



Industry and Economy

Dear Brother and Sister R: I have been seeking an opportunity to write to you, but have been sick, and unable to write to anyone. But I will try to write a few lines this morning.

As I was shown the duties resting upon God's people in regard to the poor, especially the widows and orphans, I was shown that my husband and I were in danger of taking upon us burdens which God has not laid upon us, and thereby lessening our courage and strength by increasing our cares and anxiety. I saw that my husband went farther in your case than it was his duty to go. His interest in you led him to take a burden which carried him beyond his duty, and which has been no benefit to you, but has encouraged in you a disposition to depend upon your brethren. You look to them to help and favor you, while you do not labor as hard as they, nor economize at all times as they feel it their duty to do.

I was shown that you, my brother and sister, have much to learn. You have not lived within your means. You have not learned to economize. If you earn high wages, you do not know how to make it go as far as possible. You consult taste or appetite instead of prudence. At times you expend money for a quality of food in which your brethren cannot afford to indulge. Dollars slip from your pocket very easily.

Sister R is in poor health. She indulges her appetite and places too heavy a tax upon her stomach. She burdens it by overeating and by placing in it a quality of food not best calculated to nourish her system. Her food is taken in immoderate quantities, and she takes but little exercise; thus the system is severely taxed. According to the light which the Lord has given us, simple food is the best to ensure health and strength. Exercise is necessary to her health.

Self-denial is a lesson which you both have yet to learn. Restrict your appetite, Brother R. God has given you a capital of strength. This is of more value to you than money and should be more highly prized. Strength cannot be purchased with gold or silver, houses or lands. It is a great possession that you have. God requires you to make a judicious use of the capital of strength with which He has blessed you. You are just as much His steward as is the man who has a capital of money. It is as wrong for you to fail to use your strength to the best advantage as it is for a rich man to covetously retain his riches because it is agreeable to do so. You do not make the exertion that you should to support your family. You can and do work if work is conveniently prepared to hand, but you do not exert yourself to set yourself to work feeling that it is a duty to use your time and strength to the very best advantage and in the fear of God.

You have been in a business which would at times yield you large profits at once. After you have earned means you have not studied to economize in reference to a time when means could not be earned so easily, but have expended much for imaginary wants. Had you and your wife understood it to be a duty that God enjoined upon you to deny your taste and your desires, and make provision for the future instead of living merely for the present, you could now have had a competency and your family have had the comforts of life. You have a lesson to learn which you should not be backward in learning. It is to make a little go the longest way.

Sister R has leaned too heavily upon her husband. She has been all her life too dependent upon others for sympathy, thinking of herself, making herself a center. She has been petted too much, and has not learned to be self-reliant. She has not been the help to her husband that she might have been in temporal or spiritual things. She must learn to bear bodily infirmities and not dwell upon them as she does. She must fight the battles of life for herself; an individual responsibility rests upon her.

Sister R, your life has been a mistake. You have indulged in reading anything and everything. Your mind has not been benefited by so much reading. Your nerves have been excited while hurriedly chasing through the story. If your children interrupt you while thus employed, you speak fretfully, impatiently. You do not have self-control, and therefore fail to hold your children with a firm, steady hand. You move from impulse. You pet and indulge them, and then fret and scold, and are severe. This variable manner is very detrimental to them. They need a firm, steady hand; for they are wayward. They need regular, wise, judicious discipline.

You might save yourself much perplexity if you would put on the woman and move from principle, not from

impulse. You have imagined that your husband must be with you, that you could not stay alone. You should see that his duty is to labor to sustain his family. You should bring yourself to deny your desires and wishes, and not lead him to feel that he must accommodate himself to you. You have a part to act in bearing the burdens of life. You must put on courage and fortitude. Be a woman, not a capricious child. You have been petted and have had your burdens borne for you too long. It is now your duty to seek to deny your wishes and desires, and act from principle, for the present and future good of your family. You are not well; but if you should cultivate a contented, cheerful mind, it would help you to a better hold on this life, and also on the life to come.

Brother R, it is your duty to make a careful, judicious use of the capital of strength which God has given you.

Sister R, your brain is wearied and taxed by reading. You should deny your propensity for crowding your mind with everything it can devour. Your lifetime has not been spent in the best manner. You have not benefited yourself, nor those around you. You have leaned on your mother more than has been for your good. If you had depended more upon the powers within yourself, if you had been more self-reliant, you would have been happier. Now you should bear your own burdens as well as you can, and encourage your husband to bear his in doing his work.

If you had denied your taste for reading and seeking to please yourself, had devoted more time to prudent physical exercise, and had eaten carefully of proper, healthful food, you would have avoided much suffering. A part of this suffering has been imaginary. If you had braced your mind to resist the disposition to yield to infirmities, you would not have had nervous spasms. Your mind should be drawn away from yourself to household duties, keeping your house with order, neatness, and taste. Much reading, and permitting your mind to be diverted with small things, has led to a neglect of your children and your household duties. These are the very duties which God has given you to perform.

You have had much sympathy for yourself. You have called your mind to yourself and have dwelt upon your poor feelings. My sister, eat less. Engage in physical labor, and devote your mind to spiritual things. Keep your mind from dwelling upon yourself. Cultivate a contented, cheerful spirit. You talk too much upon unimportant things. You gain no spiritual strength from this. If the strength spent in talking were devoted to prayer, you would receive spiritual strength and would make melody in your heart to God.

You have been controlled by feeling, not by duty and principle. You have given up to homesick feelings and injured your health by indulging a spirit of unrest. Your habits of life are not healthful. You need to reform. Neither of you is willing to work as others work, or to eat as your brethren eat. If it is in your power to get things, you have them. It is your duty to economize.

In contrast with your case was presented that of Sister S. She is in feeble health, and has two children to support with her needle at the very low prices which are paid for her work. For years she received scarcely a farthing of help. She suffered with ill health, yet she carried her own burdens. Here was an object of charity indeed. Now look at your case. A man with a small family and a good capital of strength, yet constantly involved in debt and leaning upon others. This is all wrong. You have lessons to learn. With Sister S, economy is the battle of life. Here you are with a man's strong energies, and yet are not self-sustaining. You have a work to do. You should have uniformity of diet. Live at all times as simply as your brethren live. Live out the health reform.

Jesus wrought a miracle and fed five thousand, and then He taught an important lesson of economy: "Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost." Duties, important duties, rest upon you. "Owe no man anything." Were you infirm, were you unable to labor, then your brethren would be in duty bound to help you. As it is, all you needed from your brethren when you changed your location was a start. If you felt as ambitious as you should, and you and your wife would agree to live within your means, you could be free from embarrassment. You will have to labor for small wages as well as for large. Industry and economy would have placed your family, ere this, in a much more favorable condition. God wants you to be a faithful steward of your strength. He wants you to use it to place your family above want and dependence.

Battle Creek, Michigan, March 22, 1869

Testimonies for the Church, Volume 2 pp. 431-436