

The  
Evangeline Booth  
Collection

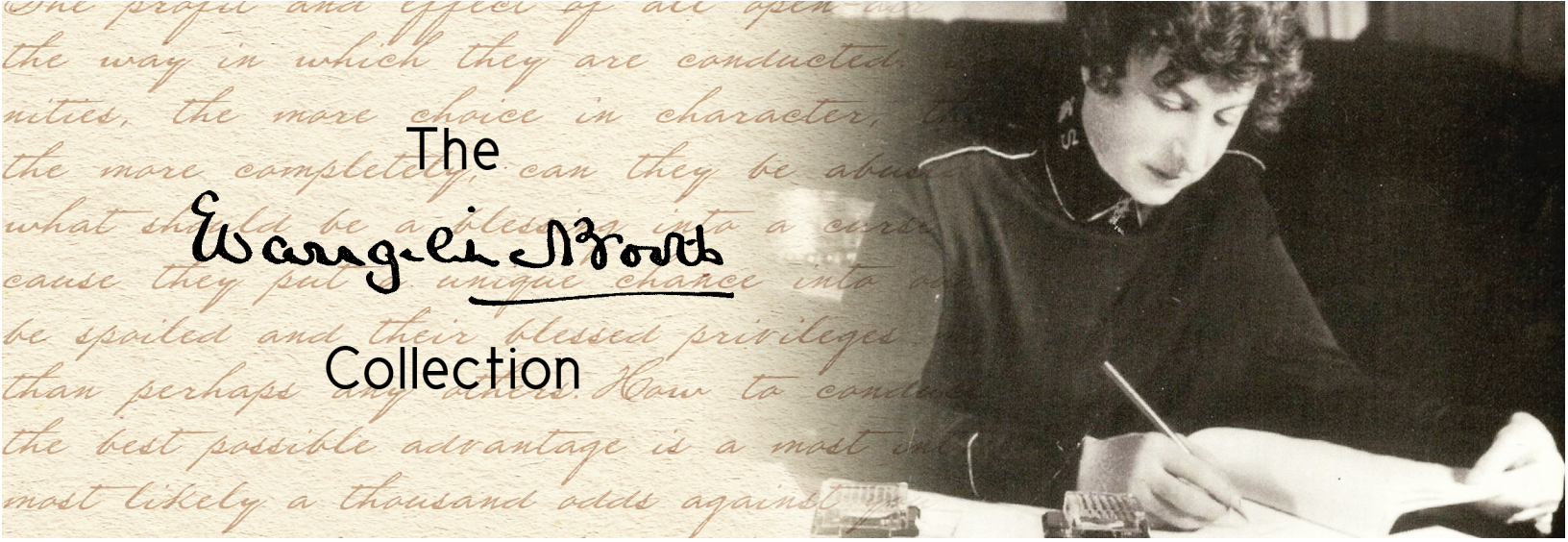
## THE ATTITUDE OF THE SALVATION ARMY

Its Unceasing Antagonism to Strong Drink Emphasized in these Extracts from the Address Given by Commander Evangeline Booth Before the W.C.T.U. Convention at Marion, Ind.

I stand here today as a leader of a movement that, in its attitude toward the drink evil, has never known a hesitating moment. At the inception of the Salvation Army, fifty-nine years ago, Prohibition was in its infancy, and there was then no condemnation of moderate drinkers. A religious movement, with total abstinence as a condition of membership, was both novel and unpopular. But the die was cast, for our Founder, my father, saw this was the curse that bound the poor man as with an iron chain to his poverty, and was both the forerunner and supporter of the worst crimes. Proscription was the only course, and that course, without a single exception, has been followed. Because of this we stand today the greatest temperance movement on the face of the earth. The Army has a right to voice its convictions and to testify to its experience concerning intoxicating liquor, for its hands are clean.

With whatever false reasoning some may delude themselves, our experience with all classes of society proves that with the closing of the saloon, nine-tenths of the drunkenness of the country disappeared. Of all welfare workers none were in closer touch with those who were afflicted with this burning thirst than my faithful officers and people, and their uniform and irrefutable testimony clearly shows that the chief source of former debaucheries is gone. One of my principal officers, an unimpeachable witness, said to me only a short time ago: "In former days I usually had eight or ten drunken men in my meetings. Since Prohibition came I have only seen two men so conditioned in all my meetings throughout the country. Commander, something has happened!"

Yes, something has happened. The drink-sodden wretch, who formerly was the despair of law and almost the despair of the Gospel, is found in only rare instances. Those who are working for the repeal or nullification of the Prohibition Amendment should solemnly ask themselves whether they are prepared again to expose their fellowmen to this terrible temptation and peril. One of my officers in Kentucky tells of an old mountaineer who said to him: "Captain, six years ago I had no home, no possessions at all. For years I had been a drunkard. My wife and children lived in



poverty. Now I have built and paid for my house. I live in the hot Summer months on my lot by the river. While this conversation went on the children in neat bathing suits were taking a dip in the river. The mother was sitting in the rocking chair. A first-class record was playing, "Nearer, my God, to Thee". The old man said, "I owe it all to God and the men and women of God who put down the accursed drink".

#### SHALL AMERICA GO BACK?

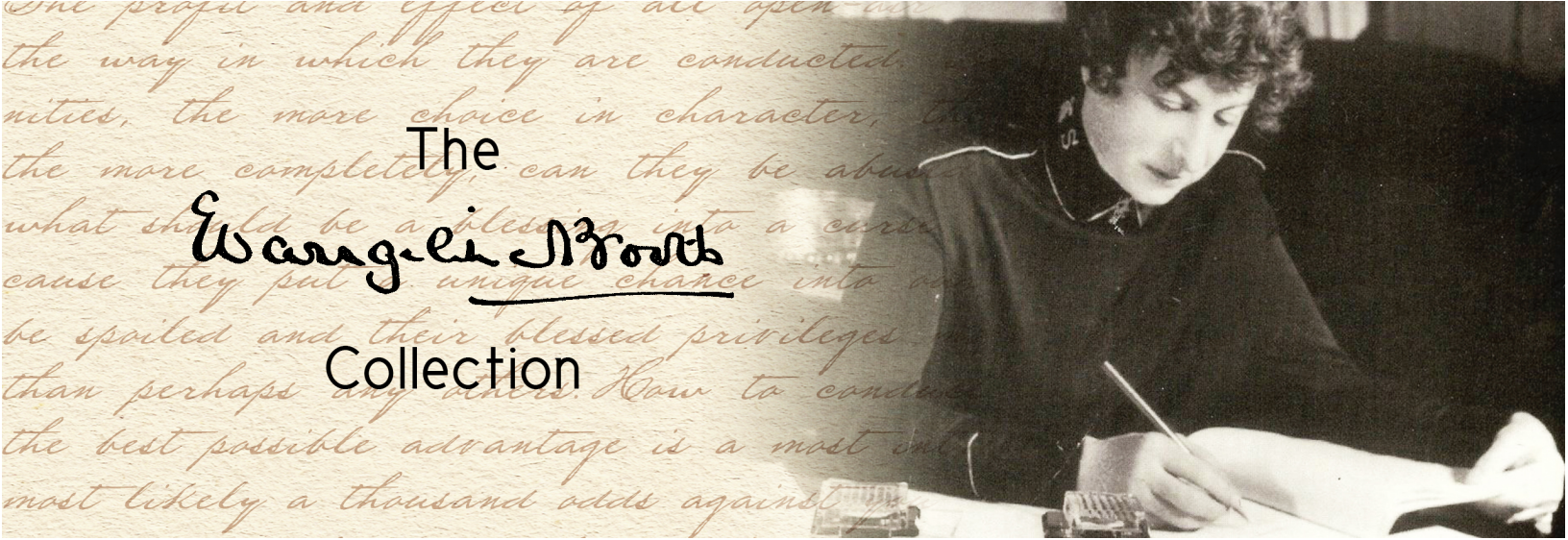
The superintendent of our Slum Settlement Work tells me that applications for relief are reduced fifty per cent. She says: "The majority we now relieve are widows. The families in the districts we visit are better red, better clothed, and better housed. Another significant feature is the decrease of mortality among young children. It used to be a common thing for reports to reach us of babies that had fallen from fire escapes and infants that were smothered on account of drunken parents, but not one such report has reached us during the last year!"

Yes, something has happened! Our Women's Rescue Officers bear testimony to the effects of Prohibition upon the broken hearts of our city streets. These experienced workers cannot be deceived regarding the relation of strong drink or light wine to the social evil. They have a greatly simplified problem with the drink factor eliminated. Whereas in the past hundreds came to the refuge of our Homes as victims of wine-room or saloon-parlor seductions, today drink cases are rarely found, and from the different calibre of cases coming under our care it would seem that the baser forms of the monster's subtle designs cannot be sustained without the stimulus of intoxicating drink.

#### SHALL AMERICA GO BACK?

Yes, something has happened, for the whole force of our Industrial Home, our Relief Department, and Labor Bureau managers bear witness that the old type of needy man is no more. Every Phase of Salvation Army activity unites in extolling the prohibition Law as beneficent in its results.

Since Prohibition many of the inmates of our Industrial Homes have banking accounts. Here are just a few figures which are representative of the many which the actual facts would supply. In



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eleven of our eighty-eight institutions 166 men have saved \$6,880 — an average of over \$41 per man. Not a very large nest egg to be sure, but nothing short of phenomenal when it is remembered that before prohibition these men were in a state of perpetual destitution, and that they could not in any emergency keep twenty-five cents in their pockets.

SHALL AMERICA GO BACK?

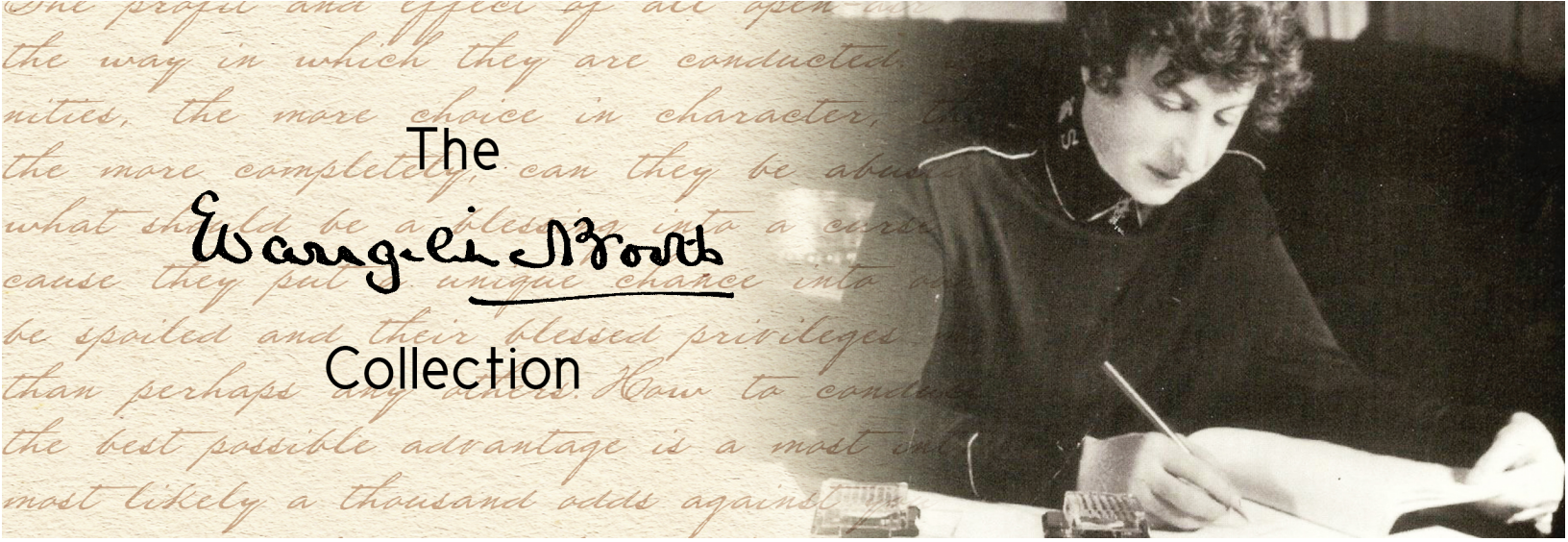
Shall we temporize, shall we compromise, and thereby jeopardize all for which we have fought for God and home and land? I make use of your glorious slogan, "A Dry World", for I refuse to localize the effects of this legislation, or circumscribe them even with such broad confines as the Atlantic and Pacific seaboard! America with the eye of the world upon her has accomplished this thing by the votes of free men and free women. She has erected a new statue of Liberty with which to enlighten and lead the peoples of every land.

Is there one with hand ruthless enough, or with eyes blind enough, or with heart selfish enough, to dare to attempt to extinguish that light and bring this noblest monument low? From this advanced moral standard taken among the nations, shall America go back? All the vile foes that have ever trailed their bloody tracks across street, or vale, or plain; all the cruel instruments of war, ancient and modern, that have drawn blood, torn flesh, maimed bodies and destroyed life: all the destructive powers that have ever sunk ships, devastated cities, plundered homes, and brought down kingdoms all in their massed aggregate have never occasioned one-hall of the sorrow, the breakage, the ruin, the self-destruction and the death that has poured from the cauldron of this red-eyed, fire-mouthed, gory-handed, hydra-headed, diabolical monster — Alcohol!

My God, Thou knowest it! My God, Thou knowest it!

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Drink has drained more blood, hung more crepe, sold more homes, plunged more people into bankruptcy, armed more villains, slain more children, snapped more wedding rings, defiled more innocence, blinded more eyes, twisted more limbs, dethroned more intellects, wrecked more



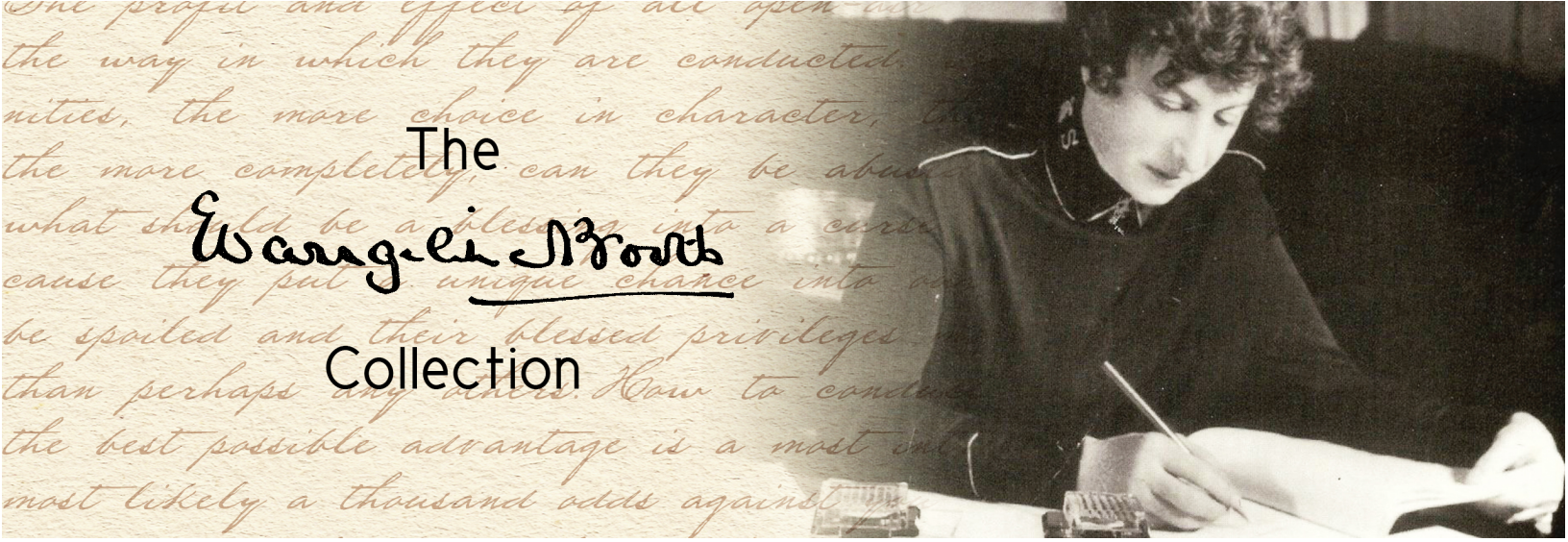
manhood, dishonored more womanhood, broken more hearts, blasted more lives, driven to more suicide and dug more graves than any other poisoned scourge that ever swept its death-dealing waves across the world.

Can it be that men and women are so deadened by selfishness, and beset by appetite, that they will take again into their national, life, into the bosom of their homes, this baneful, loathsome, reeking, wrecking abomination?

#### SHALL AMERICA GO BACK?

Let me ask you to step back to the days of the wide-swinged doors of the saloon. Let me tear the film from the eyes of me who are blinded by mercenary gains and selfish appetite. Let me persuade mothers and fathers of every status of life for one brief moment to blot out every other consideration while here today we look to the handwriting on the wall of the nation, and read what is written there. Such trembling strokes — such weak, shaky characters — such long spaces between the words; words ill-formed — words ill-spelled words ill-placed. Such simple little sentences, but vastly comprehensive such feint impress, but never to be obliterated. Whose are the fingers that have wielded the trembling pen the thin fingers the misshapen fingers - the twisted fingers? Whose is the writing? Why it is the children's the handwriting of the children, across the wall of the nation — stretching from sea to sea!

Ah! You can hush every other voice of national and individual complaint; you may silence every other tongue, even those of mothers of destroyed sons and daughters, of wives of profligate husbands; but let the children speak the little children, the wronged children, the crippled children, the nameless children, the starved children, the deserted children, the beaten children, the dead children. Oh, my God, this army of little children! Let their weak voices, faint with oppression, cold and hunger, be heard! Let their little faces, pinched by want of gladness, be heeded! Let their challenge — though made by small forms, too mighty for estimate — be reckoned with! Let their writing upon the wall of the nation although traced by tiny fingers, as stupendous as eternity be correctly interpreted and read, that the awful robbery of the lawful heritage of their little bodies, minds, and souls is laid at the brazen gate of Alcohol!



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I hear this challenge coming also as the voice of many waters from thousands of homes rehabilitated, from thousands of wastes reclaimed, from thousands of hall damned souls redeemed, from thousands of drunkards with manhood regained; from smoking flax and bruised reed, the chorus thrills on and on and on until it is caught up by ten thousand times ten thousand voices of faith and hope and love and liberty. still on and on in vibrant tones it wings its way. Mothers in the cottage voice it, the sick in the hospital join in it, the children on the school bench lift it, the convict in the prison cell catches it, the striplings of new character in this new day shout it.

Still on and on the challenge rolls through garret and palace, over hill and through dale onward and upward, higher and higher, until the dear ones in Glory catch the mighty sound and with all the redeemed, their faces aglow in the light of the Morning, join in as with a trumpet call that echoes along the everlasting hills —

SHALL AMERICA GO BACK?

(N.Y.W.C.) (January 17, 1925) (January 20, 1923)