



## **Husbands and Wives**

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## The Husband's Part

Each member of the household has a part in the family life, and the fullest happiness and blessedness of the home can be attained only when each one's part is faithfully fulfilled. If any one member of the family fails in love or duty, the failure affects the whole household life, just as one discordant voice in a company of singers spoils the music.

The husband has a part all his own, which no other can do. How does the Word of God define his duties? What is involved in his part in the marriage relation? What does he owe his wife? One word covers it all—love. "Husbands, love your wives," comes the command with all divine authority. This counsel is short, but becomes exceedingly long when it is fully accepted and observed.

### **What are some of the things embraced in a husband's love?**

One is fondness, affectionate regard. When a man offers his hand in marriage to a woman he says by his act that his heart has made a choice of her among all women, that he has for her a deeper affection than for any other. At the marriage altar he solemnly pledges to her a continuance of that love until death. When the beauty has faded from her face and the luster from her eyes; when old age has brought wrinkles, or when sickness or sorrow has left its marks; the faithful husband's love is to remain deep and true as ever. His heart is still to find its truest delight in her.

But the Word implies more than mere emotional fondness. The Scriptures give the measure of the love which husbands are to bear to their wives; "Husbands, love your wives even as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it." In the true husband who realizes all that this divine command involves, selfishness dies at the marriage altar. He thinks no longer of his own comfort, but of his wife's. He denies himself that he may bring new pleasures and comforts to her. He counts no sacrifice too great to be made which will bring benefit to her.

The wife yields all up to the husband, gives herself in the fullest sense. Will he be faithful in the holy trust reposed in his hands? Will he cherish her happiness as a precious jewel, bearing all things, enduring all things, for her sake. Will he seek her highest good, help her to build up in herself the noblest womanhood? Is he worthy to receive into his keeping all that her confiding love lays at his feet?

Every husband should understand that when a woman, the woman of his own free and deliberate choice, places her hand in his and thus becomes his wife, she has taken her life, with all its hopes and fears, all its

possibilities of joy or sorrow, all its capacity for development, all its tender and sacred interests, and placed it in his hand. He is then under the most solemn obligation to do all in his power to make her life happy, noble and blessed. To do this he must be ready to make any personal sacrifice. Nothing less can be implied in "loving as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it."

This love implies the utmost gentleness in manner. One may be very faithful and true and yet lack that affectionateness in speech and act which has such power to satisfy the heart. Scripture admonishes husbands to love their wives and do not be bitter against them. The teaching is that all bitterness should be suppressed in the very workings of the heart and changed into sweetness.

Are all husbands blameless in this respect? Are there none that speak sharp words that sting? No man who truly loves his wife would intentionally cause her pain. The trouble is that men often fall into free and careless habits at home, which they do not exercise in society. They will pride themselves on their thoughtfulness and sensitive spirit, but at home too often they are rude, careless in speech, and heedless of their words and actions. They forget that their wives are women with gentle spirits, easily hurt. A man thinks that because a woman is his wife she should know he loves her even if he is rude to her, that she should endure anything he says or does, even if it is something that would sorely hurt or offend any other woman.

There never was a more false premise than this! Because she is his wife, he owes her the loftiest courtesy he can pay. There is no other of whose feelings he should be so careful and whom he should so grieve to hurt. But it is not enough that men do not be bitter against their wives. It is a step in the right direction when, instead of being bitter, his words and acts and whole bearing are characterized by gentleness and affectionateness. Yet, there are also men who speak no bitter words, but few kindly, tender words fall from their lips. The old warmth of the newly wed husband has died out and the speech has become cold and businesslike. The mere absence of a fault or vice is not necessarily a virtue. Silence is not doubt better than bitterness, and coldness better than rudeness. A garden without weeds, though having no plants or flowers is better than a patch of weeds; but a garden beautiful and fragrant with flowers is better still.

While gentleness should always mark a husband's bearing towards his wife, there are occasions which call for peculiar thoughtfulness and sympathetic expression. Sometimes she is very weary. The cares of the day

have been unusually trying, and matters have not gone smoothly at home. Her quivering nerves have been sorely overtaxed, or maybe she has heard bad news. A child has been sick, or worse, has by some disobedience almost broken her heart. What is a husband's part at such times? Surely, if he is capable of tenderness he will show it now. He will seek to lighten the burden, to quiet the trembling heart and to impart strength and peace. Every wife should be sure that her husband will understand her, that he will deal most gently with her, that he will give his own strength to shelter her, that he will impart of his own life to build up hers. She should never have to doubt that he will sympathize with her in whatever it may be that tries her. She should never have to fear repulse or coldness when she flees to him for shelter. What Christ is to His people in their weariness, their sorrow, their pain, every husband in his own measure should be to his own wife.

The spirit of love requires a husband to honor his wife. He honored her before she was his wife. He saw in her his ideal of all that was noble, lovely and queenly. He showed her every mark of honor of which his soul was capable. Now that he has lifted her up to the throne of his heart, will he honor her less? Not less, but more and ever more, if he be a true husband and a manly man. He has taken her now into the closest and holiest relation on earth. He has linked her life with his own, so that henceforward whatever affect one affects both. If one is exalted, the other is exalted; if one is dishonored the other is debased. There is definitely more reason why he should honor her now than before she was his wife.

The ways in which he should show her honor are countless. He will do it by providing for her needs on as generous a scale as his position and his means will justify. He will do it by making her the sharer of all his life. He will counsel with her about his business, advise with her concerning every new plan and confide to her at every point the results of his undertakings. A wife to him is not a child. When he chose her to be his wife he believed her to be worthy.

But even if she is not qualified to give him great aid in his business plans, she loves him and is deeply interested in everything that he is doing. She is made happy by being into all his counsels, and thus lifted up close beside him in his life-work; and he is made stronger, too, for energetic duty and for heroic achievement by her warm sympathy and by the inspiration of her cheerful encouragement. Whether the day bring defeat or victory, failure or success, he should confide all to her in the evening. If the day has been prosperous she has a right to share the gratification; if it has been adverse, she will want to help her husband bear his burden

and to whisper a new word of courage in his heart. Not only does a man fail to give his wife due honor when he shuts her out, but he also robs himself of that inspiration and help which every true wife is able to minister to her husband.

Ofttimes it is the very tenderness of his regard for his wife that leads him to keep from her things that would cause her distress or anxiety of mind. He does not suppose that she could help him in the solving of the perplexing questions or in the bearing of the heavy burdens. In an effort to shield her from deep anxiety and heavy loads this is affectionate unselfishness in the husband, but there is no doubt that in ordinary circumstances such a course is both wrong and unwise. It is robbing the wife of love's privilege of sharing the whole of her husband's life.

When a man has taken a woman to be his wife, he has linked her life with his own in the closest of all earthly relations. Whatever concerns him also concerns her. He has no interests which are not hers as well as his. He should, therefore, make her the sharer of all his life. She should know of all his successes and triumphs and to be permitted to rejoice with him in his gladness. If trials come, she should know also of these, that she may sympathize with him, encourage and help him in his struggles and stand close beside him when the shadows rest upon him. They have linked their lives together, "for better or for worse," and they should share the pains as well as the pleasures that come to either of them. A true wife is not a child; she is a woman, and should be treated as a woman.

A man does deep injustice to the woman he has chosen to be his wife when he thinks that she is too frail and delicate to endure with him the storms that blow upon him, or that she is too inexperienced of life to discuss with him the problems that cause him grave and earnest thought. She may not have all his practical wisdom with regard to the world's affairs, and yet she may be able to offer many suggestions which shall prove of more value to him than the counsel on many shrewd men of the world. There are many men whose success would have been greater, or to whom failure would not have come, had he sought or accepted his wife's counsel and help. Even if a wife can give no real practical aid, her husband will be made ten times stronger in his own heart by her strengthening sympathy and brave cheer while he is carrying his load or fighting his battle.

It need scarcely even be said, further, that a husband should honor his wife by being worthy of her. Love has been the inspiration that has lifted many a man from a lowly place to lofty heights of worth or power. Many

a youth of humble origin and without rank or condition has worshiped at the feet of a maiden far above him in social standing, and incited by his ardent affection, has made himself worthy of her and then won her as his bride.

Every true-hearted husband should seek to be worthy of the wife he has already won. For her sake he should reach out after the noblest achievements and strive to attain the loftiest heights of character. To her he is the ideal of all that is manly, and he should seek to become every day more worthy of the homage she pays to him. Every possibility in his soul should be developed. Every latent power and energy of his life should be brought out. His hand should be trained under love's inspiration to do its most skillful work. Every fault in his character should be eradicated, every evil habit conquered, and every hidden beauty of soul should burst into fragrant bloom for her sake. She looks to him as her ideal of manhood, and he must see to it that the ideal is not marred- that he never falls by any unworthy act of his own from the high pedestal in her heart to which she has raised him.

In the spirit of this love every husband should be a large-hearted man. He should never be a tyrant, playing the petty despot in his home. A manly man has a generous spirit which shows itself in all his life, but nowhere so richly as within his own doors. There are wives whose natures do not blossom out in their best beauty because of the atmosphere in which they live is chilly and cold. A lady who is always watching for beautiful things and gathering them about her, brought from the mountainside a sod of moss. She put it in her parlor, and after a while, in the genial warmth, there sprang out from the bosom of the moss a multitude of sweet, delicate spring flowers. The seeds had long lain in the moss, but in the cold air of the mountain they had never burst into life. There are noble wives in humble homes and stately homes who are just like this moss. In their natures there are the germs of many excellences and the possibilities of rich outcome, and in it none of these richer qualities and powers manifest themselves. The bringing of new warmth into the home will draw out these latent germs of unsuspected loveliness. The husband who would have his wife's nature blossom out into its best possibilities of character, influence and power must make a genial summer atmosphere for his home all year round.

It is then that this large-heartedness will impart its spirit to the home itself. A husband who is generous within his own doors will not be close and stingy outside. The heart that is used always to be open at home cannot be carried shut through this suffering world. The prosperous home

of a generous man sends many a blessing and comfort out to be a help to a great many struggling lives. Every generous and large-hearted man scatters many a comfort among the needy and the suffering as he passes through this world.

There is nothing lost by such scattering. No richer blessing can come upon a home that the benedictions of those who have been helped, who have been fed at its doors, or sheltered beneath its roof, or inspired by its cheer and kindly interest. There is no memorial that any man can make for himself in this world so lasting and so satisfying as that which a life of unselfishness and beneficence builds up.

Every husband of a Christian wife should walk with her in common love for Christ. There are some husbands, however, who fail in this. They love their wives very sincerely, and make sacrifices for their sake. They carefully shelter them from life's rude blasts. They bless them with all tenderness and affection. They honor them very highly, bringing many noble achievements to lay at their feet, and show them all homage and respect. They do everything that love can suggest to make their earthly happiness full and complete. They share every burden and walk close beside them in every trial. But when these husbands come to the matter of personal religion and eternal realities, they draw back and leave them to go on alone. While the wife goes on in the sanctuary to worship, the husband waits without. At the very point where his interest in her life should be the deepest it fails altogether.

Surely, it is a great wrong to a woman, tender and dependent, to leave her to walk alone through this world in her deepest life, receiving no sympathy, no companionship, no support, from him who is her dearest friend. She must leave him outside of the most sacred part of her life. She must be silent to him concerning the experiences of her soul in its spiritual struggles, aspirations, yearnings, and hopes. She must bear alone the responsibility of the children's religious nurture and training. Alone she must bow to God in prayer.

It cannot be right that a husband should leave his wife to live such a large part of her life without his companionship and sympathy. His love should seek to enter with her into every sacred experience. In no other way could he give her such joy as by taking his place beside her as a fellow heir of the same grace. It would lighten every burden, since he would now share it with her. It would bring new radiance to her face, new peace to her heart, new zest to all life for her. It would make their marriage more perfect and unite their hearts in a closer union, since it is only those who realize the full sweetness of wedded life who are one at

every point and in every feeling, purpose and hope, and whose souls blend in their higher, spiritual part as well as in their lower nature and experiences. Then it would also introduce the husband himself to sources of blessing and strength of which he has never known before; for the religion of Christ is a reality and brings the soul into communication with God and with infinite springs of comfort, help and blessing. In sharing her life of faith and prayer and devotion to Christ, he would find his own life linked to heaven.

United, then, on earth in a common faith in Christ, their mutual love mingling and blending in the love of God, they shall be united also in heaven in eternal fellowship! Why should hearts spend years on earth in growing into one, knitting life to life, blending soul in soul, for a union that is not to reach beyond the valley of shadows? Why not weave for all eternity?

## The Wife's Part

It is a high honor for a woman to be chosen from among all womankind to be the wife of a good and true man. She is lifted up to be a crowned queen. Her husband's manly love laid at her feet exalts her to the throne of his life. Great power is placed in her hands. Sacred destinies are reposed in her keeping. Will she wear her crown beneficently? Will she fill her realm with beauty and with blessing? Or will she fail in her holy trust? Only her married life can be the answer.

A woman may well pause before she gives her hand in marriage, and inquire whether he is worthy to whom she is asked to surrender so much; whether he can bring true happiness to her life; whether he can meet the cravings of her nature for love and for companionship; whether he is worthy to be lifted to the highest place in her heart and honored as a husband should be honored. She must ask these questions for her own sake, else the dream may fade with the bridal wreath, and she may learn, when too late, that he for whom she has left all and to whom she has given all is not worthy of the sacred trust, and has no power to fill her life with happiness, to wake her heart's chords, to touch her soul's depths.

But the question should be turned and asked from the other side. Can she be a true wife to him who asks for her hand? Is she worthy of the love that is laid at her feet? Can she be a blessing to the life of him who would lift her to the throne of his heart? Will he find in her all the beauty, all the tender loveliness, all the rich qualities of nature, all the deep sympathy and companionship, all the strengthful, uplifting love, all the sources of joy and help, which he seems now to see in her? Is there any possible future for him which she could not share? Are there needs in his soul, or hungers, which she cannot answer? Are there chords in his life which her fingers cannot wake?

Surely it is proper for her to question her own soul for him while she bids him question his soul for her. A wife has a part in the song of wedded love if it is to be a harmony. She holds in her hands on her wedding day precious interests, sacred destinies, and holy responsibilities, which, if disclosed to her sight at once, might well appall the bravest heart. Her opportunity is one which the loftiest angel might covet. Not the happiness only of a manly life, but its whole future of character, of influence, of growth, rests with her.

What is the true ideal of a wife? It is not something lifted above the common experiences of life, not an ethereal angel feeding on ambrosia and moving in the realms of fancy. In some European cities they sell to

the tourist models of their cathedrals made of alabaster, whiter than snow. But so delicate are these alabaster shrines that they must be kept under glass covers or they will be soiled by the dust, and so frail that they must be sheltered from every rude touch, lest their lovely columns may be shattered. They are very graceful and beautiful, but they serve no lofty purpose. No worshipers can enter their doors. No melody rises to heaven from their aisles. So there are ideals of womanhood which are very lovely, full of graceful charms, pleasing, attractive, but which are too delicate and frail for this prosaic, storm-swept world of ours. Such ideals the poets and the novelists sometimes give us. They appear well to the eye as they are portrayed for us on the brilliant page. But of what use would they be in the life which the real woman of our day has to live? A breath of earthly air would stain them. One day of actual experience in the hard toils and sore struggles of life would shatter their frail loveliness to fragments. We had better seek for ideals which will not be soiled by a rude touch nor blown away by a stiff breeze, and which will grow lovelier as they move through life's paths of sacrifice and toil. The true wife needs to be no mere poet's dream, no artist's picture, no ethereal lady too fine for use, but a woman healthful, strong, practical, industrious, with a hand for life's common duties, yet crowned with that beauty which a high and noble purpose gives to a soul.

One of the first essential elements in a wife is faithfulness, too, in the largest sense. The heart of her husband does safely trust in her. Perfect confidence is the basis of all true affection. A shadow of doubt destroys the peace of married life. A true wife by her character and by her conduct proves herself worthy of her husband's trust. He has confidence in her affection; he knows that her heart is unalterably true to him. He has confidence in her management; he confides to her the care of his household. He knows that she is true to all his interests that she is prudent and wise, not wasteful nor extravagant. It is one of the essential things in a true wife that her husband shall be able to leave in her hands the management of all domestic affairs, and know that they are safe. Wifely thriftlessness and extravagance have destroyed the happiness of many a household and wrecked many a home. On the other hand, many a man owes his prosperity to his wife's prudence and her wise administration of household affairs.

Every true wife makes her husband's interests her own. While he lives for her, carrying her image in his heart and toiling for her all the days, she thinks only of what will do him good. When burdens press upon

him she tries to lighten them by sympathy, by cheer, by the inspiration of love. She enters with zest and enthusiasm into all his plans.

She is never a weight to drag him down; she is strength in his heart to help him ever to do nobler and better things.

All wives are not such blessings to their husbands. Woman is compared sometimes to the vine, while man is the strong oak to which it clings. But there are different kinds of vines. Some wreath a robe of beauty and a crown of glory for the tree, covering it in summer days with green leaves and in the autumn hanging among its branches rich purple clusters of fruit; others twine their arms about it only to sap its very life and destroy its vigor, until it stands decaying and unsightly, stripped of its splendor, discrowned and fit only for the fire.

A true wife makes a man's life nobler, stronger, grander, by the omnipotence of her love, turning all the forces of manhood upward and heavenward. While she clings to him in holy confidence and loving dependence she brings out in him whatever is noblest and richest in his being. She inspires him with courage and earnestness. She beautifies his life. She softens whatever is rude and harsh in his habits or his spirit. She clothes him with the gentler graces of refined and cultured manhood. While she yields to him and never disregards his lightest wish, she is really his queen, ruling his whole life and leading him onward and upward in every proper path.

But there are wives also like the vines which cling only to blight. Their dependence is weak, indolent helplessness. They lean but impart no strength. They cling but they sap the life. They put forth no hand to help. They loll on sofas or promenade the streets; they dream over sentimental novels; they gossip in drawing rooms. They are utterly useless, and being useless they become burdens even to manliest, tenderest love. Instead of making a man's life stronger, happier, richer, they absorb his strength, impair his usefulness, hinder his success and cause him to be a failure among men. To themselves also the result is wretchedness. Dependence is beautiful when it does not become weakness and inefficiency. The true wife clings and leans, but she also helps and inspires. Her husband feels the mighty inspiration of her love in all his life. Toil is easier, burdens are lighter, battles are less fierce, because of the face that waits in the quiet of the home, because of the heart that beats in loving sympathy whatever the experience, because of the voice that speaks its words of cheer and encouragement when the day's work is done. No wife knows how much she can do to make her husband honored among men, and his life a power and a success, by her loyal faithfulness, by the

active inspiration of her own sweet life. The good wife is a good housekeeper. I know well how unromantic this remark will appear to those whose dreams of married life are woven of the fancies of youthful sentiment; but these frail dreams of sentiment will not last long amid the stern realities of life, and then that which will prove one of the rarest elements of happiness and blessing in the household will be housewifely industry and diligence.

When young people marry they are rarely troubled with many thoughts about the details of housekeeping. Their dreams are high above all such commonplaces. The mere mention of such things as cooking, baking, sweeping, dusting, mending, ironing, jars upon the poetic rhythm of the lofty themes of conversation. It never enters the brains of these happy lovers that it can make any difference in the world in their home life whether the bread is sweet or sour, whether the oatmeal is well cooked or scorched, whether the meals are punctual or tardy. The mere thought that such sublunary matters could affect the tone of their wedded life seems a desecration.

It is a pity to dash away such exquisite dreams, but the truth is they do not long outlast the echo of the wedding peals or the fragrance of the bridal roses. The newly married are not long within their own doors before they find that something more than tender sentiment is needed to make their home life a success. They come down from the clouds when the daily routine begins and touch the common soil on which the feet of other mortals walk. Then they find that they are dependent, just like ordinary people, on some quite prosaic conditions. One of the very first things they discover is the intimate relation between the kitchen and wedded happiness. That love may fulfill its delightful prophecies and realize its splendid dreams there must be in the new home a basis of material and very practical elements. The palace that is to rise into the air, shooting up its towers, displaying its wonders of architecture, flashing its splendors in the sunshine, the admiration of the world, must have its foundation in commonplace earth, resting on plain, hard, honest rock. Love may build its palace of noble sentiments and tender affections and sweet charities, rising into the very clouds, and in this splendid home two souls may dwell in the enjoyment of the highest possibilities of wedded life; but this palace, too, must stand on the ground, with unpoetic and unsentimental stones for its foundation. That foundation is good housekeeping. In other words, good breakfasts, dinners and suppers, a well-kept house, order, system, promptness, punctuality, good cheer- far

more than any young lovers dream does happiness in married life depend upon such commonplace things as these. Love is very patient, very kind, very gentle; and where there is love no doubt the plainest fare is ambrosia and the homeliest surroundings are charming. I know the wise man said: 'Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a good roast-beef dinner, with hatred therewith; but herbs as a constant diet will pall on the taste, even if love is ever present to season them. In this day of advanced civilization it ought to be possible to have both the stalled ox and love. Husbands are not angels in this mundane state, and not being such they need a substantial basis of good housekeeping for the realization of their dreams of blissful home-making.

There certainly have been cases in which very tender love has lost its tenderness and when the cause lay in the disorder and mismanagement of the housewifery. There is no doubt that many a heart-estrangement begins at the table where meals are unpunctual and food is poorly prepared or served. Bad housekeeping will soon drive the last vestige of romance out of any home. The illusion which love weaves about an idolized bride will soon vanish if she proves incompetent in her domestic management. The wife who will keep the charm of early love unbroken through the years, and in whose home the dreams of the wedding day will come true, must be a good housekeeper.

In one of his Epistles St. Paul gives the counsel that young wives should be "workers at home," as the Revisers have put it, signifying that home is the sphere of the wife's duties, and that she is to find her chief work there. There is a glory in all the Christian charities which Christian women, especially in these recent days, are founding and conducting with so much enthusiasm and such marked and abounding success. Woman is endowed with gifts of sympathy, of gentleness, of inspiring strengthfulness, which peculiarly fit her to be Christ's messenger of mercy to human woe and sorrow and pain.

There is the widest opportunity in the most fitting service for every woman whose heart God has touched to be a ministering angel to those who need sympathy or help. There are many who are free to serve in public charities, in caring for the poor, for the sick in hospital wards, for the orphaned and the aged. There are few women who cannot do a little in some one or more of these organizations of Christian beneficence.

But it should be understood that for every wife the first duty is the making and keeping of her own home. Her first and best work should be done there, and until it is well done she has no right to go outside to take up other duties. She is to be a "worker at home." She must look upon her

home as the one spot on earth for which she alone is responsible, and which she must cultivate well for God if she never does anything outside. For her the Father's business is not attending Dorcas societies, and missionary meetings, and mothers' meetings, and temperance conventions, or even teaching a Sunday-school class, until she has made her own home all that her wisest thought and best skill can make it. There have been wives who in their zeal for Christ's work outside have neglected Christ's work inside their own doors. They have had eyes and hearts for human need and human sorrow in the broad fields lying far out, but neither eye nor heart for the work of love close about their own feet. The result has been that while they were doing angelic work in the lanes and streets, the angels were mourning over their neglected duties within the hallowed walls of their own homes. While they were winning a place in the hearts of the poor or the sick or the orphan, they were losing their rightful place in the hearts of their own household. Let it be remembered that Christ's work in the home is the first that he gives to every wife, and that no amount of consecrated activities in other spheres will atone in this world or the next for neglect or failure there.

The good wife is generous and warm-hearted. She does not grow grasping and selfish. In her desire to economize and add to her stores she does not forget those about her who suffer or want. While she gives her wisest and most earnest thought and her best and most skillful work to her own home, her heart does not grow cold toward those outside who need sympathy. I cannot conceive of true womanhood ripened into mellow richness, yet wanting the qualities of gentleness and unselfishness. A woman whose heart is not touched by the sight of sorrow, and whose hands do not go out in relief where it is in her power to help, lacks one of the elements which make the glory of womanhood.

This is not the place to speak of woman as a ministering angel. If it were it would be easy to fill many pages with the bright records of most holy deeds of self-sacrifice. I am speaking now, however, of woman as wife; and only upon so much of this ministry to the suffering as she may perform in her own home, at her own door and in connection with her housewifely duties is it fit to linger at this time. But even in this limited sphere her opportunities are by no means small.

It is in her own home that this warmth of heart and this openness of hand are first to be shown. It is as wife and mother that her gentleness performs its most sacred ministry. Her hand wipes away the teardrops when there is sorrow. In sickness she is the tender nurse. She bears upon her own heart every burden that weighs upon her husband. No matter

how the world goes with him during the day, when he enters his own door he meets the fragrant atmosphere of love. Other friends may forsake him, but she clings to him with unalterable fidelity. When gloom comes down and adversity falls upon him, her faithful eyes look ever into his like two stars of hope shining in the darkness. When his heart is crushed, beneath her smile it gathers itself again into strength, "like a wind-torn flower in the sunshine." "You cannot imagine," wrote De Tocqueville of his wife, "what she is in great trials. Usually so gentle, she then becomes strong and energetic. She watches me without my knowing it; she softens, calms and strengthens me in difficulties which distract me, but leave her serene." An eloquent tribute, but one which thousands of husbands might give. Men often see not the angel in the plain, plodding woman who walks quietly beside them, until the day of trial comes; then in the darkness the glory shines out. An angel ministered to our Lord when in Gethsemane he wrestled with his great and bitter sorrow. What a benediction to the mighty Sufferer was in the soft gliding to his side of that gentle presence, in the touch of that soothing, supporting hand laid upon him, in the comfort of that gentle voice thrilling with sympathy as it spoke its strengthening message of love! Was it a mere coincidence that just at that time and in that place the radiant messenger came? No, it is always so. Angels choose such occasions to pay their visits to men.

"With silence only as their benediction God's angels come, Where in the shadow of a great affliction The soul sits dumb." So it is in the dark hours of a man's life, when burdens press, when sorrows weigh like mountains upon his soul, when adversities have left him crushed and broken, or when he is in the midst of fierce struggles which try the strength of every fiber of his manhood, that all the radiance and glory of a true wife's strengthful love shine out before his eyes. Only then does he recognize in her God's angel of mercy. "O woman! in our hours of ease Uncertain, coy, and hard to please, And variable as the shade By the light quivering aspen made; When pain and anguish wring the brow, A ministering angel you!" In sickness, how thoughtful, how skillful, how gentle a nurse is the true wife! In struggle with temptation or adversity or difficulty, what an inspirer she is! In misfortune or disaster, what lofty heroism does she exhibit and what courage does her bravery kindle in her husband's heart! Instead of being crushed by the unexpected loss, she only then rises to her full grandeur of soul. Instead of weeping, repining and despairing, and thus adding tenfold to the burden of the misfortune, she cheerfully accepts the changed circumstances and becomes a

minister of hope and strength. She turns away from luxury and ease to the plainer home, the simpler life, the humbler surroundings, without a murmur. It is in such circumstances and experiences that the heroism of woman's soul is manifested. Many a man is carried victoriously through misfortune and enabled to rise again, because of the strong inspiring sympathy and the self-forgetting help of his wife; and many a man fails in fierce struggle, and rises not again from the defeat of misfortune, because the wife at his side proves unequal to her opportunity. But a wife's ministry of mercy reaches outside her own doors. Every true home is an influence of blessing in the community where it stands. Its lights shine out. Its songs ring out. Its spirit breathes out. The neighbors know whether it is hospitable or inhospitable, warm or cold, inviting or repelling. Some homes bless no lives outside their own circle; others are perpetually pouring out sweetness and fragrance. The ideal Christian home is a far-reaching benediction. It sets its lamps in the windows, and while they give no less light and cheer to those within, they pour a little beam upon the gloom without, which may brighten some dark path and put a little cheer into the heart of some belated passer-by. Its doors stand ever open with a welcome to everyone who comes seeking shelter from the storm, or sympathy in sorrow, or help in trial. It is a hospice, like those blessed refuges on the Alps, where the weary or the chilled or the fainting are sure always of refreshment, of warmth, of kindly friendship, of gentle ministry of mercy. It is a place where one who is in trouble may go confident ever of sympathy and comfort. It is a place where the young people love to go, because they know they are welcome and because they find there inspiration and help.

And this spirit of the home the wife makes; indeed, it is her own spirit filling the house and pouring out like light or like fragrance. A true wife is universally beloved. She is recognized as one of God's angels scattering blessings as far as her hand can reach. Her neighbors are all blessed by her ministrations. When sickness or sorrow touches any other household, some token of sympathy finds its way from her hand into the shadowed home. To the old she is gentle and patient. To the young she is inciting and helpful. To the poor she is God's hand reached out. To the sufferer she brings strength. To the sorrowing she is a consoler. There is trouble nowhere near but her face appears at the door and her hand brings its benediction.

Some wife, weary already, her hands over-full with the multiplied cares and duties of her household life, may plead that she has no strength to spend in sympathy and help for others. But it is truly

wonderful how light these added burdens seem when they are taken up in love. A legend of Elizabeth tells that once she was bearing her cloak full of loaves to the poor whom she daily fed. Her husband met her, and being amazed at the size of the load she bore looked to see what it was, and found only flowers. The loaves were as light as they were fragrant to the noble woman who carried them for the love she bore her Lord. So always the duties we perform out of love for him and his suffering ones become easy and pleasant as we take them up. Heaven's benediction rests ever on the home of her who lives to do good. Scarcely a word has been said thus far of a wife's personal relation to her husband and the duties that spring out of that relation. These are manifold, and yet they are so sacred and delicate that it seems hardly fit to speak or write of them. A few of the more important of these duties belonging to the wife's part may be merely touched upon. A true wife gives her husband her fullest confidence. She hides nothing from him. She gives no pledge of secrecy which will seal her lips in his presence. She listens to no words of admiration from others which she may not repeat to him. She expresses to him every feeling, every hope, every desire and yearning, every joy or pain. Then while she utters every confidence in his ear she is most careful to speak in no other ear any word concerning the sacred inner life of her home. Are there little frictions or grievances in the wedded life? Has her husband faults which annoy her or cause her pain? Does he fail in this duty or that? Do differences arise which threaten the peace of the home? In the feeling of disappointment and pain, smarting under a sense of injury, a wife may be strongly tempted to seek sympathy by telling her trials to some intimate friends. Nothing could be more fatal to her own truest interests and to the hope of restored happiness and peace in her home. Grievances complained of outside remain unhealed sores. The wise wife will share her secret of unhappiness with none but her Master, while she strives in every way that patient love can suggest to remove the causes of discord or trouble.

Love sees much in a wife that other eyes see not. It throws a veil over her blemishes; it transfigures even her plainest features. One of the problems of her wedded life is to retain this charm for her husband's eyes as long as she lives, to appear lovely to him even when the color has faded from her cheeks and when the music has gone out of her voice. This is no impossibility; it is only what is done in every true home. But it cannot be done by the arts of the dressmaker, the milliner and the hair-dresser, only the arts of love can do it. The wife who would always hold in her husband's heart the place she held on her wedding day will never cease

striving to be lovely. She will be as careful of her words and acts and her whole bearing toward him as she was before marriage. She will cultivate in her own life whatever is beautiful, whatever is winning, whatever is graceful. She will scrupulously avoid whatever is offensive or unwomanly. She will look well to her personal appearance; no woman can be careless in her dress, slatternly and untidy, and long keep her place on the throne of her husband's life. She will look well to her inner life. She must have mental attractiveness. She will seek to be clothed in spiritual beauty. Her husband must see in her ever-new loveliness as the years move on. As the charms of physical beauty may fade in the toils and vicissitudes of life, there must be more and more beauty of soul to shine out to replace the attractions that are lost. It has been said that "the wife should always leave something to be revealed only to her husband, some modest charm, some secret grace, reserved solely for his delight and inspiration, like those flowers which give of their sweetness only to the hand that lovingly gathers them."

She should always care more to please him than any other person in the world. She should prize more highly a compliment from his lips than from any other human lips. Therefore she should reserve for him the sweetest charms; she should seek to bring ever to him some new surprise of loveliness; she should plan pleasures and delights for him. Instead of not caring how she looks or whether she is agreeable or not when no one but her husband is present, she should always be at her best for him. Instead of being bright and lovely when there is company, then relapsing into languor and silence when the company is gone, she should seek always to be brightest and loveliest when only he and she sit together in the quiet of the home. Both husband and wife should ever bring their best things to each other. Again let me say that no wife can over-estimate the influence she wields over her husband, or the measure in which his character, his career and his very destiny are laid in her hands for shaping. The sway which she holds over him is the sway of love, but it is mighty and resistless. If she retains her power, if she holds her place as queen of his life, she can do with him as she will. Even unconsciously to herself, without any thought of her responsibility, she will exert over him an influence that will go far toward making or marring all his future. If she has no lofty conception of life herself, if she is vain and frivolous, she will only chill his ardor, weaken his resolution and draw him aside from any earnest endeavor. But if she has in her soul noble womanly qualities, if she has true thoughts of life, if she has purpose, strength of character and fidelity to principle, she will be to him an

unfailing inspiration toward all that is noble, manly and Christlike. The high conceptions of life in her mind will elevate his conceptions. Her firm, strong purpose will put vigor and determination into every resolve and act of his. Her purity of soul will cleanse and refine his spirit. Her warm interest in all his affairs and her wise counsel at every point will make him strong for every duty and valiant in every struggle. Her careful domestic management will become an important element of success in his business life. Her bright, orderly, happy home-making will be a perpetual source of joy and peace, and an incentive to nobler living. Her unwavering fidelity, her tender affectionateness, her womanly sympathy, her beauty of soul, will make her to him God's angel indeed, sheltering, guarding, keeping, guiding and blessing him. just in the measure in which she realizes this lofty ideal of wifehood will she fulfill her mission and reap the rich harvest of her hopes. Such is the "woman's lot" that falls on every wife. It is solemn enough to make her very thoughtful and very earnest. How can she make sure that her influence over her husband will be for good, that he will be a better man, more successful in his career and more happy, because she is his wife? Not by any mere moral posturing so as to seem to have lofty purpose and wise thoughts of life; not by any weak resolving to help him and be an uplifting inspiration to him; not by perpetual preaching and lecturing on a husband's duties and on manly character; she can do it only by being in the very depths of her soul, in every thought and impulse of her heart and in every fiber of her nature, a true and noble woman. She will make him not like what she tells him he ought to be, but like what she herself is.

So it all comes back to a question of character. She can be a good wife only by being a good woman. And she can be a good woman in the true sense only by being a Christian woman. Nowhere but in Christ can she find the wisdom and strength she needs to meet the solemn responsibilities of wifehood. Only in Christ can she find that rich beauty of soul, that gemming and impearling of the character, which shall make her lovely in her husband's sight when the bloom of youth is gone, when the brilliance has faded out of her eyes and the roses have fled from her cheeks. Only Christ can teach her how to live so as to be blessed and a blessing in her married life. Nothing in this world is sadder than to compare love's early dreams, what love meant to be, with the too frequent story of the after-life, what came of the dreams, what was the outcome of love's venture. Why so many sad disappointments? Why do so many bridal wreaths fall into dust? Is there no possibility of making these fair dreams come true, of keeping these flowers lovely and fragrant through

all the years? Yes, but only in Christ. The young maiden goes smiling and singing to the marriage altar. Does she know that if she has not Christ with her she is as a lamb going to the sacrifice? Let her tarry at the gateway until she has linked her life to him, who is the first and the last. Human love is very precious, but it is not enough to satisfy a heart. There will be trials, there will be perplexities, there will be crosses and disappointments, there will be solitudes and sorrows. Then none but Christ will be sufficient. Without him the way will be dreary. But with his benediction and presence the flowers that droop today will bloom fresh again to-morrow, and the dreams of early love will build themselves up into a palace of peace and joy for the solace, the comfort and shelter of old age.



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