



The *Booth* Collection



IV. CALLED FROM THE BAR.

"But where shall you get your preachers, Mr. Booth?" asked a friend one day, when the General Superintendent of the Christian Mission was declaring his intention to open new stations. "Out of the public-houses," was the prompt reply, and, thank God, the boast has been amply justified thousands of times over.

"Oh," said a charming old woman in my hearing the other Sunday, "I do bless God for the day, four years ago, when The Army came along, as I stood in the public-house, with my glass of gin before me. Yes, it was, dear friends, but, bless God, I want no more of that now. My poor old husband is only a street-sweeper, but, bless the Lord, we are happy. Why, bless you, if I could only sing the same as I feel it inside, you would all say I was a nightingale," and certainly the old saint looked it, as, under her weight of over threescore years, she lifted up her voice and clapped her hands with girlish gladness. "When my husband and me," she added, "had plenty of money, I have known what it was to want. I have known an empty cupboard then; but now, bless God, when he was weeks out of work, I never wanted for anything, and I never begged of anybody either."

The leader of the meeting might well rejoice to hear such testimonies, for, when I first knew him, Little Drunken Bill, of Bethnal Green, was a wretched man indeed. Never can I forget the sight of that poor fellow at the funeral of one of our evangelists, straggling along with some of his drunken companions (one, at least, of whom is now a preacher of righteousness as well as himself), as, lost to all sense of decency, they elbowed the processionists, heaping reproaches and menaces on the Booth family and the Mission generally, barely restrained by force, again and again, from breaking up the ranks of the mourners.

But ever since the day when Marshal Booth, then a lad of sixteen years of age, by arrangement with the poor drunkard's wife, cornered and almost forced him to his knees in his own home, Little Bill has been an equally prominent champion of the Lord. It was against him that the real, original, first "Skeleton Army" was organised in that most respectable watering-place, 'Weston-super-Mare. It was on behalf of Little Bill, whom the magistrates had sent to Shepton Mallet Jail because he would not allow the Skeletons to stop his marching out to proclaim Salvation, that



The *Bill Raitton* Collection



we made our first appeal to the Court of Queen's Bench, and won our first decisive victory against the misapplication of the law, Her Majesty's judges deciding that Little Bill, formerly of the Bethnal Green public-houses, must be allowed to lead as many ex-drunkards and others as he could induce to follow him, singing about Jesus through the streets of any place within Her Majesty's dominions.

Eleven years ago, when our services were first commenced in the town of Wellingborough, you might have seen amongst the swearing, drinking young men who came out of the public-houses from time to time to sneer and shout at our open-air meetings, Tom Coombes, then only sixteen years of age, but a thoroughly practised quoit, skittle and card-player, and gambler. Induced, however, to attend service one evening, the Spirit of God so laid hold of him that he trembled from head to foot, and the same night, with two more sought and found mercy. The very next night he went to the open-air meeting and became as thoroughly committed to the war on the Lord's side as he had been on the other. Some time after this, at a meeting held by the Chief, he gave himself up altogether to God, and was soon after called out into the field, where, after some training as a Lieutenant and various other experiences, he went as Captain to North Shields, where he encountered desperate opposition, but formed a good corps. Two thousand people gathered at the station to witness his departure for Newport, Monmouthshire, where "Happy Tom" soon became notorious enough.

It was here, that when he had found it impossible to obtain a congregation in his hall, he got a rope, made a noose, put it round Lieutenant Payne's neck, and led him round the town during the day, promising to exhibit him at night. From that time the tide turned, a congregation was gained, and sinners saved. "Happy Tom" was afterwards to be Major in command of all our South Wales corps, and he is now at the head of one of the largest divisions of The Salvation Army outside the United Kingdom, having under his leadership, in Canada, 169 corps with 487 officers.

One night a poor drunkard of good family, the son of a Liverpool merchant, who had lost character, position, friends, and almost life itself, through the terrible craving for the drink, was walking along the streets of Liverpool on his way to the Mersey, with thoughts of suicide filling his reeling brain when he was met in the street and led into the workshop of a poor coloured



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carpenter, commonly known among the Salvationists as our "Black Bishop." Here he met with Captain Smith, now our Commissioner in the United States, and being persuaded by the happy couple that there was a new life for him if he would but give up sin with full purpose of heart, he knelt with them in the cellar and cried for mercy, His troubled soul was soon at rest, and he became one of our happiest and most valuable officers For some time he was A.D.C. to Major Smith, while in command of the London Division; but, as in too many such cases, the curse of old sins made itself felt in his body, in spite of the grand deliverance he had experienced in his soul, and after a long illness he was sent as a last resource to New Zealand, where, thank God, he recovered strength and health to such an extent as to become a valuable helper on the staff. Removed in course of time with his Major to New South Wales, he is at the present time, during the absence of the former through illness, in charge of 42 corps and 71 officers in that Colony. May he be able to lead every Soldier there as energetically and successfully as thousands can remember his helping them here –

"Down where the living waters flow."

Some four or five years ago in the United States there was a saloon keeper in Bridgeport, Connecticut, outside whose door an aged Christian woman stood alone to preach. The man was ashamed, as he saw others mocking her, that he could not go and take his stand by her side. He went into the cellar to weep and pray; but, although he became so miserable as to sell out his business, for two years afterwards he remained a wretched wanderer without God, often on the brink of suicide. One day going into a drinking saloon near The Salvation Army barracks, New York, the landlord explained a mocking inscription which he found on one table, "Salvation sour," to mean " we've got The Salvation Army up there, who are a lot of fanatics and fools." Presently the sound of the big drum was heard and the poor drunkard thought he must go and see what these fools were like. The following Sunday, struggling against the mighty power of God urging him to repentance, he drank deeply, but passing along the street in a partially intoxicated state he seemed to be irresistibly drawn into the Barracks, In the course of the meeting he was somewhat sobered, and at 10.30 p.m. he rose from the penitent-form praising God for salvation. He went straight home, threw his pipe and tobacco in the stove and his wife, thinking he had gone crazy, ran to pull them out. Some time after this a dead set was made upon him in the boiler-yard where he worked. A foreman especially cursed and swore at him with a



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view to put him out of temper. He struck the man, and became a backslider for a week; but the Captain of the corps missed him from the meeting, hunted him up, and he gave himself again, and this time more fully than ever, up to God, got a clean heart, and from that hour has been a glorious worker for the salvation of souls.

One of the most striking figures at a general gathering of our soldiers at which I was present some years ago was "Drummer Bob" from Portsmouth. Upon enquiry I learnt that this fine, tall fellow had been one of the worst of sinners, having not only gone through the ordinary course of drinking and revelry, but having got into prison for some of his misdeeds, and been separated from his wife as a result of the fearful life he had led. Attracted by The Army, however, he had become a new man, had been living for a considerable time the glorious life which I saw him enjoying, and laboring, whenever he had opportunity to visit Southampton, where she was living, to lead his wife also to the Saviour. Imagine my joy when I was told some months afterwards that a poor woman kneeling at the penitent-form in Southampton was the famous Bob Hames's wife! Of course they were soon together again, and then the way was opened for Bob to give up his life altogether to the work he loved so much. For some years now he has been Captain in The Salvation Army, enduring hardships and fighting a good fight for the Heavenly Master. When in command at Aldershot he was imprisoned on one of the usual pretexts about the open-air work, and then it was Bob Hames's wife who wrote us:

"We have had the joy of seeing seven of our persecutors won for Jesus since Saturday. My husband has won their hearts towards us by patience, forbearance and love, and find that although they are the so-called roughs, they have soft hearts when spoken to of Jesus' love. When we once gain their love we can soon win them for Jesus.

"This is making the Soldiers more determined to go forward, and waking other professing Christians. I feel there are many prayers offered to God on our behalf, and I am sure He is answering them, for I could not stand in my own strength under all trials. I feel it good to say, My times, O Lord, are in Thy hands, and His blessed promise is, 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.'

"EMMA JANE HAMES, Captain Bob's Wife."



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At Blyth, in the far North, when The Army, or the "Hallelujahs," as they were locally called, first arrived, many of the drunkards of the town, after attending the services, would go back to the public-house to make mockery together of what they had seen, even holding sham prayer meetings, and pretending to lead penitents to seek for mercy there. It was while taking part in just such a scene that poor Jack Stoker, one of the most reckless drinking gamblers in the town, was convinced that there must be something in the "Hallelujahs" after all.

So one night he went to see them again, and before he left the meeting the notorious sinner had become a happy soldier of Jesus Christ. The astounding news spread like wildfire through the place, and night after night his old mates, and those who knew him and who did not, crowded to listen outdoors and in while Jack declared what great things the Lord had done for him. Eighteen months later he became an Officer, and if you want to know how God has used him during the years that have passed since then, inquire at Monkwearmouth, where the impression made upon the population during his time was such that a barracks holding 2,000 people was built for the use of the congregation that God enabled him and his wife to raise there.

But, generally speaking, the despair of reformers is the drunken woman. They say a drunken man may, indeed, be changed for life; but a woman, never. Thank God, many of those who have been prominent women speakers in The Army's history have been called out of the public-house, like so many of their brothers. Amongst the poor East-End women whose love of drink not only led them into these places, but made them capable of fighting on any provocation, was Mrs. Shepherd.

When, eighteen years ago, the Mission began to march about Poplar, she was engaged in shopping one Sunday morning as the procession passed by. A poor fallen girl who was in the shop began to sneer and laugh at the Missioners until the Welsh woman, whose mother had been truly godly, could endure it no longer.

"My girl," said she "if you were like those people, you would not be leading the miserable life you are to-day." This, of course, brought out a stinging retort, and Mrs. Shepherd put down her purchases and prepared to fight the matter out, had not the bystanders interfered. A few days later being near the old wooden shed, she ventured in, and saw a man who had not long before



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been one of the vilest swearers in the neighborhood, praying with the greatest energy. By-and-by, the evangelist in charge, the present Colonel Dowdle, came in.

"Who is that man?" asked Mrs. Shepherd. "He is the preacher here" answered someone. "He a preacher! he's more like a butcher than a preacher," she replied; but, before the "preaching" was over, the poor woman was made to feel her guilt and danger in such a way that she needed no persuading to go to the penitent-form. Going home, after the service, she looked at her three little children in bed, and prayed God to help her to be a true mother to them, instead of "training them for the devil;" and, although it was eleven o'clock, she insisted on their getting up at once to begin to-pray.

"Oh, mother," said the oldest one, five years old, "What shall I do?" for they had never heard anything about praying before. The mother herself was crying and sobbing, so that she could make no reply, and all four were soon crying together, to such an extent that the landlady, an Irishwoman, came running up, thinking that the children were being killed. Throwing up her hands, she exclaimed, as she looked at the kneeling group, "Get to bed with you; shure ye're going mad."

The mother could only answer, "I have been a bad woman, and have never led my children to Christ and we're going to hell," adding an entreaty to the Irishwoman to kneel and pray with them. This so frightened her that she ran away but it had the effect of arousing her sleeping conscience, so that she soon became in earnest about her soul as well.

Mrs. Shepherd remained under conviction for some time. One day, however, some little boys passing by the yard where she was at work, singing in processional form, in imitation of The Mission, sent the lines

"I do believe, I will believe,
That Jesus died for me,"

ringing right into her heart, and there and then she fell on her knees, and exclaimed, "Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!" Ever since that day the poor woman has been a witness for Christ, and that often to thousands at a time; and each of the three daughters dragged out of bed that night



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became Officers of The Army. It was this family who were instrumental in commencing the grand work in the Rhondda Valley, South Wales, and we trust that the mother will yet be spared to see a grander work still wrought by the use of her native language.

Strange to say, when, on the first Saturday night after arriving in Aberdare, Mrs. Shepherd went out trembling to commence her first open-air service as an Officer, it was on the doorstep of a public-house that she was offered her first stand.

When the first Hallelujah Lasses appeared in Merthyr, a young man, who had been spending some hours drinking in a public-house, in spite of his mother's entreaties, was attracted to the crowd in the Market square, expecting to find a quack doctor there. He burst into the ring, and while standing there one of the young women came up, and taking him by the hand, said – "The Lord bless you. Are you saved?"

Thinking to have a joke, he replied that he was.

"Are you ready to die?" was the next question, to which he replied as before.

The young Officer was not deceived, but answered, "The Lord bless you. I will pray for you."

Such was the effect of these words that he began to weep bitterly, and was led home by a friend.

The next evening he was at the open-air stand a full hour before meeting time, and after listening to all that could be heard there, he followed the procession to the hall, and there and then got the deliverance that his soul longed for.

The next night he was one of the speakers in the marketplace, and ever since he has been a happy soldier.

In 1878, at an All-night of Prayer, led by the Chief of Staff, he gave himself fully up to God, got a heart in every "thought renewed," and soon afterwards became an Officer. In the eight years that have followed he has been through many striking experiences, but none, perhaps, so



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astonishing as that through which he passed when commanding in Boston. Here, for standing to speak of Salvation, where many had stood before, he was sentenced to imprisonment; but one of the magistrates who passed the sentence became so troubled about him as to go himself at a late hour to the Spalding Jail to fetch him out. The two rode home in a luggage-van together, it being too late for passenger-trains, and then the released captive was regaled with a good supper in the mansion of his liberator.

Let it not be thought because I have chosen to mention cases in which persons have now been for years Officers in The Army that the process is not going on as strikingly in every direction to-day, or that instances of this kind are few and far between. We are getting more preachers out of the public-house every week. In saved "drunkards' demonstrations " held in various parts of the world within the last two years hundreds have been massed together. The Officer in charge of the Eastern division of London was but a few years ago a helpless drunkard the son of a drunkard, and nothing would gladden him more, I am sure, than to introduce you to East-End preachers of The Army gathered in from the public-houses during the year 1886.

You may go to any Corps of The Army throughout the world' and find the same story repeated over and over again. Men and women who are to-day our Captains and Lieutenants, our Sergeant-Majors, Drummers, Standard-Bearers, Doorkeepers, our prominent leaders, in fact, in every department – are men and women who were to be found, before The Army met them, spending more of their time in public houses than in churches; and, in most cases, men and women – who were drawn right from the public-house, in the first instance, by some passing procession of The Army. It is the finger of God that has beckoned them away by means of The Army's flag, and it is the power of God that keep and inspires them to this day.