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LETTERS TO SALVATIONISTS

CHAPTER 20: Home

My Dear Comrades,

Few words in the English language take hold of the heart more quickly, move it more powerfully, and retain their influence over it more permanently, than the magic word, "Home." How universally true of the Anglo-Saxon people everywhere are the oft-repeated lines:

"Home, home, sweet, sweet home,
Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home"

To some extent, this sentiment applies to the animal species as well as to the human race. The wild beasts of the forest have their peculiar lairs where they hide and sleep; the birds have their favourite woods, where they sing and build their nests; many of the fishes have their fancied streams, which they more particularly frequent; and there is only a human being, here and there, who has not some spot which he honours with the name of Home.

It is quite true, that for the good of others, and the glory of his Lord, the Salvationist holds not back the pleasures of Home in the consecration he makes of himself to the War, and that in practice, he is often called upon entirely to forego its charms. In this sacrifice, he has before him the example of his Divine Master, who said of Himself, "The foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." In other words, our Lord, after He left His Mother's cottage in Nazareth, was without a home.

Thousands, at the call of the Holy Spirit, and for the sake of a dying world, have followed the Master's example. At the head of these Saints and Warriors is the Apostle Paul, who gloried in being able to forego wife and children and all the things which, together, constitute the charm of Home. Although perfectly lawful to him, he gave them up in order to win a larger number of souls to Christ.



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The sainted and sanctified Madame Guyon expresses her conviction in the following beautiful words:

"GOD EVERYWHERE TO THE SOUL THAT LOVES HIM."

*"Thou by long experience tried.
Near whom no grief can long abide;
My Lord, how full of sweet content,
I pass my years of banishment!*

*"All scenes alike engaging prove
To souls impressed with sacred love;
Wherever they dwell, they dwell in Thee,
In heaven, in earth, or on the sea.*

*"To me remains nor place nor time;
My country is in every clime;
I can be calm and free from care
On any shore, since God is there,*

*"While place we seek, or place we shun,
The soul finds happiness in none:
But with a God to guide our way,
'Tis equal joy to go or stay,*

*"Could I be cast where Thou art not.
That were, indeed, a dreadful lot:
But regions none remote I call;
Secure of finding God in all.*

*"My country, Lord, art Thou alone:
No other can I claim or own;
The point where all my wishes meet,
My law, my love; life's only sweet."*



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But, after all, Home is a Divine idea for the race. It is in the Divine plan, and, therefore, in the natural course of things. Man's first home was Paradise, and when expelled from that blissful abode, he made his home among the thorns and thistles, and will, I suppose, do so down to the end of time. God never asks for the sacrifice of Home, unless some greater benefit is to be reaped by its surrender, either to ourselves or those about us; and even when the sacrifice has been made, some spot, however inferior to the one which we have left behind, will be christened with the endearing term.

Home has much to do with all that concerns the highest interests of those who dwell there. It is intimately associated with religion, with health, with happiness, and with usefulness; nay, it ought to be a Training Ground for the Warrior on earth and for the Blood-washed in Heaven.

While there are many Homes in this world that, alas! are little better than a loathsome stairway leading down to the Bottomless Pit, thank God there are not a few that, with equal truth, could be spoken of as a kind of Jacob's Ladder; up which parents, children, friends, and servants, can all be seen climbing to the Eden above.

All who are responsible for the well-being of Home, should enquire before they attempt its establishment, and often pause, after it has come into existence, to ask the question, "How can we make Home better answer to God's ideal?"

Let me try to answer that question, by pointing out a few things that should characterise every Salvationist's Home. It is true their realisation will be beyond the reach of many of our Soldiers, seeing that the management of Home is not in their hands. Still, their fulfillment can be aimed at, prayed for, and longed after, even by the humblest amongst us.

1. Every Home should be *the dwelling-place of God*. This was the chief glory of the first Home in Eden. It was not its situation, its climate, its fruit, its flowers, or any of its other ten thousand beauties that constituted its chief splendour. The glory that eclipsed all other glories, was the fact that God was there; that He found pleasure in



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LETTERS TO SALVATIONISTS

its occupants; that He came and went, with satisfaction and delight. It will be ever thus with the beautiful Home on high, towards which we are journeying. God will be the chief glory of Heaven. It should be so with the Homes of His people on earth.

To this end, every Home should be as definitely and truly consecrated to the service of God as the Salvation Hall. It should be a temple where He is loved and worshipped, and in which He can reveal Himself, pour forth His Spirit, and hold communion with His children. Everything that is likely to keep Him away, or to grieve Him when He is there, must be put aside, or not allowed to enter. No intoxicating drink; no impure word or deed or book; no foolish, worldly fashion, no wasteful adornment, no idleness, no injustice, no malice, no falsehood, should be found there. Nothing should come into this Home, which is God's house on earth, that you would think out of place in the House your Master has prepared for you in Heaven, and which you anticipate occupying on your arrival there.

In such a Home there will, of necessity, be family prayer. The first thing done by the Patriarchs of old, when they fixed their tents, for however short a period, was to erect an Altar and offer sacrifices thereon. Thus, they openly recognised the existence of Jehovah, acknowledged their dependence upon Him for their every good, and gave Him the worship which was His due. Whoever would have a happy Home must do the same.

At stated times – morning, noon, and evening if possible, but certainly at one or the other – let all the members of the household gather and offer the "sacrifice" of praise and thanksgiving, interceding for themselves and for the dear ones absent, for the Corps with which the family is connected, for The Army throughout the world, and for the dark sinning multitudes around.

2. Every Home should be clean, as far as circumstances will allow. Cleanliness has been said to be next to Godliness; anyway, they are very near akin. I know how difficult it will be for many of our dear Soldiers, with delicate health, or large families, or both, and with little or no assistance, to keep tumble-down dwellings and their contents really and constantly clean. And yet, a steady aim and a little contrivance will accomplish much. Children can be taught cleanly habits very early, and will soon do



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much in this direction both for themselves and each other. Husbands, who have the time, should cheerfully lend a hand to the over-taxed wife with the cleansing of the walls, ceilings, and even the floors. Why not? I can see nothing unmanly in such assistance, and I can see a great deal that is very humane; nay, I might say, very Christ-like.

To those in whose way such difficulties lie, as those I have mentioned, cleanliness is an absolute duty. Without it, they and their children will be a disgrace to themselves, to The Army, and to one another.

Those responsible for Home should be careful not to encumber themselves with such things as can be done without, and which will require time and labour to keep clean. The increase of luxurious eating, drinking, and dressing renders much extra work indispensable. When I look at the dressed-up tables and the fancy cooking now so common even in the homes of many working people, my mind sometimes tries to estimate the large amount of work involved in it all. There is the washing of the tablecloths and napkins, the cleaning of piles of spoons, knives, forks, glasses, crockery, pots and pans, and the like, to say nothing of the awful amount of time consumed in selecting and buying, and mixing and cooking and serving the different varieties of food that so commonly ruin digestion and breed disease.

Much the same feelings are inspired by the fashionable dresses, needless furniture, fancy curtains, chimney-pieces, looking-glasses, and all the rest of the ornamental affairs with which houses are crowded nowadays, and which we could all live very well without. All this superfluous eating and furnishing must make a great inroad upon the time, and add greatly to the labour of those responsible for keeping a house, large or small, free from dust and dirt.

However, whether the things in the house be many or few, they should be kept clean. The floors should be clean, the linen should be clean, the furniture should be clean, the beds should be clean, the children should be clean; above all, the Mistress should be clean; indeed, all should be clean.

3. Home should be orderly. Order is said to be "Heaven's first law"; and, no doubt, it is



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LETTERS TO SALVATIONISTS

so. And not only is Order the law of Heaven, but of every other world, with which God has to do; and, excepting where sin has made confusion, there can be no question about the law being obeyed.

Salvationists ought to aim at orderliness in their Homes. By orderliness I mean a systematic or methodical way of doing things. I know that the rash of the lives of many of my Comrades makes neatness and exactness extremely difficult. They rarely sit down to their meals at the time appointed; and when they do, they cannot tell what will call for their attention before the repast is finished. They are so situated that "regular hours" are all but an impossibility. But, when full allowance has been made for this uncertainty, it is still possible to institute some simple order of the day, and this should always be done. System should be aimed at in every Home.

It will be of lifelong advantage to the children to grow up in a regular and orderly Home. System will be favourable to their getting through a large amount of work, the doing of it happily, and will be indispensable to that quietness and peace so closely connected with health and religion.

Every Home should, therefore, have rules as to hours for meals, the times for prayer, the hour for rising in the morning and for retiring at night, and other similar matters. Every member of the household should be made to cheerfully accept and honestly try to keep these rules, the spirit of loving obedience being the most important matter of all.

4. In every Home, rich or poor, the spirit of *economy* should prevail. Perhaps I have already referred to this matter. There never was a more extravagant and wasteful age than the present. This is, of course, more apparent in the well-to-do sections of society; but, I am not sure that the same spirit does not exist, and that almost to an equal extent among the poor, although the opportunity for manifesting may be much more limited. Beware of it!

Salvationists do not fool away their money on intoxicants, tobacco, snuff, and a heap of other silly indulgences. But I am afraid they do spend no small portion of their hard earnings on sweetmeats, unnecessary food, adornments for their children, and other



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LETTERS TO SALVATIONISTS

useless things, not only thereby crippling their ability to do good which they might otherwise effect, but injuring their health and keeping themselves in debt and difficulty, more or less, all the time.

I give one rule for every head of every Home, whether rich or poor, and that is, "*Keep your expenditure a little below your income, and cut your coat according to your cloth.*"

Perhaps I might here repeat a piece of advice that John Wesley gave to the Methodists of Bristol, a hundred and fifty years ago, "Get all you can, save all you can, and give away all you can."

5. Home ought to be *the dwelling-place of Love*. It will be so, if it be the dwelling-place of God, for God is Love. And Love at Home means kindness to all there, the making of happiness for father, mother, children, servants, and every creature that comes within the doors, so far as that can be done. With Love there will be unity, forbearance, patience, forgiveness, obedience; nay, there will be every other virtue, and every other grace.

6. Every Salvationist's Home should be *characterised by Salvationism*. That goes without saying. No Soldier should be one thing in the Hall and another thing in his own house. That thought will make his Home very different to those of the worldlings around. There should be simplicity in the food on his table, in the furniture in his rooms, in the pictures on his walls, and in the dress of his children. Oh, how the inconsistencies of many Salvationists grieve me in this respect! They put themselves into Jerseys and Bonnets, and then dress up their children and their houses in all the fripperies and follies of the fashion of this world! Come out, come out, my Comrades, and be separate, and have nothing to do with the godless customs and fashions of the people around you. By all means put yourselves into Uniform, and do the same also with the homes in which you live.

Salvationism means Soul-saving. I have said that your Home, oh, my Comrade, should be as a Temple of the Lord, which must mean that men and women and children should meet with God and be reconciled to Him there. I have often thought that the



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LETTERS TO SALVATIONISTS

time will come when every Salvationist will have outside his door a Flag by day, and a red light by night, to indicate that a Spiritual Physician resides there, who can teach men and women the way by which the disease of sin can be healed. Anyway, I am sure a great deal more might be done in our Homes for the saving of the people than is done at present.