

CHAPTER 9: Responsibilities of the Workman

MY DEAR COMRADES,

In these Letters, I have been insisting, that it is the duty of every Salvationist to do as much good Work as is reasonably possible. The illustration I used in my last, of the men working on the Railway, during a part of the breakfast hour, instead of standing about unemployed, is open to several objections which I want to answer. To do this, I will mention a few things that must be considered, in conjunction with what I have said about the Railway men.

1. In settling how much Work he will do, a man must have due regard to the claims of his own health. If he rushes at his work without due discretion, and does more than his strength will reasonably allow, he will probably break down, and so prevent his working altogether, or for a season, at least. Whereas, if he exhausts no more energy than he can recover by sleep and food and rest, at the time, he can go steadily forward, and by doing so, accomplish a great deal more, in the long run, than he would by temporary extravagant exertion. When speaking on this subject, I say that I use my body as I should use a horse, if I had one – that is, I should not seek to get the most labour out of him for a week, regardless of the future, but I should feed and manage him with a view to getting the most I could get out of him all the rear round. That is, doubtless, the way a man should use his body, and to do this he should take as much time for his food and daily rest as is necessary to replace the energies he has used up by his Work.

In the leisure taken for this purpose, it will be necessary to have specified hours, as otherwise, those who are without principle will take advantage of the weak, and anything like system will be impossible.

2. Then, again, when the proper performance of a particular task depends upon the united labour of a number of individuals, who have agreed to work in co-operation, it will be necessary, in the interests of the whole, that each should conform to the regulations laid down, always supposing that such rules are in harmony with truth and



righteousness.

3. The wishes and interests of employers have also to be taken into consideration. But, in every case, the principle is equally obligatory upon all.

4. These duties will demand, and must have devoted to them, a measure of the time at our control. What that amount of time shall be, must be determined by the relative importance of those duties. For instance:

(i) There is the Work a man can do for his earthly employers, over and above the amount that is considered to be a strict and just return for his wages. Here again, he must be guided by Jesus Christ's rule, and to do unto his master as he would that his master should do unto him.

(ii) There is the Work that he ought to do for his family, apart and beyond the bare earnings of their daily bread. This is Work which no one else can do so well, and which, if it be neglected by him, will probably not be done at all.

(iii) There is the effort that every Workman should put forth for his own personal improvement. For instance, a youth of seventeen works, we will say, ten hours a day for his employer, who would very much like him to put in another hour at the same task, and would be willing to pay him extra for doing so. This, we will suppose, the youth could do without any injurious effect, to his health. But then, by reading his Bible or cultivating his mind, he might qualify himself to become an Officer, or to fill some other important position, in either case fitting himself for a field of greater usefulness, in the future, than the one he already occupies. Under such circumstances, it must be the duty of that youth to take that hour for his own improvement, rather than to use it to enrich his master or increase his earnings.

(iv) Then, every Soldier of Jesus Christ must duly consider and obey the claims of the Salvation War. That is, he must strive to take his fair share in that conflict. Whether he is his own master, having the direct control of his time, or whether he works for an employer, who only allows him so many hours for leisure, he must conscientiously devote as much of that time as he can to saving his fellow-men. In settling this



question, he must use his common-sense, and claim the promised direction of the Holy Spirit. God will guide him.

What I protest against here, is the notion, born of indolence and selfishness, which affirms that we should do as little, rather than as much, Work as is consistent with the maintenance of health, and with the claims arising out of the relations in which we stand to those about us.

However, circumstances will transpire, during the earthly career of everyone of us, calling for self-sacrificing Work that must be performed, regardless of consequences to health or any other interest.

Supposing, by way of illustration, a ship has sprung a leak, through which the water is rushing rapidly in, endangering the lives of both the passengers and crew. Under such conditions, would not every man on board be justified in working night and day to prevent the threatened calamity? Nay, further, would not the laws of humanity call upon everyone concerned to do so, at the risk of crippling themselves, or even sacrificing life itself, in order to gain the greater good of saving the vessel from destruction, and rescuing a number of their fellows from a watery grave?