



# The *G. Raiton* Collection



## VI. OUT OF THE RUTS.

"God bless the man that sent the new religion here," exclaimed a Maori convert, at one of our New Zealand meetings. And almost the same expression has been heard from many a former slave to sin, in various parts, even of this country. Such sayings while they represent the true feeling of many of those who had remained strangers to any religion, until, by this new effort they were brought to Christ, at the same time clearly explain the prejudice and hatred which The Army has encountered from only too many Christians of all denominations. Thousands of persons who confess themselves conscious of the sad state of things around them, and who have been praying for a revival of religion for many years, cannot tolerate the appearance of the religion, which, when revived, springs from the grave, as it were, in new clothing, or without the robes they would fain dress it in.

We have seen how the opponents of The Army organise themselves in various towns, under the name of the "Skeleton Army," bearing at the head of their processions a banner marked with a death's head and cross-bones. Who invented the name I have never heard, and to what freak of imagination, it can have been due, I cannot conceive, seeing that the skeletons are almost always men whose action is largely based upon a great fondness for good living, or at any rate good drinking; but it is impossible not to be very much struck with one coincidence in the matter. Was it that the enemy was again to be driven, as in so many instances before, to bring about, in his ignorance, a literal fulfillment of the Scriptures? Here were the very multitudes that we were seeking after, declared, by no wish of ours, but by their own desire, to be dry bones; and here was the scene in the very streets and lanes of great cities in broad daylight, which the great prophet witnessed thousands of years before! The breath of Heaven blew upon the skeletons! It came often through a cornet, and was supposed to arouse them more in that way than otherwise; but so it came to pass that the skeletons came together, and when they had come together they were transformed into new beings, and rose up from the penitent form, not by ones or twos only, but by scores and hundreds, an Army of the living God. The skeleton who tried to overturn the cab in which the Captain of our Chalk Farm Corps was escaping from a mass of desperadoes, is now a Captain himself. The skeleton who with a stone almost blinded Captain Wyssa in Switzerland, never rested afterwards till he was himself "in the light." And the skeleton who



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helped to carry a coffin into which our Honiton Captain was to have been thrown, after faithful years of service as a soldier, was carried by that Corps in honor to a soldier's grave!

Now, really, look at the question. How could such men as these have been formed into a religious society, which should be the same in all its striking features as those whose adherents had grown up from their childhood in the habit of daily prayer and worship? Such a thing was, on the face of it, ridiculously impossible; and even, had it not been so, the reduction of all this new force to the level of previously existing routine would evidently have made them useless for the continuance of such efforts as had been the means of their own salvation.

Why religion has so completely become shut up within walls as for the very name of the "Church" to be applied to the building in which it meets, and for intelligent men of all classes soberly to ask why we are not content to remain inside our buildings, and what more we can reasonably expect than to be allowed religious liberty under lock and key, I don't know. But when religious society had sunk into such a condition as this, it could not but be a shock to have introduced a community who regard the building in which they hold services as only a starting-point from which they are to march to the attack of other, or into which they are to gather recruits, to be trained, in their turn, to a similar life of outside activity. Now, I have no intention to argue the case for The Army on any points in which it most materially differs from the religious world around. Volumes would be required for any such purpose. All I can do is to call attention to the extreme contrast between the principles which govern our action and those upon which our condemnation is based, leaving each reader to search and think for himself as to whether the old customs of thought and action or the new are most in conformity with the wishes of the Saviour and the needs of the lost.

Upon this first great point there can be no dispute, that a great and enormous change has taken place within the last twenty years. The theory of Jesus Christ's religion, which permits only of its being taught to the little handfuls who desire it within their meeting-place stands condemned to-day before all but universal opinion. The world will not have such a Christianity, and the churches are abandoning it almost as completely. For the denunciations of wrath to come which Jesus and the Apostles, as much as the ancient prophets, so delighted in, must be abandoned



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and disbelieved in or else it must needs be the duty, and the primary duty, of all who know the terrors of the Lord to go out and persuade men everywhere to repent.

A certain magistrate in India, however, has just been denouncing one of our native Officers for having gone through the streets of a so-called Christian village declaring people to be sinners in danger of hell. The magistrate was of opinion that no one should be allowed so to insult his fellow men in any public place, and the manner of The Army's speaking has undoubtedly been equally as great a novelty, and quite as objectionable in the eyes of many, from the fact that so much of this speaking is done out of doors. We live in days when everything is supposed to be governed by what is called "Society." We are all to be civilised, and civilisation means that everyone is to be agreeable to everybody else. Jarrings and conflicts of every kind are to end, and we are all to be cooled down to a delightful consistency, beneath whose shiny depths everything that is not pleasant is at last to be hidden away.

"Oh, how dreadful!" Such words have often expressed, and often will, the feeling created when, in the midst of such a state of things, somebody arises feeling and seeing the old truths and telling them out in the old way regardless of consequences. The other Sunday morning I saw one of our Soldiers standing in a comparatively quiet, respectable street shouting with all the power of his lungs, emphasised with all the force of his fists: –

"Be wise be wise oh, men and women be wise in time! You have a soul to save! Be wise! Seek the Lord while you may." I do not believe he said one word during the five minutes or so that he spoke for which a counterpart could not have been found in the Bible, and yet it was impossible not to be conscious all the time that he was committing what would be considered quite an outrage upon the people around him. Ladies and gentlemen who have gone to places of worship for half a century may never, in the whole course of that time, have heard any one speak as though attention to the things of God were really a matter of desperate urgency, while, on the other hand, they may have heard hundreds of times of the great importance of avoiding extreme religious excitement, such as that young speaker unquestionably labored under while he sought to warn of their eternal danger men and women to whom he thought he might never have opportunity to speak again.



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In this matter too there has undoubtedly been a great change of late. In huge cathedrals where such a thing as preaching was scarcely heard twenty years ago you may now listen, occasionally, at any rate, to a few men who speak as though they had something of importance to say and as though their hearers had some great work of importance to do. We live in stirring times, and speakers who stir nobody, though still it must be feared in the large majority, are not the men of mark in any church.

But here is an organization which openly professes a religion of force; which calls speaking "firing," and which considers the speech that is not the occasion of destroying something evil, or producing something that is good, as a sort of blank cartridge. How could such a society be liked in any country at any time? I must confess to a certain amount of sympathy with those poor, unfortunate Swiss authorities who have considered it rather their duty to protect the poor citizens from the tongues of The Army than to protect the bodies of The Army from the blows of the citizens. Their great excuse for permitting women to be knocked down and stoned, and private houses to be wrecked, has been that the aggressive operations of The Army have naturally produced these results, which no one could avert. I glory in that excuse, and although I trust the day will come when every civilized government will dare to show itself on the side of God and truth rather than on the side of the devil and brutality; yet I do trust that The Army will never, in any country, cease, by its plain declarations of the truth, to stir up hell and earth into the same fierce enmity against itself which hurried Christ and Stephen out to rapid execution.

"The men who persecute you would have persecuted the Apostles," was the simple remark – of John Bright, when a Sheffield mob had been pelting the General and Mrs. Booth, and had all but killed one of the foremost Officers in a procession there; and I do not think it can be necessary to argue with any intelligent person as to whether the teaching that is "quite unobjectionable," or that which causes bad men to gnash with their teeth, is most like that of Jesus Christ.

Perhaps The Army's teaching, however strong and straightforward, might be better tolerated if it were delivered in sermons, lectures, or addresses of the customary kind; but here, again, there is a complete reversal of the order of things all but universally established. The "separated ministry", very much separated indeed, separated in many cases into a study all but a few hours of the week, and then separated into a high pulpit and a peculiar gown for the few remaining



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hours in which it is supposed to be in communication with the rest of mankind, such a ministry has become recognised as the "correct thing" all the world over; so that even the wondering Kaffir, the pensive Hindoo, and the curious Chinese may actually be seen "sitting under" such a ministry with all the quiet sedateness of the most old-fashioned European congregation.

And then "Converted Jane" and "Happy Eliza" come and open a theatrical building on the other side of the street, in which they glory in the fact that "nobody never speaks long," and that "all them as is saved must have a cut in to-day," so that the hour-and-a-half during which any other religious society would expect the people to sit quietly listening to the voice of one person, passes in a series of what may fairly be described as explosions of speech and song, every one unforeseen, and coming upon the bulk of the audience, at any rate, as a surprise.

No wonder that such a style of meeting should be considered a startling novelty! It is difficult, I suppose, for the most profound thinker to go back hundreds of years, and place around him as if in living reality the men and scenes of past centuries. Yet I confidently affirm that anyone who will thoughtfully examine the Bible must needs be convinced that the sort of divine worship it describes was, at any rate, quite as much in contrast with that prevailing in the churches of to-day as any of the most "extraordinary doings" of The Salvation Army.

What do you really think it was like when, in ancient times, the people of God met together to "make a joyful noise unto the Lord;" when they made themselves "glad in Him with Psalms," and when, in an unroofed Temple everyone spoke of His Glory? Or in the days of the Apostles when, in one meeting, thousands of Orientalists were speaking some fifteen Oriental languages with mingled question, exhortation, prayer, and thanksgiving?

Far be it from me to say one word against the calling and work of the Divine prophet. I have listened with pleasure to such prophets, notwithstanding their ignorance of grammar, for half-an-hour at a time, and should always be pleased to do so. But if, on the one hand, it be no man's right or business to condemn and oppose the preaching of the Gospel in a lengthy and a labored way, by anyone whom God has sent to do so, equally is no man authorised to condemn such an arrangement of meetings, as enables everyone who has heard the Spirit's call to pass on a "Come" to others, every one who has been with Jesus to testify that which they know; and every



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man, woman and child to praise God "with a loud voice," just as if with eyes of flesh they saw, once more, the coming in of the lowly King, and with fleshly ears heard Him say – "If these should hold their peace the stones would cry out."

But I do not deny that all this is a startling novelty. I am happy to say it is still so to me. Whether I go to some old battle-field where the war has been going on for well-nigh twenty years, or whether I look in on the latest Corps or outpost established, I am sure to hear somebody whose voice, whose action, whose story of escape from the clutches of the devil, whose "joy unspeakable and full of glory" surprise and gladden me as much as if I had never heard anything of the kind in my life before. Everyone to their taste. But I certainly cannot wonder that such masses of working people who would laugh at the very idea of going to church, delight even in an unconverted state to attend the meetings of The Army.

"It is as good as a play," such people have often said, and so, to them, it undoubtedly is. The mere idea of such a remark may shock a thoughtless reader yet what does it really mean? It simply means that all through the services there is something that attracts, that interests, that rivets the attention, what gives pleasure, that makes the listener forget for the time being everything but itself; that, in fact, really takes possession of him.

And is not that exactly what is wanted for those who have regarded religion all their lives as a matter which cannot have the slightest interest for them, whatever it may be to persons of different education and circumstances? All good people are agreed that this class – the enormous majority of the population can be spoken of as a class should be interested in the very subject which they have altogether tabooed for life. But, strange to say, the theory upon which most churches go to work to interest the uninterested in religion is to lay their religion aside for the time being! Lectures on topics of general interest, with or without magic lantern and comic music; reading rooms, amply provided with daily newspapers; gymnastics, chess, and draughts; improvement classes; anything imaginable that is not religions, to place the religious world "on a friendly footing" with the irreligious, in the hope that these latter will then be induced, some day, to attend the "services of the sanctuary!" Now, I am not deprecating any effort made by anyone to accomplish the great end at which so many, thank God, are now aiming; and it is none of my business to enquire how far any of these contrivances may have been successful in attaining



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their object. But what I say is, that if all these inventions are to be tolerated in connection with ministries and churches devoted to the teaching of Scriptural truth, then why should anyone so strongly object to services in which nothing but the most direct appeals to the heart and conscience are willingly tolerated for as much as five minutes, and in which old and young, rich and poor, are systematically trained to act together for the one purpose of bringing those who are indifferent directly and instantly to face the very truths which they have tried hardest all their lives to forget?

"But then it is the blasphemy and frivolity, the singing or shouting of sacred names and words in a thoughtless and careless manner, mingled with the use of the most vulgar tunes and manners that shock everybody so much." Here again I must repeat that I have no wish to criticise the sayings or doings of others, but I do think that the charges of blasphemy and profanity are brought against The Army with remarkably bad taste by people who glory in the Trinity Cricket Club and the "St. James's Gazette." but it is none of my business, and I earnestly plead it is nobody else's to declare whether this or that set of worshippers are or are not blasphemous or profane. The great rule laid down by Jesus Christ in the presence of the despised Samaritans, "The true worshipper shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth," is what I invoke on behalf of all the denounced Happy Jacks, "Saved Bills," and "Redeemed Marys" of The Army. The other evening I heard one of these, in giving his experience, say, –

"Whenever I am invited to go anywhere, I say, – 'Shall I go, Lord?' And if He says, 'Go Bill,' then I go; but if He doesn't, I don't."

Now to some people I can quite imagine that the idea of the great Ruler of the Universe, talking street English to one of his street children, may be shocking to the last degree. But I contend that only He who seeth in secret can determine whether Bill really does worship Him in spirit and in truth, and whether He does say to him "Go" and he goeth; and that therefore no third party can possibly be in a position to condemn Bill for looking at the matter, and understanding and explaining it in his own natural way.

Who has a right to require that Bill shall only "venture to approach the throne of Divine grace" in a set of phrases, such as he never used in his life before, and would need a good slice of the



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remainder of his life to learn? Who has the right to specify the number of notes of praise that Bill may sing within thirty seconds, and what these notes may be? Who has the right to complain if the contagion of his gladness makes his song so pleasant to all who hear it that even men in drink take it up and repeat it in and out of the meetings over and over again?

I heartily admit that the style of The Army's service and of every part of it is so entirely new at the present day as to make it overwhelmingly startling, and unpleasantly startling to those who have been accustomed to attend the regular places of worship. But this is just one of the reasons why The Army's meetings are so popular with the people, with whom the still solemnity of "Divine worship," as generally understood, is utterly intolerable. How ridiculous to be continually groaning that those people are unreached and untouched by the ministrations of the church; and then, when they are reached and gathered in by the thousand to meetings which they unquestionably enjoy, and towards the expense of which they heartily contribute, to make the very popularity of these services a ground of complaint!

The Army's use of music, which is called secular, though perhaps more unlimited and daring than that of others, has happily ceased to be, altogether, a peculiarity of its own, for, in spite of hostile criticism, American song-tunes introduced under respectable auspices, have, by the inevitable laws of human nature become more popular, even in the churches, than the sacred dronings or the fashionable chants of former days. But The Army's singing and musical performances are disliked and protested against, perhaps more on account of their general style and accompaniments than on account of anything that properly belongs to themselves. So beautiful are many of the tunes we use, and so thoroughly in accord with the most reverent and precious of sentiments and thoughts are most of our songs that the most exacting critic would be unable to find many faults with them if sung by a lady in the drawing-room with pianoforte accompaniment. But to see a man with his hat off, dancing backwards along the street or platform, waving both arms as he leads a host of singers, quite as enthusiastic as himself in singing, or, as some would say, shouting or roaring the same words to the same tune – ah, that is another thing altogether. And when it comes to having a chorus taken up in the meeting by that whole gallery, unmistakably full of men who have just left the public-house, – some of them too much in drink to know what they are doing – to find that such men are positively roaring out those sacred words with as much delight as the "Rule Britannia," with which they concluded their



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free-and-easy in the tap-room a quarter of an hour ago – oh, it is horrible! And then to think of the dirty little children, shoeless and uncovered in the streets, forming processions, and singing those same songs about the precious blood of Jesus, just for a game – how can it be other than bad?

At first sight the argument seems irresistible, and I confess that no one with proper feeling can ever be expected to hear anything of the kind for the first time without a sort of moral shudder. But the scale must, in my opinion, be completely turned the moment anyone properly reflects upon the alternative state of things. No one can question the awful condition of those poor rough men in the gallery; but suppose you could pop in a moment into the place from which they have come. If you have ever frequented such places you may have some idea what it would mean. If you have not, I must say I regret that I cannot, dare not, write on this age anything that would give you the slightest approach to a realisation of the sort of thing those same men would be singing, and applauding and delighting in. Twenty years ago I listened to a song sung by a young farm lad in a public-house in the New Forest, amid the applause of a little circle of admirers, a song full of ideas and suggestions that I had never before supposed village lads of such an age to be capable of. And I know from the testimonies of any number of Salvation Soldiers that that song and that scene was no exception, but that every Sunday evening, when you are sitting in your place of worship, just such songs, with even more profane and disgusting accompaniments than I witnessed, are "all the go," in the public-houses all throughout the country. I have personally known a wretched drunkard and his wife who, every evening of the week, as well as Sunday, were the foul-mouthed favorites of a village tap-room, to which their children would have to go time after time to seek them. As to the poor children, if you want to know what they learn in the streets (if there can be any need to ask yourself such a question for a moment), you have only to open your ears and listen to any of them, or of their elders in the poorer or more crowded thoroughfare of the towns or in the back lanes of the villages, or to ask anyone who takes the trouble to make their acquaintance, so far as really to get to know what passes current amongst them.

Now, look at these facts, turn them over thoroughly in your mind, and see then how they affect your feeling with regard to The Army's familiarising sacred names and things to these people.



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We make – yes, positively *make* these men, women, and children sing, "The blood of Jesus cleanses white as snow."

Admit that these words are sung, in the first instance, with anything but serious thought, and that they only gain admittance to the mouth and mind by the use of tunes, the mention of whose former name fairly horrifies you. Is it not, after all, better than to leave these people seething in their filth, and never singing anything but that which will debase them more and more? It seems to me to be purely a question of faith or of fear – I will say, if you prefer it, godly fear. I have no wish to sneer at or reflect upon that precious fear of God, which may make you dread any approach to profanity; but I do ask that you will not condemn the people whose faith prevails over this fear. We would not for a moment desire that any song or chorus should be sung by ungodly people if we thought it was to end as it began, in amusement, profanity, or carelessness. But we never start the singing indoors or out without the perfect certainty that comes of faith in Almighty power, that someone who is utterly indifferent to God when the song begins will be pricked to the heart before it ends; and, later on, I purpose to give a few examples of the way in which this faith has continually prevailed. We know no longer by faith only, but by sight that the man who heartily sings the chorus only to amuse himself, or partly, perhaps, to annoy others, in the first instance becomes a slave to the very words and notes, which he cannot shake from his mind, and ends in brokenhearted penitence and overflowing gratitude very often before the conclusion of a single meeting. Therefore I would say when witnessing The Army at its song-work for an Army song requires all the powers of body as well as mind and heart – or when observing any other of the peculiarities which you cannot like naturally, will you not try so far to govern yourself as to look upon all these things just as you would view the multiplied machinery of a great factory revolving with noisy rapidity around you, scattering poisonous dust on every side. You would say in that case, "I don't like being here; but it is wonderful machinery, and it is probably producing wonderful work. Let me go and see the finished article!"

Again, there are those who could pardon willingly almost all the peculiar doings of The Army if they were only carried on under what they call a proper system of government. It was quite amusing to read, some time ago, the desperate protest which a worthy divine in the southern world thought it his duty to make against a system of despotism which The Army was establishing so triumphantly amongst the freest of colonists, in spite of all the theorisings of 200 years to the



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contrary. I purpose to deal with this question much more fully later on. But here I wish merely to acknowledge that it is a very extraordinary novelty to find two young lads or lasses sent into one of the principal cities of a great Republic or self governing colony with instructions to form a Corps of grown-up men and women who are to act absolutely under their orders every day of the week, and in matters of the supremest importance to accept and submit to their judgment, even although, in many cases, they may be old enough to have been their grand-parents. It is still more wonderful to see the programme fully carried out, and to see the system becoming, year after year, more triumphant, more exacting, and yet more heartily accepted.

That all this is in the most marked contrast with almost all the traditions of the elders around us there can be no question; but, on the other hand, every intelligent man must know that if, in this matter of government, we have got completely out of the religious rut, we have, on the other hand, only brought to bear upon religion the common sense which prevails in all the circles of everyday life.

How many millions would cry out to-morrow morning if their newspapers were stopped! And yet your newspapers can only reach you by means of a series of despotisms, a breakdown or revolution in any one of which would leave you without the news. The old-fashioned systems of church government are admitted to have left the enormous bulk of the population nearest to them in utter ignorance about Salvation, and it was inevitable that any determined attempt to supply the great need must be made on modern lines, and with modern machine-like precision. The despotism of The Army exists by means of its results; and if ever it should fail to maintain or to increase its conquests, it would die a natural death. Before you condemn it, at least consider whether men may have liberty to surrender their liberty or a portion of it, if, in their view, it is more to their own interest, more likely to promote their happiness and that of those for whom they care more than themselves, than that they should maintain and enjoy useless privileges, which would leave them helpless in presence of a great emergency.

But always remember that if, in this and other matters, The Army has become completely emancipated from old customs and systems, this emancipation has been won by slow degrees, and only by the deep conviction and earnest struggles of people who have had as much difficulty, in the first instance, in reconciling themselves with the changes that have been made as you



# The *W. Booth* Collection



yourself could have. I do not believe that anyone can be more shocked to-day at The Salvation Army than its founder and Mrs. Booth would have been had they met one of its smallest Corps just as it now is, twenty years ago. When I first made his acquaintance, the General in anxiety for the permanent continuance of the work, was considering the settlement of all property on some body of persons, to be called "Guardian Representatives," or life "Guardians," who were to watch over the whole concern and preserve it from any change for the worse. For twenty years candid friends and cruel enemies have constantly insisted that upon such conditions only could the work last. Only by an experience, won at the bayonet point, have we got free from such miserable fancies and fears, founded on a persistent unbelief in the power of God. Had that precious Christian Mission been surrounded with its noble guard of worthy friends to protect it from serious alteration, either there would have been no Salvation Army at all, or it would have had to be a separate venture, disconnected legally and formally from its own first fruits!

How positively I have heard it maintained in the Christian Mission that nothing but good preaching could ever secure permanent results, and that "good preaching" meant long preaching. I have heard, within the last fortnight of persons at some of our oldest Stations who are firmly of the same opinion still, and ready to discourage any new coming Captain with the assurance, "If you cannot preach you will be no use here." Have I not seen young converts or rough-mouthed Soldiers put back or kept back in silence, lest they should "do more harm than good"? Do not I know and respect some of those "old standards," worthy old people of the olden days, "who do not believe in the jigging," as they are pleased to call some of our liveliest tunes? And have we not constantly to mourn over and struggle against the sacred propriety of doorkeepers and Sergeants, and even Officers, who cannot endure to see roughs misconduct themselves in a place of worship, and would rather shut or turn them out than allow them to enter or remain in our meetings when indisposed to maintain perfect silence and perfect decorum?

The Army has only escaped from the old ruts in which it would have stuck fast and been incapable of accomplishing its great work by desperate fighting against itself. There is no prejudice, there is no regard for old-fashioned ideas and customs which has not been, and is not to-day, strongly and respectably represented within The Army itself. But regard for those things, as for all other human opinions and powers, has been struggled against and overcome, because the General



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has had, from the first, a single eye, and that single eye will enable us, if necessary, to emancipate ourselves even further still, will make it as easy to abandon Army customs, as the custom which prevailed before The Army, whenever it may be proved to our satisfaction that, by so doing, we should more rapidly or completely attain the one great end in view.

"You see we have no reputation to lose," was the General's reply to the friend who once asked him why The Army succeeded with such ease, where others failed. "As for you," he went on, "you can do nothing without considering what somebody will say, whether within or without your own body; and while you are considering and hearing what somebody will say, life is going." Everybody has settled it that we are fools, if not a great deal worse; therefore we can go into a town and do exactly what we think best, without taking the least notice of what anybody may say or wish. We have only to please God and get the people saved, and that is easily done.