



The
William Booth
Collection

HOW TO REACH THE MASSES WITH THE GOSPEL

Preface.

By the Editor of "The Christian."

Of Mrs. Gatty's charming "Parables from Nature," there are two which are to me specially attractive. One is entitled, "Not Lost, but Gone Before," and the other, "The Unknown Land."

The former thus describes the experiences of a Dragon-fly Grub, just before the change from his earlier to his later condition of being. "His voice was languid and weak, for the Dragon-fly Grub was sick and uneasy. His limbs had lost their old activity, and a strange oppression was upon him. Upwards he must go now, upward, upward! That was the strong sensation which mastered every other, and to it he felt he must submit, as to some inevitable law."

The second parable concerns a bird of passage, the Sedge-Warbler, who "sang to her tender little one of her own young days, when she was as happy and as gay as now, though not now among the reed beds; and how, after she had lived and rejoiced in her happiness many pleasant months, a voice seemed to rise within her that said, 'This is not your rest!' and how she had wondered, and tried not to listen, and tried to stop where she was, and be happy there still; but the voice came oftener and oftener, and louder and louder; and how the dear partner she had chosen heard and felt the same; and how at last they left their home together and came and settled down among the reed-beds of the great river. And, oh, how happy she had been!

"And where is the place yon came from, Mother?" asked the little one. "Is it anywhere near, that we may go and see it?"

"My child," answered the Sedge-Warbler, "it is the Unknown Land! Far, far away, I know, but *where*, I do not know. Only the voice that called me thence is beginning to call again; and as I was obedient and hopeful once, shall I be less obedient and hopeful now – now that I have been so happy? No, my little one, let us go forth to the Unknown Land wherever it may be, in joyful trust."



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I am reminded of these similitudes of human life as my memory reverts to ten years ago, when the call of God was upon William Booth, "and to it he felt he must submit, as to some inevitable law." He was then a stated minister, with pastoral duties towards a limited flock devolving upon him; but a yearning and a longing stirred within him for another and wider, though not a more important sphere. God was saying to him, "Do the work of an *Evangelist*;" and in order to this he must, like Abram, go forth, not knowing whither he went.

The young Sedge-Warbler in the parable began to sing about the Unknown Land, until one day he encountered a magpie, who vented himself thus: "How I love simplicity! And, really, you are a choice specimen of it, Mr. Sedge-Warbler. So you are thinking of a journey to this Unknown Land, always supposing, of course, my sweet little friend, that you can find the way to it, which, between you and me, I think there must naturally be some doubt about, under the circumstance of the place being itself unknown."

There are always chatterers like that, to talk to those whom God has called, but who must, nevertheless, obey the Voice, "Arise ye and depart, for this is not your rest." And thus it was with William Booth and his true yokefellow – his gifted and devoted wife. They must give up home and position, present income, and future prospects, and go forth, with their little ones, "to the Unknown Land, where it may be, in joyful trust." And go forth they did, and as God was with Abram, He has been with them. He has had, truly, sharp trials of faith, in some of which, as in Abram's descent to Egypt, God's servant may have erred; but it has been the true pilgrim life, – a day at a time with God.

The mighty East of London, where, side by side with honest industry and honourable poverty, the destitution and drunkenness, the crime and shame of this whole land are represented, and to which are drawn not a few of the waifs and strays of all other lands, is like the "great and wide sea, wherein are creeping things innumerable, both small and great beasts;" and many to whom the Lord Christ has said, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men," here find his promise true, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."



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The following pages tell a fragment of the story of as wonderful a work of its kinds as this generation has seen. No doubt it is open to the same kind of criticism as the sculptor's chisel might award to the excavator's pick; but I do not hesitate to believe that for every essential Christian virtue – faith, zeal, self-denial, love, prayer, and the like, – numbers of the converts of this Mission will bear not unfavourable comparison with the choicest members of the most cultivated churches.

I close these brief prefatory words with the concluding sentences of a sketch, written some months ago, after spending a Sunday with Mr. Booth and his fellow workers: – “There is not in this kingdom an agency which more demands the hearty and liberal support of the Church of Christ. In the East of London are crowded and condensed a large proportion of the poorer labouring population of London. The ruined, the unfortunate, the depraved, the feeble ones, outrun in the race of life, – gravitate thither, and jostle one another in the daily struggle for bread; thousands are starving from day to day, and the bulk of these teeming multitudes are as careless of eternity as the heathen, and far more uncared for by the great majority of the professed people of God. Mr. Booth's operations are unparalleled in extent, unsectarian in character, a standing rebuke to the apathy of Christians, and a witness of the willingness of God to show his work unto his servants, and to establish the work of their hands upon them. In his name we commend this self-denying and invaluable mission to the hearts and prayers, the purses and cheque-books of his faithful servants.”