



CHAPTER 9: Advantages and Disadvantages of Marriage (Continued)

My Dear Comrades,

Marriage has, beyond question, advantages for both the parties, but it must be borne in mind, that associated with them are also many disadvantages. Especially does this apply to woman. Indeed, for her, Marriage is not infrequently a kind of lottery, and no woman can tell beforehand what sort of number she is going to draw, or what relation the gains and joys of her new position will bear to its sorrows and losses. It may truly be termed a leap in the dark.

Let every woman who is disposed to murmur because no one seeks her hand, look these disadvantages fairly and squarely in the face before allowing discontent to mar her confidence in her Heavenly Father's care. To begin with:

1. Few women can be absolutely certain as to how far their Marriage will affect their health, or whether it may not cost them life itself. It is true that Marriage is beneficial to many women, and, doubtless, life is prolonged by it in some cases. It is said that women who are married live longer than those who remain single; but that is a fact which can, I fancy, be accounted for without making it an argument in favour of Marriage.

But whether some women are benefited physically or not, I know that a great many who have scarcely known an ache or a pain before their Marriage become invalids very soon afterwards, and we have all had precious Comrades who have been hurried home by one or other of the trying and often dangerous illnesses which are commonly associated with married life.

2. No woman can be sure how far a husband's disposition, tastes, and temper will harmonise sufficiently with her own, to make her contented and happy. The Scripture asks, "How can two walk together unless they be agreed?" That is, how can they walk together in harmony unless they are of the same opinion with respect to the road they



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LETTERS TO SALVATIONISTS

travel, the calls they should make, and a good many other matters relating to the journey.

Now, if this agreement be necessary to the comfortable companionship of two travellers who can dissolve partnership at will, how indispensable must it be to the man and the woman who have to travel the rugged journey of life together, and who cannot be separated, however much they may desire it, until death shall part them?

Someone has said that there are people with whom they would rather live an eternity in Heaven than a week on earth. That is, I suppose, in the hope that these uncongenial people are going to be changed to considerable advantage before they reach that better world! Whether this be so or not, I certainly have known a considerable number of individuals myself who have, beyond question, been very good intentioned, but whose society I have not cared about any longer than was absolutely necessary for the work in hand.

But are we not all constantly meeting with such people? They may be really excellent and well-meaning folk, but there is something about their spirit, or their manner, or their conversation, that is uncongenial, that jars on our nerves, that shuts us up, and makes us glad to escape from them at the first decent opportunity. What would it be, we sometimes ask ourselves, to be shut in with such companions for life, or at best only to be able to leave them for a few hours at a time?

But someone will say, "Oh I I would look well and long at any man before I entered into such a union with him." Quite so. But that is, I suppose, just what a great many do, and yet find, when it is too late, that they have been totally mistaken in the judgment they have formed, and so find themselves bitterly disappointed in the expectations they have cherished.

I am not saying that any Salvationist would, willingly, mislead the woman whom he sought for a bride. And yet, Salvationists will, naturally, put on their Sunday best when they go courting, and not only seek to make a good impression in respect to things outward, but to make the best appearance possible as to their inner character. I do not altogether complain of this, for it is both natural and honourable that a man



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LETTERS TO SALVATIONISTS

should desire to stand well in every way in the eyes of the woman he wants to win.

And yet, after all, there is little need for the practice of any deceptive arts in the prosecution of this business, for women are at such times only too often so infatuated, as to establish beyond question the truth of the proverb that "Love is blind." If it had not been so, how many of the miserable matches which I have striven to prevent, and over which I have afterwards had sorrowfully to mourn, would never have taken place! Oh, the instances I could mention, in which I have laboured to show comrades and friends the unsuitability, for such reasons as those I have named, of proposed unions; but, alas! I have only laboured in vain. "There are none so blind as those who will not see." In many cases, the woman has made me feel that the truth has not been welcome to her, solely because it has gone against her feeling; and, even when compelled to admit the circumstances to be as I have represented them, she has foolishly reckoned on her ability to effect such favourable changes in the character and conduct of her lover, as to bring everything out right in the end.

But what I am insisting upon is the fact, that, no matter how careful a woman may be in the selection of a husband, she runs considerable risk of disappointment in the object of her choice. Incompatibility of temper which she has had no chance of discovering; differences in taste and judgment which have been almost imperceptible in early acquaintance; or divergences of opinion upon those great problems which have to be faced by every man and woman, sooner or later, may effectually prevent that agreement which is absolutely essential to domestic happiness. Instead, therefore, of unreasonably lamenting that Marriage has been denied her, woman may often have substantial reason for thanking God, that, in mercy, she has been held back from a lifetime of discomfort, if not of actual misery.

3. Again, when considering the advantages of Marriage, it should be remembered that no woman can be fully assured beforehand about her husband's secret habits. This may appear, at the first glance, to be a very similar difficulty to the one previously mentioned, but a little thought will show that it is not a distinction without a difference. The former difficulty related chiefly to natural disposition; the present has to do with habits that have been acquired. How can a woman be quite sure that the man who seeks her hand is not a secret cheat, or addicted to falsehood; that he is not the slave

LETTERS TO SALVATIONISTS

of some loathsome lust; or, in some other form, the creature of usages which, of themselves, will be sufficient to make her miserable all the rest of her days, and to curse her children after her?

Now, I do not say that such fears alone ought to deter a woman from Marriage who has prayed for guidance, and used her reason on the subject; but I do say that she runs grave risks from which those who remain unmarried are free.

4. It will be admitted without discussion, that the woman who remains single escapes the ceaseless anxieties and toils usually associated with married life. I know, and do not wish in any way to disguise the fact, that there are, in a large number of cases, great joys and satisfactions to be set over against the troubles of married life. But no one who has had the opportunity of observing the cares of a married woman with a family, especially if she has only a small income, can deny that it often represents an uninterrupted career of trial, stretching almost from the altar to the grave.

Consider only one part of the burden, the pains and perils – owing, no doubt, to the unnatural conditions under which so large a part of the people live – unavoidably connected with bearing and bringing a family into the world. The sicknesses which are all but certain to come afterwards, the anxieties of early training, and the trials which only too often await the affectionate mother through the waywardness of children in after-life.

The lot of many a married woman is, I fear, little better than that of a beast of burden. She must either be continually shut up with the children at home, or, escaping occasionally from her prison-house, be torn by anxieties during absence from it, about the little world she has left behind. Added to these are a thousand other anxieties of different kinds.

I am, of course, speaking of the married condition from the human standpoint. I want the single women to see that if they do not find admission into the Temple of Marriage, they will, at least, escape much anguish by remaining outside its gate.

5. The single woman retains much freedom of action, which, do as she will, she must



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LETTERS TO SALVATIONISTS

forfeit if she marries. I hope to say something a little later on the obedience a woman is bound to render to her husband, but there can be no question that Marriage is often little more than a modified and respectable kind of bondage. While unmarried, not only does she retain her liberty of action, being free to come and go at pleasure, regardless of the convenience of another, but she has full freedom to fight for God and souls to the utmost limit of her opportunity and her gifts. This liberty must of necessity be curtailed in some degree when she marries.

Now, I am not going to say that thousands of both Officers and Soldiers are not glad for their beloved wives to be as fully given up to the War after their Marriage as they were before, but family cares and necessities forbid. Someone must attend to these duties, either one or other of the two, and the obligation naturally devolves upon the wife. Just so! That is exactly what I am insisting upon. Paul says, "The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord that she may be holy, both in body and in spirit; but she that is married careth for the things of the world how she may please her husband." That is true; and not only is she concerned about the welfare of her husband, but she is compelled, by custom and instinct, to look after his children and his home. Necessarily, therefore, she is largely shut out from the happy task of fighting for God among the multitude.

The woman who remains unmarried, in order to serve her generation better, must be very near to the heart of Jesus Christ. God will, in an important sense, be her husband, and fill her soul with satisfaction more than equal to any she would reap in Marriage. Many women are, I believe, endowed by nature with gifts far more likely to be employed with advantage to themselves and the world around them while they remain single. There is something about them of natural capacity, of inborn quality, which seems to mark them out for rendering great services to those among whom their lot is cast, and which service they would be less likely to perform for the many if they became the exclusive possession of the few. To such women, it seems to me, that a wise Providence often refuses, if it does not actually prohibit Marriage. They are kept by what used to be called a "particular providence" from throwing away their lives and gifts; and although they may not always see it thus, and may not always accept it, the world has abundant reason to rejoice in their single lives of true service and single-hearted devotion to the good of others.



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LETTERS TO SALVATIONISTS

There is no doubt also that to many women, the condition of single life is pre-eminently adapted to aid the development of their own character and their growth in the likeness of Christ. For them the distractions and anxieties usually associated with Marriage would only tend to break the bruised reed and quench the smoking flax. Heart and soul are alike destined for a perfect union with the mind and will of God, and that union will never be brought about for them, except in the separation from those closer human ties which Marriage so quickly creates and strengthens. Looking forward, therefore, to the ultimate issue of human experience and the glorious triumphs of grace which the Heavenly world will reveal in them, their all-wise and all-loving God seeks to order their lives so that nothing shall turn them from the high path, which alone can lead them to the Lamb. He sees that Marriage would offer them temptations and trials beyond their strength, or drag them down from the mountain-top of spiritual communion, and so He directs their course otherwise. As many holy women find a continual call from God to labour for Him, in the ceaseless cares and conflicts of family life, so may the consecrated women whom Providence has led into a lonelier path find in the separation from much they may have desired, not an occasion for grief, but a gracious evidence that their Lord and Master has chosen them for a particularly important life of usefulness on the earth, and for the closest union and most precious joys of the life to come.