

1899

Women's Christian Temperance Union Address

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Martha McMillan Journals Transcription

Martha McMillan

Women's Christian Temperance Union Address

Indiana, July 25, 1899

In these pages I will write the words I spoke at Mrs. Moosures & her daughter Mrs. Williams on yesterday afternoon—as follows:

When we look at the fewness of the white ribbon workers we often feel discouraged, and well we might did we not know that God was the leader of the army at the very outset. God does not depend upon numbers to do his work—for he can help with many or with few. While God can accomplish His work with a few yet it would be infinitely better for all the women of Indiana and of the world as well to be enlisted in this work for in so doing they would not only honor God but they would receive His blessing and be co workers with Him.

It has been said by a military expert that forty well trained soldiers can successfully resist ten thousands who do not have any training—Now if this is true can we effect great things of the forty departments of the W. C. T. U. organization well drilled and equipped[sic] going out to attack men and women long steeped in ignorance and sin who have been left to struggle on in darkness with out much thought or help from the masses of church going people. Now what might they not accomplish! This is sadly true that these have been neglected by the church. Miss Willard was faithful in all church work yet she saw the lack and it was for this she gave up everything that she might lend a helping hand and God helped to organize women for accomplishing of his work. She felt that they would be a mighty host—a sold phalanx against the powers of evil. While “a reformer is one who sits at the front [?] and sees only God” yet God works by means and often uses “the weak things of this world to confound the mighty.” This is our comfort—let us trust and not be afraid.

While in our ranks there are bright lights and leaders—so bright and so lovely as Miss Frances E. Willard. How sadly we all felt when she died—each one felt she was my friend—she belonged to me. Each felt how we can move along without her—it was not only the white ribbon women that felt this—but men and women all over the land felt that her death to them was a personal loss. But now that she has gone—one who has done so much to help and emancipate every one of us ought we not try to be faithful and go steadily [sic] on and make everything she began a success. No can we not do this? When we look at our leaders to day we fall so far below them that we often ask ourselves what can we do? We know that we can not be round the world missionaries [sic] neither can we go to distant lands to plant our banner—for indeed most of us find it difficult to leave our homes long enough to attend one of our meetings in a neighboring town yet it was this very class of women that enlisted in the White ribbon army when Miss Willard issued her first call. Indeed Miss Willard also recognized this fact and so do our leaders to day that if it were not for these very women the work could not be carried on. In the army of the nation there are Generals and Brig. Generals but it is the

rank and file of the army that carry the sword and bayonet and led out to meet the enemy and when cast down in battle a new call is issued for new recruits to fill the vacant ranks and what is true of the army of the nation is also true of the

White ribbon army. Often silent workers either in single file or as bands they go out to the great battle Our Ohio State Pres said the Co [county?] Convention the State Convention and the National Convention and the Worlds Convention depended upon the faithfulness of the workers in the local unions—Now as I have already said the White ribbon army is made of mostly of Mothers whose hands are full at home. What can these women do if any think to forward the work or to help in the great battle for God and for right. I answer that there a great many dept. in which they can work.

1” They can set their faces as a flint against the open sins and wrongs of their own town and community.

2” They can do evangelistic work through the Flower mission. For flowers can enter doors that are bolted and barred where the patient is too low for any but the physician or trained nurse to enter. The flowers are ministers and the Scripture text silent teachers and messengers of God. The mother can look into the school room and see what is taught there. I believe where we understand all the departments of our work as we should we will find plenty of these depts adapted to our every day life.

But we are to talk to day more especially on the Mother’s work. It is generally understood that a mothers work must begin at home. Madam Willard said it was only as a mother did her full duty in her own home that she is capable of doing anything of great value elsewhere A mother must first reform her self—she must first be right with God before she will be able to set her own home or family right—But there are many sides to a mothers work—I will speak a moment on the spiritual side and will begin by asking what is the most important thing to teach a child? The greatest thing a child can be taught in this world is to fear the Lord. To teach this well implies most everything else. It means to see God in everything. It means to teach the [illegible] of sin—it means to teach a child who God is – what heaven is—it means to teach what hell is—how dreadful it is to be lost to go down to the dark region of darkness. It means to teach a child from its very infancy who Jesus is –who loves the little children and said to forbid them not to come unto me –this implies they are susceptible [sic] of love. Then his promise they that seek me early shall find me. Let it be remembered to be successful we must begin early. Teach a child to pray as soon as it can lisp its mothers name—Teach it to love and reverence the Bible—teach them little texts. Teach them obedience.

Be faithful and earnest with your children while you are with them for no one knows till the summons comes how short the time is. [transcriber’s note: Was Martha thinking of the infant she lost in 1878 and Florence who died at age two in 1888?] I think it was John Newtons mother who died when he was four years old but she had planted the seeds of righteousness in his heart that bloomed in beauty and a godly life long after she had been sleeping her last long sleep—so the admonition ever is to be faithful—begin early I think one cause of failure is mothers are often so hurried with their work & responsibilities that they fail to do as well as they know and before they are aware the children have grown and left the home nest forever

and gone out into the great world to solve life's hard problems for themselves. If Mothers would expect to have joy and happiness in their after life let them look well to the seed they sow for as a rule the after life shows what the planting has been. While there is everything to be said to the young Mothers those who are just starting out—but what can we say to those who are older Those of us who have crossed the meridian of life—who can look back to their mistakes. I remember hearing of a Mother who brought her son up in a country village where the air was pure and the morals of the people above suspicion it never seemed necessary for her to teach her son about the evil that was out in the world—but the years past [sic] on before she was aware he was grown and had secured a position in the city. The Mother became alarmed to think she had never told him about the temptations and pitfalls that he would be sure to meet—she wept and prayed much When the final good by came she took him by the hand and with a breaking heart said O my dear boy you are leaving me and I never taught you the danger and traps that will be sure to be spread for your unwary feet—O my dear boy to think you are leaving me and not fortified with her good by kiss She gave him a Bible and with her finger pointed to the seventh chapter of Prov. she said My dear boy study this book but especially this chapter it will keep you white and pure. Long years after this Mother had past [sic] from off the earth this man testified that this Chapter had saved him and kept him pure. But it is a comfort to all Christian Mothers and Christian workers as well that God does not only promise to go before but to follow after as well. God can unloose the knots and make the twisted threads straight in our web of life.

Now let me repeat what has always been a comfort to me when the road seemed dark. “Every life is full of failure—Every life is full of experience which no human wisdom can make clear – Our days are full of disappointment – the Mothers privilege or the Christians privilege is in the midst of such experience is to commit all to Jesus – for he can take our failures and mistakes our follies and even our falls and sins and make them into a beautiful life and character He can take our tangled threads and disentangle them and weave them in garments of beauty for us It matters not what the burden or care if we only lay it at his feet and leave it there he will transform it into good.

25th July. Tuesday P.M. 1899.