



The
William Booth
Collection

THE GENERAL'S LETTERS

THE ONE SALVATION ARMY III

From the "War Cry," Feb. 7th, 1885.

MY DEAR COMRADES,

We have seen that union is far better than division.

"Two are better far than one,
For counsel or for fight."

This will be admitted, but the two or more must be united and stand or fall together. We feel the value of unity by instinct – it requires no arguments. We are sure of it without any commandment. It prevails wherever God has His own way. He has ever aimed at it on earth; He succeeded in maintaining it in Heaven. They are all of one heart and one mind there; it must be so here. "Thy will be done on earth, as it is done in Heaven," has been our prayer from childhood.

"Difficulties!" do you say? Yes, there are difficulties in the way. It is so in this world with the accomplishment of everything that is valuable. There are difficulties in the way of saving men – making them real saints and fighting Soldiers. And there will be difficulties in the way of keeping them united; but the work of Salvation Soldiers with difficulties is to face and conquer them.

There is a growing spirit around us in favour of no government at all – either in the home, or the Church, or the State – that would let every man do what appears right in his own eyes. All masters and no servants is the motto. Nihilism spreads in all grades of society. The children don't want any authority; the workpeople don't want any authority; sinners don't want any authority; saints don't want any authority; "There ought to be no submitting of one Corps to another," says one. A step further and there will be no submission of one man to another, and you will have with individual independence weakness confusion, disorder, and destruction.



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But we are not for destruction. We are for restoration – the restoration of man to God. To accomplish this a force is required – a stupendous force – the more stupendous the better. It must be a force bound with the closest earthly and the strongest heavenly bonds; one doctrine, one spirit, one government, one end all prostrated in obedience to the Divine Head – the God and Father of us all. This means submission. This means obedience.

We have spoken of difficulties. What are the real difficulties that lie in the way of the realization of this ONE Army covering the earth and doing its share at least in the conquest of it for its rightful King? The main difficulties of the past, and, if we mistake not, the chief difficulties of the future, will be just those that are found in the selfishness and ambition of those who are brought into prominence and power. They rebel against the head in the name of liberty, professing great concern for the freedom and independence of their comrades, but, after all it is their own ambition they seek to gratify; they want to be head themselves. They want to reign, and to reach position or prominence they thank it a small evil to make divisions which they know must necessarily lead to the weakening of God's forces and the destruction of weak and ignorant souls.

My comrades, avoid these strife-makers who for the gratification of little ambitions, or the satisfaction of petty spite, or the covering of their own misdoings, would divide and scatter the Soldiers of the Cross and stop the onward course to victory.

Be loyal to God. Be loyal to His truth. Be loyal of your own consciences, and be loyal to the highest interests of the poor world in which you live. And you all doubtless know that I consider you will do this most effectually by being loyal to the One Salvation Army. This is not a very hard task. Still, to help you to carry you out let me give you a hint or two:

Look at it fairly. Get to understand The Army; the object at which it aims; the doctrines it teaches; the Government by which it is managed. Inquire. Read. "All About The Salvation Army" will give any man a pretty correct Idea concerning it. "The Doctrines and Discipline of The Salvation Army" will give you further knowledge.



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Ask God to teach you. The Holy Ghost was promised for the express purpose of explaining His methods of saving men and to help you to carry them out. Pray about it. Appeal to God as to the uprightness of your intentions. Ask Him for heavenly light, and then trust Him for the wisdom that comes from above, which is profitable to direct you. Believe that He gives it, and from that day onward never doubt but that He has led your mind to a decision in accordance with His own will.

If after this consideration and prayer you are convinced that The Army is of God and for the Salvation of men, embrace it with all your heart. Take its vows upon you, and under its colours declare before God and men your intention to fight faithfully to the end. You have no choice. You are bound to ally yourself with the people whom you believe to be nearest akin to God; whose lives reflect most faithfully the life of Jesus Christ, and whose work is the nearest to the pattern left behind Him.

You have no alternative. If this track comes the nearest to the one trodden by your Divine Master, you must walk in it. Whether you can be big or little in it – an officer or a private – a bishop or a beadle – has little or nothing to do with the question. Neither is it for you to decide whether you ought to unite yourself with it or refrain from doing so because of any pleasant or painful bearing it may have upon your circumstances. Whether in it you will be abased or exalted, blessed or cursed, comforted or killed, is quite beside the question. The point for you to decide is whether this is the way in which you can do most for your Divine Master and the Salvation of men. If you have settled in your own mind that The Salvation Army is this method, then your next very plain duty is to embrace it with all your heart, and to refrain to do so for any considerations of your own ease or honour or gain would be simple selfishness. There may be some things about it that you would have otherwise, that you could at times wish altered; but if, on the whole, it is to you God's plan, or the nearest to God's plan of any other plan, then you must give yourself to it, and that for all time. If you never intend to change, say so. You don't want to change. You don't want to be one thing one day and another tomorrow. Say so to yourself. Say so to those about you, and kneel down and say so to God.



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Having thus intelligently decided; having used your own judgment and obtained and followed the guidance of God, stand to your vows. Let nothing turn you on one side. You will not be very likely to question the rightness of your choice should prosperity attend you and make your pathway one of flowers and music. But prosperity would be no greater proof that you are right than would adversity. Perhaps not so much so, because the Master assured His followers of tribulation, and informed them that the blessing of men would not be such a sign of His favour as their hatred and cursing.

Your faith is sure to be tried. God Himself will see to this – for your good. And the devil will see to this – for your ill. A loyal heart is a prize worthy of his aim, and he will bid high to win it. Be not deceived by him. He may come to you transformed as an angel of light, offering ease and luxury, and gain and power, as the price of disloyalty, and then try to make you believe that his false leadings come from the very Spirit of God. Beware! If the voice of God tells you a path is right today, it cannot tell you tomorrow that the same path is wrong. If in His smile and strength today He enables you to build up a movement which you know to be of God, He will not tomorrow bid you attempt to overthrow it.

But, my comrades, you must beware of the devices of the devil. Resist him, and he will flee from you.

You have made your choice. God smiles upon you. Go forward. You will have a number of opportunities of proving the genuineness of your vows and the sincerity and uprightness of your own heart. You can prove it to everybody about you. You can prove it to your comrades. You can prove it to God.

Your General relies upon you, and by God's grace and in His power we will together lay the foundations of this Army so deep and strong on that One Rock, that the gates of hell shall never prevail against it. Yours for the Salvation of the World,

WILLIAM BOOTH.