



The
William Booth
Collection

THE GENERAL'S LETTERS

CHEERING UP PEOPLE.

From the "War Cry," April 11th, 1885.

MY DEAR COMRADES,

I have been thinking for the last few days that among other things the world wants is an increased supply of good, hearty, sensible, cheer-up people, who will go about picking up and comforting such as have gone down before their enemies. The world is full of people who have begun the fight – begun to work – begun to save themselves, or somebody else. They have done very well for a season; then they have grown weary in well-doing, and relapsed into a do-as-well-as-you-can condition, hoping for better days.

They have failed. They have failed because they gave up. And they gave up because they were discouraged. They want encouraging to try again; they want fresh heart being put into them, helping on to their feet, sponging down and setting off again in the fight.

Let us go to sinners. Where are the men and women going down the steep incline to Hell who have not at times in their history woke up to make a desperate struggle to stop? Have they not seemed to succeed for a season, and then – because men, or devils, or circumstances have hindered – lost heart and given up. Let us go to them. We can reckon that the Spirit of God is still striving. There is a spark: of fire smoldering somewhere. Let us find it out, fan it to a flame. Draw them. Show them the advantages of a holy life. Find out some way of helping them in their health or their circumstances. Bless the children – in short, encourage them.

Go to the saints. Is there any child of God living who has not at some particular time and in some particular direction challenged the devil, and gone in for some higher form of Holiness, or some particular work of usefulness? Have they not fought right bravely at the start? The angels in heaven and the Soldiers on the earth have welcomed them as allies. And they meant to persevere; but lions came in the way. The sinners hated them. The saints misrepresented them. Business was interfered with. The wife or the children did not approve. They did not get on, or something, to their satisfaction. They struggled for awhile and then they lost heart, took



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their hands from the Gospel plough, and settled down. But they are there. Deep in their hearts are the memories of these past hopes.

Find out these people. Find out what they were. Get them to make another start. Offer to help them. Show in what way they are gifted for the work of saving men. Speak of its advantages. Show what they might have been if they had only gone on step by step, and you will allure them to renew the race.

Go to your own Officers. It is true some do not need any encouragement. People differ. While some are always writing bitter things against themselves and their work and all they have to do with, others think quite as highly of themselves as they ought to think, perhaps a little more. These latter will not need you; so pass on to the desponding class. Go to those whom the devil almost daily tries to persuade that they have missed their calling, are out of their place; that they have not the necessary abilities, are not qualified for the work. That they are not gifted for singing or speaking, or praying or writing, or commanding, or anything else. Go to these. Sit down by them. Carry them the tidings of any cases in which you know God has used them. Show them wherein you think they excel, or might do. Tell them of others who have held on and improved themselves and reached positions of great usefulness and power. Do not be afraid of being too kindly. Go out of your way. Shake them by the hand. Look out for particular circumstances of discouragement, and specially meet and cheer them there.

Go to the Soldiers. Find out the poorest and most unfriended, whose doorways are seldom darkened by visitors. Interest yourself in their trials and difficulties, whether spiritual or temporal, and help and cheer them up in these special particulars. Let them tell you their trouble. It is astonishing how much better they will feel when somebody has listened to the description of the special sorrows that they have to endure.

Find out those who always march in the rear and sit at the back, and bring them up to the front. Then, again, those who are timid and never get a chance to speak. Call them up, and make a hearing for them. Those who never sing a song; let them have a try with their solo, and if they



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break down or are pooh-poohed, find out some good point in what they have done, if there is one; encourage them with it, and make them promise to try again.

Assure everybody that the road to excellence and success is open before them; that they have only to practise – to practise plenty, to practise often, to practise with all their hearts – in order to become perfect.

But mind, there must be no encouragement in sin, no cheering up people in wrong doing, no comforting or amusing, or whitewashing of people while they are in any shape or form holding on to unrighteousness. No truce with evil. War to the knife with all that is worldly and devilish. In this respect show no mercy; cursed is he that keepeth back his sword from blood.

Again, there must be no flattery, no stroking down or praising people simply to please them or gain their favour. This means cursing rather than blessing; is the way down, and not up; for a proud, or conceited, or stuck-up disposition ever surely goes before a fall.

No, my comrades, you must not daub with untampered mortar, crying "Peace! peace!" while there is no peace – no encouragement in sin. Neither must you flatter to remove the heaviest burden.

But I think all that is lawful and likely to stir up and stimulate poor, sad, desponding human nature to raise herself up to seek and find purity and everlasting joy and gladness in the arms of her Maker should be done.

Cultivate the gift, my comrades. Get your hearts filled with the sunshine of Divine love, and your mouths with singing, and then go about leading others to that ocean of blessedness that is waiting for all.

Yours in the fight, for the gladness of the world,

WILLIAM BOOTH.
April 7th, 1885.