



The
William Booth
Collection

THE GENERAL'S LETTERS

NEW YEAR'S ADVICE.

From the "War Cry," January 3rd, 1885.

MY DEAR COMRADES,

When this page reaches you, you will be on the threshold of the New Year. New things interest us. They have done so from our cradle; they will do so to the end of the chapter of life. What pleasure we derived in childhood from a new toy, a new game, or a new sweetmeat! and since then have we not found pleasure in a new house, a new friend, a new occupation, or a new country? This is according to a law of our nature. Change suits and gratifies us. And as it has charmed us in this life so there can be little doubt that it will continue to do so through the rolling ages of the glorious future. New experiences and events will constitute some of the unfailing sources of pleasure there. We shall doubtless be continually seeing new beings, singing new songs, visiting new worlds, engaging in new adventures, experiencing new raptures, and having new revelations, not only of the character, wisdom, and works of God, but of His affection for us. Oh, what a charming, what a glorious place will the NEW Jerusalem be!

My comrades, we must be ready for the New Heavens and the New Earth – new, indeed, to you and me because therein will dwell righteousness.

Do you ask me why new things charm us? I answer Doubtless because they are new – strange, fresh – something different from the past. A new thing is wanted and prized because it produces a sensation of pleasure – that is, supposing it is a pleasing thing; and another reason why a new thing is valued is because it is supposed to bring with it some new conditions of happiness, some new opportunities for obtaining the things on which the heart is set.

A vain woman finds pleasure in thinking of a new dress because she thinks it will bring her admiration. A proud man finds pleasure in getting into a big house because he thinks his neighbours will think more highly of him. A money-making merchant thinks with pleasure of opening a new bank or launching a new ship because he thinks thereby he shall add to his wealth: and I hope all we Salvationists are looking forward to, and praying for, the New Year, because it promises to afford us new opportunities of getting more of the gifts of the Holy Spirit



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in our own souls and spreading Salvation more effectively, pulling more sinners out of the fire and advancing more extensively the Kingdom of God.

You will sometimes hear people say they wish they could live their lives over again. Perhaps some of you will wish you could live over again the year that is past. You say you have learnt so much and felt so much, and you could make it so much a holier and more useful year. This is impossible. Since that man wrote that book he sees his mistakes and blunders and the unsound statements which it contains, and wishes he could have it to write again. That is impossible. The book has gone to the ends of the earth; it is being read, and is producing results for good or evil in all directions. Oh, how he wishes he could call it in and rewrite it! He would make such alterations that, though in appearance still the same, it would be practically a new book. But while this is impossible, here is the paper and the pen and ink. Let him write another.

My brother, you wrote a volume of 366 pages in 1884. There was doubtless in it much that was good and sound and useful, that you will not object to read again with your death-glazing eye, or to see in the circulating libraries of Heaven. But there is doubtless many a paragraph and many a page marred and spoiled with mistakes and unfaithfulness and unbelief and perhaps idleness, which you are very much ashamed of now.

Would you like to have the volume back to correct and amend? Impossible. It is in circulation. The story of your life is in some form or other in the everlasting records. But if you cannot have the volume back to rewrite, you can have its pages sprinkled with the precious Blood of Christ, so that all its sinful records and torturing memories shall be blotted out for ever – in your own memory, in the memory of God and all the holy angels. The volume itself is unalterable – stereotyped – gone from your hands and power for ever.

Thank God, however, here are the fair, white pages of 1885! They have not a stain on them. Fill them up, hour by hour and day by day; with an unblemished story of a holy, self-sacrificing New Testament kind of life. Make another chapter to the Acts of the Apostles, by being an apostle yourself.



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But, coming back, don't we remember that all the advantages of the new things that we have had in the past have depended upon the uses we have made of them? The new toy – the new house – the new friend – the now situation very soon lost all the charm that novelty brought them with, any permanent advantage we derived depending almost entirely on the condition of heart with which we came to regard them. A good man will be happy in any house; a bad man will be miserable if he gets into a new house every week. Just so, my comrade, with the New Year. Whether it shall be better or worse depends on the state of heart in which you go through it. If it is better than the past, it will be because you make it so. You must match yourself to the New Year.

A New Year wants a new self, and it will be like the Old – the same over again – unless you are new. The world outside you – here and hereafter – can only make you happy in proportion as the world inside you is a happy one.

1. *You must have a new purpose*; that is a renewed one – the same as before (for I am talking now to Soldiers who have already made up their minds to live holy lives, and spend all their strength for the Salvation of men); but now we want a more desperate, whole-souled determination to live out, before ourselves and before God and before everybody about us, the boasted consecration of this religion. No more time-serving! No more living to please men! No more of even the very appearance of trying to serve God and mammon! Inward and outward Holiness of life is what we must and will have.

Souls! souls! souls! every day, everywhere – in season and out of season, must be our motto. Onward! reckless of consequences in the following of Christ.

2. *There must be a new industry*. Oh the lost opportunities – the unused, unimproved privileges – the unemployed hours – the wasted, more than wasted days of the past years! Oh, what hosts of sinners are damned by sheer idleness! They are too lazy to save themselves. They will not be at the trouble to pick up the gold and diamonds and coronets of Heaven that lie at their feet. They will not turn over the pages and read the documents and accept the free gifts and sign their names to the deeds of the Hallelujah estates that are offered them in the Heavenly



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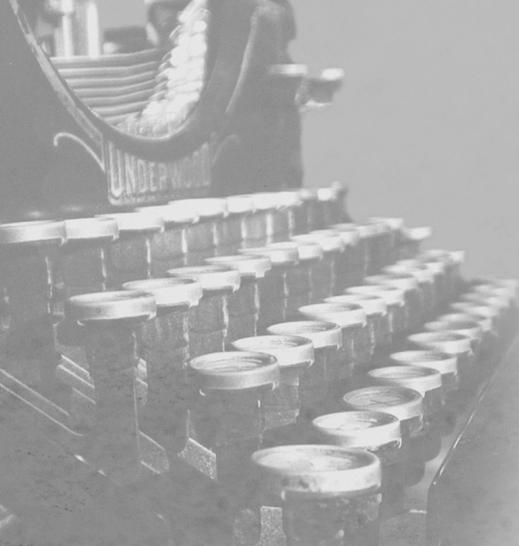
THE GENERAL'S LETTERS

Canaan. They lie down and sleep, too lazy to drink of the River of Life that flows past their feet, and so perish. They are left outside the gates of gold because they are too lazy to walk in.

But if sinners perish through their own laziness, how many multitudes perish through the laziness of saints! Oh, this horrid attempt to delegate our responsibilities with regard to perishing men and women to others – to the Minister, to the Captain, to the Sergeants – to anybody – to excuse this laziness! How people will say: "Other people don't do it," "I never did it before" and such like, to excuse their neglect of plain duty! Away with all this sort of thing for ever! None of this in 1885! Begin soul-saving work and stick to it. Be a Salvation Plod.

3. *You must have a new energy.* What is the reproach of religion? That there is no heart in it. The infidels say so; the politicians say so; business men say so; theatrical people say so. In fact, everybody knows that there is enthusiasm in politics, enthusiasm in business, enthusiasm in pleasure, enthusiasm in war, and in everything else except that which calls more loudly for it than them all – the following of the Crucified to the CONQUEST OF THE WORLD.

4. *We must have a new trust – a new confidence.* What a wonderful encouragement the experience of 1884 ought to be to faith in 1885! With all its crowding recollections, surely you are going to begin and go through 1885 believing your way through all the darkness and difficulties and devils that can come up against you. In 1885 be a believer in the dark! Anybody can believe when they feel. In 1885, be a believer when you don't feel. Anybody can believe when the enemy runs and the music plays and the results are satisfactory. In 1885 be a believer when the storm rages and the Skeletons howl and the world mocks and the newspapers sneer – then stand up and tell God and man you are going to stand up, if you have to do it alone; that you are going to keep on standing up; that you are determined to make 1885 memorable and glorious in the annals of the Salvation story. That as it is not by might nor by power, but by the Holy Ghost, and by the Holy Ghost through obedience and believing, you are going to be an obedient and believing soul. That, poor and simple and ignorant and unknown as you may be, remembering that He is no respecter of persons, you will be a medium through which He can work and a channel down which He can pour floods of Salvation on the wilderness about you.



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Believe me, yours in the War,

WILLIAM BOOTH.