



The
William Booth
Collection

THE GENERAL'S LETTERS

SACRIFICE FOR WAR

From the "War Cry," April 25th, 1885

MY DEAR COMRADES,

Peace or war, at the date of this letter still hangs in the balance. This is our fast-day. Thousands today will abstain from their ordinary food, and all over the land there will be much earnest wrestling with God on the subject. Men may say, Who are we that God should interfere with the affairs of great nations at the request of such nobodies? There may be something in this; we are only an insignificant people, very few and feeble in the estimation of men, but the Master has given us permission to use His name, and we are availing ourselves of this privilege, and asking the Father to prevent this horrible business for the sake of Jesus Christ.

Meantime, my comrades, while we seek to prevent this human conflict, we ought, I am increasingly certain, to use every means in our power to further and intensify our own Salvation War.

We go slowly. The little progress made in the earth by all the combined forces of God is doleful in the extreme. It covers me with shame. Eighteen hundred years has this Christian war lasted, and what has been accomplished? I have not courage to total the results.

Is it any wonder? Would any of the great military generals of the nations be surprised at the small results if they examined the modes of operation pursued. If General Grant had been sent to subdue the Southern rebels in America, or if General Wolseley had been commissioned to conquer the Soudanese with similar supplies of men and money and plans of action, what would have happened? They would have been simply laughed at, and returned covered with ignominy, if they had ever returned at all.

But such men would never have undertaken such enterprises on such conditions; they know their business too well. When will the Christian generals learn their work? When will those who make a loud profession of their desire that Christ should have the world for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession, recognise the patent fact that those



The
William Booth
Collection

THE GENERAL'S LETTERS

who POSSESS IT WILL NOT GIVE IT UP WITHOUT A STRUGGLE? But that when a struggle in any way proportionate to the importance of the interests involved is made, it will be *successful*.

What gigantic preparations for this possible war are being made in both countries. They sadden me in the extreme. What immense sacrifices are contemplated, and what herculean efforts are intended! Oh, that we could stir up a similar spirit in favour of our Salvation campaign, the interests of which, by common admission, far outweigh in importance any that can possibly be involved in the contest between these two nations. All who believe the first principles of the Bible must and will admit that the conquest of India by Russia, or of Russia by England, are trifling events in their bearing on the sum of human happiness compared to the conquest of India or of Russia by Jesus Christ. Does any one object, and cry out, "Oh, monstrous! think of India under Russian rule!" I answer, "Oh, Hallelujah! think of the 250 millions in India really and truly under the rule of the Son of God!"

And yet how helpless we are. Who can raise any spirit of enthusiasm, of self sacrifice, of devotion, of energy, in any Christian community for the conquest of India, or of any other part of this blood-bought world, that bears any comparison to that which is burning in the breasts of multitudes with respect to this threatened war!

Why cannot we make men willing to suffer and sacrifice, and do and dare for God and the Salvation of the world, as they are made willing to do, all as it were in a moment, about this quarrel? This is my daily perplexed inquiry.

See what willingness there is to expend money. No estimates appal them. War always has been expensive. The last war between these two very nations is reported as costing us seventy millions of money; in the great American contest it has been calculated that it cost £3,000 to kill each of the 280,000 poor fellows who perished in that fearful struggle. Some say if this war goes on it will not be ended for less than two hundred millions. But nobody seems particularly concerned. Those who will have to pay it say it will be serious, but if it has to be, it must be. And then when we come along and ask for a little money to keep the armies of Jesus Christ in the field, or to increase their numbers, we are almost looked upon as pickpockets.



The
William Booth
Collection

THE GENERAL'S LETTERS

I can see at the present moment a plan which would in some twelve or eighteen months increase our power to save in this mighty London at least threefold, but to carry it out would involve a few thousands of pounds; but where to get this sum I have no idea. Men, professing Christian men, will talk, read, and sermonize about charity, but do nothing, or next to nothing. They would be shocked, and perhaps knock you down, or sue you for libel, if you suggested that they were atheists, and did not believe in heaven and hell, and the judgment day; but only ask them to prove their faith by their works, and they come to a dead stop and pass by on the other side.

How willing men are to expend life in these earthly contests. What eagerness there is to face the possibility of death. Officers are exultant in the prospect. It is said that they, more than any other classes of the community, clamour for the war. The recruiting offices are besieged, and that not by the riffraff of society, but by quite decent, well-to-do men. The knowledge that three-quarters of a million men perished in the last war in which England and Russia were engaged does not affright them, anyway it does not prevent them wanting to rush into the fight. It is said that India may see upon her sunny plains a million of men, furnished by two professing Christian nations, engaged in the deadly war.

Oh, my God! what a contrast does the possibility of this tremendous effort bear to the miserably tiny efforts made by the friends of the King of kings to subdue that same land to Him! I have heard that one of the largest missionary societies could not find one hundred men last year to replenish their various stations all through the heathen world, although they tried most earnestly. We are not in such extremity as that, my comrades. Fifty have gone, or are on the eve of embarkation, this year; but what is that number among the vast nations of the earth?

Men and women prefer to stay at home in ease and luxury, and yet they stick to it, while their selfishness is apparent to everybody, and most of all to themselves, that they are following Jesus Christ.

Ask the poor to go, and they have got somebody to maintain; ask the educated, and they prefer fortune and respectability; and so they go to their professions, and trades, and banks, and



The
William Booth
Collection

THE GENERAL'S LETTERS

clerkships, or anything else that promises them ease and money. But, mark you, they are Christians, good Christians, all the time – but Christians who are bound, for some most excellent reasons, to take care of their own interests. Oh, what a farce must all this appear to angels and devils! what does it appear, O Jesus, to Thee?

What willingness there is to subordinate all other interests to this war!

Talk about trade? Yes, it will suffer. The shipping interests? Yes, dreadful. It may mean the transfer of our ocean-carrying trade to the ships of other nations, never to come back. Dear bread? Yes, flour has already risen in price. But no great protest comes. No mass meetings. Not a single fear expressed. And perhaps there ought not to be. Looked at from the standpoint of maintaining the honour and credit of this great nation, there ought not to be the winking of an eye. These things should be freely offered up. Perhaps so! But how is it that with multitudes who will argue thus any sacrifice of trade, or profit, or comfort required from them in order to push forward our War of Salvation, is counted too burdensome to make?

My comrades, let us at least be consistent. We must review our position, and re-examine ourselves. Are we doing our uttermost? Or are we talking about great efforts and sacrifices where there is nothing done that can be counted irksome, and nothing contributed that can be considered a sacrifice? It is very possible for us to be looking to outsiders for what we can do ourselves. The next new departure of The Army may be in this direction. We must be ready anyway for anything likely to help on our War, and the old, old saying may receive a new and startling verification, "God helps them that help themselves."

Your General, willing to learn and to follow,

WILLIAM BOOTH.
April 21st, 1885.