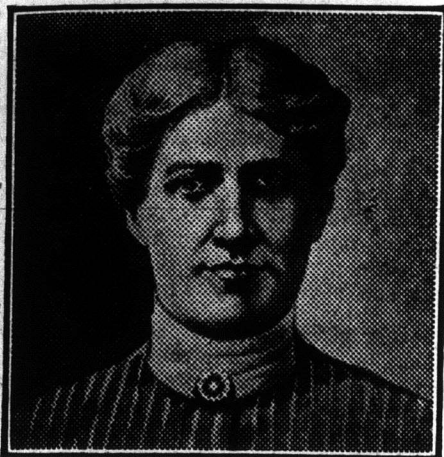


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The Young Woman and Her Problem

By Pearl Richmond Hamilton

The Three Wise Girls

We always associate the three wise men with Christmas thoughts. In their search for the Christ-child they stand out prominently in Biblical history. But there were wise girls in the Bible as well as wise men, and their influence has inspired womankind for all time. The girls of the Bible had problems and difficulties just as girls of today have. From the beginning of time through the ages of history on down to the present time there has been the same similarity in the character of girlhood. Sometimes just one act has been recorded, one picture shown in the character of the Biblical girl, yet it tells all that is necessary for us to know about the character.

"One deed may mar a life,
And one can make it;
Hold firm thy will for strife
Lest a quick blow break it."

The Little Captive Maid was one of the wise girls in the Bible. She was torn from her home and carried away into a distant land. In ordinary girlhood new impressions rapidly efface the past. Today we constantly race for the goal of "something new." It requires strength to retain the memories of a pleasant past and still be ready for the duties of an uncongenial present. Western Canada has scores of girls who do live in an uncongenial present, who long for the Old Country home just at this season of the year. It requires courage to take up new duties and retain memories of a pleasant past.

The Little Captive Maid is attractive and wise because she remained tender and unselfish in the midst of a hard life of servitude. When her master was dying she wanted to help him by urging him to place his faith in the Christ. Had she won a place of unusual confidence in this house? Was she not a servant? Is it possible for a servant to win the confidence of the home in which she works? Prove that you can be trusted. Confidence is contagious. The Little Captive Maid took up sweetly the interests around her and yet never yielded an inch from the constant faith in which she had been brought up. The pomp and show of idolatry did not weaken her. This is an indication of a rare and noble spirit. Men are strangely influenced by modest, pure, unspoiled girls. This girl of the Bible touched the heart of a prominent man by her lovely character—and I class her among the wise girls of the Bible.

Then I like to study the character of the Shulammitte maiden in the Song of Solomon. This is the most beautiful love story in history. All girls enjoy love stories. I wish every girl would read the Song of Solomon, for this story delineates the character of a wise girl who sincerely loved her country lover and remained true to him through the attractive temptations of wealth and flattery. I know girls who leave worthy young men in the country—young men they have promised to marry—and after a few weeks in the city they break their engagements to accept the attentions of false, fascinating fops who care nothing whatever for them. The Shulammitte maiden in King Solomon's time was a beautiful, rustic maiden who was carried away from her country home to the corrupt court of Solomon. The fidelity and devotion of the girl remained unmoved by the attractions of the court. They tried to flatter her and bribe her with fine clothes and gay pleasures, but she hungered for the pure, clean atmosphere in the environment of her country lover. All other proposals were odious to her. The genuine healthy country lover alone appealed to her. With her, manhood occupied first place. No Solomon in all his glory could tempt her. Her face flashed scorn at their appeals. Ennobling constancy gives beauty to any face, and

they must have admired her though she would not accept their offers. Her extraordinary firmness to truth, honesty and faithfulness touched the nature of Solomon; a feeling of reverence sprang up in his heart towards this steadfast maid so simple and pure, and he allowed her to go back to her home undefiled and unmolested. The tone of the harem changed before this example of strong girlhood. Purity and innocence are majestic and powerful. When the Shulammitte maid was allowed to return to her country lover to whom she had remained true through all possible temptations, we see a picture of constancy and truth triumphant. She, who had resisted with flashing eyes of scorn all the seductions of the flesh, was united with love and happiness to the end. Men are led by noble examples of girlhood.

Clarissa Harlowe, the story of impregnable chastity and maidenly love, works with the power of purifying inspiration. Men rise from the reading of Shakespeare's Cymbeline, and that constant heroism of Imogen, stronger and better. Paganism treated love lightly. Christianity has taught us to treat love sacredly. Thus do girls in Christian lands owe more to the birth of the Christ-child than they realize. The Shulammitte was a wise girl.

No literature contains a lovelier picture of girlhood in its various aspects than the Book of Ruth. In one of the largest universities in the States a class in English was asked to write the story of Ruth. Out of a very large class only very few knew who Ruth was. I believe the percentage would be much larger in a Canadian college; but I really wonder if girls read the Bible as much as they might. It is crowded with beautiful stories much more interesting and just as dramatic as the sensational stories of today. Why, Ruth was converted by the love of a mother-in-law! Naomi's life and character are sketched in a few master-strokes, but from them the world has learned to love her. Ruth was the kind of girl that draws the world after her—not by a gift of beauty—there is no hint that she was fair to look upon—but by the lasting qualities of unselfish devotion, of helpfulness to others, and of maidenly modesty. She was a girl that humanity loves to remember. Her character illustrates how a religious spirit may be carried into the conduct of daily life. Her life made others see God. At the rustic meal of the reapers everyone was polite to this girl; they respected her for her womanly devotion to what she considered right. Purity and gentleness in womanly character will conquer the most brutal of men. Through all the ages and today femininity has been and is woman's strongest weapon.

Sir Walter Scott, in The Lady of the Lake, takes Ellen into the Guard Room, where the coarsest of men are deformed and fevered from the dregs of debauch. There were Italians, Spaniards, Swiss, French, Germans and English exiles—released from discipline for the time. In this scene of fighting, swearing and drinking Ellen appeared, and the savage soldiery stood amazed as if an angel had descended. The boldest of them all "abashed and tamed, stood half admiring, half ashamed," and this is what he said to his mates:

"Hear ye, my mates;—I go to call
The captain of our watch to ball;
There lies my halberd on the floor;
And he that steps my halberd o'er,
To do the maid injurious part,
My shaft shall quiver in his heart!—
Beware loose speech, or jesting rough:
Ye'll know John de Brent enough."

There is as much chivalry among men today as in times past, and so it will continue as long as our womanhood emphasizes purity and sincerity in the development of the girl-life. We set the standard for men. The Little Captive Maid, the Shulammitte and Ruth were

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