



The
William Booth
Collection

THE GENERAL'S NEW YEAR ADDRESS TO OFFICERS

January, 1883

The General then addressed the officers assembled, and said: I want to speak to you this morning as Salvationists. It is impossible for any man to be happy very long as an officer in The Salvation Army, even if he could remain in it at all without being a thorough Salvationist, that is, he must admire, know, and be able to do the business of a Salvationist.

No man will be comfortable for a long time together in any trade or profession unless he is proficient in it. No one, for instance, would be comfortable for long as a shoemaker, unless he knew how to cut, shape, stitch, and sew sufficiently well to make such goods as would satisfy his customers. It would be useless for him to bring his work home on Saturday night only half done, and excuse himself by saying that he had been very busy, and could not find time to complete it, or that, indeed, he had done his best. What his master would say would be that he wanted shoes, and unless he could make shoes he was no use to him. And salvation business with us is much on the same principle. To be happy and comfortable in The Salvation Army, an officer must know how to do his work successfully and be effective, so as to pass muster with his comrades and with the General, nay with God Himself.

How to Get a Happy New Year

I want to help you in this great work. But before I commence this morning, I will from the bottom of my heart wish you all a happy New Year, a wish which of course called forth the heartiest of salvation responses.

On silence being obtained, the General continued: I wished the roughs of Northampton, who tried to break my head on Saturday, a happy New Year the following day, and with great heartiness they shouted back in response their wish that I might have one as well.

Now I have wished you a happy New Year; but if you are to have a new year superior in happiness to those that have gone by, it must be by increased usefulness, and in devotion to God; in short, you must be holier and better, and then there can be no



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question about your being happier. I want to help you in this, and to that end want to give you a little plain counsel.

Now I want to begin and speak to you with respect to your relations towards The Army. I am willing to hope, nay, with regard to the majority here I feel quite sure that you are in The Army from the conviction that you have chosen it because you believe that in it you can best serve God and save the greatest number of souls. If these considerations have determined your choice, and confirmed that choice when made, and fill your hearts at this present moment, I can speak to you then with the greatest freedom. If you have come into our ranks from any considerations of earthly gain, for money, fame, ease, or any selfish ends of any kind, I think you have made a great mistake. Anyhow, if these motives are actuating you today, I am quite sure that nothing that I can say to you, no counsels that I shall give you today, will be of very much service. The motives to which I want to appeal in your breasts will be wanting. Nay, if you have chosen this organization on the same principle that many choose their religious home, that is, as one amongst many, all of which present about the same equal attractions, then much that I say to you will be thrown away; but if you feel towards The Salvation Army as I do myself, then I am quite sure I can talk to your hearts. For myself, I am sure I can say I am here because I believe this organisation is the best adapted to gain the end that Jesus Christ had in view when He died upon the Cross, which He still contemplates, ceaselessly desires, and continuously seeks by His Holy Spirit to accomplish.

If anyone could show me a better plan than the one we have in hand of attaining this end, I would gladly fall in with it tomorrow. If you are in it, I say for the same reason, if the purpose of your lives is to save souls from eternal destruction; if in this respect you are men and women of one heart, then I can talk to you freely; for if you sincerely and with all your hearts seek this, you will not listen to me simply because I have some power or authority over you. You won't say, "I will try and do what you desire, because it will please the General;" but you will say, "Show me, let anybody show me a better way to gain my purpose, I have only so much brains and so much heart, and so much time, and so much influence, and so much money, and I want to employ these, to cultivate them to the utmost; not for my own personal service, and to gain any



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personal ends of my own but the better to carry out and fulfill the idea and purpose which carried my Master to the Cross."

If you had been in Bradford when that chimney, 240 feet high, fell crashing through that factory; had you seen the piled up stones and broken machinery, and seen the hissing steam; and had you known that your wives, and children, and friends had been buried beneath those dreadful ruins, and that everything depended upon immediate efforts to save them, you would not have said, "How much a day shall I receive for trying to move this rubbish, lift these stones, and saw these beams asunder." Why the women here I am sure would have been for taking pick and shovel and tearing up their own garments to stanch the bleeding wounds and fractured limbs of the sufferers as they were taken out; and the men would have taken off their coats and lifted, and shovelled, and toiled till they almost fell exhausted beside their labour in order to save.

And unless this kind of feeling actuates you, my comrades; unless this is the propelling motive in your hearts continually to save the multitudes who are going down to hell before your eyes, you will be of very little service in The Salvation Army, and much that I shall say to you today will fall all but uselessly upon your ears.

Now I am not going to say anything complainingly. I am not come here to find fault. On the whole I never was more satisfied with The Army than I am at the present moment. Improvement has gone forward with immense and rapid strides the last few months. I never admired the officers more than I do now. Bless you! I dream of you by night and picture by day the marvellous things God is going to do by you in the future, and I want to help you in obtaining and attaining to a fuller qualification for this by this talk today.

Now we have said that a true Salvationist is not one for convenience, but for conviction and preference. Is it so with you? Do you understand The Salvation Army? Have you grasped the idea of it? Do you see and feel what we are aiming at? And are you one with us with regard to the spirit which determines us in the methods and measures we employ; or are you still bound hand or foot by the traditions and usages of the elders? I am afraid that there is a good deal of the Pharisaic and Saddusaic



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clinging to some of you Cadets. Some of you have grown up amidst the influence of forms and ceremonies, which, however useful they may be, or may have been in other circumstances, only edge in and bar us out from the work we want to accomplish.

Do you see the freedom after which we want you to aspire, that while, on the one hand, we want you to avoid cold, straight-faced stand-apart, iceberg sanctimoniousness, we don't want you to go off into giggling foolery on the other. Be natural. Be happy, cheerful joyous, and yet grave and determined men and women.

I was asking one of my officers, the other day, his opinion of a certain Captain, and he replied, "He is a remarkable combination of the parson and the clown," something like a pendulum, swinging first to one side and then to the other. Sometimes he is all parson; and sometimes all clown." I say to you be neither, but be natural – what God has made you; neither ape one thing nor the other.

Now, my comrades, I want you to understand The Army. If you do not already do so, then enquire. Think. We don't expect that everybody will, at a bound, reach the knowledge of it or the same confidence in it that we ourselves possess; but if there are any misgivings in your minds with respect to anything we believe or do, with regard to government or teaching; with regard to the past, the present, or the future, that you do not understand, see your superior officer. Come and see us, and get settled in your views and feelings, settled forever. If you cannot, then we say, retire. Anyway, don't grumble. Grumblers are a nuisance to themselves, a hindrance to their work, and a curse to everybody about them; and, as a rule, no kind of grumbling, however low it may be muttered or whispered, can be concealed. Little birds carry it abroad. Without any employment of spies on our part, it comes to our ears.

If you understand The Army you will bear with its imperfections. You cannot expect it to be perfect now, for it is made up of imperfect people, and imperfect people do imperfect things. You will bear with its faults as you bore with the faults of your own mother's house when you were children. You did not go abroad speaking of things said and done in your own family. You shielded them from public view, and did not think you were performing any work of merit in so doing.

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But if there are any here who cannot accept and approve in the most hearty manner of The Army as their home, as the choice of their souls, as that for which they can live, for which they are willing to suffer, and for which they will be prepared to die, according to their views, then we say they will not understand much that is done in it, and much that we may say this morning.

The Freedom you have as Officers in this Army

In other words, the relation in which you stand to myself. There are those who would have you believe that you are in a measure of very serious bondage. I cannot accept it for a moment. I consider that there are no men on the face of the earth that have not only a grander opportunity to take part in this fight with the powers of darkness for the redemption of the race, but who have greater freedom in the fight. While you act up to the light you possess, you walk about your parishes like independent kings, no man daring to make you afraid. Neither malice nor envy can overthrow you.

They were telling me of an instance that occurred in one of the imitation armies around us. A young man who had been saved and taught how to fight amongst us, but who for some personal reasons had left us, was sent to a certain town. Here, favoured by the belief that he came to establish a Salvation Army, the people flocked to him; and I have no doubt that for a season a large amount of good was done. But while in the full swing of his success a 'Young Lady' comes along, and the fickle people send a petition to the superior of the movement and ask that the Captain may be removed and the 'Young Lady' may be allowed to remain. This is done, and the Captain is sent off to a broken-down concern, and the 'Young lady' is left to flourish in his place for a season.

You know that such a thing would be utterly impossible with us. There are people who preach the gospel, who, it is well known, are bound to so minister as shall please those who have position and money amongst them.

You know that our instructions to you all are – "Preach the truth. Warn those who are going to hell of their peril. Denounce those who are walking in any other than what you believe to be the paths of righteousness. Raise the standard of holiness to its

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loftiest height. Demand from every man, woman and child within the sound of your voice and the circle of your influence, the fullest surrender to Jehovah, and do it regardless of the frowns or smiles of rich or poor, ignorant or learned alike, and we will stand by you in all the consequences that may ensue, giving you our sympathy, and all the help in our power to make your success complete."

Our Relation to the Churches Round about Us

Now the word "Tradition" has been mentioned here this morning. I must refer to it again, and in doing so let me say that I cannot accept any obligation as binding upon my conscience, neither will I seek to bind any upon yours, to do, or believe, or teach anything for which authority cannot be furnished from the Word of God, or which God Himself does not reveal to us by His Spirit, as our present duty to Him or to our generation.

That our forefathers, or the generations before them, should carry on their religious operations after a certain fashion confers no binding obligation on us to do the same, unless the doing of the same appears to be commanded in the Bible, or necessitated by the circumstances in which we find ourselves placed.

I contend that God is always showing us, teaching us by His Bible, by His Providence, and by His Spirit, what should be done and what is likely to succeed if it is done to save the souls of men; and what God then makes us see is likely to save the people from being damned, I contend we ought to do.

There are new methods of cultivating and reaping, and spreading the bread that perisheth. Why should God's hands be bound, and His people be forbidden from practicing new methods of spreading abroad the Bread that endureth unto everlasting life, for lack of which the people are perishing? The blessed Bread remains the same, although the methods of spreading it may be new.

Very well, then, if it is allowable for us to have new methods, it is very desirable for such to be invented and practised always, supposing that such are in accordance with the great doctrines and principles taught in the Bible.



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The churches round about us should not, we think, condemn us for our methods any more than we condemn them for theirs. Anyhow, we will not condemn them. But I want to speak more especially to you with regard to the relation in which we should stand to these churches. Many are very much perplexed about this. Some are quite anxious and agitated. I feel perfectly quiet myself. They say our position is one of great difficulty, one that cannot last. I don't see it. It has lasted already for a long time, and we seem to become day by day more secure and settled down into it than ever. Nay, every month we seem to get further and further away from becoming anything like a formal ecclesiastical body, with the usual church functions and conventionalities.

In the north of England, a meeting was called to consider and hear me describe this movement. There were fourteen ministers present – twelve of whom were clergymen, one of whom occupied a position next in authority to a bishop – in this meeting. A clergyman said, without being contradicted, that it is evident that The Army is not a church. That to be a church there must be the exercise of the sacramental functions, which evidently are not duly appreciated, anyway which are not generally practised by The Army. We are evidently getting further away from the ordinary idea of a church every day.

It seems as if a voice from heaven had said, and is still saying, that we are to be an Army, separate from, going before, coming after, and all round about the various existing Churches. Whatever difficulties there may appear to you in this position, I am sure that if you will have patience they will vanish. If you only consider, you will find that they have been made to your mind by the traditions of the past, and the novelty of our present position. Be patient. Wait on God, and He will make our way plain before us.

But we are asked by the Churches, "What should be our attitude towards you?" We answer, "What is your attitude towards the 'Fire Brigade?' or if you live on the sea coast, What is your attitude towards the 'Lifeboat crew?' or, again, we might say, what is your attitude towards the Volunteers in the killing armies? You cheer them on, encourage them, subscribe to their funds, go to their assemblages and bless them." We say, "Do the same with us." Wish us "God-speed." Pray for us; subscribe to our



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funds, and we will pioneer, and scavenger, and excavate for the common cause in the same great campaign, but in altogether a different form, helping forward the end which all alike desire, that the world should be saved, and the King of kings should have His own. Talking about churches leads me to another question, which I know is of some interest to all of you, and many others, viz., the "sacraments."

Here we will make one statement which will help to dismiss any serious anxiety from your minds very considerably, I have no doubt, as it has done with us, and this is one in which I think you will all agree.

The "*sacraments*" *must not, nay, they cannot, rightly be regarded as conditions of salvation.* If you make them essentials, if you say that men cannot get to Heaven without being baptized with water, or without "Breaking bread," as it is called, where there is the opportunity of doing so, then you shut out from that holy place a multitude of men and women who have been and are today sincere followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, who honestly believe His words, and earnestly strive to keep them. This would be a very great calamity, and I cannot accept it for a moment.

I think you will perceive that any order from me for the general administration of the sacraments would be likely to produce grave dissensions. There is a very great and widespread difference of opinion with regard to the modes of administration – one half of the religious world denying in toto the efficacy of the sacraments as administered by the other half. Our Baptist friends, for instance, contend that baptism as administered to infants by the Church of England, Methodists, and others, is no baptism at all, and when we gave consent for some of our people to take part in the Church of England sacrament, the clergyman who invited them seized the opportunity for showing that they were only in part qualified to receive the ordinance, seeing that part had been confirmed, and a part not. Another gentleman of very high position recommended that the portion of our people who had not been confirmed should go to the dissenters for the ordinance, while the portion who had been confirmed should go to the Church. This you will see would have divided us at the very door of the Church. Here would have been a very great difficulty at once.



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Now if the sacraments are not conditions of salvation; if there is a general division of opinion as to the proper mode of administering them, and if the introduction of them would create division of opinion and heart-burning, and if we are not professing to be a church, nor aiming at being one, but simply a force for aggressive salvation purposes, is it not wise for us to postpone any settlement of the question, to leave it over to some future day, when we shall have more light, and see more clearly our way before us?

Meanwhile, we do not prohibit our own people in any shape or form from taking the sacraments. We say, "If this is a matter of your conscience, by all means break bread." The churches and chapels all round about will welcome you for this, but in our own ranks let us be united, and go on our own way, and mind our own business. Let us remember Him who died for us continually. Let us remember His love every hour of our lives, and continually feed on Him – not on Sundays only, and then forget Him all the week, but let us by faith eat his flesh and drink His blood continually; and "whatsoever you do, whether you eat or drink, do all to the glory of God."

And further, there is one baptism on which we are all agreed – the one baptism of the Bible – that is the baptism of the Holy Ghost, of which baptism John spoke as vastly superior and far more important than the baptism of water, when he said, "I indeed baptise you with water, but one cometh after me whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose; He shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost and with fire."

Be sure you insist upon that baptism. Be sure you enjoy that baptism yourselves, and be sure you insist upon it for your people, not only for the adults but for the children.

We are bringing out a formal service for the dedication of children. It will be put into your hands in a few days. By this soldiers can introduce their children to The Army. Before this dedicatory service is gone through, you must explain it to the parents, and show them that unless they are willing to bring up their children as soldiers and officers in The Army, they cannot have any part in it.

Let us keep off mere forms, and do nothing in which, as far as possible, the hearts of our soldiers do not go with us.

Employ Your Soldiers

Now, it is necessary that you should thoroughly understand that there is a fundamental principle that has to do with the very existence and working of The Army, in which it widely differs from most, if not all, of the Christian organisations round about us, and this is that the fighting is done by the soldiers, the officers leading, guiding, encouraging, and showing the way. With other organisations the very opposite is the rule with them; it is a principle that the fighting shall be done by the officers. They are set apart, ordained, and maintained, and looked upon to maintain the fight. The responsibility for success with them is not felt to depend upon private members, but upon the character of the ministry and the ministrations and ceremonials that are managed and conducted by the responsible leaders; whereas with us we publicly and most emphatically avow that the whole corps ought to do the fighting.

If you will take in and act upon this principle, and make your soldiers fight, make them do the work, you showing them the way, you will have victory all along your line. You have only to look round you in The Salvation Army to find illustrations of this. Those officers amongst us who have been the most successful have not been the great talkers – the men who could do religious harangues, expositions of Scripture, sermons, and the like. Some of our most successful men have been very poor talkers judged from the platform standard, but they have been men who have seized upon their converts as soon as they have got well into the fountain, set them up, and made them talk, and sent them out and made them face the foe.

Open Air Fighting

I come now to consider your relation to the open-air. Our great business is still, and likely to be for a long time to come, out of doors. Although there may be, and I am anticipating it continually, a great drawing towards us of the people, and that very largely of those who now are dead against us, still for a long time to come it will be we going to them rather than they coming to us- anyhow, in our time I should calculate. Now, in the open-air, as elsewhere, we want novelty. I was discussing with a clergyman the other day as to the grounds of the success of the Wesleys and Whitfield in the last



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century, and I observed – with which he agreed, and I think perhaps with which you will agree – that it seemed to me that a very large measure of the success of the Wesleys was owing to the novelty of the truths they proclaimed. The prevailing idea in those times, even amongst the few people who made any pretension to religion, was that a man must seek, and repent, and pray, a long time, nay, spend a lifetime in anxiety, before he could gain any reasonable hope of being accepted of God; even if such a hope was possible in this life. And when Whitfield came along and preached to the people the forgiveness of sins and the knowledge of the same, the tidings flew all over the country, and thousands flocked to hear for themselves, and as the result sought God and found Him in a very blessed manner in every direction. Now, the preaching of such truths is no longer a novelty; on the contrary, there has been so much evangelising, and preaching, and talking about the gospel, and people have grown so familiar with it, that they give it little or no consideration at all. And what is wanted in order to make men think and feel is not that the truth merely should be preached, but that it should be proclaimed with such method, in such a manner, and with such repetition that people shall be compelled to think about it, and attend to the salvation of their souls. Ours are not new doctrines so much as a new method of proclaiming them.

Pay more attention to your open-air work. Make your marches more effective. Get them more into order. Don't be content with simply having a good head and a straggling disorderly tail; put some of the best men all along the line, and bring up each with a line, if it is only a thin line, of soldiers that shall mark where the Salvationists leave off, and where the roughs and followers begin.

Do plenty of straight, red-hot firing out of doors. Not merely testimonies, but preach the terrible character of sin with its dreadful penalties. Preach hell; you cannot very well preach too much of hell if you do it with a broken heart and compassionate lips. Yearn over the people. Weep over them as Christ did over Jerusalem, and then talk to them of the destruction that is coming. Picture the judgment day. Talk about the blighting, damning influence they are exercising on those about them, and then preach Calvary – the open arms, and pleading heart, and home of love ready to receive them. Proclaim the universal love of God for the worst of sinners. Always offer salvation on the spot. Get penitents into your open-air ranks if you can. Get penitent-



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forms at the corners of the streets, in the market squares, and on the camp grounds where we assemble; then The Salvation Army will begin to make real and rapid strides towards the subjection of the people. On your return marches to the barracks, throw off skirmishers, who shall lay hold of the stragglers, take them by the arm, and bring them with you. Tell them they will be welcome, put them in a seat, find them a book, take notice of them, treat them as men and women, your equals. Especially watch round the doors. Many a man comes up with the procession, looks lingeringly into the hall, and then retires, perhaps to the public-house, or to join the roughs in mocking outside, who would have gladly come in had he been invited with such a word. Watch for souls.

Indoor Services

Now as to the proper style of service, you will probably be aware that it is a common danger with men and with systems to go to extremes. And this works often in the following fashion. Having gone too far in one direction, the men or systems will rebound in the opposite direction and go just as far or farther than they did in the former. There can be no doubt the Roman Catholic Church went to the extreme, sadly too much so, of ceremony, form, and ritual. She employed painting, and poetry, and music, and processions, with robes, and mitres, and crosses, and candles, and every imaginable thing that could give charm or attractiveness to her rites and ceremonies. Now the Protestant religion, it seems to us, rebounded off to the extreme of all this, going right off in the very opposite direction as far almost as it was possible to go. She put away from her all that was impressive or attractive in ritual, and music, and pictures. Everything was to be of the baldest, barest, coldest type.

The Catholic said, display your religion, publish it abroad, march with it in the streets, exhibit it to the world; but the Protestant, keep your religion out of sight, say as little as possible about it, tell it not in the ears of man, whisper it only to God. Now we are at issue with the coldest, barest, forms of Protestantism anyhow; while at the same time we want to keep free, and will keep free by the grace of God, from the superstitious errors both in doctrine and practice into which the Roman Catholics fell. We will draw the people, but draw them to hear, and worship, and love, and serve Him alone.



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We left off when we were speaking of the outdoor meetings, by saying you must make them interesting. That is just where we want to begin by saying with reference to the indoors. You must do this or the people will soon cease to come. Indeed, unless they are interested they won't stop when they are there. People go to church and chapel as a matter of duty, or usage, or because they think they must have some sort of religion, if it goes no further than attending a place of worship, consequently they come and sit the meeting out, no matter how dull, or feelingless the matter may be – but not so with our congregations. There must be something that takes hold of them, makes them think, and feel, in other words interests them, or they come no more. Have variety; spend some time in planning something new and fresh. Don't let it always be according to that formula which I am so often repeating to you, "As it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be, world without end." Begin one day where you ended the last; commence in the middle; have some strange people, or some strange doings. See how the caterers for public amusements, and for trade, and for politics are now doing something fresh and new to attract attention. Why not? Don't be too lazy to plan.

Plenty of Bills

And having planned it, publish it. Some corps never print a bill to let people know what is to happen, and they have hardly sufficient energy to announce what is coming on, and therefore nobody expects anything, and congregations dwindle, and then the Captain wonders how it is. If you have anything coming off, and you announce it judiciously, you will easily get the money back again that your bills cost. If you do print bills, remember that they are such as other people will read, or your money is all thrown away.

Commence your meetings punctually. Never mind how few are present, begin at the right time. Your songs should melt and move the people; that is, melt and move their hearts, bring them into a mouldable, fluid state. You melt wax before you want to get it into permanent shape. You heat the iron red hot before you want to bend and fashion it. Just so it is no use hammering your people when they are cold. They will break rather than bend. Sing and pray the Holy Spirit down upon them; or sing and pray them into thinking and believing, and feeling, and then fire away. When you have



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softened their hearts, and well warmed your own, and all your soldiers, give them some red-hot truths that will make them shake and quake.