

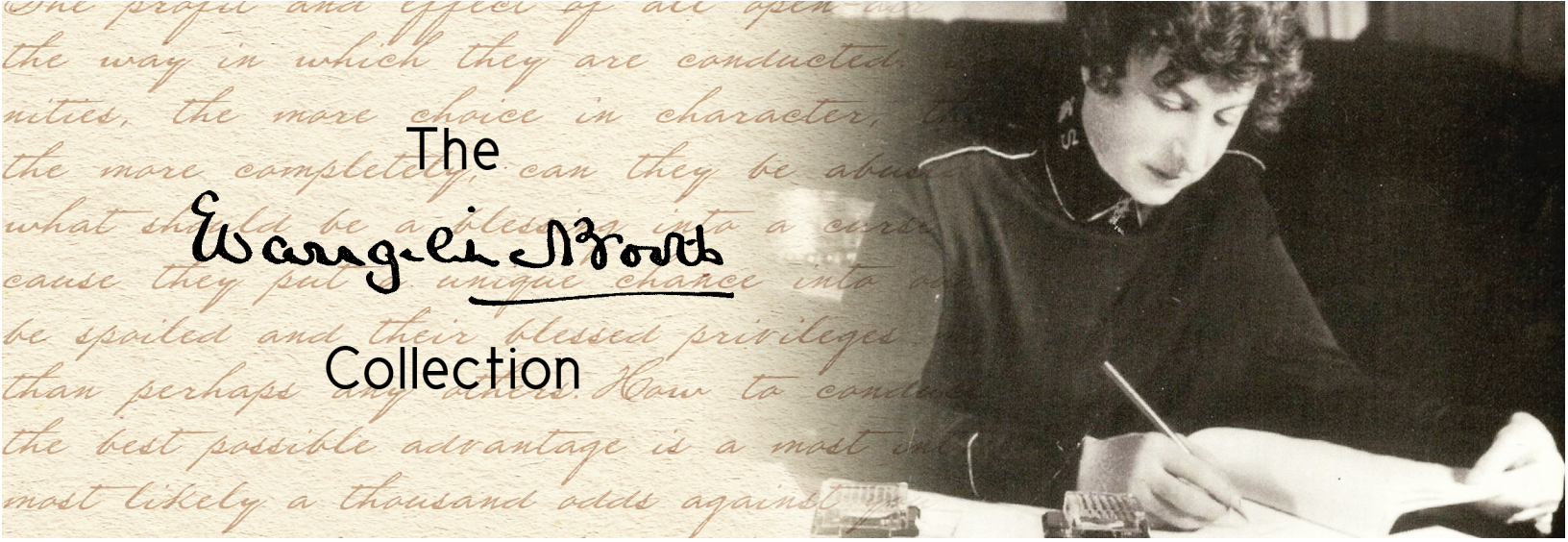
CROSSING THE DELAWARE

It was such a forlorn hope!! There was everything against him, and nothing for him. The enemy was steadily pushing him back, back, back; disease, poverty and starvation assailed the three thousand odd men that supported him — a mere handful compared to the opposing force — and worse, one hundred times worse than all, he had to contend with disobedience and treachery in his own ranks. It was a hard position, and whether Washington ever gave way to despair history does not inform us. If he did, it made no difference as far as actions were concerned; his motto appears to have been, "Go on, go on, and still go on!"

True, he was forced to retreat across New Jersey, but he retreated in a masterly and intelligent manner. He broke down every bridge as he crossed it, determined to give the enemy no advantage; He destroyed the provisions, Cornwallis hoped to get for his army, and managed so to delay him that it took almost three weeks to march less than 70 miles across a level country. Steadily on went the indomitable Washington, doing the thing that lay nearest his hand in the very best way, and trusting God with the future. He was in the right and he knew it, and therefore "His Strength was as the strength of ten."

It was discouraging time, and Patriots gave up all hope. What could that poor fugitive army of less than three thousand men, sick, half fed, half clothed, in the bitter winter weather and miserably armed, do against the well-equipped British armies? Why nothing at all; it was a lost cause!

Perhaps Washington felt the same. But that had nothing to do with his business; his business was to go on and never give in, and he did it. When he found he could not hold New Jersey he was forced to cross the Delaware at Trenton. The enemy determined to pursue him, but low! The wily Americans had seized every boat within one hundred miles, and there was nothing they could do except wait for the River to freeze over! Washington's one and only chance was to avoid a battle, and when three weeks later he found himself between the British army and the broad Delaware, full of huge blocks of floating ice, he did not hesitate a moment but determined upon the perilous crossing. The British, secure as they thought of their prey, settled down for a night's rest.



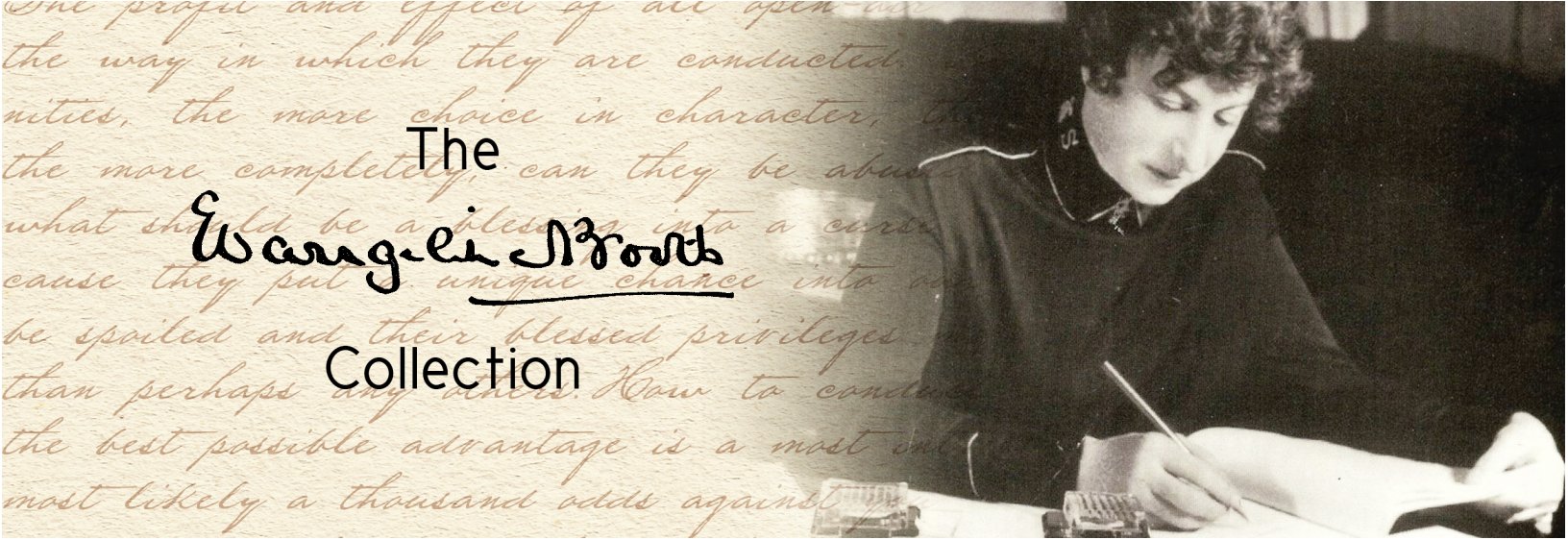
"We'll Bag the old Fox in the morning," said Cornwallis.

"Perhaps it would be better to bag him at once," suggested an officer: "He may escape, hemmed in as he was, The British army on three sides, the impassable Delaware in front?"

But Washington saw nothing impossible there; it was his one and only chance, and he took it. While the British lay wrapped in sweet dreams, Washington and his 2,400 men were being piloted across the River by humble but daring Marblehead fisherman. In and out between the ice blocks they made their way, in the freezing cold, silently, steadily, a yard here, an inch there. A set back; Forward again little by little, until at last every man of the 2,400 was safely landed. The "Old Fox" had escaped, and thereby gave a whole nation an object lesson in the folly of procrastination. On just such little things do the fate of men and nations hang! Christmas Eve, 1776, is a date that will be remembered while the world stands. It was the key to the situation, the turning points upon which hung victory. Hope sprang renewed all over the country, and received its fulfillment eventually in the freedom of America.

It was a wonderful victory, one by a wonderful man, And I was going to say accomplished in a wonderful manner. But after all, was it not rather accomplished in the simplest and most natural of ways - the study, plotting, careful doing of what seemed the best in the right way? The doing of the "next thing." In the most thorough fashion, regardless of toil, pain, loss or sorrow, unweakened by vain regrets, defeat, anxious fears for the future, but serene in the knowledge that the cause was a right cause. There is no confidence like the confidence that comes from heaven born courage; the courage that comes from faith in a leader "that never did battle lose."

We find many a parallel to the foregoing in the Bible. Abraham when he went forth not knowing whether he went; Moses, leading the children of Israel through the trackless wilderness; Joshua, when he was thrust into Moses place; Job, passing through the seas of sorrow; David pursued by Saul; the prophets, struggling with a perverse people and a forlorn hope — these all had their Delawares to cross. All had to attempt the seemingly impossible; to leap as it were through a Stonewall, but through God, we read, they did valiantly, and came off more than conquerors.

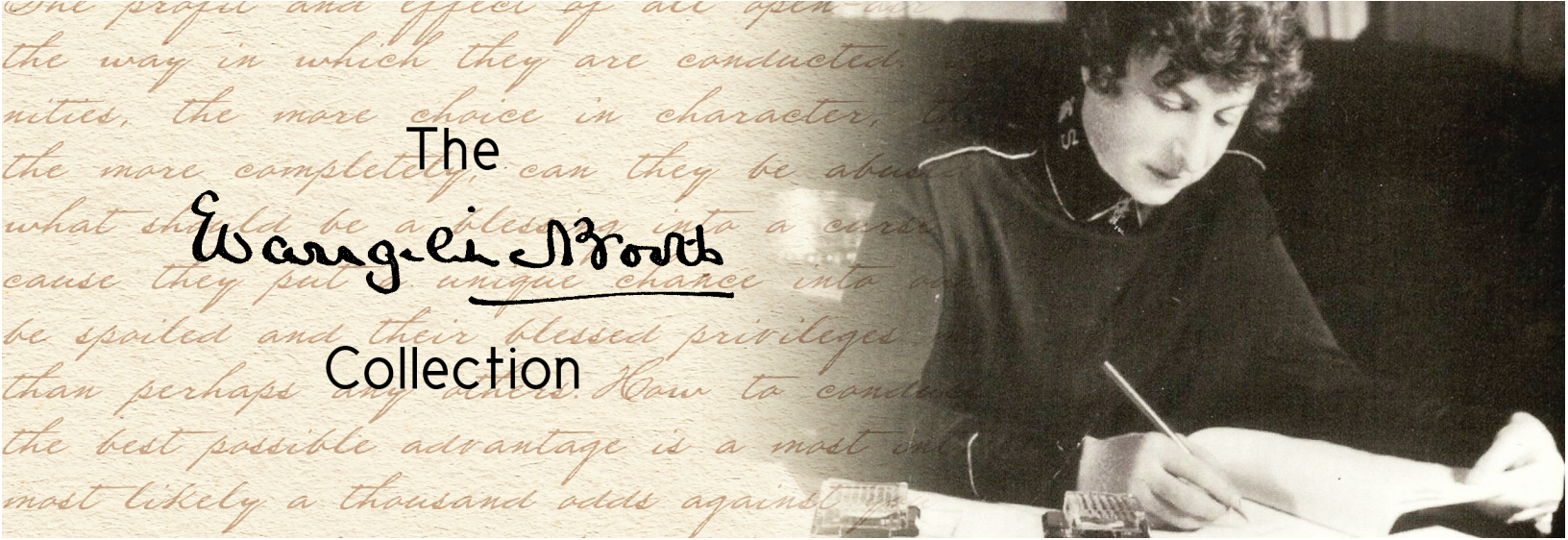


Comrades, officers, friends, readers, whoever you are and wherever situated, you will have to cross your Delaware too! You will not be exempt, either, because the lines have fallen to you in pleasant places, because God has placed you in a humble position. Your Delaware will have to be crossed else you will be among those who "drawback," whom God declares he "has no pleasure in." Oh, yes I think I am right when I say that every true soldier of the cross has at one time or another to face his or her Delaware - times when the enemy of the soul surrounds us on every side and presses close around with gives, and jeers, pointing out the utter impossibility of ever crossing that Delaware before us! We stand on that bank and look at the huge blocks of ice that seem to mock us - blocks of keen sorrow, bitter persecution, losses of every description; Friends, homes, reputation, ease, comfort; blocks of utter despair, there they sway and great and grind in the icy waters. AH, these spiritual Delawares are as real as the one that Washington and his brave troops crossed! The ice that bars the way may not be the same in every case, but the heart knoweth its own bitterness, and the impediment to progress is as great.

I do not deny that it is a bitter moment, often a heartbreaking and appalling time, when we find ourselves face-to-face with what we deemed the impossible, when God does not permit us to see by faith the Chariots of Angels that keep guard and watch around. We can only in such times go steadily onward and in naked faith cry out, "THOUGH HE SLAY ME, YET WILL I TRUST HIM!" It is in such times we can only lean hard on the promises, regardless of feeling, and press on straight over our Delaware, because it is the right path, and that it leads to God.

No doubt you have all read that account of my precious and now sainted mother marching forward over her Delaware. Frail, shrinking, timid, she ascended her husband's pulpit, confident that she would not be able to utter his sentence when she got there, only sure of one thing - that God wanted her in that place. Oh, how sorely the devil beset her! But she went on regardless, shutting her ears to his insinuations and saying, "I don't know why, Lord, but if you want me to be a fool I'm willing; yes, if it kills me!"

And where would the Salvation Army be, where would I be, where would thousands of my comrades be, if my dear mother had not crossed her Delaware?



Our beloved General, too, now many Delawares of various kinds has he not had to cross in his life — heart and flesh crying out in anguish? But in every case they were the key of the situation, and opened the door to beautiful glorious, wonderful victory.

I feel sure, even as I write, even as you read, there are many of you face to face with your Delaware. The seemingly impossible looms before you; it looks like defeat either way. "Lord I can't, I can't, you cry; "this thing is too hard for me." To such I would say out of my own experience, obey God's voice and go forward at all costs, and victory will be yours. Don't look at the probable future, don't look a moment ahead, but do your present duty now as God reveals it bit by bit. Remember, he never makes mistakes!

Oh, the world is full of poor, miserable, starved defeated souls! I meet them wherever I go. "If it hadn't been for this or that hindrance or difficulty," they say, "I'd be different; I'd be a Christian, or salvationist, or a sanctified soul!"

I talked with one only the other day. A bright, beautiful soul she was, using all her faculties to help forward the Kingdom. But something that she wanted very much was denied. God said, "it is not for you." "I cannot do without it," she said, and lean-ness entered into her soul. Today she is a bitter, disappointed woman, of no use to God or anybody else. Her Delaware was too much for her; she missed the whole key of the situation, spoiled her life and ended her usefulness.

My dear comrades, officers, soldiers, friends, corps cadets, would be candidates, whoever you are, let me entreat you to press steadily on and boldly face your Delaware, whatever form it may take. Do not, I implore you, turn back, or you will regret it forever. I have never in all my experience met anybody who turned back who did not suffer.

So take courage! Let Washington's noble example be a lesson to your soul this Independence Day. Your cause is a nobler one than his, your battle a greater; your victory assured from the beginning. Press on, fight on, attempt the impossible to you, and soon with David you will shout:

"For by thee I have run through a troop: by my God have I leaped over a wall."