

has to be done in the world—that is to say, in the sphere of the world's influence, and under the limitations that that sphere necessarily brings with it. We must all of us face this fact, and it is one which it is well for us to face, as it emboldens and nerves us, that our work must inevitably be done in the world. It must be done for the Church, but its sphere must be in the world.

Therefore, knowing what the work is that we undertake, we must expect it to be hard and arduous, and difficult, as is any sphere of work under the world's influence.

I think it worth while saying, because I am thankful to see a good many younger ladies before me, and I suppose that all of them are thinking of doing something. Now to all beginners there is one first thought that is most important, and that is, that no one will give you the least credit for good intentions. You think this is a hard, stern, and grim world, and it is a very good thing for you that it is so. Very often in our studies and moments of meditation we think how nice it would be and how comfortable and easy it would be if the world were just a little different. I need not remind you that all schemes for the reformation of the world are only too excellent, and would answer admirably if human nature were only just a little different from what it is. But the trials and difficulties of life depend upon the fact that human nature is what it is and nothing else, not a little more or less. Consequently, many philanthropic and political schemes fail, although they are begun with the best possible intentions, because it is supposed that if they operated a little while they would work a change in human nature itself. But that changes very slowly, and the fundamental causes are as they were at the dawn of civilization. The primary lives and habits of men still remain and are unchanged. The earliest literature of civilized man shows that he was capable of rising to heights of sublime contemplation, and of falling to depths of degradation, such as we are familiar with in our own time.

And this brings me to a consideration which I am more particularly desirous of putting before you this afternoon. I said that human literature in the earliest times shows to us the capacity in man of rising to heights of lofty consideration. Now the secret of perfection has always lain not in the material but in the spiritual nature. It has always lain in the development and perfection of the finer shades of thought and feeling. Man differs from the brutes and rises in the scale of civilization just in proportion as the higher thoughts and feelings have a place in his life and occupy more of his attention.

Now it has always been the case that re-

ligion, and particularly the Christian religion, has flourished and had its greatest power in times when these finer and more deeply penetrating feelings have been particularly prominent.

Some people say that times of prosperity are not good times for religious feeling. Now that, in a sense, is true, for times of prosperity are not good times for stirring deeper feelings of any sort. They mean that a man just earns what is necessary to subsist upon comfortably without its involving too much labor, and that he need not give up too much time from his reserve forces to meet the absolute needs of his daily life. It is true that it has been in times when the greatest demands have been made upon human nature that human nature has shown itself capable of responding to them. It is true that in times of national poverty and the downfall of systems, when men feel themselves driven into a corner, that then they have risen most to a deep sense of all that religious truth means and involves. But it is, after all, upon the prevalence of the finer feelings that religious appeal must continually rest for its potency. Men who are just on a level with existence, men who feel that no particular call is made upon their energy, that is, men whose energies are entirely consumed in existing and have no call whatever to put forth any further efforts, are often found to forget the appeal of these finer feelings of the heart and soul and conscience.

But it is on the maintenance of these finer feelings, again let me say it, that the whole force of civilization depends. These finer feelings are enshrined in all literature, and it is to them that the appeal of both the Old and the New Testament is continually directed.

Now the work of women for the Church is the same as the work of women for the world: women always have been, are now, and must ever be, the special guardians of these finer feelings. It is round the home and domestic affections, round all those thoughts that women entertain and that women mainly guard, it is round all these that the finer feelings of mankind have always been congregated. And therefore women are in a special way guardians of virtue, guardians of morality, guardians of the finer forms of religious feeling and of the religious appeal.

And, if that is so, they have constantly to regard themselves as being missionaries in the world of all that is highest and noblest in our thoughts, in our hearts, in our aspirations and ambitions, and every true woman rises to that appeal and discharges all that it involves.

I do not like, as a rule, to make any particular distinctions between women and men, but now that I am addressing women solely, I would like to emphasise a fact about which a