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Chapter XXXIV

WOMAN  
II

Comrades and Friends, — Some idea of the notions I entertain as to the value of the work Woman has accomplished in The Army, together with the position she ought to occupy, and the treatment she ought to receive, will, I am sure, have been gathered from my last week's message.

You will remember that my illustrations were taken from the members of my own family. But they were calculated, I think, to serve my purpose best, seeing it is the right treatment of woman by her own relatives that I am striving just now to explain and urge upon you.

My opinions and feelings with respect to woman generally are known throughout the world. My standard with respect to the just and beneficent treatment of woman is ever before you, and I want the entire Army to understand and embrace it.

First and foremost, I insist on the equality of woman with man. Every Officer and Soldier should insist upon the truth that woman is as important, as valuable, as capable, and as necessary to the progress and happiness of the world as man.

Unfortunately, a large number of people of every tribe, class, and nationality, think otherwise. They still cling to the notion of bygone ages — that, as a being, woman is inferior to man; and, in proportion to the degree upon which they act upon that notion, they are left behind in the march of civilization and religion.

To many men, woman is little more than a plaything for their leisure hours. To others she is like a piece of property, a slave in everything but name, oftentimes being treated with less consideration as to health and comfort than the horses that run in the omnibus, or the beasts that are fattening for slaughter.

Now, The Salvation Army has done and is doing something to combat these hideous heathen notions.



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To begin with, The Army has maintained that the sexes are equal in value both as regards body and soul; equal in the capacity for joy or sorrow; equal in their standing before God, and the love He bears them; equal in their share of the benefits purchased by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ; equal in responsibility and capacity for spreading Salvation and extending the Kingdom of God; equal as citizens of the New Jerusalem, and equal in capacity for the employments and enjoyments of the eternity to come.

I do not say that every individual faculty in woman is equal to the corresponding faculty in man, and more than I would say that each particular capacity possessed by man is equal in strength and value to the same qualities in woman. They differ both in character and degree. But I do say that where the faculty in one sex is found to be the weaker, that weakness will be atoned for by the preponderating strength of the other.

For example, in the possession of physical force and in the power of will, the man will be often found to excel the woman. On the other hand, in quickness of perception, in power of endurance, and in strength of love (the quality in us which is most godlike), woman is generally superior to man.

Taking the whole round of powers and faculties of woman, therefore, I say that she is equal to man in the value of her gifts and the extent of her influence; and, I maintain, that if she be given a fair chance she will prove that this is so.

Now, I want you to think over and accept this truth. Nay, more, I would like to have every Soldier in The Army accept it, and proclaim it to the world by the treatment of our women Comrades. Above all, let us teach it, both in theory and practice, to the young people around us.

Let the boy be taught from his earliest infancy that his sister is his equal in all that is important to life; except, perhaps, in that physical force which he possesses in common with the brute beasts.

Let the girl be made to feel that her value to God and man is as great as it is would have been had she been a boy.



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Let the grown-up people set before the children a constant example of that gentleness and kindness towards woman, which was ever manifested by our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let every man, whether old or young, married or single, treat all the women with whom he is acquainted with respect, with patience, and with care.

Every man to whom a wife has been entrusted must – and will, if he has any proper sense of manliness in him – champion her interests, fight her battles, watch over her soul, and even die, if need be, as Christ died, on her behalf.

Let us, then, determine to pay woman more regard in this position assigned her by the providence of God, as a wife, as a mother, as a daughter, and as a Comrade in the Salvation War. On this point I shall have something more to say to you next week.

Your affectionate General,

William Booth.