

CHAPTER 14: The Husband's Privileges

My Dear Comrades,

A very slight observation of men and things will show, I think, that every station in life carries with it some advantages peculiar to itself. For example, the privileges, possessions, and especial opportunities rightly belonging to the position of a Ruler are not enjoyed by those he governs; while, on the other hand, the governed may have certain advantages and pleasures not possessed by a Ruler.

The principle illustrated by this contrast applies to the important position occupied by a husband. He is no exception to the general rule. Certain advantages are, in the order of God's Providence, enjoyed by him, and by him alone. They are not always duly recognised; and it is, I think, desirable that some of them should be noticed here. One great benefit conferred upon the husband by Marriage is the acquisition of a lifelong friend.

The majority of us know something of the pleasures and benefits flowing from a pure and disinterested friendship. The communion of heart and soul existing between David and Jonathan, has been the admiration of the world from their day down to ours. Such friendships have done something to brighten the dismal journey to the grave, of multitudes, who have been placed in circumstances of sorrow and trial which would otherwise have overwhelmed them. But when the same exalted and ennobling influences are experienced in the Marriage union, a greater happiness will be the result, than can be realised in any other human fellowship, however intimate that fellowship may be. The Marriage state, if entered upon from pure motives, and based on right principles, is the highest form of friendship. It is Divine!

Solomon says, "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing." The word "thing" should not have been introduced into the passage. The meaning is complete without it. A true wife is a "Good," and a good in the fullest sense of the word. The highest measure of happiness and profit flowing out of such a companionship may not, I admit, always be attained. Dissimilarity of tastes, or dispositions, or opinions, will, in



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some instances, partially prevent this, and, in others, shut it out altogether. While occupying the same house, sitting at the same table, and using the same purse, two individuals, the parents of the same children, may yet be as far away from that entire confidence, that oneness in heart, which is the soul of friendship, as the east is from the west.

This division of soul may, in many cases, be accounted for by the fact that the necessity for such a union was never fully recognised by the parties when Marriage was first contemplated. Perhaps, there was not even the thought, much less the expectation of such a unity, so that there is less ground for complaint, if it does not exist. In other cases, the religious opinions and experiences of husband and wife are so widely different, that neither is able to understand the other; each being thus condemned, alas! to walk apart, when to have walked together would have softened and cheered the whole of life's rough journey.

But here there will be no just cause for murmuring. To one who did complain, I think the answer would be: "If in the days of thy youth thou hadst chosen thy Maker before thy wife or thy husband, and hadst walked consistently with His wishes, a partner after thine own heart might have been thy portion; anyway, this present sorrow would not have been thy lot."

But when a husband does find this unity of thought, feeling, and purpose in a wife, what a treasure, what a friend he has secured, and how proud and thankful he ought to be for such a prize! Among her qualities, please let all husbands note the following:

1. She will be a friend to whom he can unreservedly confide all the secrets of his soul. Every husband will have his trials. In the world he will have tribulations. Specially will this be the case, if he is an out-and-out Salvationist: and it will always bring him a measure of relief to tell out the things he suffers into a sympathetic ear. There is a quaint old rhyme which expresses this sentiment:

"What is it that casts you down?
Who are they that grieve you?"



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Speak, and let your wants be known,
Speaking will relieve you."

Moreover, every man has some particular difficulty which he cannot, with any degree of confidence, explain to an ordinary friend. Perhaps, this difficulty is the result of some mistake he made in early life, or some temptation that harasses him at present, or a besetting sin to which he is in danger of pelding. It may be some wrong done that troubles his con-science, or lies heavy on his heart, and which his own nature shrinks from confessing to any living creature. There is one ear, however, that will be ready to listen patiently to the story of his sorrows, and one heart that will ever sympathise with him in them. To his wife he can speak of those secret fears and dangers of heart and life which he would not dare to unfold to any other living soul in the cold world around him. He has no anxiety about her doing any other than hiding the things that he would himself cover up, or of helping to bear the burden he finds it so difficult to carry.

This is the natural outcome of the union of which I speak. In an important sense, they are no longer two hearts, but one. Not only does the wife expect to share her husband's goods and possessions, whether many or few, but she rejoices to share his trials, his cares, and his sorrows. Who can possibly estimate the value of the treasure that such a wife must be?

2. *The husband will find in a true wife, a spiritual director and guide. She will be the chaplain of his soul. A great deal has been said on the right of Confession as practised in the Roman Catholic Church; and there is no question that to many dear souls, the privilege of having a friend to whom they can acknowledge the sins of the past, and receive counsel with respect to them, is an un-doubted help. But the terrible abuses with which this practice has been attended, and the horrible evils to which it has led, have caused a large portion of the Christian Church, not only to avoid the custom, but to execrate it.*

Still, when a man has some sin upon his conscience, or is battling with some evil besetment, which he finds it all but impossible to resist, what is so natural to him as to



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yearn to confide the story of his inward conflict to someone on whose sympathy, and direction, and faith he can rely?

Now, there will be in almost every Corps of The Salvation Army, brothers who will gladly listen to such trying experiences on the part of the brethren, and women who will listen to similar sorrowful experiences on the part of the sisters. But the husband who has a true wife, need go no farther for such assistance than his own chamber, nor ask any other Confessor than the partner whom God has given him, to hear about the trials and struggles of his spiritual life.

Such a wife, as I shall attempt to describe in the course of these Letters, will be admirably fitted for this task. She will know her husband; she will be familiar with his weaknesses and dangers, and she will understand his heart. Above all, she will love his soul and be interested, before all others, in his fidelity to honour, to duty, and to God. She can afford to be fearless as regards consequences; while every instinct of her womanly nature will bind her to tell him the truth.

3. The husband will find in such a wife a genuine comforter in sorrow. When old companions turn away their faces, and old helpers withdraw their generous hands, her heart will beat the warmer, and her arms will cling the closer, as she strives to hold him up amidst the dark and stormy experiences of life.

4. The husband will as far as possible, share with his wife every form of gladness which falls to his lot, I can truthfully say that, when my dear Wife was by my side, I never tasted what was pleasant to my palate, never saw a thing of beauty in art or nature, never heard a sound of melody in music or song, never experienced a joy in friendship, or had a triumph in work or warfare; nay, I can go further, and say that I never had a heavenly manifestation to my soul, without experiencing the desire that she also should share it.

And there was nothing singular in my experience. It is, I am happy to say, a perfectly common one with husbands who have good wives; and no particular credit is due to them on that account either; for where there is true love, this sharing of pleasant things means the doubling, nay, the trebling, of the enjoyments which they yield. All



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real affection, while it would fain screen its object from sorrow, and bear every grief in its stead, cares for no glad-ness that its companion cannot share. So that, in a wife, a husband finds the means for the manifold multiplication of his own joys.

5. *A husband will find in a true wife a faithful adviser in his perplexities.* Oh, how little do men dream of the valuable counsel of which they deprive themselves, in failing to make their wives, as far as possible, their confidantes in all matters of perplexity! It is quite true that, in The Salvation Army, the views taken of woman's capacities and position render some of the observations made here, and, indeed, elsewhere in these Letters, of less importance than they would otherwise be. Still, I am afraid that the foolish, unscriptural, and irrational notions about woman's natural inferiority have not been entirely extirpated from the hearts of all who are marching under our Flag.

A woman is, in many respects, remarkably able to advise her husband on the bewildering, secular matters with which he is so often called to deal; and, if he will give her the chance, she will show this ability, with no inconsiderable advantage to him.

Outside our own Ranks, any such opportunity is commonly denied her. In too many cases, she is regarded by her husband, as only a kind of toy, to minister to his amusement; or as a mother, to nurse his children; or as a housewife, to be responsible for his home. Beyond this, he sees no purpose that a wife can serve; hence, he keeps her in utter ignorance of the busy world in which he lives and moves. Let him, however, condescend to acquaint his wife with the doctrines and duties of his religion; with the ins and outs of his business; with the character of the men who move in the circle of his acquaintance; and with the most important of hosts of other things that occupy him, day after day, and he will often find her better able to advise him than the ordinary run of the people whom he consults when he is beset by trial or burdened with care.

Woman looks at matters from a different standpoint to that taken by a man; and her instincts will often prove a safer guide, on questions of right and wrong, than his reasoning powers; while she, usually, manifests a greater readiness to sacrifice a



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present lesser gain, in order to secure a greater future good. She will think less of the present profit and comfort of her husband, and more of his future usefulness and advantage. In other words, the true woman will care less for consequences and more for righteousness.

Men are more given to look at things from the standpoint of expediency than women – their early training and intercourse with the world making them more concerned for the good opinions of those around them. Perhaps, it is because they see further afield than women; or, having a keener sense of responsibility for the welfare of those dependent upon them, they are more fearful of taking courses which, they can see, are freighted with greater danger and difficulty than those which they would otherwise choose to follow.

6. *In a wife a man finds a true partner in all his earthly interests.* It is true that, ordinarily, she will bring with her the occasion for increased financial responsibilities; but this added responsibility will, probably, prove to be a profitable part of the discipline of his life, by strengthening and deepening the generous side of his nature. Men are naturally more selfish than women, and their meanness grows and thrives every day they live, if nothing is brought into their experience to call forth their generosity. What narrow, miserly, shriveled up beings the whole generation would soon become, but for the compulsory demands made upon their hearts and goods by their wives and children!

In well-assorted and prudent Marriages, it is strange how the income will keep pace with the expenditure. I should think, if an enquiry could be made upon the subject, it would be found in most cases that a man who has a wife and family to support, finds himself better off, and possessed of more real comforts than would have been his lot had he remained single. The income, as by providential arrangement, wonderfully accords with the requirements.

I have heard poor people in England say, when the sixth or seventh addition to the family has been made, without any apparent increase in the means of supplying its wants, "Oh, sir, God never sends little mouths without something to fill them!" If this sort of argument applies to the arrival of a child, how doubly applicable it must be to



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the advent of a wife | She comes, at once, to relieve home of the labour of the hireling and to manage her husband's earnings with economy. They are her own things which she administers, and not the things of a stranger. She comes not to measure by rule of hours or convenience, the time, or strength, or gifts, or anything else she employs in the service of her husband; she lays her possessions all at his feet, and then toils for him as diligently and as skillfully as she would toil for herself— nay, more so.

7. The husband finds in a good wife the completion of his own character. Humanly speaking, he is but an unfinished and imperfect creature until he finds a wife. She furnishes the other side to his nature, carries on his education, and gives him the chance of rising to the full stature of a man in Christ Jesus.

8. A wife brings to her husband those pleasures and innocent recreations that arise out of the possession of a family. Although the desire for children is not so absorbing in men as it is in women, still it exists. And just in proportion to the love which a wife has for her offspring is the pride that a true husband feels in them. No sooner is Marriage decided upon, than the yearning for children springs up in the husband's breast, his mind agreeably dwelling on the pleasure he will reap from their society, the profit they may bring to him in business, and the credit they will confer upon him in the little world in which he moves.

In addition to these motives the Salvationist will hail his sons and daughters as so many reinforcements for The Army. He will count them as Soldiers of his King as soon as they have commenced to breathe the vital air.

On one of my journeys on board a German steamer, I was talking, one night, to an electrician about his soul. He had before told me that he had three little boys. I asked him what would become of them if their father died. He replied, "Oh, the Kaiser will provide for them in his Army or his Navy!" That was his idea about their future. They must go to serve, and fight for, the Emperor and the Fatherland, and he regarded the prospect with satisfaction. So, with intelligent pleasure, will every good Salvationist rejoice over his children as so many recruits for the great Army of the King of kings, assured that their future, no matter what may befall their parents, will be in His hands.



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9. A wife will bring her husband the joys of home life. Everybody sings "Home, home; sweet, sweet home," and a true Salvation home is not only worth singing about, but valuing highly, both as being the dwelling-place of the purest pleasures of human life, and as the nursery, where some of its loveliest virtues are brought into being and trained to maturity.

But no man can be truly said to have a home of his own without a wife. That does not say that no man can be happy, unmarried. Happiness depends on the possession of a clean heart, faithfulness to right principles, and devotion to the service of God and man. Indeed, as experience teaches, God can make His joy to abound in the soul of a true Soldier under any circumstances; while, as Paul expressly affirms, the opportunities for usefulness may be even greater in a single than in a married state.

Still, I write for people in the conditions of ordinary life. Marriage is of Divine appointment; and amongst the other blessings brought to a husband by a good, faithful, and affectionate wife, will be a home, – that truest earthly type, in many respects, of the heavenly rest.