

The Vow to Obey.

BY FRANCES POWER COBBE.

(In "Duties of Women.")

SOME people tell us that it is incumbent on a woman to take and keep this vow, because she is exhorted by St. Paul to "Obey her husband in the Lord." I would remind those who quote this passage in one epistle of the great apostle to remember that they are bound to attach the same authority to a parallel passage in another epistle, wherein the same apostle commands *slaves* to obey their masters, and actually sends back to his chain a runaway, who, in our day, would have been helped to freedom by every true Christian man or woman in America. The whole tone of early Christian teaching, indeed, was one of entire submission to the "powers that be," even when they were represented by such insane despots as Tiberius, Caligula, and Nero. In our day men habitually set aside this apostolic teaching, so far as it concerns masters and slaves, despots and their subjects, as adapted only to a past epoch. I am at a loss to see by what right, having done so, they can claim for it authority when it happens to refer to husbands and wives.

Next to cutting the knot by authority, I believe the advocates of obedience rest their argument on expediency—an expediency they think almost amounting to a necessity, and sanctioned by the practice of ages. "How can two walk together, *unless one of them have it entirely his own way?*" is the query put to us by these persons now. They have become so accustomed to the notion of one ruling and the other obeying that any other kind of arrangement seems to them fraught with peril of domestic anarchy. My dear friends, will you please to tell me, did you ever hear of any sort of despotism, great or small, spiritual or temporal, public or private, which was not justified by those who exercised it on these same grounds of its expediency, its convenience, its necessity for the benefit and safety of the governed? Does not the Church of Rome exert its tremendous sway over the intellects and consciences of men, in the honest persuasions of its hierarchies, that it is good for these sheep to be entirely guided by their shepherds? Has not every empire in history been founded on the presumption that one supreme and irresponsible ruler or autocrat could govern a nation much better than a nation could govern itself? Nay, has

it not been the work of ages, not yet accomplished, to make mankind understand that all the benefits and conveniences of a paternal government are too dearly bought by keeping the nations in perpetual childhood.

How is a Church to go on without a supreme head to determine doctrine? How is a State to go on without a despotic ruler at the helm? How is a household to go on without an autocrat to settle all questions by his simple volition? These questions are all very much on a par. Nay it *ought* surely to be much easier for a little household, united by the tenderest ties, to "get along" peacefully, harmoniously, and prosperously as a miniature republic, than for churches to flourish on congregational principles, or States to rise to glory and prosperity, like that of our blessed England, on the basis of some millions of independent wills.

Again, after authority and after expediency and necessity, obedience is vindicated by some persons on quite another ground: *not* its utility to the family generally or to the State, but its comfort to *the obeying party*, the relief it offers to her conscience; the short cut it affords for getting rid of her "responsibilities."

. . . Here again I find there is no getting rid of that man of the sea on my shoulders,—namely, responsibility. My husband or father *cannot* take it off for me, even if we both desire it. And why? Because GOD has laid it on me when He made me a rational free agent, not a dog or an idiot. . . . I cannot pursue these arguments in defence of the principle of Conjugal Obedience. To me that principle seems irreconcilable with the fundamental basis of morality (namely the full and independent moral responsibility of every adult human being), and (I may add) antagonistic no less to the very nature of that love and affection it is so foolishly supposed to guarantee.

Interior advance must precede all external improvement.

THE LATE MISS ELLICE HOPKINS.—It is stated that the late Miss Ellice Hopkins was engaged in her youth to a man connected with the army, who on his deathbed urged her to devote her life to the cause of social purity. The public can now testify to the faithfulness with which she carried out—despite, at one time, insult and abuse—the wish of her lost lover.



Girls of To-day.

Girls of to-day, give ear!
Never, since time began,
Have come to the race of man,
A year, a day, an hour,
So full of promise and power
As the time that now is here.

Never in all the lands
Was there a power so great,
To move the wheels of state,
To lift up body and mind,
To waken the deaf and blind,
As the power that is in your hands.

Here, at the gates of gold
You stand, in the pride of youth,
Strong in courage and truth,
Stirred by a force kept back,
Through centuries long and black,
Armed with a power threefold.

First, you are makers of men;
Then be the things you preach;
Let your own greatness teach,
When mothers like this we see,
Men will be strong and free—
Then, and never til then.

Second, since Adam fell,
Have you not heard it said,
That man by woman is led;
True is the saying, true,
Then see to it what you do,
See that you lead them well.

Third, you have work of your own,
Maid, and mother, and wife
Look in the face of life
At duties you owe the race!
Outside your dwelling place
Is work for you alone.

Maid, and mother, and wife,
See your own work is done,
Be worthy a noble son;
Help men in the upward way;
Truly a girl of to-day
Is the strongest power in life.

—Charlotte Perkins Stetson.

There's many a trouble
Would break like a bubble,
And into the waters of Lethe depart,
Did not we rehearse it,
And tenderly nurse it,
And give it a permanent place in the heart.

There's many a sorrow
Would vanish to-morrow,
Were we not unwilling to furnish the wings
So sadly intruding,
And quietly brooding,
It hatches out all sorts of horrible things.

—G. Clark.