



The
William Booth
Collection

THE GENERAL'S LETTERS

THE POSSIBILITY OF WAR WITH RUSSIA

From the "War Cry," April 18th, 1885.

MY DEAR COMRADES,

My heart is sad beyond measure. I cannot finish the letter which I had well-nigh completed. I feel, in spite of myself, I must say something, although only a few words, on the topic that is uppermost in my mind: and that is this terrible possibility of a dreadful war between Great Britain and Russia.

Everybody is talking about it. The newspapers are full of it. It seems to be taken for granted that it must be. People only deplore or condemn it in a milk-and-water sort of way. They say it must come sooner or later, and therefore we had better have it now. It is a necessity.

This, to me, sounds awful. It makes my flesh creep. Do they know what they say? Can they have rightly guessed the awful calamity such a contest must prove?

Two of the mightiest nations on the earth to be rushing at each other in deadly hatred, and for months, perhaps for years, exerting all their tremendous strength in doing each other all the damage possible.

It would mean the shedding of oceans of blood. Tens of thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands, directly or indirectly, being slaughtered on the battlefield, or perishing by disease or famine.

It would mean the making of thousands of heart-broken, prospect-blighted widows and orphans, many of whom would die of their misery, while the sorrows of multitudes more would stretch out to generations yet unborn.

It would mean the waste of millions of money, involving multitudes in hunger, poverty, and shame.



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It would mean the letting loose in the hearts of millions of men, many of them only half-civilized, the vilest passions of human nature. Oh, what vice, what blasphemies, what cursing, what devilries of every kind accompany and follow in the train of war!

Such a war would mean the hindering of the work of Salvation in the most calamitous manner. Now we find the chief obstacle to our work is the preoccupation of the people. Men's minds are full of business or pleasure, or of the anxieties of life, big and little. But here will be another topic that will absorb the thoughts and engross their feelings. A topic most unfavourable to Salvation. A theme which will not only fill up and engage the attention of the unsaved, but the very nature of which will be opposed to the very essence of real religion.

What is the duty of Salvationists at such a crisis? I cannot answer such a question fully now, but I can give a guiding word. One thing is plain – EVERY TRUE SOLDIER OF THE SALVATION ARMY SHOULD CRY NIGHT AND DAY TO GOD TO AVERT SO DREADFUL A CALAMITY. Let him shut his ears to all the worldly, unscriptural, unchristian talk about war being a necessity. It cannot be a necessity before God that tens of thousands of men should be launched into eternity with all manner of revengeful passionate feelings in their souls, and too often, according to the testimony of those who know all about it, with dreadful blasphemies on their lips. Whatever may be the right method of settling human disputes and preventing earthly calamities, this cannot be the Divine plan. *This cannot be the will of God.*

Anyway, my comrades, let us cry to God to interfere on behalf of these nations. We can talk the matter over another time. This is the TIME TO PRAY.

I am asking you all, and all who read this number of the Cry, to set apart the Monday following the date of this paper as a day of humiliation, fasting, and prayer to beseech God of His great mercy to spare the world this great calamity.

Join me, my comrades; nay, let us present our intercessions day by day and hour by hour. On this subject we will all pray without ceasing. Believe me, your affectionate General,

WILLIAM BOOTH.