

CHAPTER 10: Labour and Love

My DEAR COMRADES,

I wonder how far you have gone with me through the course I have travelled in these Letters; and what your thoughts are respecting the whole question? As with the bulk of those who write for the benefit of others, I am continually haunted by the curiosity which seeks an answer to the questions: Does anyone read what I write? And reading, do they understand what, I say? And understanding, do they agree with what, is said? But what is most important of all: Is anybody the better for what I have written?

However, without waiting for answers to these questions, I suppose I must practise what I preach, and go on writing my Letters, as well as I possibly can. And at the risk of being tedious, I propose again to mention some of the things for which I have contended, and to add one or two more arguments in their favour.

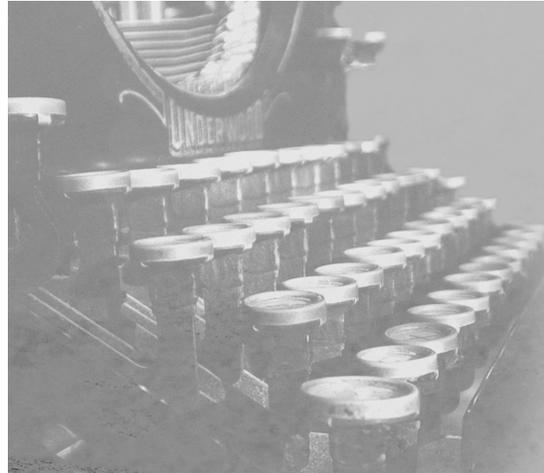
My contention then, is, that whether, in the shop or on the ship, in the parlour, or in the kitchen, in the factory or in the field, on the Salvation platform or in the coal mine, whether Officers or Soldiers, are all alike, as Servants of God, under the obligation to do all we possibly can in the service of men; and to do it with the holy motive of pleasing our Heavenly Master.

Here let me review my Warrant for requiring from you the kind of loving labour that I advocate.

1. The Bible enjoins it. We have already quoted Paul's words to the Ephesians, in which he says that our work is to be done, "Not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men." That is all I ask for.

2. It is enjoined by the doctrine of brotherly love.

I cannot understand how anyone can suppose, for a moment, that he is living a life



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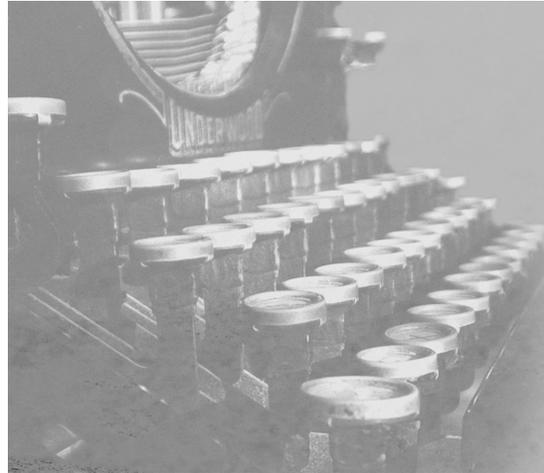
acceptable to God unless he is striving, with all his might, to fulfill the Divine Command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Your master, or whoever has a claim upon your service, must be included in the term "neighbour"; and to comply with the command of the Saviour, you must work for that master, or, mistress, as the case may be, from the voluntary principle of love rather than the earthly and selfish principle of gain.

3. Is not the disinterested method I am urging upon you in keeping with the loftiest ideals the world possesses with respect to Work? About whom does she write her Poetry? Whom does she laud to the Heavens in the Pulpit, on the Platform, and in the "Press? Whose names does she inscribe the highest in her Temples of Fame, or hand down to posterity as examples for rich and poor, old and young alike, to follow? Is it the man who makes his own ease and enrichment his only aim in life, and who toils and spins for nothing higher than his own gratification? Nothing of the kind. It is the generous, self-sacrificing, disinterested being who uses himself up for the benefit of his fellows.

Nay, at whom does that same world ceaselessly sneer, and whom does it most pitilessly despise? Is it not the mean and narrow spirit whose conduct is governed by selfish greed and sensual indulgences? Whatever may be her practice, in this respect, the sentiment of the world is in the right direction. She asks for benevolence evidenced by unselfish labour, and admires it when she finds it.

A paragraph went the round of the newspaper world, a little time back, describing how an American millionaire had decided to spend the rest of his days on a Leper Island in the Pacific Ocean, in order to labour for the amelioration of the miseries of its unfortunate inhabitants. Wonder and admiration everywhere greeted the announcement.

Shall we go back on all this spirit of self-sacrifice? Shall this kind of thing die out, or only have an existence in poetry books, platform quotations, or anecdote collections? Shall we change over to the "pound-of-flesh" principle, and hire out the Work of our hands, the thoughts of our minds, and the burning passions of our souls, for the largest amount of filthy lucre, and the greatest measure of earthly comfort, that we can



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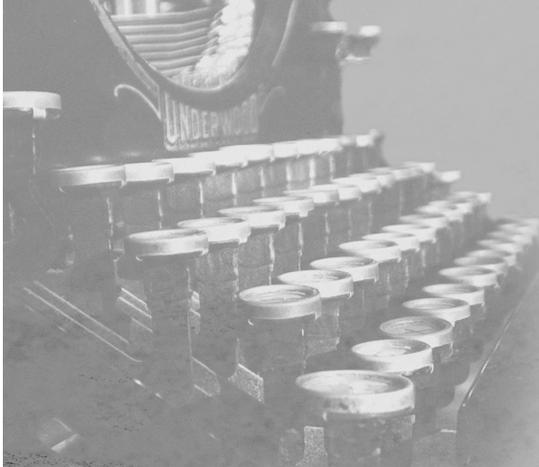
obtain for them; so justifying the lying libel on humanity, long since spoken, and still often sneeringly quoted, that every man has his price? Or shall we say that love – the love of God and man – is the highest and divinest motive of labour – a motive possible not only to the sons and daughters of genius, but accessible to the plainest, humblest man or woman who suffers and toils on the lowest round of the ladder of life.

4. I argue in favour of this doctrine on the ground of its profitableness to the Worker. My readers will probably have asked long before this, How far do these propositions harmonise with the interests of the servant? Ought he not to take his own well-being into account? Certainly. He must have just as true a regard for his own welfare and the welfare of those dependent upon him, as he has for that of others. The command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," can only be rightly interpreted by another, like unto it, which reads : "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you do ye even so to them." Therefore, he must ask, that others should do unto him as he would do unto them, supposing they occupied changed positions. This must mean that, while righteously concerned for the interests of others, he must be reasonably concerned for his own.

But here a little difficulty comes into our argument, arising out of the play of the higher motive of affection. What does Love care for gain in its calculations of service? The husband who loves his wife as Christ loved the Church, does not stop to consider the claims of duty, or the advantages following its discharge in toiling for her welfare.

He will be willing to die for her, as Christ died for the Church.

He does not say, "I will toil for my delicate wife, and deny myself pleasant things, in order to obtain for her the necessaries and comforts she requires, because she would do the same for me, if I were in her place and she in mine." Nothing of the kind! The wife I spoke of, who told me the other day that she had not had her clothes off for seventeen days and nights in nursing her husband did not make it appear that she thought she was doing anything extraordinary, or that she rendered this service to her companion in life because she felt sure that had he been the wife and she the husband, he would have gladly done the same for her.



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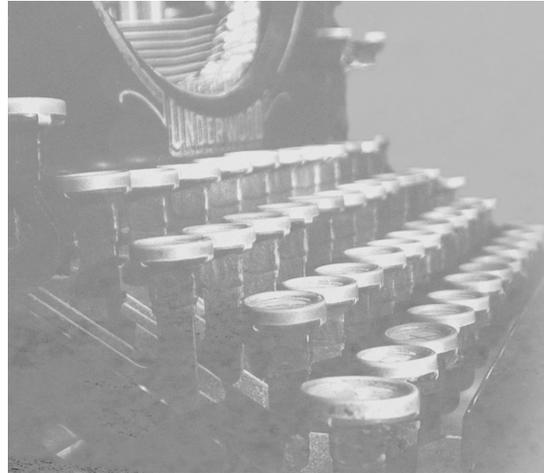
Had the newspapers thought that the American millionaire was going to the Leper Island, with his gold, to make something out of it for himself and family, or to make a name in the world, instead of his being greeted with a chorus of admiration, there would have been a universal chorus of execration at his selfishness. It was because they believed that he was going to make the sacrifice of his own gain, if not of his own self, for the benefit of the poor sufferers, that they praised him.

Supposing, however, that we come down to the low level of self-interest, we insist then, that those who work from the motive of love, rather than the motive of gain, will not necessarily be sufferers in consequence, so far as this world goes. But it may be asked, "Will not unprincipled masters or mistresses be likely to take advantage of this docile and unselfish spirit?" Perhaps, nay, doubtless, in many cases, they will. The Salvation Army has been taken advantage of all through its past history, and so have all the true Saints of God, because they have submitted to wrong, and have not fought the injustice and false representations and persecutions inflicted upon them from the beginning. It will possibly be so to the end, but that does not affect the principle for which I argue, which is, that we must do good Work, and as much of it as we can, regardless of what the world may give us in return.

But, I think, I have sufficiently shown, as I have, gone along, that this class of service, is not without its earthly rewards, and that every interest of human nature – selfish and otherwise alike – testify to the probability of its proving profitable to those who practise it.

If, however, the reward does not come in the form, of money, or houses, or lands, there will be gain in that which is far more valuable than money and houses and lands, and which money and houses and lands cannot buy. There will be the gain in peace, in satisfaction, and in joy in the Holy Ghost in this life, to say nothing of the gain in the world to come. But, on this, point, I shall have more to say another time.

I remember hearing a gentleman relate the following incident in a large meeting: – "Some time back," he said, "I was passing through the streets of Liverpool. It was a cold, raw, wintry day. The streets were ankle-deep in an unpleasant mixture of mud and ice, and battling through it all, there came along a little procession of ragged,



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haggard, hungry-looking boys. Splash, splash, on they went, through the freezing slush, at every step making the onlookers shudder as they stood by in their warm, comfortable coats and furs. In the front rank was a little fellow, who was scarcely more than a bag of bones, half-naked, barefooted, his whole frame shivering every time he put his foot down on the melting snow.

"All at once, a big boy came forward, and stooping down, bade the lad put his arms round his neck, and, lifting him up on his back, took his perished feet one in each hand and jogged along with his burden.

"I was moved," said the speaker, "at the sight; and going up to the boy, commended him for his kindness. In his Lancashire brogue the lad replied, 'Aye, aye, sir; two feet in the cold slush are not so bad as four.' After a while," said the speaker, "I offered to carry the little chap myself, but the honest fellow shook his head, and said, Nay, nay, Mister; I winna part with him. I can carry him: and he's a-warmin o' my back.' "

And so, if seeking the good of others may not bring as much worldly gain as a selfish course of action, it does ensure that joyful warmth of heart which all loving service brings, and which is among the most valuable of all the treasures of earth or Heaven. Everyman who acts on this principle is adding to the general sum of human happiness. What is the sum of celestial happiness, the happiness of God, the happiness of the Angels, the happiness of the Blood-washed spirits who are safely landed there? In what does this happiness chiefly consist?

I reply, Not in the golden streets, the unfading flowers, the marvellous music, nor all the other wonders of the Celestial Land put together, but in Love. Love is the essence of the bliss of Heaven, for "Love is Heaven, and Heaven is love." This happiness we can have below. It is not the love others bear to us that makes our felicity, but the love we bear to them; and, thank God, we can as truly love on earth as we can in Heaven.

5. And then, as I have been saying all along, acting on this principle constitutes true religion. As labour done from selfish, fleshly motives is of the earth, and as the results which follow it will perish with the earth, even so labour done to bless mankind and to please God is Divine, and the results flowing out of it must be everlasting honour and



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joy. Where this principle is carried into effect, every part of human conduct becomes religious – nay, a positive act of Divine worship, and an acceptable song of praise.