

The White Ribbon

FOR GOD AND HOME AND HUMANITY

Vol. 6.—No 65

CHRISTCHURCH, N.Z., OCTOBER, 1900.

2s 6d Per Annum
Post Free.

St. Paul and the Women.

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The Bible has been used as a missile to defend all kinds of vagaries and theories. It was thrown at the abolitionists, just as it is hurled at the progress of women to-day, and poor St. Paul in this latter struggle must bear the brunt of contention.

St. Paul was an epitome of a world's history. He did not antagonize his present by precipitation, nor dwarf the future by narrowness. The ages find room to roll majestically through his firmamental height of thought. He was in no wise behind his Master in his insight into the possibilities of womanhood and the importance of childhood.

Some of St. Paul's isolated utterances may be criticised in the light of modern progress, but a man's specific utterances must be judged by the general trend of his thought. The epistle to the Romans sounds very modern in its tone of respectful equality used towards his helpers—the women. But in Rome women had larger freedom than in any other country of the time. They made journeys, ruled the home, gave great social entertainment, carried on business, and had many legal rights nowhere else permitted. Here without any detriment to her womanhood, or to the church, she could teach and take active and public part in the advancement of the new religion, for the love of which

she was not only willing to toil and sacrifice, but for which she as loyally died in martyrdom.

In Greece, however, a different social code met St. Paul. In that country women were secluded. They received no education. If a woman chose education and publicity it was at the sacri-



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fice of her reputation for chastity, and if she espoused learning and entered the school of some great teacher she must do it attired as a man. An unveiled face was the recognized sign of unchastity. What wonder, therefore, that St. Paul forbade these child-women to cast aside their veils, when it meant disgrace to the new religion?

But the need of such a command is pitiful. It shows that the breath of the new religion, fresh as a breeze of ocean, as it stirred beneath those sultry veils, brought with it a presage of freedom that made those women feel more keenly their life of feverish repression. St. Paul, like Christ, never chose to suddenly overturn any harmless custom. Society was to be gradually reformed upon a Christian basis, but such a reformation could be enduring only as it should be stable. Therefore all these minor details of a decadent society, if not right, would of themselves slough off, as the revivifying spirit of Christianity restored it. Thus it is that he tells these women to conform to the Grecian customs, wear their veils and behave modestly in public, that they may not bring disrepute upon their religion by unnecessary and precipitate reforms. Slaves were told to obey their masters, but that did not mean that slavery should never be abolished. That specific saying was abrogated when the reign of the Golden Rule at last abolished that world-old evil, and the Golden Rule was Christianity.

Paul also advised wives to obey their husbands, a command in every way subservient to the interests of those child-women. They knew nothing, practically, beyond their own door. Because Christ had made them free unto eternal life, it did not follow that they could overcome their lack of training in