

The General of Militant Peace

BY
CHARLES EDWARD RUSSELL



MRS. CATHERINE MUMFORD BOOTH.

THIS Easter season brings to General William Booth, founder and head of the Salvation Army, his eightieth birthday.

A very remarkable man—the whole, I think the most remarkable man of his times—for sixty-five years he has toiled without ceasing for the one purpose of helping his fellow men, as, according to his faith, they needed help. In these labors he has created from his own indefatigable brain the great, wonderful, worldwide, perfectly organized, smoothly working, efficient, self-offered, tireless, restless Salvation Army, whose flag now flies in fifty-four different countries and colonies, whose officers number 16,199, whose 8,358 corps and outposts carry on a gigantic and faultless plan of campaign in thirty-one different languages and whose converts and beneficiaries, helped men and rescued women, saved children and lightened lives, if any one could count them, would mount into millions upon millions.

And now he has crowned it all with a unique beneficence—a University of Humanity, a great, broad school he has planned in which to train men and women to deal with misfortune. He begins the raising of the endowment fund of \$1,000,000 on his birthday and has planned branches for New York and Chicago.

All this is the product of one man's heart and brain. I do not know that, as a matter of fact, any other man ever stood in any such position toward the world. Merely as an example of the potentiality of human achievement I doubt if it is possible to cite anything so extraordinary in history. With General Booth's fundamental theology one may have no particular sympathy, and yet one is bound to admit that even to the worldling the grandeur, the extent and the impeccable success of this man's life work seem on inspection something overwhelming. We test by results.

You ought to know this man; he is good to know; he raises the human average. Let me see if I can help you to his acquaintance.

Here is the worst region of a dreadful slum in the heart of an English factory city, on all sides the brooding darkness of poverty, dismal streets, forlorn dwellings, hopeless people; at a corner a crowd of the ragged and dirty; in the center thereof, on an up-turned box, a singularly handsome and passionately earnest boy preaching. He is sixteen years old or thereabout, slender of frame, clear of voice, wonderfully ready of speech. His gray eyes burn and glow. There is a kind of apostolic flame in every word.

While he pleads the crowd, products of the savage conditions of modern life and debased by brutish toil, jeer and laugh and offer comment of the heathen order of wit. Finding these have no effect, some ruffians hurl at the young preacher pebbles, decayed vegetables, clods, two or three dead cats. Some of the missiles hit him in the face, some on the body, some go wide. He shows not the least resentment; he only smiles in a kindly, patient way, very moving, and goes on preaching as before. At the end he brushes from his clothes the marks of the missiles and cordially invites his hearers to go with him to the chapel.

A ragged rout follows him, part curious, part defiant, part touched with the fire and pathos of the young man's fervent appeal. So wreathed and tattered is the appearance of these people from the slums that at the respectable chapel they are turned from the front door and obliged to enter at the rear of the building. The young man leads them in, finds benches for them, seats himself among them. At every opportunity he gives them words of comfort and cheer, presses their hands, urges upon them the hope and security of the Christian. He goes among them, encouraging all. As the

services begin he takes his place as one of them. He has his mind upon his Master, this young man; he remembers the friend of publicans and sinners.

In the same English city of factories and slums there is great excitement and a practical half holiday. The city is decorated. Many thousand people go out upon the country highway and line it, waiting for some one. Sick persons are brought upon beds and litters and laid by the side of the road. It makes one think of scenes in the New Testament. An old man comes in an automobile, a beautiful old man, looking like one of the saints. He has snow white hair and a long snow white beard and a beautiful, kindly, gentle face, full of all gentle thoughts that man may think, without guile, without one sordid or sensual cross, all good and kindly. The people cheer wildly when he comes and crowd around him to touch his hand or hear him say a word. The sick on the beds are lifted up for his blessing. He says something to each, and each is visibly cheered and lightened by his words. Some persons raise a hymn, ten thousand throats take it up, and so between dense crowds of applauding people the old man in the automobile enters the city, like a famous saint or apostle in the first days of the church. The city authorities receive him with every mark of respect; without dissent all men do him honor; a speaker refers to him as the foremost of the world's living philanthropists and benefactors; unanimous applause greets the remark.

The boy preacher stood in the slum street and the old man reverend and venerated are one person; the place is the same, the lacemaking city of Nottingham, and the two scenes are perfectly typical of the wonderful life of William Booth, general of the Salvation Army, that now encircles the extent and whose labors the sun never sets, whose drumbeat is literally heard around the world.

There is no more astounding career in all the records nor in all the fiction. About it, as about the man himself, there is something that even to us of the world does not seem within the range of human ordination. No king, no emperor and no captain of industry wields a power comparable to this man's. In all the world is no other organization—civil, military or industrial—that for order, method, system, energy and enthusiasm is fit to compare with this. Not even the German army works with a precision so faultless and a discipline so admirable. Looking impartially at these things, I am not perfectly sure that the human mind and the human heart, working together and charged with love and feeling, unselfish and unremitting, have any particular limits. If one man so inspired can do these things, where shall we set the bounds to feeling and thought?

What were the endowment and environment of this masterful man? His father was a prosperous tradesman in a small way in this same city of Nottingham, where William Booth was born. His mother was a saintly and gentle soul, widowed when the boy was still young, then forward wrapped up in him. His ancestry was commonplace, which is to say the very best, everything good on this earth having come from plain people. He had careful home training, but no great schooling, for the elder Booth lost all his money, and William must go at an early age to work. Doubtless this was likewise an advantage. The glaciers of scholasticism could hardly have chilled a fire so fierce as burned in this bosom, but surely they could in no way have helped it.

The family was orthodox in the Establishment of England, but of liberal views. One night when home he passed a Wesleyan chapel where services were being held. He thought he would like to see what such serv-

ices were like and looked in. Something about the ardent fervor of the worshippers aroused his interest. He remained until the close of the meeting and returned to the next. The more he saw the more he was impressed. In the end he underwent what is called conversion, and, with his mother's full consent, became a member of the Methodist church.

At once he asked for work that he might share with others the peculiar satisfaction and joy that he felt in his new relation—a characteristic desire, since he has all his life craved employment as other men crave repose and has all his life held the first object of his industry to be his fellow man. They gave him work in the slums, particularly a place called the Narrow Meadows—most inappropriately, since nothing like meadows exists within miles, and the terrible region is closely packed with the grimy and forbidding houses of the poorest people in Nottingham. It was here, a beardless boy, without experience or training, lifting up his voice to some of the most melancholy wrecks on the human tide, that he began his career as a preacher, stoned and derided and reviled for his pains, offering a heart filled with sincere and absolute love of his kind and taking with unflinching submission the buffets in his face.

He was employed as a clerk in the daytime; it was only in the evening after 8 o'clock that he was free to preach. He must be at his work early in the morning, and his health was so frail that his friends often despaired of him, and a physician solemnly warned him against exposure or over-exertion. All these fears and suggestions he resolutely put aside, pursuing without hesitation the course he had charted for himself and looking calmly upon his life or his death if he could win men to what he was convinced was the state of salvation. A young friend and coworker fell at his side, stricken dead in the prayer meeting. If all accounts were true it should be Booth's own turn next. With unconcern he viewed that imminent probability; he would go when the Lord called him; meantime he would rest not, but save souls.

These were the days, from sixteen to twenty, when, still earning his living in his commercial employment, he was devoting his nights to street preaching in the byways and purlieus of the Nottingham slums. At the end of his address he would at first invite his hearers into some house where a cottage meeting was in progress. Soon his followers became too numerous to be contained in any house, and he led them to the chapel, where rude benches were procured for their separate occupation and where he sat among them. Even then, so young, he was filled to the brim with one magnificent thought above all others—to wit, that the least fortunate most needed help and that as there was no depth of degradation that could separate man from the love of God there was none that could separate any man from the love and care of his brother. I do not know that there is a nobler conception, and this man was all in fire with it.

Discerning persons, taking note of the moving eloquence and power of this young man, urged him to enter the ministry. His physician examined him and told him that with such a physique he could not for twelve months endure a minister's life. Thus

debarred from entering college, he kept on undismayed, fighting for souls in the slums.

When he was twenty years old he had a chance for employment at better wages in London and moved thither. Without delay he plunged into religious work in the great city, preaching in local pulpits, in the streets or wherever he could find an audience. He must have had even then an extraordinary power of oratory, for almost at once he made an impression and soon came to be a marked man.

While thus employed coincidental fate, or, as he would say, Providence, led him to the second great inspiration of his life. One Sunday he was invited to supply the pulpit of a small chapel in Clapham. In the audience was a young woman named Catherine Mumford. She thought William Booth's sermon the finest effort of the kind she had ever heard. She said so some time afterward to a man who knew Booth. Later William Booth and Catherine Mumford met at this man's house, fell in love with each other and after some years of courtship were married. There could not be imagined a happier union. Mrs. Booth was in all ways an extraordinary as her husband, and yet they harmonized exactly. She was of his faith; she had all his fervor concerning the saving of souls; she, too, believed that nothing else in life was of any importance, and hand in hand the two consecrated themselves wholly to that work. Until her death, in 1890, an event that called forth such tributes as few women have ever had, Catherine Booth labored in what she felt to be the highest cause, addressing meetings, planning campaigns, devising improved methods, while she reared her children in her own creed and cheered, sustained and inspired her husband.

On May 29, 1858, William Booth was ordained a minister of the Methodist church, and for the next two and a half years he traveled through England as an evangelist, holding revival meetings in many of the principal cities. This was the work that he loved and to which, by a solemn covenant with the conference, he was to be assigned. At the meeting of the conference in 1861 the question arose whether this compact should be kept or whether William Booth should be assigned to a local pastorate. Booth felt very deeply about the matter, and so did his wife, their idea being that their chief chance to save souls lay in evangelical labors. The conference split on the issue. A compromise was suggested. Booth, like all other strong and sincere men, did not believe in compromises; to his mind a man was either right or wrong, and there was nothing between. Nevertheless this compromise seemed to be much esteemed by the conference. It was put to a vote. It was about to carry when a quiet, strong faced woman arose in the gallery, lifted one hand above her head and startled the sedate conference with one word:

"Never!"

Then she turned and moved toward the exit. It was Catherine Booth. At the same instant her husband, on the floor beneath, seized his hat and made for the door. And so hand in hand they went out of the church without a charge, without employment and without a dollar.

On the night of July 5, 1865, he began work in an old tent, pitched in a deserted burial ground in

the heart of the most forlorn and savage region on this earth—Whitechapel. There, at his own initiative and on his own faith, he established his own mission, preaching with open arms and overflowing heart to the lowest of all human creatures, a rotten old tent for a church, a box for a pulpit, himself and his wife for the church organization—preached there burning words to growing crowds. After a time he moved the tent farther east in the slum region to a place called (not inappropriately) Mile End Waste, where he labored on until the winds and the rains tore his old tent to pieces. Not in the least dismayed, he secured a place that was used on week nights as a dancing saloon. This proving too small, he moved to an old wool warehouse, through the gaping windows of which the rowdy boys were wont to throw sticks, stones and even lighted freerackers upon the heads of the worshippers. Yet the crowd steadily increased. After a time William Booth made a bold stroke. He hired for Sunday a most disreputable theater, and on the stage he massed scores of men and women that had been notorious as the toughest persons in the district and were now converted—thieves, bullies, prizefighters, and worse—and before this indubitable object lesson Mile End road surrendered. Here were "Bill the Bruiser" and "Maggie Moll" turned into decent and penitent citizens, and before such wonders the road was very still.

The news of William Booth's success spread all through the east end and farther. Branches of the mission became efficient mission workers. Theaters, halls, tents, were pressed into use. The mission in Mile End Waste became the center of a new movement, undenominational, earnest, vigorous, restless and directed most toward the help of the least fortunate. A rich man offered \$50,000 to build a hall on conditions that would admit Mr. Booth's freedom of speech and action. Booth declined and fought on in his own way. In a few years the number of missions and of workers had grown so great that he summoned a conference of his fellow evangelists. In effect and without his volition he had practically founded a new movement in religion and one so great and so rapidly growing that no man could foresee where it would cease, for it was throughout animated with the exalted fire and absolute devotion of the founder, which was a faith able to remove mountains.

In January, 1877, the movement had reached a point where a definite polity and a new organization of wider scope were required, and the end of that year saw the founding of the Salvation Army. Most of us have a vague notion that the Salvation Army was deliberately planned to utilize the glamour that militiamen and soldierly trappings have for the English populace. As a matter of fact, the army was of accidental origin, and its militant aspects, titles, organization and methods have grown upon it without prevision or design. The adoption of the name came about in a curiously unpremeditated way. As the head of the new movement, Booth had many cares and was obliged to hire secretaries. One day he was walking up and down his study, dictating, when he used these words: "The Christian mission is a volunteer army." He paused in his dictation and look-

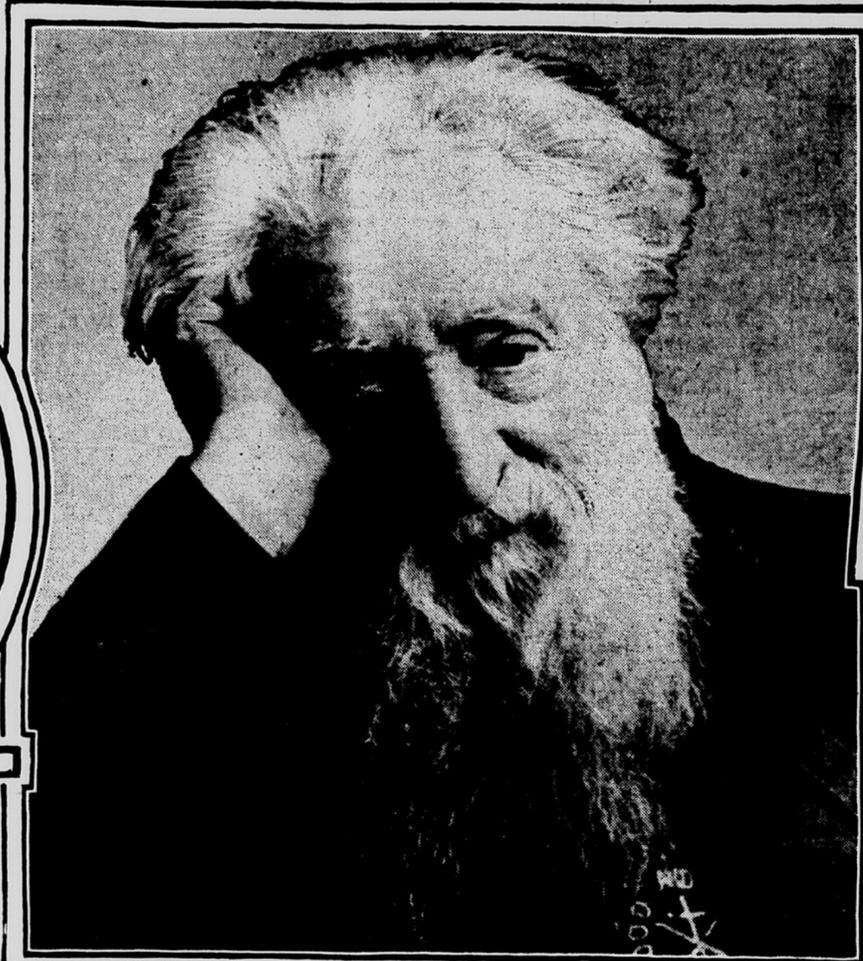
ed thoughtfully over his secretary's shoulder at the written line, took up the pen, scored out the word "volunteer" and wrote above it "salvation" and went on dictating. That was the first time the term was used, and it made such an impression that it began insensibly to be thought of as an appropriate name for the mission; it grew upon the imagination of men; they liked it; finally they adopted it.

The use of titles developed similarly. One of the mission evangelists, preaching to his fishermen of Whiteby, had been called "captain;" other mission evangelists came to be known by the same title. To call them "reverend" when they were chiefly laymen was not feasible, whereas merely "Mr." of course, was no appropriate designation. The military nomenclature came handily in men's mouths. As William Booth was the head of the movement, men began to call him "general." The title seemed admirably to fit him because of his commanding figure and presence, his great energy and ready resources, his militant attitude toward the evil. The rest of the military organization, the division of the army into corps and commands, the marching bands and uniforms came of themselves.

Rapidly the movement spread all about the British islands. From the meeting of outcasts in the rotten tent in Whitechapel had grown a new and tremendous force, directed, animated, inspired by one man engrossed in one great idea. Formalists were horrified at the unconventional methods of these soul savers. General Booth himself was the chief target of abuse. Men accused him of playing for his own personal profit upon the popular appetite for war. He was said to be accumulating personal wealth from the collections taken in support of the mission work. The churches often bitterly assailed the army. Some clergymen seemed more incensed against it than against evil itself. Upon all these manifestations General Booth looked unmoved. He had the armor against attack that only the good man can ever come by, which is the knowledge of pure intentions. He went on unflinchingly with his great work, spreading it into every town, village and hamlet. "Posts" of the Salvation Army sprang up everywhere; "barracks" were built; the soldiers were sent forth to daily attacks upon evil conditions; rescue work in the slums was put for the first time upon the basis of a scientific plan; thousands upon thousands of young men and young women enrolled themselves in the ranks of the army.

Great Britain having been well organized, the army extended its operations to India, Canada and the United States. It moved upon France and entered Paris. From that time it has spread steadily around the world. Germany and the Scandinavian countries were quickly organized. One nation after another was invaded until now the Salvation Army flag flies and the Salvation Army march is heard in every country in Europe except in Russia, and it would seem as if the time was nearly ripe for the entering of that country.

The American division is one of the most important departments. General Booth had always entertained a deep affection for America. One of his early inspirations had been an American evangelist named Caughy, who was then traveling in England and was tracing great crowds, and for Caugh-



GENERAL WILLIAM BOOTH.



EVA BOOTH.

ey's sake and for other reasons he had thought often of the American field. The record of the army here was not different from its record elsewhere. It took root at once because it contained a vital principle and because it was inspired by a man with a genius for leadership, a man to whom organization, method, system and indefatigable effort were natural gifts.

The War Cry, the official organ of the army, is published in twenty languages and in countries as remote as Iceland and Argentina. The circulation of the army's periodicals is more than a million copies an issue.

The army maintains 213 shelters and food depots, 18 homes for released convicts, 117 rescue homes for women, 860 social institutions. It has supplied in one year almost 10,000,000 free meals and 5,702,416 beds.

In this country it has 889 corps and outposts, 79 workmen's hotels, 39 industrial homes, 24 slum posts, 3 farm colonies for the unemployed, 4 children's homes, 24 rescue homes, laundries, workshops and industries of many kinds for the unfortunate.

In the year ended Sept. 30, 1908, it rescued 1,614 women. Its indoor meetings had a total attendance of 10,105,122.

You should see him and hear him speak to understand what has made him the greatest single power in the world. You should note him when he comes forward to address one of his monster audiences—10,000 eager people hanging breathless upon his words. There he stands before them, eighty years old and perfectly erect, an unforgettable figure, with his tall, commanding presence, his snow white beard and snow white hair, his fine, delicate, earnest face, his splendid blazing eyes, his beautiful hands, his clear skin, finely tinted as with perfect health. He speaks without an effort, his mellow voice reaching every person in even the farthest corner of the hall. Fluently and easily he goes on, the winged sentences flying like shafts from his lips, and as he speaks the whole audience is swayed to his will, perfectly, absolutely. He thunders at sin and its penalty, and all his hearers sit appalled. His voice falls almost to a whisper as he tells of divine love. He makes them laugh with a story and cry over the case of some victim of the slums—beyond any doubt a very great orator, man born to lead other men, to melt stubborn hearts and convince stubborn minds, a powerful, acute, resourceful intellect.

All the trifle of calumny and misunderstanding passed long ago. His assiduity and consecration have won over detractors. Probably no other living man has so large a measure of the world's good will. He is the friend of rulers, presidents and kings as of the masses of men. When he came to the United States President Roosevelt paid him an extraordinary tribute; in Japan he had the exceedingly rare honor of a personal interview with the mikado; in England King Edward has often consulted him. In 1907 Oxford conferred upon him the degree of D. C. L. A long list of other famous men received honors at the same time—the prime minister, statesmen, scientists and our Mark Twain. The reception that was given to General Booth stood out as the most striking feature of the day. The undergraduates hailed him as "England's grandest old man," and for him there was nothing but praise and good will.

He works almost incessantly. Even at eighty he will not spare himself. When he travels by steamship he has with him a specially constructed deck chair that enables him to write as if at a desk; when he travels by railroad an arrangement of straps allows him to overcome the jar and motion of the car and continue his writing. He is the head and life and soul of the whole enterprise; he directs and writes for the various War Cry; he plans and leads the whole campaign. His health is almost perfect. Except for a cataract on one of his eyes, happily removed, he has had no ailment. For twenty years he has been a vegetarian, and all his life he has lived abstemiously. Dietists will doubtless find in these facts the secret of his wonderful health and strength; but, as a matter of fact, it seems to be true that those who pursue exalted aims, strange selfishness, think pure and sweet thoughts and live for mankind are about the only persons that know what health is.