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Chapter XXXIII

WOMAN

I

Comrades and Friends, — For some time I have desired to express more definitely my feelings and opinions with respect to the position and work of Woman in The Army. The opportunity for doing so is now offered, and I am sure that you will carefully consider the counsel which, prompted, I trust, by the Holy Spirit, I shall give you.

I need not remind you that woman has been privileged in the past to render very valuable and important service to The Army. The ability to render that service has, I think, largely resulted from the position she has held, and the opportunities that have been afforded her. Still, notwithstanding this usefulness, I am often led to wonder how my people regard our attitude on this question.

To help you to a right conclusion, let me tell you something of my own experience on this subject, and then perhaps you will be better able to form a correct judgement.

Fifty-two years ago, or thereabouts, I met with a beautiful woman; beautiful not only in physical form and comeliness, but in mind and heart and character. Still, to me her chief attraction lay in her spiritual nature; that is, in her soul.

Definitely converted in early life, endowed by God with a compassionate spirit, a strong intellect, and a quick intelligence, she was wholly consecrated to do the will of her Lord at all costs. Later on she developed into a mighty preacher, and the words she spoke from pulpit and platform are still echoing round the world. Indeed, I seldom set my foot on any ship or on any shore, where one individual or another does not grasp my hand, and acknowledge the benefit they have reaped from her burning words.

That woman became my wife, and joined me with all her heart in the work that had already become the ruling passion of my life. For thirty-five years she was my trusted counsellor in perplexity, my unfailing encouragement in depression, my unspeakable comforter in sorrow, and



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my unflinching comrade in warfare. She was the inspired teacher of our children, the watchful guardian of our home, and the true lover and chaplain of my soul.

Nearly twenty years ago she went to Heaven, where I expect, when I have finished my work, to be reunited with her for evermore.

Now all the world knows something of the position I gave her in the early days of The Army, and the opportunities I made during its later history for the exercise of her abilities.

If you had been in my place, and that noble woman had been your wife, how would you have treated her? Do you think I was wrong in setting her high as I did? What do you say?

I had a daughter – I have several. I refer to one in particular because she is in Heaven, and I can therefore speak more freely of her. She was a noble woman. Taking into consideration her character, her disposition, and her loyal devotion to The Army, and her soul-saving career in its ranks, I know of no woman who has excelled her. She was charming to look upon, while in mind and heart she followed very closely on the track of her now glorified mother.

Both before her marriage, and afterwards in conjunction with her gifted husband, I gave her position after position of usefulness and eminence. These she filled with credit to The Army, profit to the people, and honour to her Lord.

As you may know, she was taken to Heaven seven years ago in a railway accident in the Western States of America. I can say, with many who knew and loved her, that we are following on to meet her. What a meeting that will be!

Was I right, think you, in giving that daughter those high positions of usefulness, and the power and influence associated with them?

If she has been your daughter, and you had been in my place, would you have acted after the same fashion? What do you say?



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Now I have three granddaughters, who have reached years of maturity. They are here to be known and looked at, and I cannot say about them all I would wish to for, were they not with us. But I may remark that they are gifted in regards the graces and education and intelligence of this life.

What was to be done with these girls? What was my duty with respect to them? What did I advise?

Well, I will tell you how their father and mother, with my full approval, have treated them. They have filled their minds with the notion that the position of a true Salvation Army Officer is the most useful, honourable, God-approved position that they or any mother's girls can possibly fill.

With such training, you will not be surprised to hear that they embraced the self-denial and hardship of an Officer's life, and are now fighting their way as Officers, proud of the privilege they enjoy of living on an Officer's fare, fighting an Officer's battles, and looking up for an Officer's reward.

Now, if they had been your granddaughters, how would you have acted? Would you not have done just the same as your general did? What do you say?

Well, so far so good. But may I not ask whether you are acting on the same principle with your wife, and with your daughters, and granddaughters, if you have any, as I have done with mine.

Possibly, those under your control may not have been endowed with the same natural gifts and accomplishments. But are you willing for them to occupy the same position and do the same work, so far as they are capable, as mine are doing?

Have you done your best to discover what abilities your loved ones do possess? Have you furnished them with such means of improvement as lie within your reach?

Have you encouraged them to aspire after the work for which you feel they possess capacity?



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All I ask is – let us find out the powers of our woman Comrades, whether they belong to our own families or not, and give them the chance to use those powers for the promotion of the glory of God and for the Salvation of the world.

Your affectionate General,

William Booth.