

WOMANHOOD AT THE CROSS-ROADS

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Womanhood at the Cross-roads by Mrs. Gell

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MRS. GELL

**WOMANHOOD AT
THE CROSS-ROADS**

WOMANHOOD AT THE CROSS-ROADS

*THIS is one of a series written
mainly by present or past Church of
England Chaplains to the Forces,
and edited by the Rev. F. B.
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WOMANHOOD AT THE CROSS-ROADS

By the Hon. Mrs. GELL, Author of 'The
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FOREWORD

READERS of 'Womanhood at the Cross-Roads' will realise that it is largely addressed to the problems confronting the more educated section of society, not because these problems are the most important, but because they have apparently received less attention than those primarily concerning the wage-earning section of the community. There is among the more leisured classes an immense reserve of force, hitherto very imperfectly utilised for the benefit of the body politic. In the crisis of our fate, our country needs every gift of daughters as well as sons, if wise solutions are to be reached; and those to whom wealth of opportunity has given balanced judgment, organising power, above all a lofty vision, are not justified in hoarding their treasures for the delectation of a narrow circle, but are bound to seek every means of rendering them available for the country as a whole. The capacity for leadership is often strongest in sensitive souls which shrink from anything approaching publicity. The degree of vision is the measure of responsibility.

Time was I shrank from what was right
From fear of what was wrong,
I would not brave the sacred fight
Because the foe was strong.

But now I cast that finer sense
And surer shame aside,
Such dread of sin was indolence,
Such aim at Heaven was pride.

So when my Saviour calls, I rise
And calmly do my best,
Leaving to Him with silent eyes
Of hope and fear the rest.

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'Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it!'

'Hear ye not the voices, ringing down the ages,
Echoing still the message, though their task be done—
Voices born of heroes, monarchs, poets, sages,
Yearning still to share the wisdom they had won?

'Listen! Thronging round you, deafening with their clamour,
Fashion-tyrants mock at your vaunt of self-control;
Wake!—Delusive visions, fraught with poison glamour,
Daze your eyes to blindness, while they paralyse your soul.

'Yet the Cloud of Witness solemnly advances,
Widening as each clarion voice is hushed in death below;
Yet the Heavenly Vision gleams on raptured glances,
Prompt through changing vesture their changeless Lord to
know.'

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CHAPTER I: WHITHER?

'I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul.'

THE altered outlook of women on life as a result of the War is fraught with possibilities so vital to the future of our country, that it is important the position should be squarely faced, if disaster is to be avoided. At present we are pursuing a policy of drift. Opinions are crystallising fast. The whole attitude of Womanhood is changing; and apparently leaders are making little attempt to safeguard the heritage of the past. In every direction the spirit of opportunism is rife.

We are a prey to a peculiarly acute form of individualism. Self-expression is considered to be of primary importance. The body politic has become a secondary consideration, and under the altered conditions, which, rightly manipulated, might be productive of untold good, there is danger that the fundamental principles on which our country's greatness is founded will suffer eclipse.

Women have tasted the sweets of freedom. They have discovered their economic value. Their administrative ability, hitherto absorbed in domestic activities, where it was largely unrecognised, has been appreciatively utilised in the service of the State. Physically, whether on the land or in munitions and the like, they have proved equal to undertaking laborious tasks hitherto considered beyond their powers; and the net result is that many of them are determined never to go back to the pre-war conditions.

As usual, the swing of the pendulum is excessive, and the whole situation needs wise and judicious con-