



The
William Booth
Collection

THE GENERAL'S LETTERS

OFFICERS WANTED.

From the "War Cry," December 6th, 1884

DEAR COMRADES,

I finished up my last letter with a wondering inquiry as to whence the enormous supply of Officers demanded by the Army was to come, and found some encouragement, you will remember, in the consideration that a host of young people were being trained up by Salvation mothers and fathers in different parts of the world to come boldly forward and bear their burdens in the coming campaigns.

But it has occurred to me that this is rather a chilly consolation, seeing that the coming of this host to the rescue is in the distance. What is to be done in the present generation? Before the rising one is reared, and sanctified, and trained, this generation will largely have passed off the stage, and gone to its reward. Cannot something definite and desperate be done to meet the definite and desperate demands of the moment?

We must have Officers. The people are perishing. We want men and women filled with this idea, and filled with the idea of the Grand Remedy that is provided, and filled with the resistless power of the Holy Ghost, who will go and force these same ideas upon the world about them.

Surely there should not be any difficulty in finding a multitude of such.

God speed the rising race! Let everyone help God to speed it! Mothers and Fathers, Captains and Lieutenants, Sergeants and soldiers, help the little ones! Put them on the altar. Spend time and money and strength in teaching and training them. Nurse them for God. Fill them with the War Spirit. When they fall, pick them up again. When they are discouraged, cheer their little hearts. Get them saved. Get them into uniform. Write their names on the roll. When they are carried away by their childish impulses from the straight paths of truth and righteousness, fetch them back again; get them washed and forgiven, and encourage them for another start. March them in the processions. Possess their minds with the truth. Fill their mouths with your songs.



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Teach them your music, and hurry them on in every possible way to get ready for the fight.

We cannot wait for the dear children, however. That are the reserves; they will come in by-and-by. We want Officers ready grown. Before they come into the fields white already to the harvest, a good portion of the crop must be reaped. We want more reapers. Where can we find them?

But this wonderment is nothing new. When we opened Barracks after Barracks eighteen months ago, people asked me where I should get my preachers from. I replied "From the tap-rooms."

That this answer was a correct one, The Salvation Army itself is an unanswerable affirmation. Alas! alas! these and kindred institutions seem still to form inexhaustible sources of supply of the same sort of people – close to us, at our doors. There they are; young men and young women, exactly the kind we want – the right age, the right height, the right strength, with just such gifts, and go, and enterprise, and daring we need. They can sing and march and pray just after the fashion we need. All that is wanting is that they shall have another spirit in them – a right spirit, a good spirit - the spirit of Holiness, the spirit of love, the spirit of Christ; that, instead of being filled with the devil, they should be filled with God. Then they will talk the right talk, sing the right songs, march in the right direction. Instead of living for themselves, they will live for others. Instead of taking men by their influence, gifts and songs, and enthusiasm down to Hell, they will, by their influence, gifts, songs, and enthusiasm take them with them up to Heaven.

Now, my comrades, here is the plan. You see what I want. You see what the world needs. You see what the Army requires. Here is the demand, and there is the supply. A man in a country, the woods of which abounded with game, and the rivers of which were filled with fish – to all of which he was welcome if he only had the nous and the ability to capture them – would have little excuse for starving, and little pity for being in want. Let him take his gun and go to the woods, and his lines and go to the river; and just so, my comrades, there are the streets and the alleys and the lanes and the houses swarming with exactly the sort of men and women we want.



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Take your gun, and make aim and –fire!

Take your lines, bait your hooks, and catch your fish!

Soldiers, here is a new inducement to you.

Go to the crowd of sinners, or spot them individually – not merely to save their souls from sin and Hell (though that is a noble stimulant), but because out of them you may make Lieutenants, and Captains, and Majors, and Generals, who shall lead our conquering hosts to win thousands who have never yet seen our Flag.

My comrades, you must consider this. But I fancy I hear some Soldiers saying, "Need we wait even so long as this?" It must necessarily take some time before even the men and women who are now fully grown – and so far as flesh and blood and intellect are concerned, are ready for being inspired with that breath of the Almighty which will qualify them to become soul-winners – are properly fitted for the fight. With even these, though saved tomorrow, some time is necessary for testing, experience, and training, ere they go forth.

Are there not some in the ranks that have been passed by? some in the rear who ought to be in the front? some holding back that presentation of themselves to fulfil the consecration vows they have so often uttered?

If any such read this, let them hold back no longer. More about this by-and-by.

Yours for the Salvation of the world,

WILLIAM BOOTH.