



CHAPTER 12: The Master in Relation to the Servant

My DEAR COMRADES,

In view of what I have said, it may be asked whether I advocate that masters and mistresses should aim at placing their servants on a social level with themselves. No; I advocate nothing of the kind, and that for two reasons.

1. It would be impossible to accomplish it, even if attempted. The instincts of both servants and masters would be against such an arrangement. Perhaps, this instinct is nothing more than a prejudice. Well, if so, it is there, and its eradication would be impossible without filling up the social gulf that at present separates the two classes, and the distinction necessitates a difference in their treatment.
2. Servants themselves do not desire such equality. For instance, they would, as a rule, be like fish out of water if invited to take their meals in the dining-room with the family, or to pass their evenings in the drawing-room with the visitors.

I remember spending the best part of two days, some years ago, with a very amiable family in a certain Continental City. The gentleman was a professional man of high standing, though, I am sorry to say, a pronounced sceptic. The lady was as kind and gentle as any lady could be. They were both Socialists of the individualistic type, and, to a certain extent, accepted the doctrine of having all things in common. In order to act consistently with their creed, amongst other things, they set aside a nice little room, well warmed and lighted, where any poor persons who chose to do so might spend their evenings free of charge. When I looked in, however, which my curiosity prompted me to do every time I passed the door, I did not observe that anyone availed themselves of the privilege.

Then the servants were treated as equals with the family, so far as sitting down to meals and other familiarities were concerned. How far the gentleman acted up to his notions in his profession, I am not able to say. I have no doubt that he was very kind and generous to all with whom he had dealings, as it was his nature to be.



But I do not think the efforts made in the direction of lifting up the servants to a level with the heads of the household were either very successful or agreeable to those concerned.

I am sure that I, as a visitor, was much confused by the arrangement. I could not help feeling that I ought to treat the lady of the house with more deference and respect than I did the cook or the housemaid. Moreover, I got lost again and again between the servants, the visitors, and the daughters.

Then, if these servants were of the ordinary type of domestics, which they appeared to be, I am sure they would have very much preferred taking their meals and spending their leisure time, in a free and easy manner, in their own dominions, without the restraints imposed upon them by the presence of those who, after all had been said and done, they could not help feeling were their superiors.

But if a master instructs his employees after this fashion, will they not be likely to take advantage of the increased skill they gain thereby, and leave him when they have the opportunity of securing a situation with higher wages, or more agreeable conditions, without his reaping any profit from all the trouble he has bestowed upon them? Yes, doubtless many will, and in this he must be content to suffer for their benefit. Well, if he promotes their interests by paying more wages, and affording greater facilities for improvement, he will have a firmer hold on their gratitude, and be likely to retain them in his employ. And whether or no, he will have the consciousness of having done his duty.

I say no more on this subject, however, where so much might be said, but pass on to have a word on a matter to which I have again and again, referred; namely, the responsibility of masters and mistresses for the religious well-being of their servants. How few mistresses, even where a great profession of religion is made, feel any real concern for the spiritual needs of their servants! How few are at the trouble even to find out whether they are converted, or to put forth any proportionate effort to secure their Salvation! An odd, formal word, now and then, an enquiry whether they are Church members, a cold routine of family prayer; and, as a rule, the mistress thinks she has fully discharged her duty.



While, in the workshop, in the factory, on the wharf, or in the mill, the master only too seldom stops to enquire whether the people who weave and work out his fortune, are the friends or the enemies of God; or whether they are on the road to Heaven or Hell. Indeed, in too many instances they would be treated very much the same in this respect, if they had no souls at all.

And yet, what an influence for good, masters and mistresses might wield, if they chose, over the hearts and lives and destinies of their servants! In importance this influence stands next only to that of the father or mother – nay, it is often felt to be vastly more potent for good or evil than the parental itself, for with the influence of the masters and mistresses, the servants feel that their earthly interests are intimately connected. Ought not, therefore, every possible effort to be put forth to use this influence on behalf of their eternal welfare?

Some of these things, you will say, do not apply to you. You are not ladies or gentlemen, or large employers of labour, and if you were you would not trample on the health, happiness, and the very life's blood of your servants in order to climb the ladder of fortune. Thank high Heaven for that. God forbid that you ever should.

But some Salvationists who will read these Letters will have servants, of one kind or another, at their command. Let me ask such, whether they are really considering their temporal and eternal interests with anything like a father's or a mother's heart? Are you, my Comrades, acting towards those whom God has placed under your care, in the spirit of your profession?

Especially do I want to know whether you are truly endeavouring to secure their Salvation?

You will march up the street and down the street, and stand in the market-place, seeking to deliver the soul of the stranger from the enemy, and so you ought. You will pray, and preach, and fish for the drunkard or the backslider who may come inside your Halls, that he may be rescued from sin and Hell; and so you ought. But what about the boy who works in your shop, or the girl who is busy nursing your children, or the woman who is preparing your food? Are they saved and sanctified? and if so,



do you see to it that, though it be at some inconvenience to yourself, they have every reasonable opportunity for increasing their Holiness and exercising their gifts in the Salvation War. I hope so. If not, make haste and get yourself into line with your profession, and into harmony with the wishes of Jesus Christ, your Heavenly Master, and into agreement with the teachings of your General.