks of life, and outside of the truth, it not unfrequently happens that a wife fails to constitute a companion to her husband. He may have tastes in certain directions, scientific, literary, or otherwise, in which she cannot keep him company; either because her tastes do not lie in the same direction, or because her more limited opportunities prevent her keeping pace with her husband's attainments. She may be possessed of

ability, and excel in her own sphere of labour; but the duties connected with this may be so numerous and urgent as to engage her attention, to the exclusion of those matters which especially interest her husband.

Through the effect of this on her mind, she may come to regard his particular bias as a weakness, which will only help to widen the gap which he feels to exist between himself and his wife, because she cannot or does not take any interest in that which to him is the source of the highest pleasure.

Now, in the truth, the chances of such a hitch are greatly lessened. The possession of the truth furnishes a basis upon which, if husband and wife have embraced it from the heart, both may be firmly joined together in one mind. It may be that the sister has not been fortunate enough to be united to a companion in this respect. Married in ignorance, she may have received the truth since entering wedlock, her husband not bearing her company in the matter. Even in this case, the truth will be to her a great advantage. It will prove a solace to her amid the troubles and cares incident to her position. And she can indulge the hope that she may be some day cheered by her husband's acceptance of it.

To this end let her labour, ever mindful of her own deportment, as one professing godliness, and encouraged in her labour of hope by the words of Peter, whose advice is in this direction to those having unbelieving husbands, so that they (the unbelieving husbands), may even "without the word, be won by the conversation of their wives."

DRAWBACKS OF UNEQUAL YOKING.

There are, doubtless, many drawbacks to a sister who finds herself in this position. She is thereby deprived of much encouragement and help, and experiences many obstacles which would not exist with her husband's hearty co-operation in and identification with the truth. Still, even this form of evil may not exist without advantage to the sister so circumstanced, though such advantage will, doubtless, rank among the "forced benefits" of her experience. One of them will be that she will be thrown upon her own resources for spiritual sustenance, and her profiting will, doubtless, appear in her individual intelligence and spontaniety in the truth.

At the same time, there is much danger. Her connection with an unbelieving husband may exclude the atmosphere of the truth, and surround her with adverse influences which she may be unable to resist. She may, if not on her guard, be insensibly and gradually robbed of her enthusiasm for the truth, and having a name to live, may become dead. The simple principle of placing "Christ

first," her Lord, in all her course through life, would prove a guiding star out of many a dangerous path into which she might otherwise be led. Better brave the disfavour of husband and friends than imperil a favourable reception from the King of kings, when he comes forth to judge his household.

Of course, she will require to use discretion in such a matter, and not unnecessarily cause trouble; still, if she cannot comply with the commands of Christ without giving offence to her husband, she has no alternative. But let her see to it that it is really the offence of the truth, and not the flesh in some form taking advantage of the liberty wherewith the truth has made us free.

If she have brought herself into this condition of unequal yoking subsequent to her acceptance of the truth, she will have ample reason to repent her folly and her sin, and will, probably, find sufficient retribution in the increased difficulties which she will find around her, in the good fight of faith. If she have arrived at a knowledge of the truth after her union with an unbeliever, she can, at least, rejoice that she has done so, and will make the best of her surroundings, hoping by her faithful endeavours to bring about a better and more harmonious state of things.

MARRIED IN THE LORD.

To those who know by happy experience the blessedness of union and fellowship in the truth, nothing need be said. Their joint labours will show the sweet advantage of being of one accord, and of one mind: fellow helpers into the Kingdom of God, and heirs together of the grace of life; growing up into Christ who is the head—being rooted and grounded in the love of him. To such the truth is a never-failing source of interest. It furnishes them with occupation for all their spare time, and more, and so great is the variety of ways in which it will claim their attention, help and sympathy, that, whether occupying the highest or the lowest or the middle place in society, they will find enough to fill their hands, and will certainly have no time for the genteel frivolities with which it is customary in "society" to fill up the time. Their private studies can hardly be placed on the list of labour. These are to them as resting places where they drink and are refreshed, and strengthened to resume the journey, in which they are firmly united as fellow pilgrims, toiling together with strong purpose for a common end.

But this happy experience does not fall to the lot of all who profess the truth. There are cases in which husband and wife, both professedly in the truth, do not run smoothly together. There are many reasons for this unfortunate state of things, some of which cannot entirely be done away with, though most of them

may be modified. The great bulk of the brethren and sisters belong to the class who have to toil most of the time in secular matters—each in their own department, and each having to endure much fatigue and weariedness, which unfits for that cordial manifestation of appreciation which under more easy circumstances would flow from each to the other, rendering daily intercourse a source of mutual happiness and comfort. Still, the fact that some hard working couples get along without strife or jarring, shows that fatigue alone does not constitute a barrier to conjugal felicity in the truth. The probability is that shortcomings on both sides are the direct or indirect cause of the difficulty; or it may be that a high sense of the obligations of the truth on one side is not reciprocated on the other. Now as a life of continual jarring, whatever the cause, must be prejudicial to progress of the truth, it would be well for the sister who finds herself thus placed, to try to discover if she possibly can, how she may by any modification of her own behaviour, bring about a happier and more becoming state of things. It would be better for her to forego even what she might legitimately claim as her right, if the truth would be thereby served, than stand out for it at the cost of a perpetual unpleasantness, which interferes with the work of the Spirit. She will always have the consolation that whatever she loses by the service of the truth now (if incurred willingly) will be repaid her an hundredfold when the Lord returns.

This is taking for granted that she is a true sister—one of Sarah's daughters, willing in all things to be subject to the will of her Lord. Indeed unless she be this, there is no chance for her at all in the struggle between the flesh and the Spirit. "Christ first" means self last, or rather, self crucified, and therefore, in a suffering and humble condition. The consecration of self to Christ and his truth, needs daily renewing amid the daily occupations in which we engage, and only in this daily renewal of service and sacrifice, may the true sister hope to attain that spirit of ready obedience in all things to the will of Christ, which will enable her to endure patiently, and avoid the rock upon which others split and flounder who do not endure, but who murmur and dispute about what they ought to endure, as seeing Him who is invisible. If the love of Christ were paramount in each, the troubles that disturb in this manner could not arise. This love of Christ needs continual strengthening by intercourse with him in the word and in prayer. Yesterday's supply will not entirely suffice for today. And in this matter we should be careful not to deceive ourselves. A sister may imagine that she loves Christ supremely; but let her test herself by what she is willing to endure for his sake. She may find that she has overrated her affection; that many things dispute the pre-eminence with him in her mind

and affections. She will find it a work of time to gain the mastery over her own natural desires, and to readily and willingly give the first and best consideration to him who alone is worthy of it. Yet let her not lose heart because she finds herself defective. She will, in the end, overcome and conquer, if her faith fail not; and never forget that "faith cometh by hearing," and hearing by "*the Word of God.*" She has special need to fortify herself.

EXTRAVAGANT EXPECTATIONS.

She may find much more to contend with than she had expected on entering the married state. She may have pictured to herself the delightful times she would have when united to one in the truth, who would be to her a continued help and instructor. Perhaps she expected too much from him, and forgot that she would also have to do her part, as having at last to give an account of herself. Perhaps she had pictured to herself the delightful evenings they would spend together when her husband could read aloud to her, as she busied herself with her needle, and how the heavenly dews of spiritual refreshing would continually descend, as the result of her husband's ministrations in things divine.

Her actual experience in married life will greatly disappoint her. She overlooked the fact that her husband also would be in need of ministration; that his arduous struggle with an evil world outside would unfit him in some degree for positive attention, and lead him to look to home as a haven of rest, when each day's toil was ended.

Must not his disappointment be great if he finds his partner more an additional weight than a relief, and not by any means the fellow helper he had fondly anticipated? If there is not great care to exercise forbearance here, a rupture of the happy experience of first-wedded days will take place. It will above all things be necessary first, that both husband and wife be thoroughly in love with the truth, having the fear and hope and love of God richly dwelling in each, independently, inducing in each a willingness to submit to whatever the truth requires at their hands.

It must be remembered that the faithful profession of the truth entails trial in some form or other. It brings many advantages; but that does not render inapplicable to us the intimation of Paul to the believers of his age, that *all* who will live godly must *suffer*, according to the circumstances in which they are placed. If the husband is a faithful son of God, the claims of the truth will occupy much of his time, and his sister-wife may be deprived of much of his company in consequence.

WISE ADJUSTMENTS.

She may also in many ways be called upon to forego much that she might legitimately claim as her right and privilege. Her husband's faithfulness to the truth, may decide him on courses that will deprive himself in many respects, and in this he expects, and is entitled to realise, that his wife as a daughter of the same Father will be able to join him. It will be well for her, and for her husband, if this is the case. It may bring deprivations and bitterness in some directions, but let her remember for whose sake she is called upon thus to suffer, not forgetting his promise and abundant reward in the future, if the cross is willingly borne now.

Even if she thinks her husband extreme in his actions, and finds sometimes that his readiness to serve, and liberality in the truth, deprives her of the opportunities she might wish of showing spontaneity in the same direction, let her be comforted with the thought that in his labours and service and sacrifice for the truth, she is a sharer and co-labourer if she readily and uncomplainingly bear the share of disadvantage such service may bring to her, and that in the end she will share the reward of faithful stewardship which her husband seeks to earn by his devotion now.

It is very necessary that a sister-wife should cultivate the powers of self-sustenance in the truth. When she has attained this, she will find herself in the possession of a powerful protection against the disappointments incident to a husband's absence from home, or his occupation when at home to her apparent neglect. It will enable her to bear up with cheerful countenance and hopeful heart, when her immediate surroundings are not such as might inspire that frame of mind. It will be a great help to herself and an aid to her husband, and often supply the first links in the chain that will lead to profitable and happy re-union at the end of a day's toil on both sides.

CHAPTER III.

AT HOME AS A WIFE.

WHY should the sister-wife acquire the power of self-sustenance in the truth? Not that she may shake herself free from her husband's influence and set up on her own behalf; but that she may realize in the privations incident to her position, that help, encouragement and happiness, which it was designed the conjugal relation should yield, but which it may fail at all times to give.

To attain the necessary degree of self-sustenance, we must remember that the highest object of life is to please Him who has called us to be saints: perfecting holiness in ourselves through the fear and love and obedience of Him. The sister married in the Lord, has her part to perform, and frequently an arduous and onerous one. She requires to be strengthened inwardly to sustain her in the discharge of it.

If she depends too much upon her husband, she runs the risk of disappointment; and whatever disappoints, is a hindrance and source of weakness, that must, if possible, be avoided. She loves her husband, and desires his company. He loves his wife, and desires her welfare in all things. It would be his choice to spend his leisure time with her; but, the claims of duty he cannot disregard: and these frequently call him from her side. The necessity of growing in the truth also requires him to withdraw himself sometimes for study. Now, let not the sister who has to forego ordinary home pleasure for the truth's sake, imagine that she is in a special degree aggrieved. The experience of the sisterhood generally in this respect, will be in many instances similar to her own. The problem to be solved is, how so to deport herself in the evil inevitably attendant upon this state of trial, as to secure the blessing of the age to come.

IN THE HOUSEHOLD.

That the sister-wife should be able to sustain her part is highly necessary. Her position in the household is an all-important and influential one. Her influence for good or evil is great. If she will but rise to the dignity of her calling in the truth, and to the honour, responsibility and power attaching to it; as the helper of one of like precious faith, to whom she may prove a true helper unto the kingdom of God, and as being herself a candidate for eternal life; her labour will be ennobled in her own estimation, and she will be greatly encouraged in the work of overcoming the evil in herself and around her. Should she be

tempted to think her position too obscure, and her sphere of action too limited to be of any account; let her remember, that it is only in proportion to the means at our disposal that we shall have to render account. It was the servant with only one talent who failed through not using it. Let us take warning, and make the best of even small opportunities, lest by any means we should fail of the grace of God.

THE DAILY READING.

On no account should a sister permit a day to pass without her daily Bible reading. The mind is so liable to be affected by what is passing around, that the things of the Spirit grow dim if not continually presented in a direct form. There is nothing in the world, to remind us of the more enduring, but as yet unseen, things of the Spirit, and the only means we have of retaining and deepening our impressions of them, is by contact with what has been left on record for our special benefit in this respect.

Let it not be said by any, that they have not time to read every day. It is possible for the busiest hand or head to spare ten minutes, at least, every day for receiving into the mind the refreshing ideas preserved for our instruction and comfort, which in being transferred to the mental tablet, become a stimulating power in the performance of duty; and though small, this daily dropping from the pure fountain will sustain spiritual life; when without, it the mind would of necessity become parched and dry.

In the endeavour to secure this most necessary daily bread, the *Bible Companion* will be found of great service, especially where the time for reading is limited. Being provided in it with an indicated portion, there is no time wasted in the consideration of what would be best to read, and there is also this advantage, that the reader is conducted through the whole of the Bible in a given time; whereas in adopting other modes of reading, in all probability some parts never would come under notice at all. The reading with the *Bible Companion* need not in any way interfere with the more extended study of the word or the reading of other books where time permits; but it will at all events secure, in the midst of a busy life, that refreshment of spirit, and growth in knowledge, without which we cannot hope to progress in spiritual life.

THE BEST TIME FOR READING.

The morning, or at least early in the day, is the most suitable time, so far as profitableness is concerned. The mind is

more free to receive impressions than when the business of the day is in full swing. At a later period, the mind is generally too much occupied to give that close attention which is necessary to give the reading of the word that power that is desirable. And again there is this advantage in reading early in the day, that the mind is sustained throughout the day's occupation by the impetus received from the reading.

The duties of some may not admit of morning reading. Each must wisely determine for herself at what time of the day she can best secure the benefit; and once the practice is begun, it is necessary to persevere. For this some determination is necessary. Put not off your reading to a time when, from pre-occupation or weariedness, your mind is unfitted to profit by the exercise. It may not be always practicable for the married sister to secure her reading at the same time or hour of the day; still, if she persevere in the attempt, even in spite of hindrances—the presence of little ones not excepted—she will be astonished at what she can accomplish, and will surely secure the prize, and reap enduring benefit.

Apparently unfavourable circumstances may be turned to excellent account in this way. It has not unfrequently happened that a mother with a young infant has secured more opportunities for reading, than under ordinary circumstances; because she has snatched her book whenever she sat down to suckle her baby, and so availed herself of an opportunity to increase her knowledge which might not otherwise have presented itself; and which yet is overlooked or thought impossible by many. As her family increases, her ingenuity in this matter will be brought into play. She will devise ways and means for continuing this most indispensable aid to sustenance in the path of life. Persevering in it, she will the more and more easily continue to secure the privilege of reading, because, as time goes on, she will learn to prize it above all price, and to regard it as a thing as necessary as daily food. She will find herself trained at last, rather to forego something else than lose her reading.

ATTENTION TO HEALTH.

Next in importance to keeping the mind invigorated by the things of the spirit, is the duty of attention to the laws that govern physical well-being. If we can maintain a fair degree of health (and this is about all we can hope to do in this evil state), we shall greatly increase the possibility of cheerfulness and vigour in the performance of the daily duties. It is astonishing how much is in peoples' power in this matter, and it is lamentable that so much neglect should prevail with the consequent reaping

of much needless debility and languor, and unfitness for spiritual hardihood. The bulk of sisters, it is true, have little time to study or opportunity to put in practice the laws that govern our physical economy. But there are certain simple aids to health which are within the reach of all more or less, which, if persistently practised, would tend much to lighten the evils that most easily beset this mortal frame, and interfere with the earnest desire to triumph over difficulties. It is to these simple aids that I wish to refer. They have a decided spiritual bearing, though it may not appear so on the surface.

THE MORNING BATH.

The morning bath ought to be a standing institution in every household. The benefits of it can only be estimated by those who enjoy its daily use. In this as with the daily reading, none need say they cannot spare time. It takes far less time than most people waste in bedside dawdle, and it is one of those things that the more quickly it is performed, the better. Nor can it be objected to as a luxury which many cannot afford. It is not necessary to go to any expense at all. A properly constructed bath is, of course, best if procurable, but the benefit of morning ablution can be secured with no other appliance than a closed door and an ordinary wash hand basin. With this, a sponge, piece of flannel or wet towel, the whole body may be quickly wetted (bit by bit, if one is delicate), and then briskly dried with a good rough towel. The action produces a healthful glow, and diffuses general vigour through all the faculties.

The muscular exercise which this process compels morning by morning, is no insignificant part of the benefit; and will greatly tend to promote bodily strength and general health, without which the finest accomplishments are useless tinsel. The courageous performance of this duty, make one feel impervious to the discomfort usually experienced in beginning a new day.

In many instances where a mother feels in a morning more like going to bed than getting up, through a disturbed night with her baby, this simple performance wipes off her weariness wonderfully, and enables her to grapple with the morning's duties much more comfortably to herself than she could otherwise have done. Persevered in, it would certainly tell beneficially on the health, and would prove in this respect a valuable aid in the battle of life.

OUTDOOR EXERCISE.

A state of robust health is impossible if a sister is within doors the whole time. Consider that the life is in the blood,

and that the blood depends upon the air for its purity and vigour: and it will be seen why so many are pining and weakly, who never stir out of doors days and days at a time. If sisters were aware of the advantage which results from a walk in the open air (and they ought with their enlightenment, to be aware of it), they surely would make greater efforts in this direction. It is painfully evident that many droop and suffer in various ways, from staying all the time within doors. Let them try the experiment of a run out every day. Even a quarter of an hour every day will do them more good than a whole month once a year by the seaside, if all the rest of the time is spent in the house.

Domestic purchases will always give abundant occasion for daily walks; and if these are out of her way, let her make a visit where she may be of service—say to an invalid (just for a few minutes)—her walk will do her a double benefit. She will bring back with her the pleasant reflection that someone besides herself has benefited by her outing; and the healthful stimulus of both will be felt afterwards.

Where no such errand presents itself, and she has nothing specially calling her out, don't let her yield to the temptation of staying in the house. Let her take her walk by any means; it will give her the opportunity of inhaling the invigorating air outside, and if she be within reach of green fields and shady lanes, let her enjoy the sweet season of contact with the soothing quietude so conducive to meditation. She will return greatly renewed in her purpose, and increased in her ability to pursue the steady way of life, in preference to the empty pursuits of the world around her. She will, in this matter of going out, have to be very determined; for she will frequently have to encounter obstacles, in disinclination, and in the many claims of household matters requiring her attention; and if she give in, she will soon find herself in the weary valley again.

Let her determine, as in the case of reading, at all hazards, to secure this great boon—this almost indispensable condition to a successful walk in this Spirit. How much better is she able to meet the demands of her family cares after she has had a run out for a short time, than after a day's stewing in the house over some troublesome piece of work, upon which she has exhausted nearly all her patience. And how much better able she is to bear her husband company at the close of her day's work, if she has thus healthfully varied her occupation during the day.

Let her try the experiment, and she will find growing upon her the power to minister to and to bless others, instead of being a sufferer in want of being ministered unto. Even if her

husband be faulty, and remiss in his profession of the truth and practice thereof, she will by this power of self-sustenance, be able to maintain her own position in the truth; and by her exemplary behaviour, may assist her husband into a more excellent way. It will also be of very great service to her in the training of her children. If she first be able to rule herself, she will be the more able wisely to rule those under her.

MANAGEMENT OF THE CHILDREN.

This is a matter in which unanimity with her husband will be more precious than rubies. When husband and wife are divided in opinion as to the treatment of their children, it is an unhappy thing for the children and for themselves also. Such a difference, besides making a proper government of the children impossible, will probably result in their loss of respect for one, or perhaps both of their parents.

It too often happens that the mother is guided solely by her maternal instincts, instead of allowing her judgment to decide what is best for the child. When punishment is really called for, and the father would judiciously administer it, her sympathetic interference entirely spoils the wholesome effect of the punishment, making the child feel that by the infliction of the chastisement, it has been aggrieved, instead of merely receiving the merited penalty of transgression.

Then the father is naturally irritated at the lack of wisdom in his wife. It will be well if he be able to bear with her in this weakness, and endeavour to show her how injurious to the best interests of their children her interference will prove. If she allows her judgment to rule, she will have gained a victory over herself, and a new source of thankfulness; for if husband and wife are united in the hallowed work of bringing up their little ones in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, they may look forward in hope to a full reward of their joint labour in this respect, in the age to come, when father and son, mother and daughter, shall rejoice together in the kingdom of God. Even now, there will be a reward in the up-growing of tractable and intelligent sons and daughters, interested in all that concerns the household.

It will be well for the sister to remember that while it is quite true that our maternal instincts are implanted by an All-wise Creator (and most wisely, too, for without them how could a mother endure the toil and incessant unrest which attend the rearing of her little treasures), the natural instincts—every one of them, have to be brought into subjection to, and regulated by the truth. *Crucified* is the word Paul uses, and if we consider

what that means, we can understand how it is that we cannot follow in safety the dictates of the merely natural impulses.

Of course, the same rule applies to the father equally with the mother, only, in such a matter, it is more likely that the father would be guided by his judgment, simply for this reason, that men as a rule more readily act from reason than women. The instincts of the latter are much more quick, and where the sympathies are fully engaged, they are liable to act from impulse, where men would more coolly reflect before acting. Still, both will require to exercise in themselves that control which the truth inculcates, and to extend to each other that forbearance and consideration which must ever be needed while we remain in this imperfect state, entailing upon us as it does, in spite of higher aspirations, much weakness and failing by the way.

It is an enjoyable sight (it has been called the most beautiful picture on earth), to see husband and wife united in mutual love and respect (as heirs of immortality), with their children growing up around them, taught by precept and example the fear of the Lord. Such a home is a true haven of rest for the wearied spirit, and a well of continual refreshing in the journey through the dry and parched land of a world lying in wickedness. Such it is intended to be; for the apostle Paul could use no more fitting simile to represent the close and endearing union existing between Christ and his faithful brethren. I have something more to say of the ways and means by which the married sister may be aided in successfully fulfilling her part.

CHAPTER IV.

DEPARTMENT TOWARDS HUSBAND AND CHILDREN.

PAUL tells us that in Christ "there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. iii. 28). But this truth is misapplied if it is allowed to interfere with the social relations of the present state. Whilst we are all called to the kingdom of God, our positions in life, meanwhile, may be widely different. Paul, for instance, acknowledges the relationship of master and servant among the saints. He does not direct a man when he receives the truth to cease being a master, neither is he who is called, being a servant, to cease his service on that account. They who have believing masters are to count them worthy of more honour because they are brethren; and a brother who finds himself in the position of a master, has it enjoined upon him to give his servants that which is just and equal, dealing considerately with them, always remembering that he himself has a master in heaven.

So is it with the relation of husband and wife. As candidates for eternal life on the same principle of faith and obedience to him, they are upon an equal footing; but in relation to each other, Paul informs us that the husband is the head, and that the wife ought to be subject to him. Their union in the truth does not obliterate the natural relation established at the beginning, in which the woman, as the weaker vessel, is to accept a subordinate relation to the man.

If I were writing for the husbands, I would stay to point out that, with his special privileges, greater responsibilities are proportionately his. He is entrusted with the headship in the family, on the supposition that he is capable of exercising it with wisdom and kindness. In fulfilling the responsibilities of his privileged position, he has set before him an exalted and perfect pattern by which to be guided, even that of our Lord himself, in the love and solicitude manifested by him for those who are called out by the gospel to be his bride-elect. Even to the giving of himself for her, he showed his care and anxiety for her welfare, and desire that she might appear without spot and blameless. So, says Paul, ought men to love their wives, and to nourish and cherish them, "even as the Lord the church." Then Paul as one of the Bride-elect, says, "The love of Christ constraineth us." This shows how it is between husband and wife, when they are in the right relation to each other. The husband loves his wife and his love *constrains* her. It is positive pleasure to her

when constrained by his love, to be subject to him. This subjection brings no trial; it imposes no burden upon her. Love, as the moving spring of her actions, prevents all chafe. She instinctively takes her place by his side, a true help-meet, and yet the weaker vessel requiring his protective care and sympathetic love.

MISTAKEN HUSBANDS.

But all husbands do not come up to this standard. We must not expect perfection yet. It sometimes happens that the husband is overbearing, and forgets the conditions which engender a loving and ready service on the part of his wife. He neglects the working out of his pattern, and takes to admonishing his wife about some flaw in her attitude, instead of acting the part that would remove the flaw.

Paul nowhere enjoins upon the husband to assert his headship over his wife; but exhorts him to meet his wife's loving and spontaneous subjection by following the example of Christ, with the great love with which he loved the church. However, to follow this, would lead me out of my province. I must leave him to think it up for himself, hoping he may, as the result, approve the more excellent way. I direct my thoughts and counsel to the sister-wife who finds herself mated with such a one.

Her task will be a difficult one, but let her not quail before it. Let her by all means endeavour to fulfil in a becoming manner the duties and responsibilities of her position. Let the dignity and patience of her meek and quiet spirit, be the means of heaping coals of fire upon the head of her faulty companion, if such she have. Let her remember that a "soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger." If she has a Nabal to deal with, she can at least, like Abigail of old, shew herself to be a woman of good understanding; and by her wisdom may, like her, avert much evil that would otherwise come upon her household.

THE ASSISTANCE OF PRAYER.

One very important element of success in fighting with these and all other difficulties, she will find in prayer. There are many instances on record of women who feared God, and whose prayers were heard and answered according to their request. Their lives were like our own, made up of the commonplaces and ordinary occurrences of daily duty in the household. The desires and aspirations that animated their breasts were the same as animate ourselves. They were subject to like passions as we are;

were like ourselves encompassed with weakness; yet their prayers were heard, because they put their trust in God. When we call to remembrance the examples on record where help was visibly vouchsafed to those who prayed to God in the hour of need, we do well to consider whether we individually take full advantage of this blessed privilege. True it is that the promises of God belong specially to the nation of Israel; but are we less Israel than the Israel of old? Do we not know that by our obedience to the truth, we are adopted into the family of him to whom the promises were made, and are therefore no longer aliens; but of the household of faith? This we do know, and ought therefore to live up to the fact that God is to us the hearer and answerer of prayer.

We cannot come to the door of the tabernacle or the temple, like the women of old, with our offerings. We have a new way of approach, even Jesus who lives at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, our high priest and intercessor. We are assured by those whom Jesus sent to spread his name, that all who come unto God in this new and living way, will obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. This we have on the authority of Paul (Heb. iv. 16). How often we feel that this is just what we want—a refuge in the time of trouble, "help in the time of need!" Surely, amid the accumulating cares of life, feeling oftentimes the need of wisdom to guide, of courage and strength to pursue the steady path of duty amid conflicting elements, we shall do unwisely if we neglect to retire to our closets and make our requests known unto God. He will hear us when we pray, for he cannot lie, and He has said, "Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee and thou shalt glorify me" (Psalm 1. 15). Paul also encourages the same attitude of mind toward God. He says, "In everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving."

Many songs of thanksgiving are on record, of those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious and full of compassion. How delightful to rejoice before the Lord with such a song of thanksgiving upon our lips as this: "The Lord is my strength and my shield: my heart trusted in Him and I am helped; therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth, and with my song will I praise Him" (Psalm xxviii. 7). Let the adopted daughters of the house of Israel, in these latter days, follow the example of the holy women of old, in supplicating the Most High in whatever matters they have need; let them be helped, and let their songs of thanksgiving ascend. The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous

runneth into it and are safe. With such a strong refuge, they may trust to be sustained.

The work to be accomplished in all the travail of life is one: that of being found worthy at last for the Master's use. The dignity and honour of the position to which we are called, explain the amount of preparedness required of each one. This preparedness requires all our diligence and will give us continually something upon which to occupy our thoughts. It is a preparedness having many elements. The grand result is to bring our sympathies and affections into entire harmony with the things that are of God.

THE CHILDREN.

After herself, a mother's spiritual solicitude will be for her children. The question has sometimes been raised whether we ought to teach our children to pray. I am persuaded that with a thorough acquaintance with the Scriptures, such a question never could be raised. We have the apostolic injunction to bring the children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Now, in what way are we to carry out this injunction? What shape shall our instructions take? Shall we not tell our children of God's wonderful works in the days of old, of His goodness to those who trusted and obeyed Him, of His wrath and power manifested upon wicked men who feared Him not; of His goodness to us—that everything we have and enjoy comes from Him; that He makes the sun to shine and the rain to fall that we may be supplied with food from the good things which the field and garden yield; and telling them of these which come on the just and unjust alike, shall we omit to tell them of the time, close at hand, when He will send Jesus to establish a glorious state of things upon earth, in which only those will share His love who obey and trust Him now? Surely not. If there be any preference, it will be shown for the unsearchable riches to which our children, equally with ourselves, may attain. Such daily instruction will not fail to provoke within them a desire to be among those whom God will love and bless in the day of the manifestation of His sons. This desire will find expression in their talk. We delight to hear them express such desires to ourselves, and shall we restrain them, if they wish to express them to God? We teach them to thank an earthly friend who bestows upon them a gift, and consider it a breach of good manners if they omit the ceremonial, and shall we teach them to be less respectful to the Heavenly Giver of every good thing? To this it is said by some "but the children are not in a position to approach God; none but those who believe the truth

and have been immersed, can acceptably pray to God." As regards the eternal relationship of sons, this is true, but shall we shut them out of the relation that is actually theirs? Are they not creatures of His hand? May they not thank Him for their being as such? Are they not possible candidates for sonship? May they not, like Cornelius, present their aspirations in prayer to be guided into that relation? Shall we forbid a child to say, "O Lord, I am a poor child of the dust. I desire to be an heir of life everlasting, through Christ, Lead me into the way," If a sinner's "Lord be merciful to me a sinner," was heard, who shall shut the mouth of an instructed child who is daily progressing to maturer knowledge of divine things? Much hurtful neglect has come from wrong views on this question: or rather the mis-application of a right view.

We know that God heareth not sinners, and that the prayers of the wicked are an abomination to Him; but the children of believers are not of that class. The "sinner" and the "wicked" of these statements are of that class that are given over to transgression, and it is with reason that they should not be heard; but our children are the seed of the righteous, whom the Lord has promised to bless. They are the children of the household, and are under training for becoming acceptable worshippers when their understandings are sufficiently developed to comprehend what is required of them. Meanwhile, when their hearts are stirred to thank Him for the good things they enjoy, for the food they eat, and for the comforts of home and the beautiful world outside, let us not restrain their thanksgiving; but rather teach and encourage them to acknowledge God in all these things. Christ took an interest in the children when he was upon earth, contrary to the expectations of his disciples, who sought to prevent the mothers intruding their children upon his attention. He took them up in his arms and blessed them, and surely he would not be less pleased now with the effort to develop their minds in a direction pleasing to him. God himself, we are told, hears the ravens when they cry (Psalm cxlvii. 9) and the young lions roar after their prey and seek their meat from God (Psalm civ. 21). If He is not unmindful of the inferior creatures of His power, doubtless He is not regardless of those to whom a higher destiny is offered.

We have much to encourage us in the prosecution of our arduous toil in the rearing of children. We have great encouragement in the hope of their ultimately attaining to immortality, either at the coming of the Lord, or should that glorious event take place before they attain to the obedience of faith, then at a future period. Apart from this, our efforts are without object or recompense. To accomplish this object, an enlightened daughter of Sarah will make every effort.

Our position in the matter is peculiar in living at a time when we may expect the immediate return of the Lord. With some, this is an anxiety. It need not be. If the Lord come before our children have attained the years of responsibility, they will doubtless be incorporated in the great work to be accomplished among the seed of Abraham according to the flesh, with whom they are upon a level, as the children of those who have been adopted into the family of faithful Abraham. What a great incentive this is to have the children well instructed in the truth. In this relation, the Sunday school appears in its true light, as an aid in the work of making the children acquainted with the things of God. With their heads and hearts full of these things, looking, like ourselves, with intense longing for the time when all families of the earth shall be blessed in Abraham and his seed, can we refrain from entertaining the hope that they shall live through the time of trouble incident to the setting up of the kingdom, and be gathered with the Israel according to the flesh, to be a blessing in their midst, and that ultimately upon the same principle as all others who have attained to immortality, namely, that of faith and obedience during a life of probation, they shall obtain life in the perfect state, which lies beyond the *aión* of the kingdom? The hope and aspiration that she may be fitting her children for such a destiny, fills the mother's hands with noble work, and the remembrance that she is entrusted with the training of those, who by early lessons may be led into the way of life from which they will not afterwards depart, will be to her an incentive, a solace, and a stay when strength and patience may be sorely tried.

THE DRESSING OF THE CHILDREN.

Then in the dressing of her children, the effects of the blessed hope will be seen. The sister-wife and mother will no more accept the popular standing in the outward adorning of her children, than in the formation of her hope. She will regulate this like her own attire, by the maxims of the high calling. She will not be anxious that her little ones shall appear in full feather as exponents of the newest fashion. She will appreciate a due attention to health and cleanliness in their attire, but she will teach them, as she has come to be instructed herself, that the vanities and follies attendant upon gay dressing are forms of the evil which everywhere prevails; and that though beautiful and attractive to the youthful eye, they are to be eschewed as something calculated to engender forgetfulness of God and the coming of Christ for which we are all preparing.

Moderation in all that pertains to the things of the present is the rule Paul gives, and it is well that he has given us that rule, for if blessed with abundance, we might think we were at liberty to please ourselves as to how we appropriated His bounty. The rich are responsible to the Master for the use of what they have. One of the Master's most continual instructions is that the rich are to share with the less favored who may be in need, the abundance which they enjoy. He will be their judge as to whether this is bountifully or sparingly done. The poor are exalted by the hope of the gospel, but still made stewards of their smaller things. The sense of duty performed, whether high or low, brings with it the highest satisfaction, and is about the truest pleasure we can enjoy now, apart from the contemplation of the truth in its height and depth and communion with the Deity, than which no higher enjoyment can be conceived. The patient continuance in well-doing, does ever and anon bring a sense of satisfaction to the mind which nothing else can, because, in no other path can we hope for the blessing of God, either now or hereafter. So then let us not weary in the well doing, knowing that in due season we shall reap if we faint not.

CHAPTER V.

LIFE TOWARDS OTHERS.

“**H**OLY women of old” were wont to illustrate their faith by their works outside their own home. They sought and found a variety of ways in which to forward the work of the Lord, each in her own generation. The fear of the Lord was the moving spring of action with all of them, prompting the service which the surroundings of each required. We may be thankful for the record of their deeds. They are recorded for our instruction and encouragement, that we also in our own later days may emulate them in their love and service.

Our manner of life is different from theirs in some respects. The usages of the countries in which we live are widely different from those of our Eastern sisters of old. Yet there are many points of resemblance to be traced between our experiences and theirs. We stand related to the many present things, in the same way as they did. We have the same natural sympathy with things seen and temporal which they had. We also have their hope of something gloriously better in the days yet to come. They endured as seeing Him who is invisible, because of their hope in his word of promise; we also are called upon to do the same. They experienced the faithfulness of “a faithful Creator” when they cried unto Him, and obediently walked in His ways. It will be our fault if we do not the same. We may share the blessings they enjoyed if we share their faith, and toil for the same noble end.

We may not be called, like Miriam or Jael, to sing the song of victory over the proud foe slain and vanquished, and the hosts of the Lord triumphant; but we may bring their spirit into play in vanquishing other foes, who, if not met in the name of the Lord and His strength, will be too much for us. There were those who laboured privately, whose work was approved when brought to the priest for the service of the tabernacle. God gave them wisdom, and the wisdom they received they devoted to His service with acceptance. The spreading of the table for the prophet, or the refreshing water hospitality brought for the feet of the stranger, were simple acts, but *accepted*; and that is all the greatest among those born of women can hope to attain unto—acceptance before the Lord.

When we consider what the equivalent in our own country and mode of life would be to the many simple but loving services rendered by the God-fearing women of old, we can see that the difference between their mode of service and ours is only a difference of form. Had we been in their circumstances, we should have done

as they did. Had they been in our surroundings, they would have found our way to serve the Lord. The impelling motive in the saints of all ages is the same. The aim is one; the triumph the same except in form: the triumph is one of faith and obedience over unfriendly circumstances. When the company of the redeemed is completed and mustered, they will be of one heart and one mind, in this, that they will have been all tried and purified, and perfected by the discipline to which their faithful service subjected them.

We are, in a sense, permitted to come nearer to God—the great object of our fear and love—than they were. This approach is through Christ, of whom they had not heard except in promise. His manifestation of the Father has drawn us, as it were, more closely into the attitude of children; and with Christ as our elder brother, occupying the position of high-priest and advocate at God’s right hand, our confidence is greatly sustained. He knows what our difficulties are as “daughters of the Lord God Almighty,” living in an evil world. He has experienced them. He has gone through the preparatory ordeal of trial and endured it as we are called upon to endure it, in view of the joy awaiting victory. In Him we have a helper such as those in the days of old knew not of, for he lives, having been tempted, to succour them that are tempted (Heb. ii. 18). We are even better off than those who lived contemporarily with Him, and companied about with him; for they were not able to appreciate Him as we are enabled to do in the full light of apostolic revelation. They did not understand His mission as we can now, looking back upon the fulfilment of much that was inexplicable to them. In the study of His sayings and doings, we have much of the love of God to contemplate that was before hidden. Thus, though we have no visible manifestation of His power in the earth, nor of His presence among us personally, yet by the exercise of faith in what He has caused to be written of His mind and will, we can steadily pursue our way, toiling on in a hope well founded, that at the time appointed, He will reveal His son to bring about that glorious state of things so long promised, and the hope of which has animated the saints in all generations.

“OUR WORKS”

Having, then, the hope that inspired the holy women of old, let our works be of the same character. In the days of the tabernacle, the wise-hearted women busied themselves in weaving the variegated and significantly-designed curtains to enclose it, and the various coverings required, internally and externally, for the hallowed place. They worked skilfully and with willing hands, and their service was accepted. It must have been a delightful occupation, so directly identifying the workers with the service of the Most

High, and yet we know from Paul's teaching that whatever service is undertaken as unto God, is accepted, however obscure. "Whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall be received of the Lord, whether he be bond or free" (Eph. vi. 8).

There is much for us to do that will identify us with God's work in His sight (and it is enough that *He* recognise our work). Wherever there are brethren and sisters, there ought to be (and if they are true, there will be) a light stand in the midst of the surrounding darkness, and the service of this light-bearing will afford interest and work for each one that bears not the name of Christ in vain. There is first the duty of assembling together on the first day of the week, to break bread in remembrance of him.

If this memorial is celebrated in true love and remembrance of an absent one whose return is greatly longed for, it will be truly a "time of refreshing." To none will it prove more so than to the sister whose toil during the week interferes, to some extent, with the realisation to her own mind of the joy which lies hidden in the comforting words of promise to all the faithful who are in Christ Jesus. Her toil, and labour, and anxieties are known above and provided for; but she requires a little quiet to recall the blessings which are hers. She forgets sometimes, in the multiplicity of her duties as a wife, as a mother, as a sister, and as a friend, that there is cause for joy even now, amidst the toil and the darkness. This is brought anew to her mind in the quietude of the morning meeting—the silent communing, the word of brotherly exhortation, the song of praise and thanksgivings, the united prayer. Her mind is tranquilized and once more re-assured of the good hope, and she is made to realise more vividly the connection between present toil and future glory. She will not be true to herself, if she allows trifles to detain her at home; she will rather plan her arrangements with the view of securing this season of soul-reviving, that she may, by its aid, renew her journey like the weary traveller, after he has rested and partaken of the brook by the way. Christ has indicated the manner in which he wishes us to manifest our love to him. He says, "If ye love me, *keep my commandments.*" In his absence, if we love him, we shall delight to think about him, and call to remembrance what he did and said when he was here, and shall be most anxious to comply with his own prescribed mode of remembering him.

We feel the dying wish of a dear friend to be imperative and sacred, and is not this the dying wish of our best friend and brother, that we should break bread and drink wine in remembrance of him, till he come again? It is. And in the observance of this dying request, we are reminded of the depth of his love, which culminated in the shedding of his blood for us; and we have also in it a pledge of his return—a link that binds us to him "till he

come." Who then would be absent, when this ordinance of his own appointment is being observed? The very engagement itself reminds us that he really lives—that though unseen by us, he is cognisant of all our thoughts and deeds. It is worth considerable sacrifice to be there. We should think so, if he were personally and visibly present, and it is, doubtless, well pleasing to him that we show our faith in him, by thus recognising him, and doing him honour in his absence.

If it is difficult for a sister to attend the meeting, the more will she please him in overcoming difficulties for his sake. Then, in the gathering together of brethren and sisters, there is the opportunity afforded of shewing our mutual interest in each other's welfare, and, by this means, increasing our love and sympathy as members of the same family. This knowledge of each other, and the circumstances to which each stands related, will furnish us with a clue to the best means of serving the Lord in the persons of His representatives—His brethren and sisters. He has given us to understand that whatever is done to them, He will consider as having been done to Himself. Some stand in need of comfort and encouragement in difficult surroundings: some want to be helped out of the snares by which they may be entangled; some want a little sunshine thrown upon their solitary path; and others stand in need of the practical aid that goes further than saying, "Be warmed; be filled." In all these phases of life, we discern the opportunity providentially afforded to all that exercise themselves unto Godliness, according to the ability which God has given them. One is gifted after this manner, another after that. Let us all be fully persuaded that we have something to account for, and, from this point of view, let us *do* whatever is within reach, however small, whether direct or indirect, that will minister to the profit of the brotherhood, or further the work of the truth.

There are many claims upon the loving heart and hands of a married sister with a family. Yet, let her use the situation wisely. Let her not make her household duties a reason for neglecting spiritual duties, but rather a reason why she should strive and contrive to avail herself of all opportunities of improvement such as are presented in meetings of the brethren, whether for the proclamation of the truth to the public, or for mutual edification in the word.

We cannot sustain vigorous spiritual life without spiritual sustenance. The things of the spirit must be brought under our especial and frequent notice. They will not come to us spontaneously. We, therefore, ought to give the more earnest heed, availing ourselves of every help. Therefore, in addition to private study of the word, the busy sister-wife will once a week be glad to spare an hour from the work which would otherwise engage her attention

at home, for the exclusive contemplation of those things which are at present unseen, but more real than domestic realities, and the true appreciation of which requires the concentration of our thoughts upon them.

She will be glad of such an opportunity to aid the inmost desire of her heart, which is that she may do honour to Christ now, and render herself worthy of his acceptance when he comes. In this condition of mind, how well will she fit herself for the many duties required of her in filling up the measure of her days. In the pleasant duty of visiting among her brethren and sisters, her influence will be healthful. She will be a blessing. She will present a contrast to the tattler and the busy-body, who forgetful of the spirit of her calling—if she was ever brought under its power—delights to go and rehearse the latest gossip, or to pull her neighbour to pieces; for whom the Master has in reserve no word of commendation.

The visit of a true sister will turn to good account in those mutual visitations and rejoicings in the truth, which are natural among those of like precious faith. Such interchange of hope in the things promised, and shortly to be realized, will greatly quicken faith and courage in both visited and visitor. Specially will this be the case in visiting the sick and afflicted. The sister who knows experimentally the sweetness of the promises, both as regards His paternal care of us in this life, and of what He has in store for us in the future, can from the treasury of the Spirit created within her by the word, follow the apostolic example of ministering the same comfort wherewith she herself is comforted of God. Where material help is needed, she will be ready, and if not sufficient of herself for the occasion, she will seek the co-operation of others like-minded, and be able to relieve the immediate wants of the afflicted. The poor among us we shall always have. Our Lord has told us so, perhaps to test our loyalty to him who deigns to acknowledge, in every poor brother who is rich in faith, a representative of himself. The people of the Lord, in the days of old, were required to give so much of their substance to Him according as He prospered them. The claims of the cause of Christ, at present entrusted to the Saints, require a similar sacrifice and service. We are not called upon to bring it openly to the tabernacle or temple. We live under a different dispensation, when we are called upon to do good continually, as we have opportunity. And this good-doing, a true woman will do privately as the Lord has commanded. She will avoid the publicity of "subscription lists," which are on a par with the ostentatious almsgiving of the Pharisees in our Lord's day. His exhortation to his disciples, in contradistinction to such practices is, "Let not your right hand know what your left hand doeth."

In this spirit much service will be performed which only the judgment-seat will reveal, and, it may be, that such service may often be misinterpreted by contemporaries. To this we must be indifferent. They are unaware of the secret motives which would explain all. They may suspect a lack of taste where the surroundings are due to a decision to avoid spiritual hindrances. Ornaments for person and house might be not less gratifying to the obedient sister than to her carnally-minded critics, but she refrains from the purchase, believing she will better do her part as a steward, by using her lord's property in some other way than merely pleasing the eye.

There is great danger in "the lust of the eye and the pride of life." These lusts which are followed so entirely in the world, we are to crucify. They are not conducive to the development of the mind Godwards, but the reverse. A wise sister will not make it an object to acquire the gewgaws which, as a rule, are only used by their possessors to excite, by their exhibition, the admiration of her visitors. Visitors who can be entertained in this way are dangerous, and their commendation a snare. Rather let us, by the absence of such ornaments be set down as bores by those who don't know the truth, than endanger our standing with the King, who esteems "of great price" the ornaments of a meek and quiet spirit. Let us be misunderstood by our fellows, but not by Him who has written our name in His book of remembrance.

A FINE HOUSE AND WASTED TIME

Let us choose to deny ourselves the questionable pleasure of surrounding ourselves with household ornaments, which consume such an amount of precious time in the taking care of them. We can spend the time to better purpose. We need not seek to please our neighbours in the keeping of our houses. Our standard differs from theirs. A sister's calling requires her to regard her house as a convenience in this wilderness state, and not as a thing she is to live for. It is not with her a principal object of attention. She will be careful to keep a clean house and a comfortable house, but a stylish house she has neither time nor taste for. What God requires of her will demand the time, and the skill, and the means, which a fine house would consume at her hands. The will of Christ has the first place in her affection. She looks at some women who profess to be Christ's, and yet have no time for anything beyond the demands of the house; things of God find no place with them. Bright furniture and spotless carpets seem more to them than Christ fellow-shipped in deeds of kindness to comfortless hearts, and the gospel preached to the perishing. The true daughters of Sarah reverse all this, and dispense

with much that is considered indispensable in worldly households, because they find that to give such things the attention considered genteel, they must neglect the claims of higher things. Their principle is *pre-eminence to the things that belong to God*. This, indeed, is the only safe rule to follow. It may separate us oftentimes from the "respectable" people so called, but it will place us in the company of apostles and prophets, who were at a discount in their day, because they esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. And we have the joy of knowing that if it gives us their company in the present bitterness, it will ensure for us their glorious society in the day of the manifestation of the sons of God. If we have now the answer of a good conscience, we may indulge in the glorious hope of sharing the honour which awaits all who have in like manner laboured and not fainted. Where then will be the plans and patience bestowed upon the frivolities of fashionable life?

CHAPTER VI.

THE GOAL OF A WOMAN'S LIFE IN CHRIST.

BY our works we shall be judged. The remembrance of this will greatly influence the management of our affairs. Those affairs are somewhat different from a brother's; but faithfulness in them is, on the part of the sister, of equal importance in God's sight with his. As he will not be called to account for not acting a sister's part, so will she not be accountable for that which does not come within her sphere; but an account she will have to render as a faithful sister-steward.

The bearing of this will be very visible in a sister's life. She looks around on the busy world, and beholds her sisters in the flesh, engrossed in the concerns of the present moment only. In scarcely any does she discover a recognition of a future life or a present over-ruling Diety. All press eagerly forward as if no other than the present time could have a possible bearing on human existence. Worrying and wearying, and beguiling themselves with the passing day, the joys they devise for themselves are of the fleeting and unsatisfactory order if realized at all. Too often there is entire failure, and as years advance, the failure is written in countenances made expressionless or deeply furrowed by care.

Now, the tendencies of human nature are somewhat similar in all generations. The sister who has entered the race-course for eternal life is no exception, and if not on her guard, those tendencies will get the better of her, as life advances. It is important she should remember that she has just once to go through this life. She cannot have a second chance, and the missing of her way in this sweeps away all blessedness beyond. The claims of the present have a legitimate place. The difficulty lies in discerning this place, and strictly keeping those claims there. To succeed in this will indeed be to secure the object and aim of our high calling in the truth.

"PLEASURE."

The fascination of the present evil world are usually powerful with the weaker sex. There is a present relish about them which pleases the inexperienced mind. Those who have learnt to be wise will let them pass. They are pleasures too short for those who long for immortality, and too dearly bought when enjoyed at the risk of God's displeasure and our own hurt. The danger is greater than the simple know. It is not the immediate effect of an individual

act of participation in the world's pleasures that is to be considered; it is what it may easily lead to in associations formed, and the fostering of an inferior taste to the weakening of such as the truth creates within us.

Then there is that social rivalry which still more easily draws even wise women into its coils, in which the foolish votaries of fashion put themselves to immense trouble to commend themselves to their equally-foolish contemporaries. This is great vanity, the victims of which at last get wearied and disgusted. For one professing godliness to get entrapped in this mistake (living in the world as of the world), is sadder than the case of even an out-and-out worldling, who, at least, never having aspired to a crown of immortality, does not lose it. It were better not to embrace the glad tidings of the good time coming, and for a time rejoice in the prospect of that untold goodness of God, and set herself to the attainment thereof, than for a woman to lay hold of these things, and engraft upon them "the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life."

We are required, while the Lord is away, to honour him by a faithful compliance with all his commandments, whether spoken by his own lips or delivered by his servants, whom he commissioned to speak for him; and we cannot expect to attain this faithfulness, otherwise than by the constant study and remembrance of these things.

This brings to mind again the thought that, apart from the daily study of the word, there is little chance of success. How, otherwise, in the absence of voice and sign, are we to continue in harmony with the expressed mind of our Master who is in heaven? Familiar acquaintance with the word enables us to realise that it is not according to his will that we should coquette with the world, or keep it secret that we are espoused to him; neither is it his will, when we have withdrawn from the world, that we should plan how nearly we may conform to its foolish and faithless ways, and yet retain his favour. He desires *that* abundant love which he has shown for us, and which should constrain us readily and lovingly to be content to be as he was in this evil world. We may have him continually before us in memory as our pattern; the example which we shall be alone safe to follow.

DOING GOOD.

A strong feature in that example is that he gave his whole life for the benefit of others, telling his disciples that he came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. It is his expressed wish that the disciple should be as his Master. In this matter, the sister will find the world against her; for although womanly

instincts of kindness find expression in many ways in society, yet the doctrine of the world is against the policy of doing good. We must be content to obey our Superior, and in the service of others, we shall feel in some measure walking in his footsteps, for he came to serve others, even to the laying down of his life.

Often times, when hope has well-nigh fled, and the remembrance of Christ's loving interest in us has almost faded from our thoughts, could we but hear his audible voice as in the days of old, would he not say, "O ye of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Surely it is feebleness of faith that causes us to withhold our hand sometimes; that makes the servant refrain from trading with his Master's goods.

Let us eschew the folly that feverishly spends all time, energy, health and means in securing a comfortable old age that we may never see, while the work of the Lord languishes for just the help that otherwise might be given. Let us not forget the gracious and assuring promises to those who lend to the Lord, in the manner in which he has been graciously pleased to intimate his willingness to accept a loan: though who can lend to him who is the possessor of all things? Let us never miss the chance of such a bountiful repayer as Jehovah!

In this matter, and in this manner, the sister may secure the blessing or the blank. It will be a mistake on her part to suppose that she cannot devote somewhat of her substance to the Lord. Be she ever so poor, zeal will contrive a portion for the Lord. A married sister having, as a rule, only so much at her disposal as the guide of the house, will not have so much in her power as others with a control of their own; but even she, be her allowance weekly, monthly, quarterly, or yearly, will always arrange to set apart the Lord's share, even at the price of self-denial. Poorer than she may command the blessing. Our Lord approved of the widow's mite eighteen hundred years ago, and he will do so now. The spirit that dictates the deed, is the thing that is prized in his sight. Given from a desire to serve him, in whatever shape, it is well pleasing to him. The act on our part is an acknowledgment of him, and known to him if to none others, and we know that if during our brief sojourn we confess him, and do him honour in the obedience of his commandments, he will acknowledge us in the day of his appearing. Let none imagine that the little they do is without worth. The very desire to acknowledge Christ in the smallest service or gift, constitutes its value in his sight, and is by him noted in that book of remembrance, from which no record of hidden deeds shall ever fade. What a comforting thought that to God and the daysman betwixt us, all our actions and motives are known. Let us indeed make the God of Jacob our fear

and our dread, that we may also rely upon Him as our shield and supporter, our hope and our trust. With such a high object of fear enshrined in our hearts, we are safe from the multitude of evil things that harass and affect those who have no such strength within. We know in whom we have believed, and we know what He has promised, and that He is able to perform. If we have only little of this world's goods, let us never forget the Lord's portion. If we refrain because we have only a little to give, we may lose the opportunity altogether. If we live in the hope of having more, we may have grown selfish by the time such hope is realized, and blinded by the possession of much; whereas if we train ourselves to give according to what we have, there will be a guarantee that we shall do more if more be given to us. God is able to make all grace abound toward us, and we know that if not now, most assuredly in the day when He shall reward everyone according to their work, they who have sown liberally will also reap liberally.

“THE LIFE THAT NOW IS.”

Even in this life a trusting, loving service, while health and strength and means are at our disposal, lays up a good foundation against the time to come. The consciousness of pursuing a dutiful line of conduct gives the answer of a good conscience, and tranquilizes the mind, where otherwise fear and apprehension might take possession and distract the thoughts. We have no assurance that we shall escape trouble. Indeed, we may make up our minds that we shall be tried, for in the trial of our faith and patience are we to be perfected; but then as dutiful and confiding children, how different is our position when trials do come, than if we were of those who are without God and without hope in the world; of those, who, having a name to live, are dead; and who until roused by some unexpected calamity, do not realise the glorious position to which the truth has introduced them.

The daughter of the Almighty who has made His acquaintance by giving heed to His testimonies, making their study and meditation her delight, will be much better able to meet calamity than her sisters, who allow domestic, or any considerations to rob them of this true wealth. It matters not, after all, how much we are called upon to bear, if only we can be supported in it. Let us then in health and when things go with tolerable smoothness, keep close acquaintance with God, through the revelation He has given of Himself in His past dealings with men, in the recognition He has been pleased to vouchsafe to those who feared Him in days gone by, and in the reiterated promises of

blessing to all in all ages who truly fear and serve Him. Great sorrows He may permit to overtake us, even as He spared not His own son; but His favour is sufficient to sustain us, and raise us up when greatly bowed down.

Earthly consolations necessarily fluctuate. The most robust, the most buoyant, the most loving and the most gifted may fail through the weakness inherent to the perishable framework of this present nature, but we can rely upon God as the Unchangeable One. Through all generations, He abides the same. Any change we may experience has its origin in ourselves and our surroundings. We may feel out of joint or at a distance from Him, but He changeth never. Let us, then, draw nigh to Him, and we will be restored to our wonted resting-place.

The time is near—even at the door—when we shall all meet around the Son of His love, who for ages has been the hope of all who have looked for redemption in Israel—the cloud of witnesses by whom we are surrounded, and who will shortly arise to the glory, honour, and immortality they have won through faith in God. Their faith was equal to the requirements of the day, and shall ours be less? Shall we meet those saints of old with shame or joy, and shall Abraham and Sarah acknowledge us or look upon us with pity as those who have neither part nor lot in the matter? Yea, rather, shall Abraham's God receive us in Abraham's seed, filling us with a joy unspeakable and full of glory, or shall we hear the death-knell, “I know you not?”

THE LAST ANSWER.

Sisters, we are determining the answer to these mighty questions now in our life and conversation; and the answer that great day will reveal, if we never knew it before. Let us look neither to the right hand nor the left, but be diligent to make our calling and election sure. If we are striving (agonising, as translators tell us it ought to be) to realise a joyful standing in that day, we have reason to be of good cheer, though sorrowing because of the manifold temptations which for a season surround us. The world weeps and laments when its sorrows come, for it has no hope; but the daughter of Sarah, while wetting the pillow with her tears, sorrows not as these. The truth is to her a healing balm even now. The afflicting visitations of this time of sojourn destroy her not; she accepts them as the incidents of her pilgrimage.

Unknown to her contemporaries, who would think her crazy if she told them what she looks for, she is one of a band who shared the same fate before her; godly women, daughters

of Sarah, all who have faithfully testified to the truth, by word and deed, in their day and generation. Denied, by circumstances, the society which she longs to enjoy, she takes comfort in knowing that there will shortly be an end to her travail, in the day when those who have hungered and thirsted after righteousness shall be filled; and when all the nobler faculties of her nature, feeble and abortive now, will be made perfect in change from flesh to spirit.



Supplementary Chapters

SISTERS IN MODERN TIMES.

Introduction.

SEVENTY years have passed since the foregoing pages of wise and valued counsel were penned by our beloved Sister Roberts. During that period vast changes have taken place in the world, which have brought new problems, trials, and temptations to the sisters of Christ. The sheltered life characteristic of the Victorian era has given place to the exposed conditions of modern times. The standards of morality have deteriorated to the level of the Noachic age. Facilities for pleasure and amusement have greatly increased. The so-called emancipation of women, and the modern doctrine of the "equality of the sexes" have seriously undermined divine teaching concerning woman's position. The entrance of women into the industrial and commercial sphere, demanded by the necessity of earning a living, has brought problems to sisters unknown to the contemporaries of Sister Roberts, whilst the claims of a condition of "total war" have involved sisters to-day in problems of civil defence, firewatching, war-work, etc., which were unheard of a generation ago. Married women are not exempt from these pressing claims, and, moreover, those with children have anxieties peculiarly their own. The influence of modern education, the "disobedience to parents" which Paul declared would characterize the last days, the universal godlessness and irreligion of the times, are powers against which the "mother in Israel" must battle daily. It is the object of these supplementary chapters to consider these various problems, and to offer helpful advice to sisters in the cultivation of that holiness and sobriety, upon which depends their acceptance at the hands of Christ in the day of His coming.

CHAPTER I.

SISTERS IN BUSINESS.

MOST unmarried sisters, and a few married ones, are engaged to-day in business life in an office, shop, factory, farm or hospital. How should they comport themselves?

The world they have to face is the product of the carnal mind, which says Paul, "is not subject to the law of God." Its evil ways are exhibited in the behaviour, speech and attire of many women in business, whose general attitude is comparable to that of the "daughters of Zion." They were "haughty, and

walked with stretched-forth necks and wanton eyes," and the daughters of the Gentiles to-day are no better.

Into such unholy society, many sisters of Christ necessarily venture forth to earn a living. In so doing they shoulder a very great responsibility, for they go as sheep among wolves, as light-bearers to a dark and degenerate people, as sisters of Christ amidst the children of this world. Many have been "brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" from early days. Can they now stand the test? Others, in years of maturity, have renounced the "hidden things of dishonesty" in favour of the purity and peace of the gospel. Can they maintain their integrity? All must remember that they are not their own—they have been purchased with a price, even the precious blood of Christ, and He demands their unswerving loyalty and devotion.

"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" This is the frame of mind to adopt as the guiding principle in pursuing the daily avocation. It provides a strong antidote to the encroachment of worldly pleasures, and a powerful incentive to the cultivation of a Christ-like disposition. It induces an earnest and thoughtful demeanour, a quiet and modest deportment, and a holy and contrite spirit, such as was displayed by the Lord Himself.

Such beautiful characteristics will find expression in many practical ways. The sister of Christ will be sincere, conscientious and sober-minded. She will avoid the flippancy and instability of her feminine associates, among whom she will be held in respect, though not in favour. She will refrain from the "small talk" and foolish gossip of the more empty-headed of her contemporaries, and still more, from the backbiting and slandering in which they indulge. These hurtful activities taint human society everywhere, and provide ample reason why the sister of Christ should keep separate from the world, in obedience to Apostolic command. (II Corinthians 6, 17.) Her general deportment will be such that her work-fellows will "take knowledge that she has been with Jesus." She will not be haughty, nor disdainful, nor self-assertive. By no means will she be "fast," or "common." Instead, she will be modest, to the point of reserve, almost too much so for the liking of her more pushful colleagues. Always courteous, she will never be rude or arrogant; ever ready to help, but never a busy-body. Her great aim will be to manifest the "new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." (Ephesians 4, 24.)

How exalted in this calling! A wise sister will devote every waking moment to the attainment of its lofty standard.

Similar principles govern the choice she exercises in her style of dress. Slovenly, untidy, unsuitable clothing, betoken a

disorderly mental state, and will find no place in the wardrobe of a spiritually healthy sister. Extremes of fashion in the opposite direction will also be avoided. The divine standard is expressed in the words "modest apparel, with shamefacedness" (Greek: modesty, decency, reverence) "and sobriety." (I Tim. 2, 9.) This cannot possibly include many modern styles of dress (and sometimes undress), which are designed, supposedly, for the comfort and convenience of the wearer, but which not infrequently overstep the bounds of propriety and respectability. The principles of the Truth must be strictly observed in the selection of attire. Let every sister of Christ ponder these matters in her heart. Let her make quite sure that her style of dress is modest and becoming, and does not detract from the high standard of dignity and grace befitting her calling as a child of God.

The matter of hairdressing will also receive her attention—for this finds special mention in the writings of the Apostles. "If a woman have long hair it is a glory to her." There is a right and a wrong way to apply the underlying principles of this divine utterance. Extremes of style in the dressing of the hair must be avoided. Much time, effort and money can be dissipated in unwise attempts to follow the fashions and follies of wordly women. No sister must allow these insidious influences to encroach on the profitable use of her time. She will be circumspect and constant, and will ever remember that "plaiting the hair," or its counterpart in the elaborate "coiffeur" of to-day, is disparaged, rather than encouraged, in the Spirit Word.

A spiritual sister will not resort to the extravagant use of cosmetics. Painted lips and pencilled eyebrows are a form of attraction and self-advertisement which she can well afford to forego. Her beauty will not depend upon the artificial make-up which can be bought at a chemist's shop. The real secret of charm is not purchased with money, nor contained in external embellishments.

"Beauty of mind is beauty of face,
And inward sweetness makes outward grace."

The cheerful countenance, the noble brow, the sunny smile, the compassionate eye—who is not attracted by these powerful charms? A happy face may be a very plain face, but who, with discerning judgment of these matters, would exchange it for the soul-less artificial beauty, so-called, of the vain daughters of men? "Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised." (Prov. 31, 30.)

Many strong temptations beset the path of a sister employed in business. For instance, it is easy to form the habit of employing the loose, vulgar, and even, perhaps unholy language of those who think it clever to indulge in forceful expletives, or slangy expres-

sions, and whose frame of mind is expressed in the words "Our lips are our own, who is lord over us?" A woman professing godliness must "keep the door of her lips" against these irreverent and unwholesome forms of speech. Her vocabulary is drawn from the choice language of inspiration. Her speech is "always with grace." (Col. 4, 6.) It is "comely" (Song 4, 3); "pleasant" (Prov. 15, 26). Her words are words of "truth and soberness." (Acts 26, 25.) Her "lips disperse knowledge." (Prov. 15, 7.) She is careful to apply the Lord's command, "Let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay, for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil." (Matt. 5, 37.)

Modern degenerate tendencies are well illustrated in the growing habit among women of smoking. In former years this practice was denounced by public opinion as unseemly and degrading. Popular taste has undergone a great change in this direction, and a woman who smokes nowadays is tolerated and encouraged in wordly society. Her departure from the standard of femininity maintained by an earlier generation, is regarded as an evidence of broad-mindedness and advanced education. So general has this practice become that a non-smoker is the exception rather than the rule. No change, however, has taken place in the attitude of faithful brethren towards this objectionable habit. Smoking has been deprecated among them as unclean and wordly since the pioneer days of Bro. Roberts. Is it any less so among sisters? "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." (I Cor. 6, 15.) True sisters will set their faces like a flint against the acceptance of the proffered cigarette, and tactfully discourage the cordiality it is intended to promote.

An extremely grave temptation to which a sister in business is frequently exposed concerns the attitude towards her of members of the opposite sex. A young and pleasant sister will almost certainly find that before long she is the object of the attentions of one or more of the men folk with whom she must necessarily mingle during the day. Friendly relations may be attempted which appear harmless and innocent enough. These probably take the form of an invitation to lunch, or a stroll after business. Friendship-seekers such as these may even profess to take an interest in religion, especially if a sister's devout mode of life has been the subject of particular notice. The warning note of Scripture is explicit on this point. "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away." (Prov. 4, 14.) Consistent efforts to maintain this divine standard of purity of life will imbue the mind with wisdom and discernment. In the

keeping of these holy precepts lies each sister's highest good.

If, as a result of a sister's sincere demeanour, a genuine interest is shown in her religious beliefs by a male member of the staff, she can always introduce the enquirer to a brother of standing, who would be pleased to instruct him in the "way of life more perfectly."

In whatever capacity a sister of Christ is daily engaged, she will not allow the demands of business to absorb too much of her time or talent. There is need for balanced judgment in this connection. Called to "be a good steward of the manifold grace of God," a wise sister will reserve some part of the day for reading, meditation and prayer, for this is vital to the development of spiritual health and vigour. Opportunities of service can be "bought up." Good stewardship comprises a life-long accumulation of little acts, humbly and willingly performed—a letter of comfort and cheer written during the lunch-hour—a young or lonely sister befriended on or from her way to work—the sick visited, or a visiting sister given a welcome at the station. Quite often, in her leisure time, the sister who types can do much useful work. Exhortations, addresses, letters, extracts from the writings of the brethren; these can be duplicated and circulated among sisters in isolation. And how strengthened are these lonely watchers as a result of such industry and effort!

The wise planning of the weekly earnings must also be considered, so that some part, however small, can be devoted to the Truth's interests. The greater the sacrifice entailed in thus providing a reserve, the more precious the gift in the sight of Christ.

All these little duties and services, faithfully discharged, provide limitless opportunities for combining daily business affairs with the immeasurably higher Business of the Father. They constitute in the aggregate the answer to the question, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" "If ye love me, keep my commandments." They are comprehensive in their survey, and rigid in their application. They cover every situation in which sisters in business may find themselves, and provide a rule of action which will guide them through trials and temptations to lives of usefulness and happiness. Strong in courage and in faith, they will carry out their daily tasks with earnestness and zeal, "in singleness of heart, as unto Christ; not with eye-service, as men pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart—knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord." (Eph. 6, 5-8.)

CHAPTER II.

SISTERS IN WAR-TIME.

FOREMOST among the problems which confront sisters in war-time is the claim of the State upon them in the matter of Civil Defence. So wide are the powers, and so urgent are the needs of the Government, that most sisters come within their scope, and there is need for a clear understanding of the principles which govern the relations between the servants of God and the State. The first duty of every sister is to be fully conversant with the Scriptural reasons for the stand which the brethren have taken since conscription was first introduced during the last war. Jesus declared, "My kingdom is not of this world," and addressing his disciples he said, "Ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world." The out-working of this principle of separation precludes the possibility of enrolment in any of the State organisations connected with the war effort. Moreover, it is incumbent upon the followers of Christ to "obey God rather than men." They must not sacrifice their liberty of conscience or freedom of action. Yet obedience to the "Powers that be" is divinely enjoined when their laws do not conflict with the laws of God. Whilst, therefore, enrolment is excluded, submission to human law must be rendered on every possible occasion.

It is evident that no sister can consistently join the various branches of the Women's Services attached to the fighting forces, nor any organized units under Government control. Yet obedience to Christ requires that there shall be compliance with the Tribunal's directions to take up work compatible with conscience. In many cases this submission involves considerable sacrifice. Good posts must be relinquished, homes must be left; possibly isolation must be experienced. Unaccustomed, and sometimes uncongenial, work must be undertaken, involving long hours and hard manual labour. How shall the sister fortify herself in these depressing circumstances? Let her first remember that, notwithstanding all her unpleasant experiences, she is still "the Lord's freeman." Let her rejoice in her liberty, and see in all her changeful days the guiding hand of a loving and tender Father. Let her reflect that she is called to be "a follower of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises"; and again, that "all things work together for good to them that love God, and are called according to His purpose." With these divine assurances, she will cheerfully accept her lot, and endeavour to use it as an opportunity to be a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

In undertaking work of national importance, a wise sister will be careful in her choice of occupation. She will avoid the

munition factory, and, as far as possible, any work which deprives her of reasonable opportunity of meeting with those of "like precious faith." She will seek the advice of the "mothers in Israel" concerning the suitability of her choice, and the possible temptations and trials it entails. She will not give grudging or unwilling service, even though the work may be irksome and disagreeable. For Christ's sake, she will do her best, knowing that faithful conscientious service to an earthly master, performed by a disciple of the Lord, is accepted as rendered unto Him. Above all, she will see that her mode of life, and graceful, gentle bearing is consistent with her profession, which, by the very nature of her circumstances, is "known and read of all men."

Among the claims of the State upon the sisters is the obligation to carry out "fire-watching." It is generally considered by the brethren that this service can be rendered voluntarily and privately, but not in compliance with an enrolment order. The difference between that which is permissible and that which is not is entirely a matter of principle. To perform the duty voluntarily is to "do good unto all men as we have opportunity." None would hesitate to assist a neighbour in distress if his house were on fire. But to be enrolled is to surrender liberty of conscience, and become incorporated in an organization whose avowed object is to assist in winning the war. "Fire-watching" has its temptations and trials. Long hours spent in the company of the alien, who, perhaps, is a member of the opposite sex. Whole evenings and nights with no other duty than waiting for possible contingencies. How careful a sister needs to be in such dangerous circumstances! The safeguards lie in utilizing the time profitably. Reading, letter-writing, sewing and knitting, will pass the time happily and usefully. If conversation with a fellow-watcher is desirable on the grounds of sociability, no opportunity will be lost to introduce the gospel message. Many have been attracted to the Truth since the outbreak of war by faithfulness in this matter. Realizing the dangers inherent in the situation, the wise sister will contrive to avoid undesirable companions, and the schemes they devise for their amusement during the waking and waiting hours. Doubtless, earnest, spiritually-minded sisters will find the situation trying and perplexing, but prayer and faith will avail much, and engender courage and fortitude equal to every experience. "Thou God, seest me." That is the sisters' confidence in all the problems created by the universal unrest associated with the end of Gentile times. With the Psalmist they can exclaim, "I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches. Because thou has been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice." (Psalm 63, 6.).

CHAPTER III.

SISTERS IN THE HOME.

MUCH has been written by Sister Roberts in the foregoing pages concerning the duties and opportunities of sisters in the home. The sound advice of our worthy forerunner has not diminished in value with the passing of years. Various problems, however, present themselves to-day, which are peculiar to war-time and modern conditions. Many calls are made on the time, skill and substance of the busy housewife. The procuring and preparing of the daily food; the "ekeing out" of the slender rations, yet the reserving of a little for the requirements of the Truth; the "mending and making do" of the family clothing; the wise spending of the weekly allowance, reduced maybe, on account of the husband's faithful adherence to the commandments of Christ; the counteracting of modern tendencies in the upbringing of children — all these extremely pressing problems tax to the uttermost the resourcefulness and ingenuity of sisters of Christ. So urgent, at times, are these cares and cumbrances, and so distracting and disturbing are their effects, that the mind tends to become engrossed in the mundane affairs of life, and dulled to the realities of the Truth. The Master's stirring appeal provides a strong antidote to this spiritually languid condition. "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added until you." In war-time, as in peace-time, in scarcity, as in plenty, this promise stands sure. It provides a powerful inducement to cultivate robust faith and preserve true perspective.

The solution of these problems requires much time and forethought. While "looking well to the ways of her household," a wise sister is sedulous to maintain a high standard of usefulness and efficiency in the Lord's service. She contrives and plans, revises and improves, the methods of management of her household affairs, to provide facilities for development of the spiritual mind. She eliminates superfluous activity from the "daily round," and concentrates on anticipating and providing for the necessities of life. She trains herself to work without wasting her time; to be punctual and methodical without irksomeness or vexation. She does not permit the preoccupations and cares of the present to outweigh the more important and far-reaching issues of the future. Prayer and reading will be given their place, notwithstanding all the exactions and burdens of the day. She aspires to cultivate a character that will "retain honour," without which all her labour will be of little worth. The blending of the meditateness of Mary with the practicability of Martha is the ideal she will

endeavour to attain. A richly stored mind to think, and an ever-ready power to act; a loving, tender, and sympathetic disposition, and a self-sacrificing, generous and practical service — these are the true ornaments of character of the woman professing godliness, whose home is the modern counterpart of the little home at Bethany.

To her husband in the Truth, a sister has special obligations. She is a loving wife, and a loyal companion of his studies. With him she shares the same aspirations, the same tastes, the same ardour for the Truth of God. She strives to ease his difficulties, and make the home his sanctuary from the stress and battle of life. The testimonial of Bro. Roberts to the devotion and love of a valued partner finds a reflection in the life of every sister-wife conscious of her duty. "She sympathises as the closest of friends cannot sympathise; she understands as no other friend can understand. She appreciates as it is not in the power of any but Christ to appreciate. She is a help, and a support and a stay in life's troubles as no other being on earth could be, however cordial their friendship and intimate their acquaintance." Of such a wife it can truly be said, "The heart of her husband will safely trust in her." (Prov. 31, 11.)

Not the least among present-day problems peculiar to sisters in the home, is the need for resisting modern influences upon the minds of the young. In counteracting these influences, the sister, in her capacity as mother, commences the wise training of her children in their earliest years. Their minds and hearts are directed into a knowledge and love of God, and a deep reverence for His Holy Word. First impressions cling tenaciously, and greatly influence youthful dispositions. It is upon the rock foundation of Holy Writ, therefore, that the God-fearing mother prayerfully and regularly builds up the characters of her children. She instructs, directs, counsels and warns. She sedulously engenders an earnest love for "whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely and of good report." Unquestioning obedience is insisted upon, and, where necessary, due correction administered and punishment inflicted. Unlike their wordly contemporaries, her children are taught that disregard of divine matters, disobedience to parents and discourtesy to elders, are displeasing to God. In the opinion of the modern generation, an upbringing of this kind is old-fashioned and narrow-minded. Advanced education and so-called improved systems of mind-culture have superseded this supposedly obsolete and disciplinarian form of child training. The effect of modern methods is deplorable. Instead of showing a reverent demeanour, children of to-day are heard "taking the Name of the Lord God in vain." Parental authority is flouted, and obedience displaced by defiance. The wholesome and edifying

interests of home life are neglected in favour of the allurements of the cinema and theatre. The amazing increase in juvenile crime is an indication of the rapid deterioration in the moral standards of modern youth, and is clearly traceable to lack of control in early childhood.

To prevent the infiltration of these pernicious influences, a God-fearing mother is untiring in her efforts and unceasing in her vigil. She adopts practical ways and means of keeping the world outside, and of maintaining that high standard of holiness, which from the children's early days has been fostered and preserved. Divine matters are given first place in the daily programme, and the family united by the sanctities of the Truth. The home is a school of wise discipline, where precept and example are practised and understood. Healthy and profitable recreation is arranged during periods of holiday; the children are taught to appreciate the beauties of the universe, and to know the joy of healthful activity. They gradually begin to realize the need for, and value of self-denial and service, and to esteem the privilege which such knowledge confers. They are trained to take their places as useful members of the family circle—the boys drilled into polite and gentlemanly behaviour, and the girls acknowledged as "mother's right hand." Their companions are selected from those whose bent is in a godly direction. Their taste for reading is encouraged, though their choice of books is closely scrutinized and carefully supervised. Educational and instructive books are good, and are allocated a place on the bookshelf, but no novel or unwholesome magazine is found in the household where godliness is practised and purity prevails.

Thus, in wisely directing and guiding the footsteps of the young, in inculcating the need for reverence and respect, in radiating a spirit of happiness and love, in discoursing upon the glorious truths of God, in repelling and excluding the influences of the world, in attaining and maintaining high morals and ideals, in developing and cherishing a love for things divine, through difficulty and trial, in season and out of season, is found the path of true parental wisdom, and the full meaning of the words of Scripture, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

CHAPTER IV.

SISTERS IN THE ECCLESIA.

IN writing to his son in the faith Timothy, concerning the purpose of his first Epistle, the Apostle Paul declared, "These things write I unto thee that thou mayest know how thou oughtest

to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the Truth." There is much in the Apostle's instruction of especial interest and importance to sisters.

In most ecclesias, sisters are numerically stronger than brethren, and this fact in itself emphasizes the influence for good or ill which they exert. The Apostles frequently reminded Timothy of the power of example—"Take heed unto thyself." This precept, when applied to sisters in the ecclesia, is capable of the widest application. From the moment that each sister enters the "assembly of called out ones," she becomes an example for good or bad to all her fellow-worshippers. A faithful sister will remember the gracious appeal of the Psalmist, "O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness, and will endeavour to comply with this beautiful precept. Her mind will be suitably prepared to receive the impressions which collective worship affords. Quietness and thoughtfulness will characterize her demeanour before the commencement of the meeting. Close attention will be given to the spiritual ministrations of prayer, praise and exhortation. Meticulous care will be exercised to maintain the standard of holiness which becomes those who would worship the Father in "Spirit and in Truth." No worshipper at the weekly memorial feast will so far forget her call to holiness as to manifest unseemly behaviour of any kind in the presence of Christ. She will not be given to whispering or wool-gathering. She will not attend to "pay her vows" clad in unbecoming or unsuitable attire. Her appearance will be modest, neat and undistracting to fellow-worshippers. The exigencies of war-time conditions have brought great changes in styles of feminine attire. This calls for a timely word of warning, especially in regard to hats. Many women of the world have almost discarded this article of clothing. Even the leaders of religion have so far relaxed their rules as to permit women to attend Church services with their heads uncovered. No such innovation will mar the meetings of the brethren and sisters of Christ. Rather will sisters ensure that the hats they are wearing are really a covering. They prefer to approximate more closely to Apostolic command, than to descend to the worldly fashions and customs of their more fleshly-minded contemporaries.

In imparting instruction concerning "good behaviour in the house of God," the Apostle includes exhortation and warning concerning speech. His words have particular reference to sisters. They must be "grave." *No breath of slander must escape their lips, nor words of gossip or tittle-tattle be found on their tongues.* Rather will the "assembly of the saints" be utilized for the furtherance of mutual spiritual interests. Many opportunities present themselves, for which wise sisters will be on the look-out. Visitors from

other meetings can be given an affectionate welcome — newly immersed sisters imparted words of tenderness and love. The harassed and wearied can be buoyed up. Problems can be discussed with sisterly affection; arrangements can be made for the writing of letters, for the care of children, for the visiting of the sick, and sometimes invitations can be extended to troubled or lonely ones. These are golden opportunities which will not be missed by energetic and zealous workers in the service of Christ who desire to use the social intercourse available at the ecclesial meetings as a means of useful and edifying conversation.

An important duty in ecclesial life which devolves upon sisters is the attendance at the quarterly business meetings. Their influence on these occasions is very far-reaching, for their numerical strength must greatly affect the result of the ballots. It is imperative, in the interests of the Lord's work, that the divine commands relative to the elections of those who serve the ecclesia are fully comprehended and acted upon. No hesitation or doubt must be entertained, for the word of the Apostle to Timothy are emphatic on this point. (See First Epistle, ch. 3, verses 1-10.) Before attending a business meeting where elections are to take place, sisters should study the necessary qualifications required by divine command, and decide, to the best of their knowledge, upon the suitability of each brother to be elected to office. Intelligent interest will be taken in all ecclesial arrangements and affairs, and loyal co-operation and support given in the furthering of the Truth of God.

There is a department in the service of Christ worthy of mention, which is reserved exclusively for sisters. It is the Sisters' Class, in which is to be found a meeting place and a delightful haven, where the more intimate problems of sisters can be affectionately considered. An opportunity is provided in the course of "sweet communion" around the Word of God for compliance with the Apostolic precept "the elder to teach the younger." Using, possibly, the writings of Dr. Thomas and Bro. Roberts as a basis, instruction can be imparted concerning the special duties of sisters in their ecclesial work. The mutual study thus fostered is beneficial in providing food for reflection, and inducing robust spiritual growth. So long as this high standard is maintained, a Sisters' Class is productive of much that is useful and good. It creates a lively interest and encourages reading and research, which cannot fail to develop the minds of those who regularly attend.

Last, but by no means least, among the "good works" with which Paul says "women professing godliness" adorn themselves, is the patient instruction of the children in the Sunday School. This department of the Lord's work has been termed "the cradle

of the ecclesia." Much perseverance and effort is needed if the children are to benefit from the labours of their teachers. Conscientious preparation of a good lesson must be undertaken beforehand, so that the sisters are thoroughly familiar with the subject. They must be consistent, masterful and tactful in the handling of the children. Lessons must be made interesting, and scholars encouraged to ask questions. The moral aspect of the Truth must be emphasized, and the teachers themselves examples of their teaching. To take part in this work is to materially assist in the noble occupation of "raising unto the Lord a godly seed," which will prove a "crown of rejoicing in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ at his coming."

These, then, are some of the activities available to those who desire to "labour much in the Lord." There are others which will occur to the mind of each individual. Sisters who engage in them wholeheartedly and faithfully will become possessed of the secret of wise and useful lives. They will diffuse joy and happiness to others, and "lay up for themselves a good foundation against the time come." Who are the blest?

They who have kept their sympathies awake,
And scatter joy for more than conscience sake;
Steadfast and tender in the hour of need,
Gentle in thought, benevolent in deed;
Whose looks have power to make dissension cease,
Whose smiles are pleasant, and whose words are peace;
They who have lived as harmless as a dove,
Teachers of truth, and ministers of love.

This is the ideal, poetically expressed, of every worthy sister who aspires to be among the "blessed of the Father" in the great day of inspection. In endeavouring to reach unto it she will be ever watchful for her Lord, having her lamp well trimmed against the day of His coming. She will use her talents with diligence and care, and will carry out all her works of mercy and ministration in the spirit of the Master's words, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me." May all who read these few simple lines be privileged, in the mercy of God, to receive the Master's approval, and hear from his lips those welcome words—"Well done, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

VIRGINIA VIGILANT.