



The
William Booth
Collection

THE GENERAL'S LETTERS

THE WAR SPIRIT.

Front the "War Cry," February 14th, 1885.

MY DEAR COMRADES,

What a remarkable example is being set before our Army in connection with the history of this country! There it is, written in big letters in every newspaper, more or less throughout the civilized world; so that indeed he who runs may read it.

I mean the war business which is raging in the Soudan, where bloody battles are being fought, all manner of hardships are being endured, and all manner of sacrifices are being made. Nay, not only is this war raging, for surely it is being waged at fever beat in the minds and hearts of the people in the City of London, and in all the principal cities and towns and villages of this land – notwithstanding its loud and often repeated boast that it is under the dominion and government of the Prince of Peace.

But it is the Prince of War that rules just now – with a vengeance. For in all the clubs and public-houses and parks and village greens, and at firesides, and even in churches and chapels, men talk and pray about the strife. Nay, it may be said that in the hearts of multitudes of men cannon are being fired and rifles shouldered, and that their very thoughts and wishes breathe threatenings and slaughter.

"Khartoum is fallen!" "Is Gordon dead or alive?" "If dead, let him be avenged!" "If alive, let him be rescued!" These are the questions and answers that come and go unbidden to men's lips. "Why does not the army march to Khartoum – march on Metammeh – march on Berber – march everywhere?" Why? Something must be done – quick – that will strike terror into the enemy. Mighty issues are at stake, and so the authority goes out to those in command to do the work thoroughly, no matter what it costs or what suffering it inflicts. "Push the war!" "Send out men!" "Never mind the money!" "Retreat is impossible; we are in for victory." Now we say that in this mode of waging war the children of this world are wiser, and more thorough-going, and, it seems to us, more self-sacrificing than the professed children of light. No wonder that they are



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more successful in their killing wars. And while avoiding the spirit of earthly war and keeping our skirts clear of blood, can we not learn from their example?

First, we must have more skill. How these recent battles have revealed the high state of perfection to which the science of war has been raised!

1. We must have more skill.

War is a science, and by dint of long and careful study it has been almost raised to perfection. The unskilled Arabs, with their primitive spears, were no match for the British soldiers with their rifles and rockets and shells, and all the latest inventions in weapons of slaughter. And although in bravery and self-sacrifice these sons of Ishmael were equal to any men who ever fought, they were not able to come within thirty yards of the British squares.

Now, my comrades, we must have more skill. Oh, what folly to talk against new measures. Let us have new and more ingenious inventions of every kind. Soldiers, rack your brains. Bring forth plans new as well as old – specially new. Not to keep those with or rather for whom we fight off us, but how to bring them near. How to get at them. To bring them down to the Saviour's feet, conquered by love and won for the King.

2. We must have more system.

Plenty of mistakes and blunders there doubtless will be in this campaign; mistakes with ships and boats and ammunition and weapons and food – and I know not what; mistakes in telegrams and letters and messages and everything else. Still it must be a wonderful display of system to be able to equip and send forth those thousands of men right into the heart of that African desert, and a still more wonderful thing it must be to supply them with food and water, and all the necessities of war when they are there. One word explains the whole business, and that word is SYSTEM.



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My comrades, we must have more of this science. It means finding out how to do things in the best way, and then keeping on doing them. Let us all join hands at this. It means that somebody gives the order how things are to be done, and then everybody concerned goes quietly to work to obey. Soldiers, mark that! Do you want to see the war waged with greater vigour and rushed forward to mightier results? Bear this in mind: every man to his post, and let every man do his duty when he is there.

3. *We must learn better to sacrifice and to endure.*

There have been some deserters, perhaps; some who fled at the sight of the enemy, or who fell out of the march in the heat of the sun when not compelled to do so; or there may have been some one who has gone over to the foe. But we have not heard of such cowardice or treachery. These men have held on to their business. They have been true to their oath, perilous and difficult business as it has been. England has been ringing with the descriptions of that battle which these soldiers fought after two days desert marching and an all but sleepless night – and fought to win. How officers, wounded at the commencement, fought on to the end, refusing to leave their comrades while they could strike a blow; and how men courted death in their desperate effort to secure victory.

My comrades, such heroic sacrificing efforts in such a cause cover me with shame when I think of the cold, weak, mean spirit in which this Divine War of ours is carried on. We are not behind other sections of the Great Army of God. We are abreast of them. But that is not saying very much, and I cannot allow that we should measure ourselves by ourselves. Where are we for daring and self-sacrifice alongside these men who so freely spilt their blood on those desert sands, who refused to be beaten, and who are still waiting to obey commands which may carry them on to certain death?

We must go again to the Altar. God shall have Soldiers who will *outstrip* in bravery and endurance and sacrifice in this War of life all who fight in any other cause and under any other flag.



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4. *We must have more enthusiasm.*

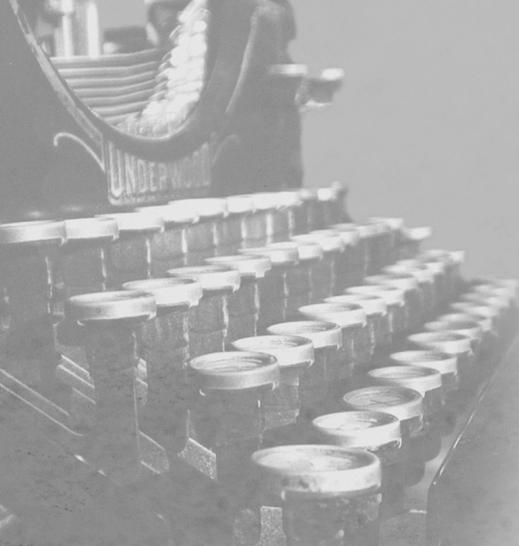
Whatever was the feeling of this country a few days ago towards this war, to-day it is one of enthusiastic determination to carry it on to victory. The command has gone forth that the general on the banks of the Nile is to secure this result, and the country will give him all the men and money and materials he needs in order to gain this end.

That is the style. When will it come to this with the Salvation Army? How we poor warriors – those of us who are willing to fight – HAVE TO STAY OUR HAND FROM THE BATTLE TO BEG THE BREAD OF THOSE WHO ARE LAYING DOWN THEIR LIVES IN THE WAR. There must be better days for us. There must be a time when, instead of everlasting chiding and condemning the little earnestness there is in the hearts of those who stand in the front rank, we shall be pushed forward with the cheers and entreaties of those in the rear; and the ringing command will be sounded out on our ears, "Onward! All needed supplies shall be forthcoming. Order all that you need. Trouble yourselves only with the best measures needed to carry you on to victory!"

5. *This will mean success.*

Whatever comes between, ultimate victory will be with the British colours – such victory as comes out of the bloody business of human war. Very unsatisfactory and unremunerative as a rule. But such measures as I have noticed will mean that glorious success to our banners which means always blessing without sorrow or tears.

Hold on, my comrades! Nay, take fresh hold. Let us review the reasons for our conflict. We fight not for one man, not for one garrison. We fight for the deliverance of a *whole world*. The destiny of millions, nay, I verily believe of hundreds of millions, is hanging in the balance – depending to an awful extent on the enthusiastic, skillful, and self-sacrificing conduct, and maintenance of this war.



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Oh, let us throw ourselves back upon our God. Let us imitate Him. Let us go back to the example of our Great Commander-in-Chief. Let us consider how and for what He fought, and follow Him. You know, my comrades, whither that following will lead you. You sing about it – *Will you follow Him?* God help you!

Yours for the thick of the fight,

WILLIAM BOOTH.