



The
William Booth
Collection

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

By
THE GENERAL

The 'Messages' or Letters printed on the following pages were written in 1907-8 by our beloved Founder to the Soldiers of The Salvation Army. They were to cast in the form in which they appear here, so that, as one item of the Service, they could be read to our people at some convenient weekly gathering – Sunday morning usually being chosen.

The necessity of making the Letters brief, and the difficulty of continuing a line of thought from one week to another, no doubt made against their success as literary productions. Nevertheless, for their direct and simple language; their practical guidance towards a rule of holy living for those to whom they were addressed, and their deep insight into the needs of ordinary people who wish to serve God and bless their fellows, they are entitled to be placed among the writings of the first order.

I warmly commend them, not only to the Soldiers of The Army, but also to our Officers everywhere. They contain much of the pure milk of Salvationism, and will, I believe, help every sincere reader to better understand the will of God and better to know his own heart.

Two thoughts especially seem to influence these Messages. First – that the most important matter which can concern the human mind is our relationship to God – our true appearance in His sight – our rightness – our harmony with His will – our submission to Him – our love for His law – our assurance of His favour. This is the true light which shines alike in the most thoughtful and the most practical of these pages.

William Booth had a perfect horror of a religious life which is not carried in its fullness into the daily relationships of those who profess it. He demanded that love to God should make men better workmen, better neighbors, better masters, better servants, better fathers, better in everything at home or abroad. He had no use for those who profess to believe in a God Who loves all men while they can use men for their own selfish aims – can abuse or neglect them, or can seek their approval while leaving them to perish in their sins. But all the same, behind all this



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there was the vision of the true prophet, that the personal revelation of a Living Saviour was the first, the great, the supreme need.

And secondly – these Letters mark the spirit of their author’s own life in their call for the service of our fellows. Here will be found evidence of the radical – the vital – distinction which he ever drew between well-meaning and well-doing in the service of God and man. How often I have heard him cry out, in tones not unmixed with a kind of anguish, when he has been pleading now with the individual – now with the multitude – ‘Oh, do something; for God’s sake, you must do something to help Jesus Christ to rescue the people from their sins.’ There was a kind of impetus – it seemed at times almost irrational – contempt for the mere talkers. Over his own long life in all its developments might be written – Action, Action, Action.

Well, here is that same call to us who follow him – especially to us who loved him. And these Letters reveal his quick comprehension of the fact that that action must be seen not merely in the open and outward struggle for the emancipation of soul – ‘pulling them out of the fire’ – but in the seclusion of home and common-place life amid the limitations of sickness and poverty, amongst the narrowing surroundings of misery and darkness; yes, in the daily, hourly, duty done.

International Headquarters,
London.
April, 1921