

Woman's Auxiliary Department.

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WOMAN'S MISSION IN THE CHURCH DURING THE VICTORIAN ERA.

SO great have been the changes in the social conditions of the world during the past sixty years, and more especially in the public attitude of women, that when we attempt to classify the net work of religious and philanthropic work, carried on by her during the present epoch, we can but faintly appreciate the extraordinary influence she has exerted upon the destinies of the race.

When we read of great reforms, revolutions, or movements as the work of one man, or the joint work of many men, we find that classes or nations have been affected, elevated or destroyed; but when, at any period, we take up the record of women's work, we see efforts towards the awakening of new life to the entire sex, and a trend pointing to the uplifting of humanity.

The Egoism of the day tempts us to claim all the splendid outcome of the higher activities of the waning century to the humanitarian impulses of the age, yet, if we seek for the origins of these results, we will find them under the sheltering aegis of the Church of England.

When Victoria came to the throne Great Britain was seething with discontent and sedition, loyalty was unknown to the masses. The monarchy, its representative a gentle maid, was on trial.

This Canada of ours, now a Confederate Dominion, owning and governing the larger half of the American Continent and recognized as a leader among the virgin nations of the world in 1837 was in the throes of a rebellion, the Provinces were ruled each by its own racial laws, religion, customs, and governors.

We are told that sixty years ago the Church was supposed to be on its death-bed—disestablishment and disendowment were threatened. The churches as a rule were neglected and dilapidated, the services slovenly and mechanical. Richly endowed Rectories and Curates were largely worked by the "Perpetual Curate" at a miserable salary, while the actual holder of the living lived outside of his parish, in the full enjoyment of city life or foreign travel. Tithes were rigidly exacted from the produce of the land. Aggressive work among the populations pouring into the great cities was undreamt of; missionary zeal had waxed cold. The Church had neither synods, nor congresses, nor convocations. In all the empire there were but three Bishops outside of Britain: one in

Nova Scotia, one in Quebec, one in Calcutta. The total number of Anglican Bishops was under forty, but, thanks be to God! the light within this cloud of moral darkness was still shining on the *Home Altars of England*, whilst above the threatening horizon an anointed maiden, whose highest ideal was "to be good" and "do good," sat on the throne of her fathers, bringing with her into public life, the advent of woman and child, to be followed by the recognition of women and children as workers under God for humanity; Victoria, in her own royal life, typifying the meridian glory of woman's mission in the seeking for, and the reclaiming of the lost "ninety and nine" unredeemed masses of the race.

In Britain the conditions of the working classes, and more especially that of women and children, were as serious as the increasing rate of pauperism.

In every large manufacturing centre, thousands had no homes but cellars; sanitation and drainage were unknown; the filth from the street ran into the cellar homes of the laborers. A man in his working clothes would have been refused admittance into a public park. No factory acts regulated the employment of women and children. Even as late as 1842 there was no law to prevent Yorkshire colliery owners from exacting fourteen and fifteen hours of monotonous and heavy toil daily from the tender frames of little children, many of whom had lived barely as many years—they labored from early morn till night at heavy tasks that killed them before womanhood or manhood was reached.

Herod's "slaying of the innocents" was but as the early morning's mist, to that of the long un pitying rain of cruelty which fell upon the child laborers of Britain, when working women and children were the bond slaves of that age. They had to crawl along the passages of mines, many of which were only ten feet high, not so good as a common sewer, dragging along slowly and laboriously a truck filled with coals by a thick chain attached to a girdle that clasped their nearly naked bodies, for the lowness of the passages obliged them to pass on all fours, like beasts of the field. No limit of age or hour; no regular meal time; no protection from dangerous machinery, poisonous, or unhealthy processes. In factories and fields the children toiled on through rain and snow, foul atmosphere and darkness, under rule of brutal task masters, until Elizabeth Barrett's heart utterances in her "Cry of the Children," found an echo in every true man and woman's heart for redress, and spurred legislation on behalf of the oppressed children.

The "Cry of the Children" is now materialized into creches, with their kindergarten adjuncts; homes for children; hospitals and convales-