

Document

Alice Chown's Criticism of Deaconess Education in the Methodist Church

INTRODUCTORY NOTE: THE "UNION OF SCIENCE AND SENTIMENT"
Diana Chown

In 1911 Alice Chown wrote several articles for the Methodist newspaper, the *Christian Guardian*. In them, she criticized the education of deaconesses by the Methodist Church and the deaconesses' lack of professionalism. Chown was one of a number of women in Canada who sought to gain for women workers a more effective role in the church, and who came up against the firmly entrenched dichotomy between service and preaching. Traditionally, women served and men preached. In the case of the diaconate, exponents of this dichotomy justified their position by citing biblical references to women as servants of the church.¹ When the female diaconate, or deaconess order, was established in the late nineteenth century, churchmen stressed that it was traditionally an office of service, "a service of affectionate helpfulness," as a writer in the United States expressed it in 1907.² Along with the view of deaconesses as self-sacrificing servants went the presumption that they would be under the authority of the male hierarchy of the church, and have no voice in decision making. This role left them without expectations of equal opportunities, a living wage, or a chance to create autonomous working situations. They worked in a patriarchal structure as the "foot soldiers of Methodist applied Christianity."

The Methodist deaconess movement in Canada was officially established by 1894 when the Toronto Deaconess Home and Training School opened. Particularly influential was the deaconess program set up by the Episcopal Methodist Church in Chicago under the direction of Lucy Rider Meyer, head of the Chicago Training School and an advocate of woman's ordination.³ Because it recognized deaconesses' inferior status in the church, the establishment of the home and training school did not lead to the creation of a deaconess order or to an official recognition of the value of deaconesses' work. The school's Board of Management excluded deaconesses until 1904, when one representative was allowed to sit as an *ex officio* member.⁴

At the time Chown's articles appeared, women entering the training school were expected to be single and between the ages of twenty-one and

thirty-five, to be in good health, and to have achieved university matriculation or a nursing diploma or teaching certificate.⁵ These requirements were met in no more than a third of cases.⁶ Promoters of the deaconess movement had hoped to attract educated women. A contemporary supporter wrote that the deaconess movement "provided a noble antidote for educated women in danger of becoming mere aesthetic dilettanti, of cultivating refined selfishness."⁷ However, since "for the most part, deaconesses remained pastors' aids engaged in visiting and institutional work," and given better opportunities for women in missionary or secular social service, few women enrolled who had education beyond high school. Women who sought this work, like the men, came mainly from strong Christian families that included ministers or women church workers.⁸ Although they did not take vows, deaconesses were expected to wear a uniform and to live in a deaconess home.

Initially, the course of study was taught by an *ad hoc* group of clergy and laity. By 1896, members of the Victoria College faculty were doing much of the teaching. The training of deaconesses continued to be centred in Toronto, although deaconess homes were established elsewhere. The course at first lasted one year but by 1912 had increased to two. Its purpose was "to furnish Biblical and practical training." In the 1903 program, Bible study occupied half of class time, whereas one fourth was spent on "methods of work," or social work, and the remaining quarter on applied Christianity (sociology, temperance, and missions) and aesthetics (literature, deportment, and physical education).⁹ The first year evolved to consist mainly of religious subjects, the second to include a vast array of studies from music to physiology.¹⁰ Their number and diversity lead Chown to describe them as a "little smattering of everything, not much of anything."

The list of texts for a reading course suggests that deaconesses knew of such concepts of social reform as advocacy for change in legislation affecting child labour, health, and industrial conditions.¹¹ The deaconess reports in the *Christian Guardian*, however, suggest they mostly gave immediate and practical help; deaconesses seldom undertook lobbying or other political work. They helped the elderly, poor, infirm, women, and children, many of them immigrants. This is congruent with the church's view of activities appropriate for deaconesses. According to the Deaconess Society Report of 1912, their work was

to minister to the poor, visit the sick, pray for the dying, care for the orphan, seek the wandering, comfort the sorrowing, labor to save the sinning, and devote themselves fully to such forms of Christian work as may be suited to their abilities.¹²

The number of active Methodist deaconesses increased slowly. By 1906, forty-nine were labouring in thirteen Canadian and Newfoundland

communities, and by 1910, seventy-six served in more than two dozen communities across Canada.¹³ For the most part, deaconesses worked for missions such as the Fred Victor Mission in Toronto or the All People's Mission in Winnipeg, or for parishes where they served under the authority of the pastor. Nancy Hall has described urban deaconesses' work as emphasizing three main areas established by women's missionary societies: evangelism, education, and medical assistance. Deaconesses provided household or simple nursing care, and helped to solve housing, employment, and other problems.¹⁴ Beyond these ministrations, deaconesses taught Sunday school, met immigrants as they arrived in the city, set up "Fresh Air" camps for children,¹⁵ and, as mentioned in the articles by Alice Chown, ran boarding houses for working women.

Signs of discontent from deaconesses and their supporters were apparent before and after the publication of Chown's articles. J.S. Woodsworth, in his published reply, wrote of "dissensions" among deaconesses, implying that some of them had objected to their poor remuneration.¹⁶ By 1910, deaconesses were asking for representation on, at least, the Quarterly Official boards where they were serving. Such unrest continued, but with little effect. At the 1914 General Conference a number of active deaconesses asked that their order be recognized and placed under the direction of the Annual Conference, a request that received no official attention until 1921. The problem reached such proportions that, at the General Conference in 1922, twenty-six deaconesses demanded that the Conference adopt legislation to "place the deaconess order in a position to do more effective work, or if this is impossible to disband the order of deaconesses."¹⁷ The Conference appointed a commission to study conditions. Their 1923 report cited low educational standards and a lack of appreciation for the value of women's work in the church,¹⁸ suggesting that significant improvements had not been made after Chown's criticisms.

From time to time the *Christian Guardian* published letters criticizing the church's treatment of deaconesses. Several months before Chown wrote her articles, a letter noted that deaconesses received no salary, just \$10 a month "to clothe themselves and meet all personal expenses." Indeed, they were not allowed "to supplement it by any present that a friend in their church may give them." No one would expect even an inexperienced worker to provide service for such remuneration, the writer added.¹⁹

Alice Chown understood well the ethic of service bequeathed to Victorian women. When she was justifiably accused of attacking the deaconesses, she wrote that she, too, shared the service ethic, that "weakness of self-sacrifice and self-negation [that] has come from long years of regarding other people before ourselves."²⁰ Like many social reformers whose world

view was affected by the Social Gospel movement, she thought that in the coming "new age of humanism" true democracy would "provide the fullest opportunity for everyone, rich and poor, gentle and simple, without regard to sex or social condition."²¹ She included the social movement and the professionalization of social service among the signs pointing to the advancement of humanity. She was one of the "regenerators" working toward a more Christian social order.

Chown's writing mainly concerned reform for women. She supported better access for women to higher education, better working conditions and remuneration, reform of social service, the introduction of home economics courses into the education system, and changes that would make household labour easier.²² In criticizing the treatment of deaconesses, she urged the church to acknowledge its part in the poverty of deaconesses, their poor training, and the marginalization of workers under its control.

When she wrote these articles, Alice Chown was forty-five years old and had recently arrived in Toronto to begin work as a journalist for the *Toronto Daily Star* and the *Christian Guardian*. She was asked to write a series of articles about working conditions for women.²³ Whereas her articles for the *Guardian* dealt with women's issues, those for the *Star* dealt with the co-operative movement and civic reform, based on her own recent experiences of living in Letchworth, one of the British garden cities which espoused the principles of co-operation and meaningful work. Her occupation as a Canadian journalist lasted only about a year, after which she spent long periods in England and in the United States.

Chown had grown up in Kingston, the only daughter among five sons in a family that had settled in the area in the 1830s. Both her parents were prominent in the Sydenham Street Methodist Church. Amelia Chown, her mother, was one of the early supporters of the Woman's Missionary Society. Her brother Edwin was a "saddle bag" preacher, and later became a minister in the church. Her cousin Samuel Dwight Chown was general superintendent of the Methodist Church in the years immediately preceding the 1925 church union.

Chown herself was an active Methodist until well into adulthood. In *The Stairway*, she described her years of service:

I have gone through all the stages. I have led prayer meetings, been zealous in all the good works of the church; I have visited the sick and the poor; I have spoken to the stranger within the gates. Every church activity has some time in my life found in me an earnest exponent. Three or four services with an occasional committee meeting on Sunday was once quite customary.²⁴

Chown described her disenchantment as a gradual perception of the church as an institution deadened by custom and authority. Like many social reformers of her time, she rejected orthodox Christian teaching. The church had "crystallized," she wrote, and "the truths that once meant life and growth, force and virility, having been accepted as an end instead of a beginning, had killed the life of the spirit."²⁵

Chown likely began to question orthodox religion during her years as a student at Queen's University, beginning in 1887. Studying political science with Adam Shortt, she came in contact with investigations of social conditions and with a secular view of social responsibility. In 1893 she visited Hull House, the well-known settlement house in Chicago, while attending the World's Fair. Like many college women in the United States, she saw the settlement movement as a way to find meaningful work in a society that excluded women. Thus, beginning in the fall of 1898, she spent a year at Whittier House, in Jersey City, "a vital institutional center of a large, interlocking network of women's organizations in New Jersey, [and] a center of both women's culture and women's politics."²⁶ There, encouraged by the head worker, Cornelia Bradford, Chown came in contact with some of the leading American women reformers of the time. She wrote of looking forward to the arrival of Jane Addams, and she described a steady stream of other prominent persons appearing at Whittier House.²⁷ Chown also enjoyed the company of other university-trained women and she became familiar with many of the views held by such women in the United States at the turn of the century. Part of her experience at Whittier House was to gather each day after lunch with other residents to hear Bradford read from progressive journals.²⁸

Bradford was influential in Chown's move from an emphasis on charitable church work toward an understanding of the underlying causes of poverty. The settlement head, Chown noted, was convinced that one can "serve God in secular work quite as well as in church"; the work of the settlement house was "along sociological lines."²⁹ This was consistent with a change in the philosophical climate of philanthropy and social welfare work taking place in the United States at that time. During the first decade of the twentieth century, "the most forceful and articulate leaders in social work came to accept the idea that poor environment, not defective character, generated poverty, and therefore that a vital part of their own mission was to uncover and strike at the social, economic, and physical causes of poverty."³⁰ The settlement movement itself, with its optimistic college women living in residence among the poor, has been accused of gullibility or sentimentality and a tendency to focus on obliterating the social distance, rather than the economic one. Chown herself later referred to the average settle-

ment worker as salving “her conscience with a great deal of talk about sharing in the life of the poor [when] she rarely has any real conception of unity with them.”³¹

One aspect of the changed climate for social welfare work at this time was the elevation of social work to a profession mainly through the establishment of formal training centres such as the Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy at the University of Chicago.³² Chown supported the “scientific” practice of social work, and criticized amateurism when she presented a paper on charity at the annual meeting of the National Council of Women of Canada in 1899. The paper, “Fundamentals of Charity Organization,” expressed similar points to those set forth in the 1911 *Guardian* articles. It stressed the view shared by many American settlement and charity organization workers, that traditional relief practices were inefficient and misguided.³³ Chown described four principles of charity organization: education of both the public and the poor, co-operation among relief agencies, investigation, and visitation. Investigation was aligned closely with the new discipline of social work: “We must investigate in order that we may know the cause of poverty; that our work may be preventive as well as curative,” she wrote.

After writing the deaconess articles in 1911, Chown continued to work for better wages for women and to promote an understanding that women’s poverty was caused by social, political, and economic factors. Just as she charged the church with responsibility for the poverty of its deaconesses, so she tried to bring about an awareness of the T. Eaton Company’s responsibility for the state of its women workers. In the 1912 Toronto Eaton’s strike, women workers joined male strikers. Because of her support for these women, Chown was ejected from the suffrage organization she had helped to establish. The members claimed that the two issues, women’s suffrage and women’s poor working conditions and low wages, could not be mixed. They did not support her view that the management of Eaton’s was ignoring the legitimate protests of the strikers; nor would they support her attempt to include the women strikers’ problems in the group’s agenda. Chown, however, differed: women’s subsistence-level wages must be raised immediately, she believed, and not at some later date. In the following year, 1913, she travelled to New York to take part in a large garment workers’ strike.³⁴

In her articles criticizing deaconess education, Chown focussed on the Deaconess Home and Training School in Toronto, the only Methodist school training deaconesses at that time. She condemned the inadequate education and remuneration, and suggested that if deaconesses were better trained, the church would be obligated to pay them better. She also pointed out that the church, through its establishment of subsidized deaconess-run

boarding houses for working women, allowed manufacturers to pay women workers less than a living wage. Her insistence that deaconesses should be trained social workers is consistent with the pressure at that time for the professionalization of other women workers, such as nurses.

Unfortunately, her criticism of the deaconesses was unjust and Chown was chastised in letters to the paper, including one from J.S. Woodsworth. However, his letter supported most of her claims for church reform. He suggested that she had "rendered a valuable service to the church," agreed that deaconess training and allowance were inadequate, and noted that deaconesses were "forced to endure great privations if they remain in the order," including breakdown of health. He viewed church intransigence as part of a larger Canadian picture:

It is deplorable that while definite training in social service is being given in all the larger American cities, we in Canada have hardly, as yet, begun to get beneath the surface of things to a real study of social conditions. To some, the situation seems at times almost desperate . . .

He lamented that in the United States, "charity organization societies and social settlements are decades ahead of the churches in their understanding of social programs," and agreed that the church as a whole must adopt a program of real social work or be eclipsed by other agencies.³⁵ In 1913, he himself turned away from the church and left his All People's Mission in Winnipeg to assume leadership roles in secular social work organizations.

In her emphasis on the church's failure to train deaconesses to become professional social workers, Chown, unlike Woodsworth, did not suggest giving the women "a larger voice in determining the policy and rules of their order."³⁶ Nor did she broach the subject of women's ordination, as did Nellie McClung four years later.³⁷ Rather, she emphasized women's working conditions, the subject about which she had been asked to write.

Chown noted that the deaconesses themselves were demanding better wages and a recognition of the importance of their work, and she hoped that her critique would help them. Whether her articles resulted in increased sympathy for the plight of the deaconesses is unclear. However, the following year, the principal of the training school was replaced and deaconesses' travelling expenses were increased.

John D. Thomas, writing of the years up to 1925, states that after 1911, the order entered a period of decline from which it never recovered and "events and changing perceptions conspired to alter significantly the relationship of deaconesses to the Church."³⁸ Unhappy with their position as servants of the church, many deaconesses left or stayed for only a short time. From time to time, improvements in education and salary were granted

but attempts to raise their status were consistently rejected. For example, recommendations for the reorganization of the diaconate as a special order of ministry, first proposed by an official committee in the late 1920s, and again in the 1940s, were turned down in both cases. Equal treatment on church courts, or Presbytery, was for many years another demand made by deaconesses and committees on their behalf. Although women could be ordained in the Methodist Church by 1936, deaconesses did not become full members of the church courts until 1964.

NOTES

- ¹ Particularly, Paul's words in Romans 16:1–2: "I commend unto you Phebe, our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea . . ." See Reverend Christian Golder, "The Scriptural Foundation of the Deaconess Work," in *The Deaconess Motherhouse* (Pittsburgh, 1907), quoted in Rosemary Radford Ruether and Rosemary Skinner Keller, *Women and Religion in America*, vol. 1, *The Nineteenth Century* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1982), 277–80.
- ² Ruether and Keller, 227.
- ³ Ruether and Keller, 248, 281–82; Diane Haglund, "Side Road on the Journey to Autonomy: The Diaconate Prior to Church Union," in *Women, Work and Worship in the United Church of Canada*, ed. Shirley Davy (n.p. : United Church of Canada, 1983), 215. Rider Meyer was one of those who responded to Chown's articles. She chastised Chown for criticizing deaconesses, but supported better training in social service while defending the curriculum. Chown replied to Rider Meyer's letter on 27 Dec. 1911, in a brief article not printed in this collection.
- ⁴ See Nancy Hall, "The Professionalism of Women Workers in the Methodist, Presbyterian, and United Churches of Canada," in *First Days, Fighting Days, Women in Manitoba History*, ed. Mary Kinnear (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, University of Regina, 1987), 127. I have also relied on Nancy Hall's Master's thesis, "'Not by Might, Nor by Power, but by My Spirit': Women Workers in the United Church of Canada, 1890–1940" (University of Manitoba, 1986).
- ⁵ Hall, "Professionalism of Women Workers," 125. Chown also mentions lower requirements for those entering "Class C."
- ⁶ John D. Thomas, "Servants of the Church: Canadian Methodist Deaconess Work, 1890–1926," *Canadian Historical Review* 65, no. 3 (1984): 384.
- ⁷ *Methodist Magazine* (July 1901), 84, quoted in Thomas, 375.
- ⁸ Hall, "Professionalism of Women Workers," 125.
- ⁹ Thomas, 385.
- ¹⁰ Hall lists Bible history, Christian doctrine, church and mission history, the life of Christ, and church laws (Hall, "Not by Might," 55). Hall, Thomas, and Chown (in her articles) name sociology, English literature and composition, general history, deportment, public speaking, physical education, household science, sewing, music, art, economics, child development and psychology, methods of evangelism, teaching, nursing, relief work, study of social reform, anatomy, childhood diseases, hygiene, public health, and obstetrics (Hall, "Not by Might," 55; Thomas, 385;

- Chown, "Some Criticisms of the Deaconess Movement," *Christian Guardian*, 15 Nov. 1911, 24; reprinted later in this piece.
- ¹¹ Hall lists Mary Richmond, *Social Diagnosis*; Breckinridge and Abbott, *The Delinquent Child and the Home*; Town, *Social Problems*; Healey, *The Individual Delinquent*; Trew, *Boyhood and Lawlessness and the Neglected Girl*; and *Canadian Civics*; *His Dominion*; and *The Education of our Canadians* ("Not by Might," 56).
- ¹² Quoted in Hall, "Professionalism of Women Workers," 126.
- ¹³ Thomas, 379; Hall, "Professionalism of Women Workers," 127; *Christian Guardian*, 20 Apr. 1910. In 1910 twenty-two of the seventy-six deaconesses worked in Toronto.
- ¹⁴ Hall, "Professionalism of Women Workers," 126–27. Hall states that besides working in inner city missions and parishes, some deaconesses also established homes for unwed mothers and orphans, schools, settlement houses, hospitals, and churches for the poor ("Not by Might," 58).
- ¹⁵ See *The First Fifty Years, 1895–1945: The Training and Work of Women Employed in the Service of the United Church of Canada* (n.p.: The United Church of Canada, 1945).
- ¹⁶ J.S. Woodsworth to the editor, *Christian Guardian*, 29 Nov. 1911, 24–25.
- ¹⁷ Hall, "Professionalism of Women Workers," 127–28; "Not by Might," 66. Research into the circumstances behind this statement could throw light on the deaconesses' position at this time.
- ¹⁸ Thomas, 391.
- ¹⁹ *Christian Guardian*, 23 Aug. 1911, 20–21. On the subject of remuneration of ministers, early that year S.D. Chown and Albert Carman, general superintendents of the church, in an "official letter" in the *Christian Guardian*, explained a recent increase in ministers' salaries. The fact that their justification could also have been employed to increase the remuneration of deaconesses would not have occurred to them. "Some of the ministers," they lamented, "have not been able to get out of debt and possess themselves of many books beyond those required in their course of study. . . . If our men fall out of the habit of study and become stunted in their earlier years, they can never recover their loss" (*Christian Guardian*, 4 Jan. 1911, 7).
- ²⁰ Alice A. Chown, "Not Deaconesses, but Deaconess Training," *Christian Guardian*, 6 Dec. 1911, 34.
- ²¹ Chown, "Effect of Some Changes on the Family," *Lake Placid Conference on Home Economics: Proceedings of the Fourth Annual Conference, 1902* (Washington, D.C.: American Home Economics Association, 1902), 34. Like many exponents of the Social Gospel movement, Chown saw Christianity as a social religion. In the deaconess articles, she writes of the evolving profession of social service which has "a vision of the abolition of poverty through the abolition of the conditions which create it," as one of the signs of the advancing new age. She insisted that "the best minds the church can command must prepare themselves through a thorough study of psychology, economics, sociology, political science, history, hygiene, and the remedial social legislation of all nations to educate the people to believe in the possibility of a fair chance for all" ("Will the Deaconess Society Adopt Modern Social Methods?," *Christian Guardian*, 29 Nov. 1911, 34). These views resembled those of such social gossellers as Nellie McClung.

- ²² For example, "A Wise Women's Movement," *Toronto Saturday Night*, 23 Dec. 1899; "The Supplement of Higher Education for Women," *Methodist Magazine and Review*, Nov. 1901, 443-46; "Modern Experiments in Housekeeping" (paper presented at the annual conference of the National Council of Women of Canada, 1904).
- ²³ *The Stairway* (1921; reprinted with introduction by Diana Chown, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 99.
- ²⁴ Chown, *The Stairway*, 13.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*
- ²⁶ Claudia Clark, "Settlement Houses and Women's Politics, 1900-1930: A Case Study of Whittier House," unpublished paper, 1988, 9.
- ²⁷ Chown to Minnie Chown, Oct. 1898, collection of Stanley Chown descendants, Renfrew, Ontario. It was likely during her period at Whittier House that Chown met the head of the National Consumer's League, Florence Kelley, whose counsel she sought when writing the 1911 deaconess articles. A brilliant woman who was partly responsible for the eventual enactment of wage and hour laws in several states, Kelley's accomplishments included an undergraduate thesis on the history of the legal status of children, a law degree, and translations of Engels. Kelley lived at Hull House during the 1890s.
- ²⁸ Clark, "Settlement Houses and Women's Politics," 6-7.
- ²⁹ Chown to Minnie Chown.
- ³⁰ Mina Carson, *Settlement Folk, Social Thought and the American Settlement Movement, 1885-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 123.
- ³¹ Chown, *The Stairway*, 25.
- ³² See Ellen Fitzpatrick, *Endless Crusade: Women Social Scientists and Progressive Reform* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990). Well-known American reformers Sophonisba Breckenridge and Edith Abbott joined this school in its infancy and contributed significantly to its becoming one of the foremost schools of social work in the country.
- ³³ Chown, "Fundamentals of Charity Organization," *Yearbook of the National Council of Women of Canada* (1899), 254-56. At that time Alice was secretary of the Charity Organizations of Jersey City. For a discussion of Alice Chown's deaconess articles and the movement for the professionalization of social work, see Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap and Water* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1991).
- ³⁴ For the story of her involvement in both strikes, see Chown, *The Stairway*, 115-34.
- ³⁵ Woodsworth to editor, 25.
- ³⁶ Woodsworth to editor, 25. Another reply, from a deaconess in Winnipeg, suggests that the situation for the deaconesses who worked in the West differed from that in Toronto. She wrote that "deaconesses in the west are much freer to follow their best judgement," and "conditions in the east would improve if the deaconesses were given adequate representation on the Board" (Priscilla J. Smith to the editor, *Christian Guardian*, 20 Dec. 1911, 27). Other replies were more critical. Rev. Bartle Bull insisted that deaconesses were not professional students and, like another respondent, deplored Chown's "unjust attack" on a "Christ-like movement." (Bartle E. Bull, "The Deaconess Work: A Reply to the Criticisms Made by

Miss Chown," *Christian Guardian*, 22 Nov. 1911, 34–35; Mrs. John Morrison to the editor, *Christian Guardian*, 29 Nov. 1911, 25–26.

³⁷ Nellie McClung, "Women and the Church," *In Times Like These* (1915; reprint, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), 67–79.

³⁸ Thomas, pp. 372, 387.

Alice Chown's Articles for the *Christian Guardian*

SOME CRITICISMS OF THE DEACONESS MOVEMENT

15 November 1911

My criticisms of the deaconess movement are founded, first, on the weekly reports which appear in the CHRISTIAN GUARDIAN; secondly, on a study of the report of the Deaconess Society; thirdly, on a visit to the Barbara House, Jarvis Street, and lastly, on a pleasantry in Miss McElhenie's address at the luncheon given by the Methodist women to the women of the Ecumenical Conference. If you exclaim that I have not visited the Deaconess Training School, that I have not talked with Miss McElhenie, that I have not interviewed the directors, I readily assent at once that I have done none of these things, and point them out to future critics or defenders of the movement as essential in the understanding of not only what the movement is, but what it aspires to be.

I have been accustomed to characterize the weekly accounts in the GUARDIAN of the Deaconess work as "sentimental sops," the attempt to appeal to the weakest side of the Methodist Church so they would support the movement. I have never once seen a single article that represented their work except as an appeal to the feelings; not a single sentence that showed that the writer had the faintest idea of relating the cases narrated to the causes that produced them. It always made me wonder if the so-called sociology taught at the Deaconess School was any deeper than "poor fellow, he is hungry; give him a loaf of bread."

If those accounts had been written for some Salvation Army publication we would have excused them on the ground that the Salvation Army's heart was further developed than its head. Appearing each week in the GUARDIAN, they have not only been a condemnation of the superficial training in social work and the principles which should underlie it, but a condemnation of the whole Methodist Church that their ideals of social service are so senti-

mental, so unscientific. Such articles have no excuse in the organ of a church that has educational ambitions.

With such a strong feeling concerning the emotional pap that the deaconesses feed the Methodist public on, I studied their report with interest, especially their course of study. It is a fine hodge-podge of theology, literature, history, so-called sociology, nursing, domestic science, music, art and deportment. Every subject which a supporter of the movement deems beneficial has been hay-forked into the course—a little smattering of everything, not much of anything. What self-sufficient, stuffed amateurs such a course would create. Subjects on which a professional student would spend a couple of years are here given perhaps a twentieth of the time. The entrance requirements are low for those entering Class C. As one reads the curriculum over, one asks oneself what is the intention of such a course? Surely not to train leaders in social work? Perhaps the purpose is to furnish nice little satellites for Methodist ministers, women who will clasp their hands with admiration at the greater knowledge of the pastor, whose work they are supplementing.

One of the fundamental problems lying at the basis of our home life, of the social evil, the spread of specific disease, and myriad of other questions which are perplexing us, is the problem of a living wage for working women. With the hope of getting some light on the conditions which affect the wages of working women, I visited the Deaconess boarding house on Jarvis Street. Alas! alas! immediately I stated my object the deaconess in charge informed me she would not talk to strangers. I mildly interjected, "Perhaps my name is not unknown to you," but no, the name meant nothing, the person everything. I quietly tried to explain why I wanted the information, but she would not listen. "I understand perfectly," and no explanation on my part could shake her self-satisfaction that her personal relationship towards the girls was ideal and the only one to be considered. Finally, I was shown the door with the parting shot, "If you studied less and worked more it would be better."

While I have had many hearty laughs over this experience, it is told here to corroborate my previous contention: the deaconesses are not trained to see, in every individual who comes to them for spiritual or material help, not only the person, but also a cog in this great social organism. To the trained social worker every girl in that boarding house would have been not only a person to be loved and understood, but she would have been also a link in the great human chain, which is no stronger than its weakest links. The girl receiving insufficient pay would be encouraged, friends and recreation provided, but she would also be studied. Does her poor pay arise from her inefficiency, her lack of ambition, or her employer's greed? Is her ineffi-

ciency due to lack of training, poor nutrition, or false ways of spending her money? There are myriad questions to be answered before we can intelligently turn all our forces with hope of success upon the problem of a living wage for the working woman. Homes like the Y.W.C.A., the Barbara House and its kin are only bonuses to the manufacturer and merchant, necessary for the protection of the working girl until we know how to create proper conditions for her. With the gathering of the knowledge of present conditions the deaconess in charge of the Barbara House has no sympathy.

My last criticism, not a very strong one, is founded on Miss McElenie's pleasantry that they did not encourage girls to enter the Deaconess Home to train for ministers' wives. It seemed to me that the course of study was aptly framed to fill Ruskin's ideal education for women, the ability to appreciate other people's learning, not to be competent oneself. Certainly, if any women are so broad minded as to wish to prepare themselves for their future work, they should be encouraged.

But what about the deaconesses after they have received this very superficial training in a multitude of subjects? It is only the exceptional, competent woman who is so absorbed in her work that her remuneration does not matter; the majority of women who fit themselves to do a definite work believe that the workwoman is worthy of her hire. Competent workers demand adequate pay. The women who from sentimental reasons take up the deaconess work, accept the low remuneration, and have so little self-respect that they allow their income to be supplemented by free services of doctor and dentist, discounts from stores and other alms, may not be worth more than they receive; if so, they are too dear workers for the Methodist Church to employ. Surely we have arrived at a place where, as a church, we can demand properly trained social workers, and insist that they should be adequately paid. Surely we have passed the Cheap John stage.

WILL THE DEACONESS SOCIETY ADOPT MODERN SOCIAL METHODS?

29 November 1911

When Mr. Pratt first began to think of Pratt Institutes, he devised a school to make work more intelligent to workers. Before he had gone very far in his plans, he discovered that the first necessity was for normal school teachers and professional workers and he had to reorganize all his plans with the purpose of training normal teachers to teach public school and high school teachers to instruct children. He had to commence three generations further back than his first scheme. We who know the good services that the Pratt Institutes have performed for education and industry feel that it was a wise change of plan and that the history of the twenty-five years of its growth and work amply justify the delay in reaching the workingman.

Social workers are querying if a similar change in the plans of the churches would not be valuable. The great need of the Church today is for trained social experts. The whole world is awakening to a cosmic consciousness, to a realization of the oneness of humanity, and that together we stand or fall. Everywhere the social problem is being studied and steps are being taken to remedy conditions which create poverty. There is no question that this social movement is going to grow and take increasing hold upon men and woman of all classes and conditions. The question the church must answer and answer quickly if it is to be a leader, is "shall this new spirit of brotherhood be touched with Christian idealism, or shall it, in disgust with the dilettante, unscientific spirit of the church, refuse to recognize its guidance?"

So far the only pretence the Methodist Church has made to train social workers has been the Deaconess Training School, in which the curriculum has been so varied and unco-ordinated as to have neither pedagogical nor professional value. For the college graduate [or] professionally trained student in Nursing or Domestic Science who has been trained to relate her work, it may have slight educational value, but to the student who has only had three years in high or public school (and the course is open to both these classes of applicants), it can only cause mental indigestion. These qualifications of the teachers cannot give educational value to such an unrelated course.

Nor is the plea that it is to train its graduates for practical Christian work any excuse, for the skilled nurse who saves one baby from blindness is worth more than twenty deaconesses with their pious platitudes of resignation. The same is true of every social condition. No beautiful Christian sentiments will take the place of efficiency.

The ideals of social service have changed. We no longer aim alone at amelioration, but have seen this vision of the abolition of poverty through the abolition of the conditions which create it. That is no easy task for the good intentioned, charitably inclined individual. The best minds the church can command must prepare themselves through the thorough study of psychology, economics, sociology, political science, history, hygiene and the remedial social legislation of all nations to educate the people to believe in the possibility of a fair chance for all. They must lead in continuous agitation for better conditions and possess the clear vision that perceives that every obstacle to well being removed is one less obstacle to man's realization of his spiritual being. It is a continuous warfare for the good of souls fought with external weapons, often with very little mention of religious sentiments, but infused by the Christ spirit.

Let every man and woman interested in social regeneration read the parable of the man who had two servants and he said unto them, "Go," and one said "Lord, I go," and went not, and the other said, "Lord, I go not," and went. Which of them did the will of his master? Then let him press the question home, do dilettantism and pious sentiments, or expert services and the spirit of brotherhood, best fulfil Christ's spirit?

If the church is wide awake it will realize that the limited personal services which the deaconesses are trained to give must wait to supplement the larger services of the trained social worker, who abates no jot of interest and sympathy in the individual applicant for help, but reaching far back of the present, sees the conditions which created the present poverty. Is it due to insufficient wages? Then the state must be called upon to establish a Minimum Wage Board, as Australia has done. Is it due to ill health? Then sanitary inspectors must more carefully safeguard the sanitation of the factory and house. A single case of tuberculosis may arouse the wide awake social reformer to an agitation for wider streets, more parks, lower buildings, better inspection of milk, shorter work hours, municipal play centres, and the fulfilment of other related needs. He stretches back to causes and forward to prevent some other man from suffering from the same causes in future. One gladly recognizes the self-denying service, the sympathy, the activity of the deaconesses, but, like Mr. Pratt, the Methodist Church may find it expedient to create social leaders before ministering to more individual needs.

Can the Methodist Church transform the Deaconess Training School into a modern training school for social workers? Can it adopt the larger ideal of the prevention of poverty and the necessity for trained experts to lead the church in this forward social movement? It will lead to the abandonment of the obsolete ideals, borrowed from the Catholic

sisterhoods, of distinct costumes, except when desirable for some special work as nursing or sanitary inspections, all the ideas conducive to celibacy, and the disciplinary rules obnoxious to self-respecting woman of today. It means that the church cannot agitate for proper payment of factory employees and not pay its social workers adequately. It means that for the appeals of the deaconesses to man's emotions, it shall substitute an appeal to man's reason and to a deeper conception of brotherhood that will demand justice for all. It requires not only the scientific education of the social leaders, but a broadening of the social consciousness and conscience of the whole Methodist Church. Will the present unrest in the deaconess training school result in the broader ideals of social service, and the adaption of present machinery to a larger social purpose?

NOT DEACONESSSES, BUT DEACONESS TRAINING

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The first advice given to a student in training for social work at a School of Philanthropy is, "Develop a sense of humor; laugh whenever you can." I have always seen the humor of all my experience with deaconesses, present criticisms included. I can laugh at myself, even when the joke goes against me, as it did at the Barbara House.

Why do my critics assume that my criticisms were directed at the deaconesses? For that I am sorry. I am too much a lover of my sex not to understand how our very weakness of self-sacrifice and self-negation has come from long years of regarding other people before ourselves. I am not criticizing the women who, yielding to this feminine characteristic of self-denial, devote their lives to service, but the Methodist Church which accepts the service of these fine-spirited women, gives them such a poor preparation for the work they desire to do and then so inadequately remunerates them. The women who develop, despite this training, I honor.

May I here express my regret that my absence in New York prevented my seeing the criticisms of my first article, or I would have in my second article most emphatically stated my admiration for the spirit which prompts the deaconesses, and for the self-denying personal services they render. In emphasizing one evil, the inadequate training they receive and its limiting of their point of view, I had no intention of attacking the deaconesses. The personal influence of the head of the Deaconess Boarding House was so evident to me in the interview to which I referred—I took it for granted.

Having no personal animus to any deaconess, I did not realize that I was "knocking the heads off saints and angels."

Every trained social worker dreams of the abolition, not the amelioration, of poverty. The social reformer as well as the socialist believes that fair conditions for every man shall prevail, but they will not be gained by distributing Christmas baskets nor writing nice little sentimental stories. To see the larger issues, the necessity for larger strategic measures, is not to discount the personal services which have their place. This is the basis of my criticism of the Deaconess Society, that the training it offers does not deal with social questions seriously, never trains its students to look upon philanthropy as a science, obeying definite well-known economic laws. The difference between the professional worker and the amateur in any field of work is largely one of point of view. The trained nurse relates all her experiences to basic principles in medical science. She correlates her knowledge.

The amateur nurse is the plaything of each experience, with no knowledge of principles to guide her. The nurse does not study the development of many kindred sciences, pedagogy, for instance, interesting as such information might be. She concentrates on her one science.

So it should be with the social worker. Philanthropy is a science with well-defined laws and principles for guidance of its workers. Its present-day aim is clear and definite, the abolition of poverty through the changing of present legal, physical and economic conditions, and the moral uplift due to a deepening sense of brotherhood.

To allow social workers to take the haphazard course offered by the Deaconess Society is to treat the possibility of hastening the time of brotherhood with less dignity than one treats the possibility of gaining health. It is to substitute sentiment alone for the union of science and sentiment, and this one-sided training has affected the point of view, the attitude of the deaconesses to social problems, and has found its expression in the weekly articles in the *GUARDIAN* which arouse feeling and sympathy for the unfortunate poor, but do not lead the readers to delve below the surface of the misery to find a remedy, or preventive to future misfortunes. The social worker should lead the church to think with feeling and feel with discretion.

In New York, last week, I talked with Florence Kelly [sic] who, probably, has done more than any one woman in the States to have the laws protecting working women and children improved, and who is continually struggling to have new laws passed and old laws amended, making imperative proper sanitation conditions, protection from fire, restriction of night labor, shortening of hours and a minimum wage for women. She said, emphatically, the various Y.W.C.A. and other semi-charitable working girl homes are worth millions a year to manufacturers in furnishing them with an

argument for lessening wages. It is such a well-known economic fact, taught in even the most elementary classes in economics, that these houses are bonuses to manufacturers, enabling them to pay less than the girl could live upon if she were dependant strictly upon her own resources. I never realized that it might be questioned. Nor are these homes the only bonuses we give the manufacturer; we care in our hospitals for those its machinery, often faultily guarded, maims, and we look after the families of those killed in industries.

It is no new view—that charity pays part of the cost of manufacture, and must pay it, until we have better laws. We are not going to gain the just conditions for workers by any easy *laissez-faire* methods nor by any shirking of the truth. We must support hospitals and various charitable agencies as temporary necessities while we wage the fiercest fight for right conditions, but let us not deceive ourselves; our charity, although intended for the victims of the present industrial system, sometimes indirectly benefits the employers, who are likewise the slaves of conditions. We cannot forego our ministrations to the suffering, but we can see facts clearly and work for the proper remedies, not merely palliatives which prolong existing evils.

Two fundamental causes in lessening the wages of working women are the supplementing of the women's wages by their own homes or parents, and secondly, by the semi-charitable homes, and these are also two of the contributing causes in leading women insufficiently paid, who must compete with women more fortunately situated, to turn to vice. Truthfulness, the recognition of facts, the measuring of whether one's efforts will strike at the root of an evil or simply lop off some of its branches, must be part of the social training of the whole church.

In conclusion, let me say, what the poor want is not charity, but justice. We have no right to salve our social conscience by pleasant deeds of kindness. We are guilty if we feed our complacency by charitable gifts and do not recognize our share in maintaining the injustice which makes its victims children of poverty. At present, the Methodist Church is playing at the problem of social reform, and it will continue to play, until it studies modern social science and conforms to its laws in training its workers, both men and women, ministerial and lay.
