

# Women of the Flag

## Anna von Wattenwyl

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In extolling the grace of God who chooses for the service of His Kingdom 'weak things' of the earth, and while rejoicing in His power to use these humble instruments to lay low the vaunted 'wisdom' of the world, the Apostle Paul qualified his sweeping statement with a comforting exception. What untold blessing the few 'noble, wise and mighty' who have chosen to follow Christ along the way of the Cross have been to His Kingdom all down the ages!

Paul himself, for instance, with his well-trained mind, his knowledge of men and affairs gained by travel and experience in many lands, his ease in any company, born of contact with men of many grades, and his powerful, reasoned speech which gave him a ready hearing alike from the common people, captains, scholars and Kings! What a champion he was for the struggling Early Church and, indeed, the Church in every succeeding generation until today!



And so it has been that, in almost every country where our Flag has been raised, there have rallied to our standard at least a few noble souls, who have heard in The Army's message the voice of God, and in its deeds seen the works of Christ. Their possession of money, dignity, position or education did not become a snare to our Movement, by raising standards unsuitable for less favored comrades; for these noble souls possessed their gifts not for themselves, but only to pour them out at the feet of the Savior for the furtherance of the holy war.

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One of this blessed company was Lieut. Colonel Anna von Wattenwyl, of Switzerland, promoted to Glory in 1927. She owed a great debt to the religion of her mother, an English lady, educated in Switzerland, who in her young womanhood had become deeply distressed about her soul's Salvation. She had told her father that she greatly desired Salvation, and with her confession came the glorious assurance of sins forgiven. Throughout her life she lived in the conscious presence and favor of her Lord. Marrying a Swiss pastor, she had entered into his labors in a village under the shadow of the Bernese Alps. Here her family was born. The boys and girls lived a simple, joyous, out-of-door life; they were taught to love God, to love the poor and to regard honest toil as honorable.

When Anna was twelve years of age, her father retired from the ministry and bought a property at the head of the valley of Gurzelen. The house, built on a hill, has been for almost a century as a lighthouse to the valley, for it was known that any in distress of soul or body might find help there. The spacious home, filled with joyful, spiritual influences and generously hospitable, was a gathering place for holy warriors of all lands.

Conviction of sin first came to Anna on a day when she heard her mother and a friend singing together. 'Oh, I have found grace in Thy sight.' Anna knew that she had not found. When blossoming into young womanhood she went for a visit to Paris and London. Then, for the first time, she saw the world dressed in all its allurements, and felt her heart drawn to the altar of 'the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.' On her return home, a sudden illness brought her to the verge of the life beyond, and on that mysterious brink she shuddered.

About this time a hot-hearted evangelist visited her home, and did not hesitate to picture to Anna the human heart in all its sinfulness and also her individual

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responsibility for the Salvation of her soul. Would she choose the world or Christ? 'Christ!' replied Anna. Then she must renounce the world, regard herself as a child of God and live so. Anna sold her jewelry, and during that winter she enjoyed giving to the poor out of her little store. But she had not found heart-peace. Visiting Berne, she heard a powerful sermon on 'Ye must be born again.' After the service she mustered courage to ring the bell at the parsonage and tell the minister her spiritual difficulties. The good man sought to help the inquirer, but Anna left uncomforted. Returning home heartsore and weary, she gave up her efforts to be saved and cast her tired soul upon the mercy of God. A wonderful peace came to her spirit. As surely as the sun was shining in the heavens so surely did she know her sins forgiven. Christ now became the supreme reality of her life.

Coming in contact with a company of godly people, she embraced their doctrine of 'death to self and activity for Christ.' renouncing the last traces of worldliness, seeking for souls became her chief concern. Life now thrilled with the joy of service, and she won many souls in Sunday-school, sick visitation, and also in hospital nursing among the wrecks of the 1870 Franco-Prussian war.

In 1875 a wave of Holiness teaching swept through Switzerland. Anna von Wattenwyl eagerly examined the doctrine. She had already died to the pleasures and dictates of the world, and her life was fully consecrated to God; but sometimes she was impatient and vexed, and sometimes she feared the criticism of man. Was there deliverance from the power of sin along such subtle avenues as these? Down before God went this sincere soul, determined to have all that the Sacrifice of Christ had won for her. She claimed the power that would cause her to triumph continually.

Soon after this experience. Mrs. Josephine Butler held meetings in Switzerland. She visited the von Wattenwyl household, and Anna accompanied her to many

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of her meetings. Mrs. Butler told her much of The Salvation Army - of the clear teaching on Holiness of the leaders of the Movement, of the simplicity of their lives and their love and faith for the poorest and worst. Anna felt a chord of sympathy strike deep in her soul and believed that sooner or later God would lead her into this Army of Salvation.

Family business occasioned a visit to England, and in company with Mrs. Butler Miss von Wattenwyl attended a Salvation Army Holiness Meeting. Mrs. Butler had well prepared her visitor to expect a certain lack of convention and a good deal of noise amongst Salvationists, and Anna in her first contact with them certainly did not like those characteristics. But the simplicity, joyfulness and certainty of the religion of these common people delighted her, and when Bramwell Booth spoke from the word of God it was no cheap or easy way he opened up, but the way of Christ: 'Deny yourself; take up your cross, and follow me.' Miss von Wattenwyl stayed for a week-end, visited the wretched homes around the Open-Air Meetings, joined in the marches and Meetings, and her love was captured by this Army of Salvation.

Home ties claiming her, she returned to Switzerland, but a later occasion to visit London took her again to a Holiness Meeting. Her soul was very hungry. God had done great things for her. He had given her victory over the power of sin, but often she felt poor and weak when she believed it her right to be conscious of the power of God within her. Oh! to realize His presence in her soul as a living fact every moment of her life, controlling and empowering her for the glory of God.

Setting off for home, she found herself alone in a railway carriage. On her knees she pleaded that the Holy Spirit would take possession of her. To that railway carriage, swinging and roaring its way along, Jesus Himself drew near. She saw Him as her Lord and Master. She saw Him as her Redeemer. He should have her

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soul's deepest gratitude. She saw Him as the Beloved of her soul, her all in all. He should have her heart's love for ever. The hours passed all unheeded. The doors of her being were opened wide; the King of Glory came into her soul and there He abode.

In the year 1882 The Salvation Army opened fire in French Switzerland. The fierceness of the fight, the bitter opposition, the mob attacks, the prohibition of the Meetings, the closing of Halls, the imprisonment of Officers made having to do with the Salutistes to be a 'going without the camp'; but Miss von Wattenwyl's spirit was with them. Still, God had given her a wide scope of work, and she did not wish to run without His word. When, latter, an opening in German Switzerland was made, she felt that she must rally to the Flag of the Kingdom where the fight was hottest, and she went to the help of the Lord against the mighty. Of her circle of relatives and friends, all were against her decision except her mother, who said, 'My child, if God has bidden you to join The Salvation Army, join it.'

Anna von Wattenwyl went to the Officers at Zürich. They had rooms in a tenement house with a large Hall adjoining. Every night the Hall was filled with roughs. 'All the dangerous elements of the city are there,' said the police. The Meetings were uproarious, but souls were saved and out of such fire came valuable Officers. Captain von Wattenwyl was in her element. The joy of the Lord lifted her above all fear or depression. She gained the good will and even the devotion of many of the notorious roughs, who became her champions. She delighted to remember one drunken fellow who insisted upon carrying her bag, and, as he walked or rather staggered beside her, said, 'I've said it before and I still say it. "I'm not ashamed of The Army!"'

The authorities made the Salvationists answerable for the misdeeds of the roughs and determined to silence The Army's message in the Swiss Confederation. For

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some time persecution was endured in silence. But on the celebration of the six hundredth anniversary of the founding of the constitution, the leader of The Army in Switzerland determined that Salvationists should insist upon the rights of citizenship.

Captain von Wattenwyl had many experiences with the authorities. Once she was summoned at a Corps Tea Meeting for not having a license as a restaurant keeper; on another occasion for walking two and two with five Cadets—this was called a 'procession.' Finally she was sent to jail. Lieut. Commissioner Fornachon told the incident:

*We had decided to march in spite of an order of the authorities that we must not do so. A constable stopped our procession and ordered us to dismiss. Captain von Wattenwyl, that aristocratic Swiss lady, stepped up to the constable and said in her cultured voice: 'I have learned to walk step by step with God, and as a child of God and a citizen of Switzerland I do not intend to obey the order of the police, which is contrary to the free constitution of our land.' The march continued to the Hall, and Captain von Wattenwyl was summoned to answer for her resistant of police authority. When the constable went to arrest her, he shyly proposed that she should walk a few paces behind him to avoid attracting attention. But they lady did not at all mind walking with the policeman, and the embarrassed officer of the law needed to fulfill his unpleasant duty.*

Recalling the incident years later, Lieut. Colonel von Wattenwyl wrote:

*They conducted me to my cell and, when they turned the key, I laughed at the whole situation, although sad that such a thing should be possible in my beloved Switzerland. The warders were very kind to me, and brought to me the women prisoners for me to speak to. One of the girls, I believe, truly gave herself to God.*

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Lieut.-Commissioner Fornachon continued:

*The captain of the police, a professed atheist, who was most bitter against The Salvation Army, continued to oppose us. Our Hall had been closed, and Meetings were forbidden. However, we continued to meet wherever we might. One evening, in a place just outside the city, about five hundred people gathered for prayer; but the police heard the singing and came twelve strong, led by the chief constable, to disperse the Meeting. Arriving at the Hall they demanded admission at the closed door, which not being granted, the door was smashed with an axe. As the police burst into the Hall, the Captain said: 'Let us pray,' and prayer ascended to God that the police might be blessed. The chief constable ordered his men out of the Hall.*

Going to the police captain to make his report, he declared that he would resign his position if he must persecute such people. Captain von Wattenwyl was called to the police captain's office. After a long conversation with her he confessed that he had lost his early faith, but said, 'I will no more resist you; and now I give you permission to march.'

The fierceness of the Field fighting having decreased, Captain von Wattenwyl was freed for work for which her gifts and experience especially fitted her. As editor of Der Kriegsruf, her refined touch and her direct, simple messages were as good seed scattered throughout Switzerland.

Captain - who in due time became Lieut.-Colonel von Wattenwyl was invaluable as a translator, and it was a great joy to her that for many years, on the occasions of the Founders' visits to Switzerland, she travelled with and translated for him during his Campaigns. The Colonel felt at home with the grand naturalness and greatness she found in the Founder's character - a

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certain similarity to her own glorious Alps; such strength and settledness and simplicity; such glowing purity and aloofness from the small and petty things of life.

For a term, Lieut. Colonel von Wattenwyl filled the position of Secretary of the Women's Social Work. Said one who worked with her:

*She has intense joy in taking Salvation to the most hopeless. I shall never forget the Meetings she held with the inmates of the Homes. Her radiant spirit, aglow with the love of God and the light of God, made her Meetings a very powerful means of interpreting the love and power of God to the poor women and girls. And her influence on the Officers was powerful. One could tell her one's most perennial soul needs, the perplexities of one's work, knowing she was willing and able and ready to help.*

The Colonel's last appointment, which extended over many years, was as Secretary to the Auxiliary League. The friends who in her early days had been grieved or offended at her attachment to The Army had long since combined to honor her choice. She delighted to remember a friend, a professor at the university, who met her in Berne during the rioting days. Some students had caught sight of the Army uniform and were ready for a lark when, to their amazement, they saw their professor remove his hat and do obeisance to the Salvationist.

A beloved aunt on her death bed sent for the Colonel and said: 'Dear Anna, if The Salvation Army is as good as it looks when one comes to the brink of eternity, it must indeed be very good.'

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To the highest in the land the Colonel successfully explained the aims and purposes of the work of The Army, and lifted up the standard of that Full Salvation by which its miracles are wrought.

The Officers throughout Switzerland looked to the Colonel as a beloved mother in God, They loved her, revered her, obeyed her. The late Lieut.-Commissioner Fornachon gave some glimpse of the joyful sanity of her outlook which won their confidence:

*She was such a happy, believing soul. She did not mourn hopelessly over the inevitable losses of the Salvation War. She would say, 'I don't count plums that fall off, but those that remain on a tree.' When some special test came upon The Army she would say, 'Let us do what the Founder says - not wobble, but keep in the middle of the King's Highway. We are safe there.' But she would not call evil good. However staunchly she had upheld a person or view, once she recognized in either a divergence from the truth as it is in Jesus, she came to a full stop, and followed that way no more. Her life and testimony and teaching of Holiness were a bulwark to the faith of others. In dealing with spiritual problems, she had a great gift of seeing the essentials and presenting in simple language the will of God.*

The uniform was a source of keen satisfaction and restfulness to the Colonel. She wore nothing else. She had two dresses, one best and one for every day. Her last uniform, trimmed with full regalia, was made when she was eighty-four. 'Oh, the comfort of the uniform! I have never to say, "what shall I wear?"' she would remark. Her dear mother, who increasingly loved The Salvation Army till the day of her death, rejoiced that her daughter would not wear mourning for her. One of the most precious of the Colonel's memories was of a visit to the Jura mountains, when a woman who was anxious about her soul, on seeing her uniform, asked her of the Way of Salvation, and she was led to Christ.

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Colonel von Travel paid grateful tribute to the Colonel's guiding hand throughout his career. When as a young Convert, a brilliant young scientist, he was groping his way out of spiritual darkness toward the heavenly vision, in the secret place of his soul God was saying to him, 'There are many professors of science, but few tell of the love of Jesus; which calling will you choose?' Far away, Anna von Wattenwyl was awakened from her sleep by a Voice saying to her, 'Pray for von Travel.' She prayed, and his choice for Christ was made. At another time, feeling he was tempted, she wrote asking him to meet her. They travelled by train some distance, and another difficult stretch of his life's journey was safely passed. Said von Travel:

*The example of her own life clinched all her arguments. She had given away all her money, and she longed for all in The Army to live in great simplicity so that the main issue of its purpose might be kept clear. She was very careful in the expenditure of Army money. 'We get it from the poor,' she said, 'and must spend it as a sacred thing.'*

Retired from regular work, the spirit of the warrior still burned within her. She returned to the home of her girlhood - the spiritual lighthouse at the head of the valley and people of all sorts, from the highest in the land to the poorest, sought her there, though she had little to give them but love. During her last days, many a poor man tramping on a long journey came, weary and footsore, to her door. She and her sister would bring warm water and clean socks, knitted with their own hands; then, while they talked with him of the love of God, they would put ointment on his broken feet and bind them up, having comforted and helped him, would send him on his way.

The little Corps housed on the ground belonging to her father's estate, a stone's throw from her own home, was to her an unmixed delight. She had given the

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Hall and Quarters to The Army, and her heart rejoiced over its 132 Soldiers, its five Outposts and its various departments of work. She attended the Hall every Sunday, giving her testimony and praying with the penitents. Her presence was a benediction to the Officers stationed there.

Her spirit refused to grow old. When she was eighty years of age a Brigade of Cadets, visiting her Corps in snow time, were most anxious to have the Colonel's presence with them; the frail old lady accepted a ride to the Hall in a sledge!

On the occasion of Officer's Meetings in Berne the Colonel, aged eighty-four, amazed the assembly by stepping out of the side-car of a motor cycle, by which she had travelled from her home in the hills to meet her comrades in council.

A few weeks before her translation to Glory, I sat with this delightful old lady-- so human, so gay of heart, so filled with the love and joy and peace of God--in her room at Gurzelen. Her hand, almost transparent and very sensitive, held mine as she talked of the dealings of God in her life, of the world in general and of her dearly beloved Salvation Army, Speaking of the great change that had come over the affairs of men since her youth--'not all for the best'--she said with a note of confidence, 'But God will have the last word! Meditating upon the rising generation of The Salvation Army, to whom will be entrusted the Flag when the 'First Brigade' has passed on, she said, 'I pray that the young Officers will not seek their own, but will give their life and love entirely to the seeking and finding of souls; for life is soon at an end.'

Of the precious comradeship of The Army she said, 'Let our communion have nothing to do with small things. Let us each go on doing the work which God has given us to do; let us love one another.' I looked out of the window; the afterglow had touched the Alps. In a moment she had realized it. 'Go up to the

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gallery where you can see it better,' she smiled. I went, and watched that panorama of glory. Had not the beauty of God rested so upon that life in the room below, until the gaze of men and women and children in this her fatherland and far beyond had been caught and held by it?

I descended and sat with her again. She took my hand and said, 'Let us have a little prayer.' God was not afar in the heavens, nor in the depths to be brought up, but just there in that room: all she had known Him to be these many years -- Sovereign and Lord, Redeemer and best Beloved, All in All. She talked with Him as friend with Friend. I felt in royal company, and thanked God that I had been permitted to tread such holy ground.

A few weeks later her Beloved spoke her name, and Anna von Wattenwyl straight arose and went to behold Him face to face.