

"THE KING'S DAUGHTERS": THEIR CULTURE AND CARE.

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PART VI.

"UNTO THE KING."



It has been the creed of all God-fearing nations from the beginning, that the promises are unto us and our children. Various are the ways in which we seek to ratify that covenant. Some of us believe that we may bring our little ones to the Lord in baptism, as did Lydia, the purple-seller of Thyatira, and Stephanas

of Achaia; others "dedicate" only without the outward form and sign of water. But, some way or other, every Christian parent brings the children to Jesus that He may touch them, and bless them. Households still are enrolled under Christ's banner.

To-day I want to speak a little about further bringing "unto the King." There is a natural reticence shown by every human soul in its direct dealings with others. I think those good folk who encourage a "moral nakedness" are wrong. They go chiefly on the verse "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," forgetting that in each case an evil speaker is being photographed. We do not talk in public of our immense love for husband, child or parents. We show our love by our works. Most people are reticent as to their deepest emotions.

Even in our treatment of the King's daughters we should respect spiritual reserve. All the same, night and morning we must bring our girls "unto the King." A few words of Bible-reading, a few minutes of united, silent prayer. The daily formula—"Oh, Lord, defend this Thy child with Thy Heavenly grace, that she may continue Thine for ever; and daily increase in the Holy Spirit more and more until she come unto Thy everlasting kingdom"—is more than an episcopal benediction. If accompanied by a soft touch of mother's hand on the curly head, a reverent closing of eyes, and a loving kiss, the King's daughters will never forget it.

Mrs. Tait, she who afterwards was called upon to bring all her five daughters in one week, unto the King, through the gate of death, had brought them to Him every morning of their short lives in another way. She has left on record the prayer she used, "Prepare these Thy children for what Thou art preparing for them." Such a short, pregnant formula, one we might well use even on our busiest days.

I am sure every parent feels that the heart of her child may be irrevocably turned against or towards God by the ideas imbibed in play and schoolroom. We realise the necessity of grave and careful thought, and definite resolve, as to what teaching the girl shall receive on this momentous subject, of being brought "unto the King." We shall not delegate to others the task which carries "joy and gladness" with it, yet "the times and seasons" each mother must seize for herself. The moments are few and far between in which mother and child will definitely realise that they stand on holy ground. Those are precious, just on account of their rarity. But the few deeply felt, softly spoken words on such occasions are a very real coming into the presence of the King. Afterwards there will

be a thousand showing forths of the King's care, His love, His tenderness, but they will not be spoken of. "The practice of the presence of God" will have been set, and the idea have become part of the child's life.

We may also bring the King's daughters to Him through every manifestation of life round us. Teach them to find

"Books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones,
And good in everything."

This should be our programme in moral and intellectual culture.

"New thoughts of God,
New hopes of heaven"

should be woven into the blessings of each day. The flowers come, because our Father has taken care of them through the long winter. This has been a happy day, because our Father has made it so.

The thunder is God's voice speaking to us; the lightning his artillery. "Just as the old Cavaliers brought up their sons and daughters in passionate loyalty and reverence for their not too worthy princes, so by having our hearts full of loyalty to the great King we shall influence our families. Let our daughters see what a grand thing it is to come to "the chief amongst ten thousand" by the style of our clothes, the ring of our voices, the carriage of our heads, by our talking, by our acts."

And if our little ones ask us, "How are we to know we have come to the King, mother?" make answer: "When my girls are gentle and sweet and happy, we know they are in the outer court of the palace, for,

"When you come, He makes your face so fair,

Your friends are glad, and say, 'The King is there.'"

But there is another and deeper, and fuller, and sadder way (for us) of bringing our little girls unto the King's palace. It is an arrow, though sharpened by love, that the post gives us as a token. Open in the hands, sometimes, comes the letter saying that our sweet precious nurslings are to prepare for a change of life, for the King is not willing that they should be so far from Him any longer. And oh! before the "great cloud" becomes an "exceeding glory" we have to still the trembling lips and nerve the shaking hands. We know—

"Snowy brows, no care shall shade them,
Bright eyes, tears shall never dim,
Rosy lips, no time shall fade them,
Jesus calls them unto Him."

But we cannot help grieving—

"All adown the mighty ages,
All adown the solemn time,
They have taken up their homeward
March to that sere clime.
Where the watching, waiting angels,
Lead them from the shadow dim,
To the brightness of His presence,
Who hath called them unto Him."

"There is always something pathetic about a soul that stands upon the borderland of a great, new country beyond. There is always something that strikes a tender key about a life that has lately been, or is soon to be, merged into the fuller life of immortality." So writes one who has stood there with the little ones. I think the sentence explains our attitude towards the King's daughters. They have so lately come—fresh, sweet, and beautiful—from the Father's hand. We do not know how close they may be standing to the

many mansions, or how soon they may be called over the border line. Time has not yet obliterated marks of their nationality. Innocence, trust, and simplicity are still fully developed in the little ones who have come from a far country, and have not yet learned the shibboleth of earth. "The silver bells of youth," are not yet jangled out of time. Blue eyes are still blue with the glory of the heavens they lately passed through.

I think only a mother can really realise the awe with which we mothers approach, and touch, those who have come from and are going to the King.

"I appeal to all who bear babes—in the hour,

When the veil of the body we feel
Pent round us—while torments reveal
The motherhood's advent in power."

Are we doing all we can to prepare our daughters for the destiny in store for them? Bunyan has placed his land of Beulah at the end of pilgrimage. Rather, I think, it should be put in that part of life when the children are children still. For here alone are the pilgrims' chambers perfumed with camphire and spikenard, saffron, calamus and cinnamon. With all trees of frankincense, myrrh, and aloes, with all the chief spices. Here we anoint their bodies for that passage over the river which may be so near. For though—

"No rush of the mournful waters
Breaks on the ear,
To tell us, when Life is strongest,
That Death draws near."

Yet from statistics we know that nearly half of the world's population go back to the King in childhood. Only a little while may be ours to work the clothing of the King's daughter with wrought gold and fine needlework. Only a little while to act the part of Hegai, and see that all things necessary for their purification are theirs (Esther ii. 8). Only a little while to strike their lives in the key which is set to the songs of immortality.

I wonder if we think enough about this? The white bodies of the King's daughters must, we say, be kept pure and clean and wholesome. Oil of myrrh and sweet odours we metaphorically pour over them. We clothe them in fine linen, tucked and embroidered and frilled and stitched. We feed them on the finest of wheat flour and best of fruits. We make the pillars of the house they live in of the silver of love, paying it with gold and covering it with purple. We tend them carefully in sickness and health, in poverty and wealth. Do we equally, carefully, and systematically make this life only a part of that other life they may any day be called to begin? Not patching this old cloth on to a new garment. Not making it an exchange of old lamps for new ones. But weaving the fabric all of one piece. Letting the same threads twine and intertwine until there shall be nothing to change if the Master's voice came to-day: "Bring her to Me."

We so carefully train our maidens for the lifework we think they have before them. The embryo schoolmarm takes a degree after years of study. The musician spends hours at the piano. The artist learns anatomy and colour and form. So, just as diligently our little girls should be trained for eternity. Other careers may be before them. Eternity must be before them.

"The beautiful gate" led from the court of the women into the Holy Place. It was made of strong brass, but overlaid with pure gold. It was carved with almond knots and grape