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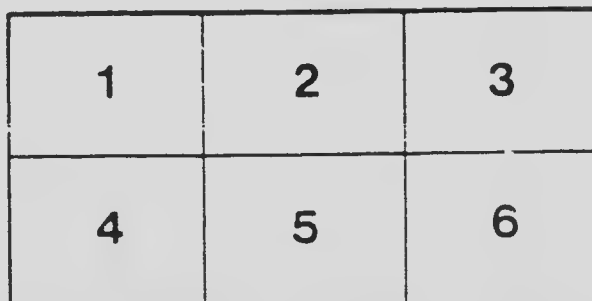
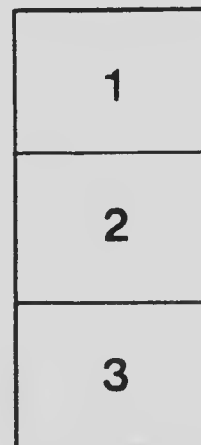
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PAPERS FOR WAR TIME. No. 3

THE WOMAN'S PART

BY

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HUMPHREY MILFORD

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

LONDON EDINBURGH GLASGOW NEW YORK

TORONTO MELBOURNE BOMBAY

1914

EXPLANATORY NOTE

GREAT BRITAIN is engaged in a war from which, as we believe, there was offered to our nation no honourable way of escape. The desire of all who love their country is to serve it in the hour of its need, and so to live and labour that those who have fallen in its service may not have died in vain. While this may suffice to make immediate duty clear, the war remains in the deepest sense a challenge to Christian thought. The present bitter struggle between nations which for centuries have borne the Christian name indicates some deep-seated failure to understand the principles of Christ and to apply them to human affairs.

This series of papers embodies an attempt to reach, by common thought, discussion and prayer, a truer understanding of the meaning of Christianity and of the mission of the Church to the individual, to society and to the world.

Those who are promoting the issue of these papers are drawn from different political parties and different Christian bodies. They believe that the truth they seek can be attained only by providing for a measure of diversity in expression. Therefore they do not accept responsibility for the opinions of any paper taken alone. But in spirit they are united, for they are one in the conviction that in Christ and in His Gospel lies the hope of redemption and health for society and for national life.

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THE nation has called upon its manhood, setting before it a plain duty, asking for a plain answer. The claim that war makes upon womanhood is more hidden, and often more difficult; for it is easier to be active than passive, easier to place oneself under obedience at a crisis than to serve by silent anxiety, or to desire service with no clear indication as to what our work should be. But it has been wisely said that warfare depends largely for its ultimate success on the spirit of the people left behind, and we know that in an ever-increasing proportion this will mean the women. Therefore we must look to our own character and conduct as a necessary part of the great war.

COURAGE.

First, then, the nation asks of us the high gift of Courage -- one of the four cardinal virtues. It is shown not only in brilliant attack, but in patient waiting and patient endurance. Ruskin sees the sublimation of this, not in some glorious figure of a hero, but in the tired and tried figure of Botticelli's Fortitude, waiting undismayed where there is no retreat. Even so must women wait.

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And we are called upon to give. It is perhaps at this moment that we realize fully all that is meant by the 'pain and peril of child-birth', as we take our place with Mary on the hill of sorrow. The ever-widening circle of duty has embraced innumerable homes that have hitherto been unstirred by military tradition or military zeal. Homes indeed they are where other dreams, other ambitions, had found their place, with every promise, as it seemed, of fulfilment. But now across these plans and hopes there has fallen the shadow of a sword that is bound to pierce our own hearts also. Yet God still loves a cheerful giver, and the nation depends upon our willingness to give. So a wife was able to say simply and truly, as the women watched their men go out to the front: 'The women were very brave. Many of them had a smile on their lips. It was easier for me, for I had a smile in my heart.' This high courage, seeming to us almost miraculous, is the gift of God, not beyond the reach of any, no matter how weak we ourselves seem to be.

God has laid down these cardinal virtues as foundations of stable Christian character, and He asks nothing that cannot be fulfilled in His strength. He is no conqueror, demanding a levy from a desolated, panic-stricken town, but He is the relieving force, bringing up unexpected reinforcements when the strain seems at breaking-point, and men's hearts are failing them for fear. Courage rises with trust. The nation trusts us, God trusts us. We do not give ourselves, but

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those who are far more precious than ourselves. We give, not for ourselves nor even for our own generation, but for a future race. We sow in sorrow that others may reap in joy. The day breaks after night, and both are counted in to the completed day: 'the evening and the morning were the first day': therefore our shadow and darkness are part of a whole that is to be made perfect in God's time.

Our giving must not be in resignation only, but with confident faith that God will make a new and better world out of the mistakes and disasters of man's disputes. We believe we give in answer to God's call, for it has been said that His voice will probably never be clearer than when He speaks in the call of the nation and of the man's own conscience. We had hoped that God would give a lasting peace in our generation, without the cruel arbitrament of the sword. It is not so. Because of some hardness in our hearts, it was impossible; the world is not yet ready. But we give our men as warriors against war. We are fighting that it may die. So far as we know, this can be achieved in no other way at this present time. The means are not of our choosing, and God alone knows truly how and why this terrible thing has come to pass. But our men answer in single-heartedness and self-sacrifice, and we will do the same; none can do more. To die that others may live, this bears the impress of the Cross. Neither the cross of Jesus nor the cross of the present agony is self-chosen or self-sought; our Lord Himself would have put the cup away

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from Him. But He is perfected and completed in the midst of violence ; the knowledge of this makes clear the possibilities of self-sacrifice and what it may mean to our men, and to ourselves, the women.

Our courage answers to the call of God as we hear it in the stern duty of the moment. But it fails us and grows confused in academic discussion of origins and motives, guilt and blame. We do not doubt the sin of the world, whether it be the responsibility of the present, or rooted in some distant past, or in the fact of the fallen race, which we are so slow to acknowledge. We can only offer man's obedience and woman's sorrow in mediation, and we believe that God will not despise the sacrifice. Self-sacrifice opens the world to us. It is the key to the hidden things in the hearts of others. The very pain that appears to invest and besiege us, cutting us off from the world, brings us, on the contrary, into fellowship with others. We no longer stand in isolation. Fellowship in danger, anxiety, and sorrow is closer than all other fellowship. It is the bridge, whether between classes or creeds, sects or opinions, so that beyond the ordinary prejudices we are able to see into the hearts of men. Courage is far-reaching ; a steadfast woman is a support to all amongst whom she moves. We are told that those who overcome are made pillars in the temple of God, and at this time brave women may become the pillars of the nation.

If the shadow of death falls upon us, then too our part

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is indicated. We go back with Mary to the new home—it cannot be the old home—to the claim and call of ordinary duties that make so great a demand on resolution and fortitude. We shall not be alone. God and our country will be with us. We shall understand and be understood in clearer vision.

PRUDENCE.

The country needs not only courage but Prudence, another foundation virtue. War has brought a great desire for activity, and we may easily become over-excited, able to grasp only one sort of heroism, over-eager to rush into work for which we are unfitted. We women must confess that this time of crisis has found us unprepared. Relief work requires a knowledge that might have been ours for the asking at any time during the last fifteen years, and yet, when we are called to distribute the nation's resources to the needy, many have no experience to guide them. In the new army we see men of position enlisting in the lowest rank, ready for discipline, ready to learn, ready to obey, and we women must not fall behind in humble, self-effacing energy. Our quick imaginations and our impulsive desire to serve will help to inspire, but they are not foundations of work. We have already learnt that subscriptions are withdrawn from normal everyday charity in order to meet new and urgent claims, and we find many who neglect all the

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old, necessary machinery of social work in order to share in some phase of war activity. However natural this may be, it is not always prudent. We each need to make a thoughtful estimate of our leisure time, and then to offer it carefully and wisely where we may at once be of some use and learn to be of more use.

Looking thus at the main channels of work that have shaped themselves out of the initial confusion, we find that whereas all are necessary in this time of stress, they are not all new organizations. This fact perhaps rebukes our former apathy. Five outstanding groups claim our personal service: work in connection with the soldiers and sailors, work for the Belgian refugees, provision for the unemployed women and girls, the care of mothers (already grouped round the schools for mothers), and the care of children, centring in the care committees. Yet it may be that the quickest and most useful manner of serving any one of these organizations is for us first to serve a humble apprenticeship of a month at a Charity Organization Society office. Women are wanted who can be trusted to do a small thing perfectly, without incessantly grumbling at central organizations or elaborating improvements of their own. By the trustworthiness and fidelity of individual workers the whole begins to work smoothly and efficiently for the benefit of all.

The nation's need forces upon us a new consideration of life and usefulness. If we have counted leisure as our own we can do so no longer. Every moment is

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redeemed for us by the fleet and the army. In the early days of the war men were content to sacrifice some part of their spare time to drill. Then came the call to the ranks. So with women. Those without home ties, who are free and independent, should test the call to complete whole-time service for God and His suffering poor. Who am I to live at ease when all are suffering, to claim ample leisure when there are vacant posts to fill, to seek refuge in helplessness when there is every opportunity to learn? And who am I to withhold others? Any number of girls have found home irksome and difficult, with no scope or opportunity for their latent powers. We have learnt to let our sons go forth to manhood at the bitter cost of life itself. Let us send forth our daughters to womanhood with all its full and gracious powers of strength and healing—not only to Red Cross work, but as probationers in hospital, institution, and infirmary, wherever help is needed and workers are shorthanded: not only to visit a family here and there, but to learn patiently and humbly the principles of relief under experienced supervision, that their work may be made perfect: not only to give an hour when by chance the family moves to town or country, but to remain faithful at some post because regular, steady, whole-time work is needed. Let us face facts steadily—and they are sad facts before us. The already great majority of women over men must in our generation grow larger and not less. Therefore we must prepare a full, satisfying, useful, and happy life for younger

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women and lead them into the wide sphere of public service, lest they break their hearts alone and unemployed.

Some then have to learn prudence in their work and its preparation, in the knowledge and science of relief, in their use of time and energy. But there is another way in which we are called to exercise prudence. It is as the housekeepers of the nation. We must practise frugality in our homes. Many are asking about their duty as to expenditure in times of war. A too careful economy may injure tradespeople and employment; a careless spending is a bad example, and wasteful of the nation's store. The simple and unquestioned duty is to pay all bills at once. A large number of tradespeople would profit more by small orders paid immediately than they do by larger orders with no immediate prospect of payment. Thus money is circulated and its usefulness increased. But we must go further. Women realize now how largely they have encouraged the building up of a business of luxuries and inflated prices, with the consequent distress in times of difficulty and retrenchment. It is surely our duty to lay permanent foundations of simpler and more frugal habits.

But already we are aware of obligations and responsibilities. Our very questions as to spending and buying show that we acknowledge a duty in regard to employment. Already the worker matters more than our purchase, the dressmaker more than the dress. Such considerations are now shown to be essential to the well-being of the

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nation. But they have always been essential and always will be. It is for women to see that they are never again ignored.

SIMPLICITY.

Two things menace peace, one externally, the other internally. They are militarism and luxury. While our men go forth to fight the one, women at home must manfully crush the other. Extravagance in dress and food have become as competitive as our armaments, and if the budget for armaments has been in the hands of men, women have been chiefly responsible for the budget for luxury. We can at least lift this burden from the nation and the national character. During the last ten years we have seen an abnormal increase in needless extravagance; dress alone has encouraged the most wasteful competition between woman and woman, class and class, each seeking to emulate and to surpass the other. If we remind ourselves now of the complicated succession of meals from early morning to late theatre suppers we see in them an index, not of refinement, but of greediness. If we look back from the shadows of this great calamity we recognize something of the follies of peace in the riotous fancy dress balls, where waste has masqueraded too long as charity. We will have no more of blue wigs and exotic pageants, for these are things that divide, marking off the rich, with time and money and wits to waste, from the poor, who work in monotony

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for daily bread. War, with all its horror, has enabled us to find our oneness, and peace, with its undoubted temptations, must never again divide us. We learn prudence in a hard school under an austere master, but if we are to fulfil our part w. women must take our lessons seriously, binding them about our necks, writing them on the tables of our hearts. Let us be known as the generation of housewives who lived and suffered through the war, and used its cruel lessons to win for our nation a new standard of simple, wholesome life, of simple, wholesome work, and simple, wholesome amusement.

This simple life may also help to bridge over some of the dangerous gulfs that still divide society. Party strife has had to go, and narrow class distinction must follow it. They are already breaking down in the time of trial, when all suffer together ; but women, to whom they have been so curiously dear, must see that they never recover their old strength. The lesson taught in war must not be lost. The fine examples of fellowship and understanding between officers and men must be translated into the terms of employer and employed, priest and people, mistress and servant, neighbour and neighbour. Women can help in this re-ordering of social life, not in the future, but now, when already the barriers we have helped to build are being swept away. So much in the past has been sham. War brings us very close to reality, and some of us dare not raise our eyes to look it in the face. For long we

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women have talked too much, playing with ideals, experimenting with philosophies. 'Good women' have taken a kindly interest in St. Francis, and church papers are ready to welcome discussions as to the possible equivalents of poverty. Fanciful women have developed a whole theory of the simple life that finds its abode in one of the scarce country cottages, and its expression in old furniture, paved walks, and a garden of pergolas. Strict women have kept their Fridays and Lenten fasts by a rearrangement of dishes. Dreaming women have sought to eliminate the facts of sin and pain. War brings us abruptly to fact. Here is poverty waiting for many of us, and simplicity without artificial aid. Here are fasts indeed, not ordered by the partial authority of some Christians, but enforced on the whole world, whether combatant or not. And here indeed is pain and sin past all denial, that must awaken any dreamer. All the old artificial theories must go, with the old artificial luxuries, and it is women who are called to cast them out. We step down from our platforms and cease talking, that we may humbly seek to practise as best we can what we have preached.

FAITH.

As we turn to reality and simplicity we find our feet on an old and familiar road, a road that has not been altered for motor traffic, nor used by those who care

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only to pass quickly. It is quiet and apart, but all the same it is a direct road. It is filled with the recollections of childhood, and seems familiar enough, though we have not passed that way for some long time. It is the road of Faith, and the sign-post leading to it is a cross. Here is the supreme contribution of women in war—that we may establish again our faith and the faith of our nation. If we dare send men to battle in the name of God we have to see that F's name is honoured and hallowed at home. Out in the trenches or on the high seas men look up to God unashamed, for faith is part of reality, and God draws very near in the time of man's need. But we who are the traditional guardians of faith have proved ourselves careless and indifferent, and we have forgotten steady progress and discipline in a trivial playing with new and fanciful cults. We are passing from theology to God, from party arguments and idle speculations to an eternal need: we want Him badly—how badly few of us can express. Neither peace, nor ease, nor luxury pointed us to Him until we came 'whither we would not', to the time of sorrow. Now and again we are chilled and disappointed in our search for Him; a church service sends us home as hungry as when we came. But now and again the whole starts into life; a psalm rings out its message, the lesson seems meant for me, the Sacrament no longer veils the Presence. And I know that to turn back to God and duty and the Bible is to come home.

We can determine at this time to bring God more into

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our life, our work, our ideals, and our homes. We can humbly regain old-fashioned habits of family prayer, because our lives are scorched with the fire of anxiety for those we love. We recover 'Grace' at meal time, so childish, so simple, so forgotten, because we have learnt that our bread is daily bread bought at the cost of men's lives; it is a sacramental feast. We recover Sunday with its quiet and dignity, its home life and recognition of God, because our hearts are broken for want of Him and His peace. We examine anew our shifting moral standards in the quiet light of the Christian standard, and recognize how desperately we have failed. The vulgar play, the suggestive book look strangely garish now, and we have little use for them. We want God; oh! how much we want God. The nation needs Him too, and women can bring Him once more into the camp of national life. 'Victories are won', said Marshal Oyama, 'by faith and discipline: faith that knows no fear of death, discipline that will obey orders.' In some true sense women might have established both faith and discipline in the life of the world, but we have dissipated our power. No wonder that we pray for God's deliverance not only in the time of our tribulation but also in the time of our wealth.

This is perhaps the root of all our mistakes. We had thought peace must always be spiritual. We had forgotten that materialism can take many forms and that Self is never more firmly established, God may never be so entirely absent, as amidst a materialistic peace.

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LOVE.

There is yet something left for women to set forth. There is Love. We have heard of the world-wide solidarity of labour, but it has broken. We thought that art rose above all nationalities and divisions, but music and beauty once common to mankind have been banned and destroyed. Even knowledge has suffered in the scornful repudiation of laurels rightly won and respectfully given. Sorrow alone remains common to all. There is here neither German nor Russian, Belgian, Austrian, Servian, French nor English. And this sorrow rests chiefly on the hearts of women, so that transcending all divisions we know ourselves to be one in our motherhood as nothing, as no one else, is one. Motherhood, womanhood has reached her Calvary. Then let the words on our lips be words of forgiveness and love.

We may cry to God in the darkness, questioning why He has forsaken us, and He will understand and be patient; for that cry was wrung from the Lord Himself upon the cross. Yet, notwithstanding the darkness, God has a purpose for us. He looks for its fulfilment, and He trusts us. If we have been faithless, He has been true. 'Therefore', said the Lord, 'I will bring her into the wilderness and speak to her heart.' 'Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.'

