

## THE GRACE OF GRATITUDE

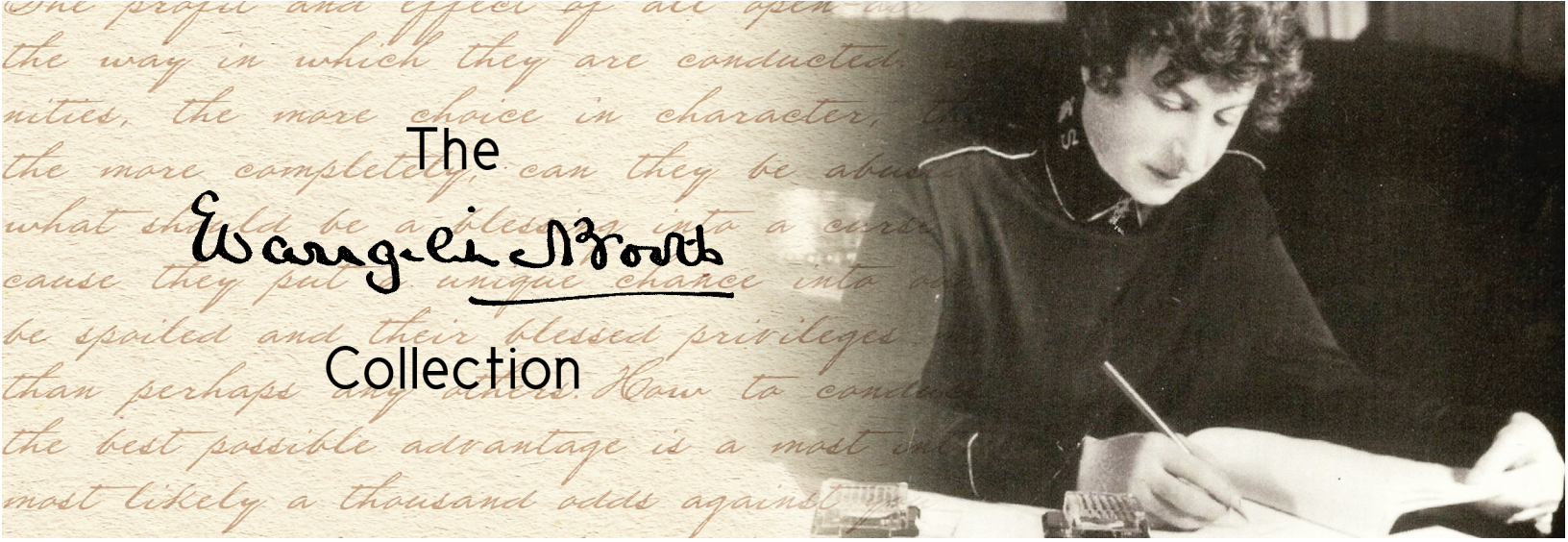
### A Thanksgiving Reflection

The proclamation of praise affects us at this Thanksgiving season. We must be responsive to the call that our honored President issues; and, indeed, I venture to affirm that of all the people who compose the citizenry of this mighty Republic none will more consistently receive and more whole-heartedly enter into the spirit of that proclamation than will the soldiers of The Salvation Army. It is meet that it should be so, for gratitude is one of the distinguishing features of Salvationism, and what is a habit of life is more easily emphasized one day in the year. Let us then humbly bow before our Heavenly Father, the Giver of all good, and join most heartily in the national thanksgiving to which we are called. I am quite sure that a people never had more occasion for special thanksgiving than have we, the American nation, at this time, when so large a part of the family of nations is engaged in such mortal struggle.

It seems to me that ingratitude is quite a common fault, and it is as mean as it is common. So much blessing is poured forth from the hand of God, and that in such a lavish way, and so many people take it as a matter of course, without thinking of returning thanks to the Author. This common fault we must avoid, and the grace of gratitude must more than ever mark our lives.

While thinking about this matter it seemed to me that many personal fall into this fault because they fail to understand that God's care is personal and particular, rather than general and common, and so, thoughtlessly, they take their blessings as a matter of just the ordinary and common good, without realizing that in an individual sense the Heavenly Father has made them the subjects of special care, and that in a personal sense they owe a debt of gratitude.

Yet nothing is more clearly taught than the personal nature of the care of our God. "Your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need," said Jesus, and this distinguishes care was illustrated by the sparrow's fall, with the assurance that "not one" so falls without the Heavenly Father knowing; and again, "The very hairs of your head are all numbered," betokens the minute and personal character of the Father's care. The Bible abounds with similar statements, all



indicating the same fact, and we must be entirely free from that very common fault of thoughtlessness so promotive of ingratitude.

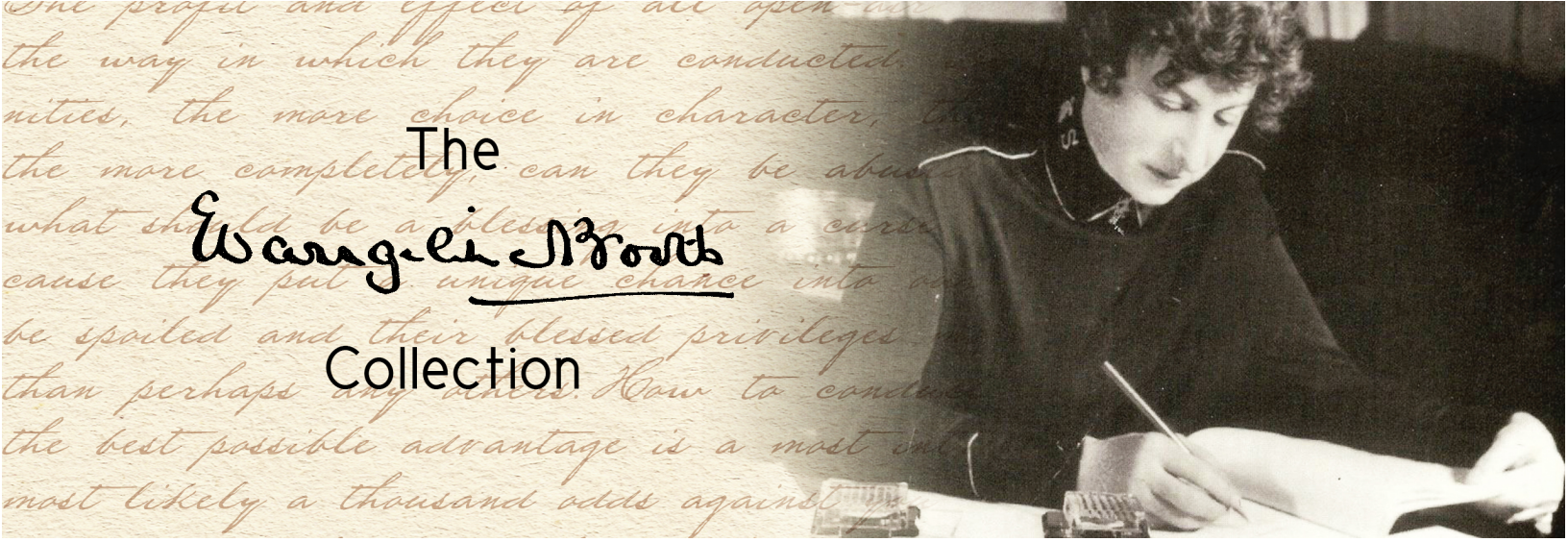
Much more must we be free from the ungrateful spirit which complains and murmurs and repines. To possess such a spirit were a shame to anyone, and especially is it so to a Salvationist. I have read the fable of the woodman who found a serpent, cold and frozen, and took it to his bosom and then to his home and fire, where it was warmed and brought back to life, and then at once it stuck its venomous fangs into the woodman's child. The moral was: "No gratitude from the wicked." It is certain that the complaining, repining spirit of some seems so to approach malice and enmity of heart and is altogether so foreign to the first principles of Salvationism as to make it quite out of place within our ranks. It is given us rather to show the spirit of the man who, when cured of his leprosy, returned to Jesus to give thanks. Let me help you to think of him with a view to emulating his spirit.

There were ten possessed of a common sorrow – they were all lepers. Shut away from the company of men, they companioned together. Distinctions were lost sight of in their affliction. Leprosy was a grim leveler. Jew and Samaritan lived together in their desolation. They all "stood far off," and they all "lifted up their voices" and prayed the same prayer, and they all received the same answering instruction, and all turned toward the priest and were journeying, when they were all cleaned.

"And one of them" – what a severance! For months, and probably years, they had ranged those hill or marches on that frontier country, exiles and outcasts, and now they were cleansed, "and one of them" – just one – was joined by Gratitude. She took his arm and flooded his being, and filled his soul and turned him round and winged his feet and lifted his song until the hills rang with the echoes of his "loud voice," glorifying God, and finally, overwhelmed, he "fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks," and that adoring, prostrate, grateful soul, we are told, was a Samaritan.

"Where are the nine?" asked the gracious Master. "Were there none found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger?" And vacancy and silence answered, "None." Just one in the ten, and it seems to me that this ratio is strikingly maintained even today, for multitudes are





blessed, but gratitude languishes within them. Ingratitude is a very common sin, while gratitude is the sign of a noble soul. Let us give thanks. David said: "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?" and surely the problem is equally ours when we try to cast the mighty sum. Shall I do less than did David? He found the answer to his question in the "cup of Salvation," in calling upon the name of the Lord and in paying his vows. Let us do likewise, and by it show the grace of gratitude.

(November 27<sup>th</sup>, 1915)