

LETTERS TO SALVATIONISTS

CHAPTER 17: Husband's Duties and Responsibilities (Continued) II

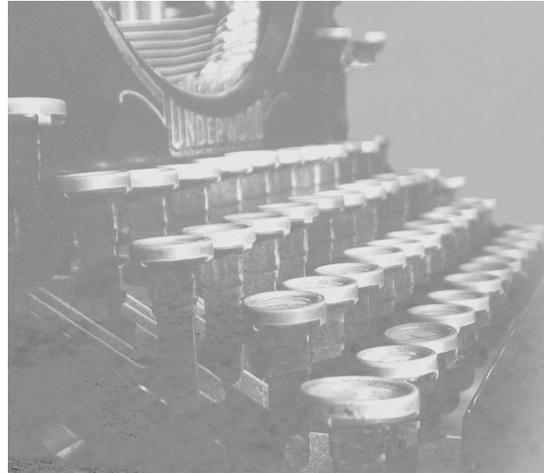
My Dear Comrades,

The husband should share the family cares of his wife, I cannot help feeling that I am here and there repeating myself; but the reader must remember that I write for those who have not had a very careful training in such matters. Indeed, these Letters, I have no doubt, will come to many who never knew what family love was before their conversion. Take, for instance, the following testimony brought under my notice by an Officer a little time back. The speaker was some fifty years of age:

"Speak not a word agin The Salvation Army," said he. (It was in an open-air meeting, when Home chaff was being rather freely indulged in on that over-interesting theme.) "Speak not agin The Salvation Army. Before I came into it I was a drunkard. I was never once properly sober for twenty years. It was late at night when God converted my soul, and I should think it was near midnight when I got home. . . . My wife trembled when she heard my step on the stair. She expected oaths and, perhaps, blows – as was the custom in those days. But I rushed into the room, and to her amazement, flung my arms round her neck, and said, 'Wife, a husband has come home to-night!' and then I kissed her. I had never done that sort of thing since we were married near upon twenty years before. I then said, 'Where are the children?' and I had them all out of their beds of rag and straw, and I said to them, 'Children, you have got a father now'; and then I kissed them; and I declare to yon, that I had never kissed them before since they were born. Friends," said he, "never say anything agin The Salvation Army! It did that for me, and I have stood to it"

In writing for many of this class, I feel that I cannot speak too plainly; no, nor plainly enough; and I cannot very well go over the ground too often.

The husband, then, I say, must share with his wife in the cares which are ever connected with family and home. On the wife, the heavier share of this burden must necessarily rest. It is quite true, that the man has, in many cases, to go forth to meet



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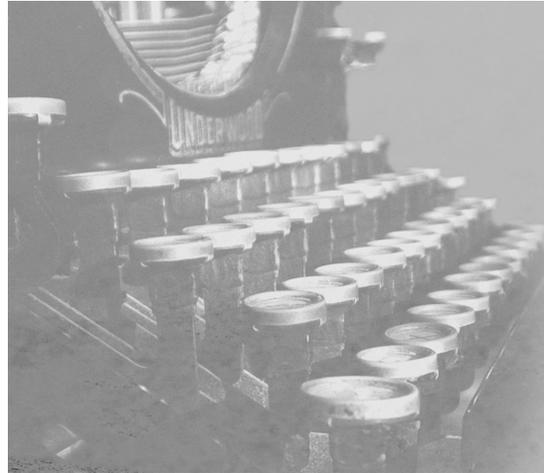
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dangers by land and sea, in order to earn the family's bread, and that he leaves the wife all snug and comfortable in her cosy home, while he risks life and limb amongst the machinery above ground or amidst the fire-damp below, or in the presence of a thousand other perils. Still, the daily excitement associated with these dangers and inconveniences will often make the husband's life easier to bear than the monotonous lonely one which a woman has ordinarily to endure.

A husband ought, I think, to bear all this in mind, and to remember that in the life of his wife there are numbers of trials of which she can speak to no one so readily as to him; and that upon no one else has she anything like so strong a claim for sympathy and counsel with respect to them. It is not, therefore, uncommon, I imagine, for husbands to regard their family affairs as matters of small moment. The sicknesses, accidents, naughtiness, education, and training of the children; the waywardness of servants, where there are such luxuries; the upkeep of the house; the troubles of relatives, and the ever-recur-ring difficulty of making ends meet, are often matters of small moment to the husband, in comparison with his own special trials; and, therefore, he is constantly in danger of regarding them as no trials at all.

Many a wife feels, very keenly, this under-estimation of the troubles of her lot. To her, the health and happiness and welfare of her children, and most of all, the making of them into good and holy men and women, constitute the chief responsibility of her life, one which she feels must be faithfully discharged, whatever else may befall her; while all the host of other perplexities have also to be attended to, or the household and its affairs will go to rack and ruin. And, when the husband cannot be prevailed upon to join heart and hand with her, in dealing with them, she will naturally and rightly feel it very acutely.

Only too often the husband does not afford the time to even hear about these things; much less does he manifest the spirit that boldly shares the burden. The wife has taken her full part of every anxiety that has come upon him, from the first hour they agreed to join hands and hearts together; and yet, in many cases, she is left to toil on alone with the canker of neglect gnawing at her heart, until the thousand and one anxieties worry all the religion out of her soul, worry all the true love for her husband out of her heart, and, alas! worry her into the grave.



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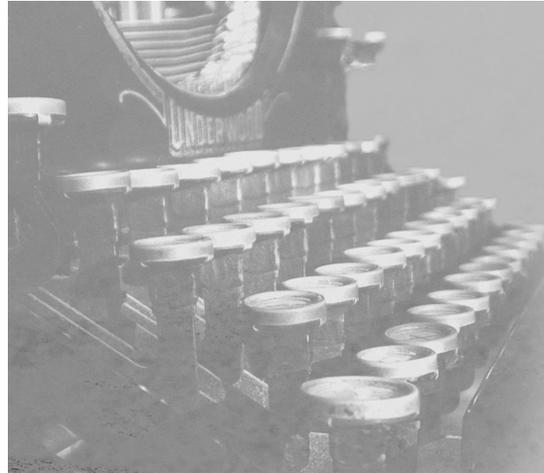
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Now, I say to husbands, do not let this state of things, or anything approaching it, happen in your experience. Begin, and go on to the end, in the spirit and practice of a true partnership. The children are yours in as true a sense as they are your wife's; and although Divine Providence has apportioned the larger share of nursing and teaching and training them to her, a high responsibility rests upon you as a godly father, to work with her to the very utmost of your opportunity. Twenty years hence, if you are a good Salvationist, and should be spared, you will greatly desire to see them taking a front-rank place in the world, and boldly and successfully playing their part for God and man. On the other hand, it will break your heart and cloud your declining years with sorrow to see them grow up the enemies of God, a curse to their fellows, and a disgrace to your name.

To this end, someone must prepare the soil of their young hearts, put in the good seed, and with prayers and patience, guard its growth to maturity. I repeat again, that the larger portion of the burden of all this loving toil must of necessity fall upon the wife, and especially will it be so when the children are at the most impressionable age; but I insist also, and that with all the emphasis I can employ, that the father must take his fair share of this anxious business. No small part of that share will consist in hearing, with patience and sympathy, from the lips of their mother, of the difficulties she meets with, counselling her as to the best method of dealing with them, and cheering her forward in the discharge of her heavenly task.

7. The faithful husband will specially care for the happiness of his wife. A certain amount of gladness is essential to health of body, mind, and spirit. Men do not forget this when they think of their own lot. And what is true of man is true of woman.

Now, who is responsible for bringing this happiness to a wife, if not her husband? He tried to make her happy before he married her, assured her of his devotion, made her presents, took her to meetings, and shared his holidays with her at the seaside or elsewhere, while hours were spent conversing on matters about which he cared but little –just because they pleased her for the time. Why should he not continue these, and the similar arts for creating pleasant thoughts and feelings in her breast, of which he was such a master before the Marriage-day, and which will be just as welcome to



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her now as they were in the days gone by? I do not ask for any of the frivolities so common in the giddy world; but I do ask that there shall be a direct and persevering attempt on the part of every husband to brighten the life of his wife, and make her feel that it is a joy to him to have been favoured with such love as has fallen to his lot.

Alas! in many cases, all these loving usages change so seriously, and so much for the worse, after Marriage, that the wife comes to think that she is to her husband as an old song that has lost its charm, and so all the gladness dries up out of her soul, and her life becomes a gloomy pilgrimage.

Of course, the experience of the true Salvationist wife will differ, in some measure, from this, even in these sad circumstances, seeing that there will be for her sources of gladness eternally new in the Salvation of God flowing in upon her, and in the ever-varying joys connected with blessing her fellows, and extending the Kingdom of Christ. But even then, few of us can estimate the secret disappointments and heartaches of multitudes of sincere and loving wives, when they witness the gradual decline of any real interest in the gladness and happiness of their lives, on the part of those to whom they have given their all.

8. *The true husband will give his wife a fair share of his time.* This is a difficult subject, and one upon which I know some difference of opinion prevails, even among Salvationists. The utter selfishness of some wives is known far and near. They would keep their husbands ever dangling at their elbows, regardless of the useful work they might be doing, for the lost and wretched around them, expecting them to have no higher aim in life than, to minister to their own comfort and pleasure. But the demands of those who are unreasonable must not be allowed to interfere with the rightful claims of others, for certainly a woman should have a fair measure of her husband's time, and he ought to see that she gets it.