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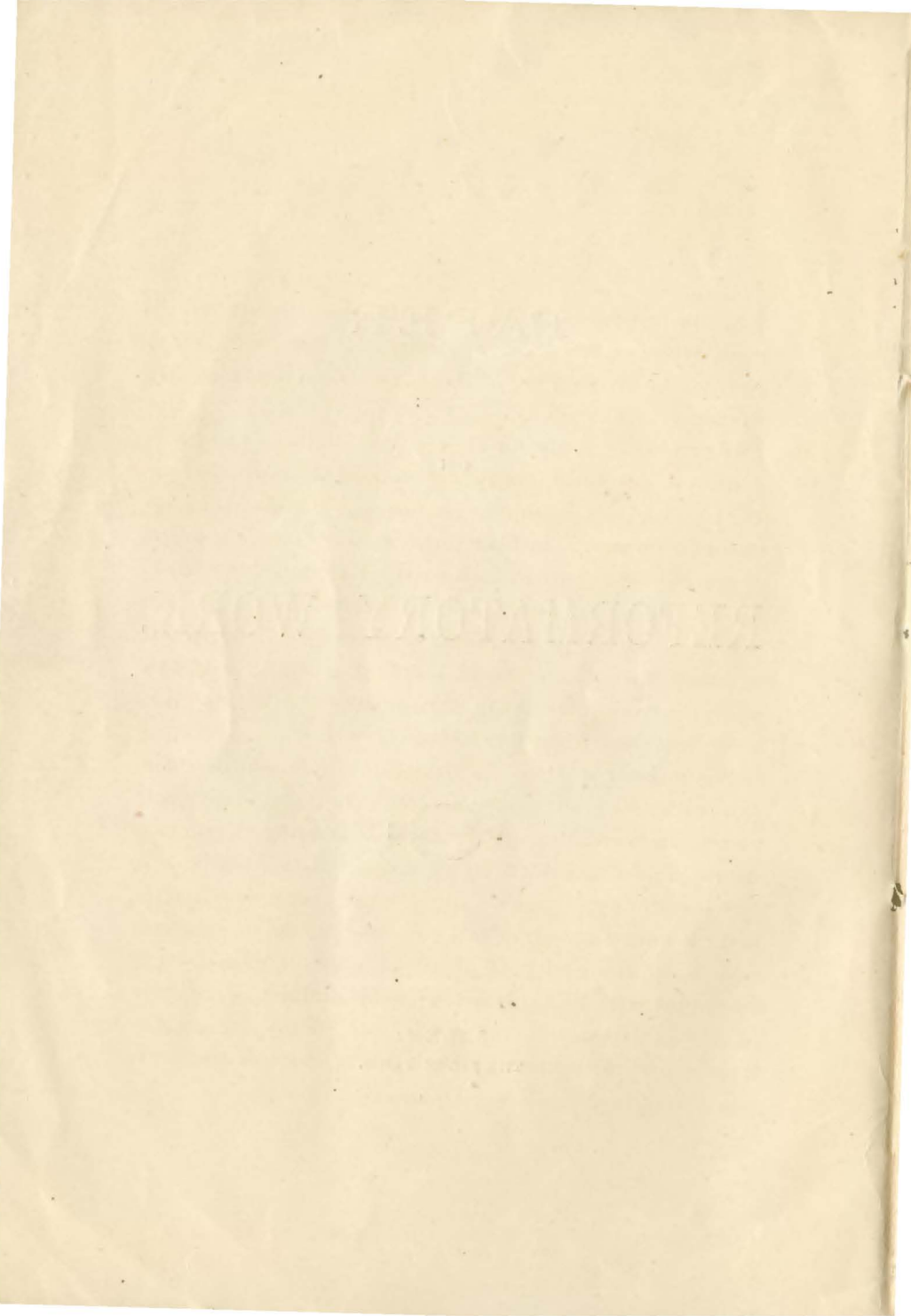
PAPER

ON

REFORMATORY WORK.



SALEM:  
THE SALEM PRESS.  
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At the quarterly meeting of the Women's Friend Association, held October 27, it was voted that this paper, which was read to the members of the Board and Association then present, should be printed.

The subject of the relation of the Board to its Committee on Admission and Investigation was considered at some length. The importance of establishing a thorough understanding between the Committee and the Directors was especially urged, to the end that we may accomplish the most satisfactory results. Attention was also called to the fact that, if it is well that the Board and its Committee should thoroughly harmonize in their manner of work, should not the aims of the Association be clearly fixed in the minds of the citizens of Salem, to whom we must all look for help to execute our plans.

Our work in the "Home" on Daniel street was misunderstood. Our work here is still misunderstood. In the minds of many people, we were, in the old "Home," laboring to reform a degraded class of women, taking comparatively little interest in those who were in need simply from adverse circumstances, and not from the result of evil ways of life. In the minds of many now, we are adopting an entirely opposite course,—they regard the work of the Association, as at this time, entirely centred in the cause of the "worthy poor," to the almost entire exclusion of the claims of those in whom, less than two years ago, it professed, by its work, a thorough interest.

What a curious society we must appear in the minds of these people! I wonder what sort of a Constitution they imagine us to have! They must regard it as elastic to the last degree. At the last Manager's meeting, the President stated that we had accomplished, since occupying this house, treble the amount of reformatory work ever done before. To all of us who are trying to do good useful work, it is very discouraging, to feel that there is this lack of sympathy, for I truly believe, if there were more sympathy, there would be better knowledge. Do not think I am unappreciative of the very generous response we received a year ago last spring from the citizens of Salem. But just because of this, just because so many people know exactly what we are trying to do, and are giving us their earnest sympathy,—for this very reason, do I want everybody to understand the aims of this Association.

“By their works ye shall know them.” By our work shall we be known.

It may be that many of those, who accuse us of neglect of our assumed duties to those women whose feet have strayed from the path of right, are those to whose hearts this matter of reformatory work is very near and dear. No one can for one moment doubt that it is our best work, our most important work, but it is very expensive. It exacts great expenditure of time, of strength, of money; thus far our treasury has been able to meet the demands made upon it by those girls who have applied to us, in their hour of need. I believe we shall always have the means of answering these calls; as our work increases, our hands will not be left empty, *this* I have faith enough to believe. But let us look at the matter clearly and

honestly. In order to meet our current expenses, here at the "W. W. Bureau," we shall require an income of \$1,000. This calculation leaves us a small surplus, which every prudent housekeeper and householder regards a careful provision for the future. We receive a very small income from the Intelligence Office branch, and later we may be able to establish other industries, which will still more increase our yearly funds. Meantime, this house must be maintained by memberships and donations. The success which will attend our labors *will be in proportion to the amount of money which shall be paid into our treasury*. But, if we need money, we also want earnest laborers in the field. In the year during which I have worked with you all, I have not had time to discover just who are the *born* reformers in our midst; in the nature of things, there must be two or three, to whom this work right here within these four walls is not regarded as of great importance,—perhaps I should express myself more correctly were I to say of *vital* importance. They regard the old proverb, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure," as very well in its way, indisputably true, but they want something more to do. They are essentially physicians for the soul, they want plenty of patients, and they want them all to have some clearly defined disease, that they may begin at once to effect a cure. It is to these women I now appeal. I beg them to come forward and lead others on, by the power of their enthusiasm. I am not a born reformer, but I believe I know the materials that go to make up one. A subtle magnetism to attract, a courageous mind to retain influence once obtained, a tender heart from which to speak, a firm will to enforce, and a well-guarded tongue to keep sacred secrets necessarily confided.

In a word, we must have deep charity, infinite patience, a wide imagination. This last gift is almost an essential,—to be able after hearing a story of vice, to see before us the whole train of circumstances which have made the girl or woman what she is, to realize what has been her inheritance, what moral training she has received, how susceptible she may be to outside influences, how much moral courage she may possess. All these questions must be carefully weighed, before we can understand how best we may guide the stumbling footsteps. Of all work, it is the most discouraging to those who are not possessed of undaunted zeal. We discover a young girl surrounded by poverty, filth, disease and vice, who has sinned almost in ignorance. We say to her, “Come!” I have found a home for you, where you will always have enough to eat, you may always be clean, you will breathe an invigorating air, you will be safe from evil surroundings; in short, you will be elevated (only we should not use a word so incomprehensible to her ears). She comes, and, at the end of a few days, forgetting the weak, cowardly nature the poor girl has inherited, we wonder that she tells us a deliberate and almost uncalled-for falsehood; then, we discover, to our disgust, that the girl is homesick for the squalor from which we have, as we had hoped, rescued her forever. Yielding to her entreaties, we permit her, for an afternoon, to go back to her dreadful haunts. When she returns, with an unmistakable odor of beer about her, we are in despair, that is, if we are not possessed of that invincible zeal, born of the true reformer. If we have been faint-hearted, our small stock of patience is at once exhausted. Our want of charity hastily assures us that the girl will not try to do right. We, in our

self-righteousness, cannot sink to so low a depth, as to put ourselves in her place. Is it not discouraging? Given so much, that the girl can accept so little! "Not a bit," the born reformer answers, "work on, keep up a brave heart, give to her weakness, out of your strength. You have thought too much about her body, be quick to remedy your mistake, begin with her soul, put something worth knowing into the vacant mind. She must first loathe the uncleanliness, both of body and soul, before you can inspire her with an appreciation of higher things.

Now, then, let us all be up and doing. If we sit still with folded hands, waiting for the work to come to us, how much valuable time will be lost. I, myself, as I told you, am not a "born" reformer; but, after all, I may be able to do something. I am ready enough to work, if only somebody will come forward and tell me how. Let us help these good women, who are working so hard among the drunken men here in our midst. Let us help the wives to make comfortable homes for their husbands.

Let us ask these faithful workers who have done so much for the *men*, to send us the *women*, whose lives are made wretched to themselves and to others, because of this terrible habit which has bound them to evil, hand and foot. Let us go out ourselves and find these degraded women, and bring them to love higher things than the mere carnal pleasures of this life. Let us ask every policeman in the city, to send us the girls whom he sees polluting the streets with their evil ways. My friends, ask all your friends to come and help, whether they belong to our society or not. Try to interest those who know

so little of our work. We want their time, their strength, their money, anything, everything, which they will give us. You, to whom this work has an absorbing interest, I entreat you, come forward and lead us on; uphold us in the good work. Give us courage to go on. Inspire us with your enthusiasm. In a word, exert to the uttermost the power that is within you, that we, and many others in this city, may help to purify it from uncleanness that we may make the old Puritan influence, modified by our better knowledge, to be again felt in this community, on this soil, so dear to their sturdy hearts.

