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Collection

HOW TO SUCCEED

APRIL, 1894

The Editor Interviews the General

Looking back from your Jubilee standpoint, General to the past fifty years of glorious salvation service, to what do you especially attribute your success?

"That is a big question, don't you see," said the General, pausing a moment as he paced up and down his office at Headquarters.

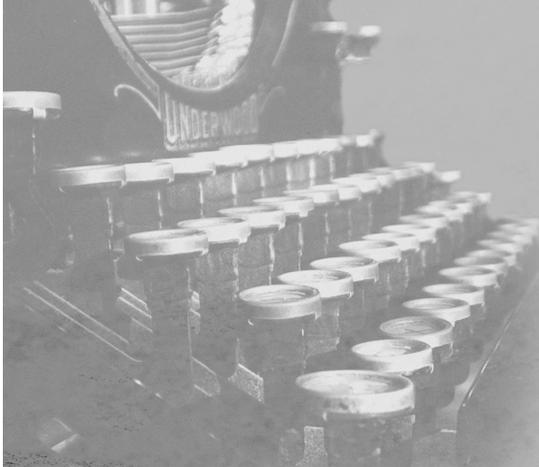
And we thought so, for it seems to us as if that little room had grown into a platform, and as if the eager eyes of our 10,577 Officers in all quarters of the globe had turned to gaze upon our beloved Leader, and as if their 10,577 eager ears had opened to listen to his words, and as if their 10,577 eager voices had repeated the question and said, "Yes, tell us, General. To what do you attribute your success; and how can we in our own humble way learn to follow in your footsteps?"

No – it seemed rather as if we were all crowded together, family fashion, into that homely office, with its large portrait of the Army Mother taxing down upon us from the mantelpiece, diminishing ourselves to snowflake size, and fixing up ourselves on 10,577 niches all round the walls for a good face-to-face talk with our General.

"If I were compelled," continued the General, renewing his walk and down the room from which so many bombshells are being perpetually flung into the devil's camp, "If I were compelled to condense the answer to your question into a solitary sentence, I should say: In the insistence upon an actual experience of salvation, including a heart realization and development of love to God and love to man."

I was going to ask another question --

"Wait a minute," said the General, "Let us keep to the question you have just asked. I have always regarded all theoretical opinions, and church ceremonials, and passing feelings as being subordinate, nay, as being nowhere, in comparison with a personal realization of Divine things. Hereby I have, as you will see, been brought into contact with the heartfelt wants of all the people with whom I have had to do. My topics have



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always been more or less of interest, and, with the blessing of God, have borne more or less gratifying results.”

What qualifications do you consider, General, are required in an Officer to follow out these lines, and to become thereby a success?

“First there must be the personal realization of them in his own heart. The man whose soul has been renewed by Divine power, and who is the conscious possessor of this heavenly affection, and whose heart is continually going out for the advantage of those among whom he labors, and who has the Spirit of God with him, is bound to succeed.”

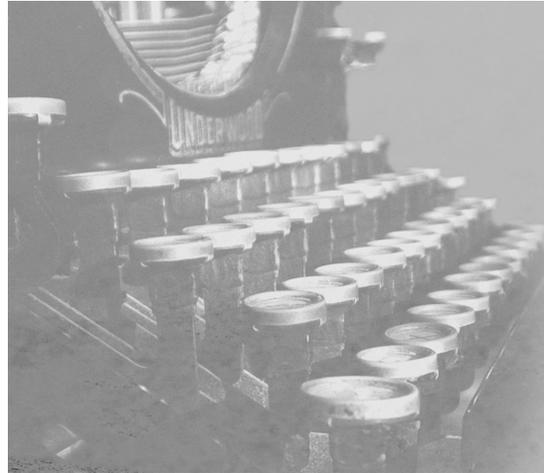
Are there any other qualities which you think an Officer should possess in order to succeed?

“Well, after his own personal acquaintance with the things of God, I should say the quality which above all others has helped me, and I think is essential to all who labor in this or in any other form for the benefit of the race, is Perseverance. The kind of man who is likely to succeed is who (1) *Knows what he wants*; (2) *Is determined to have it*; and, (3) *Perseveres in its pursuit*. A man of this sort cannot help but get *something*, even if he doesn't get all he has set his heart upon.”

Excuse me, General, I should like you to explain what you mean by “a man who knows what he wants.”

“Well, I mean one who, whether he sits down before a single individual in private, or stands up before a crowd in public, wants to work some radical change either in the one person or the audience. He has that definite object before him all the time, therefore he is not as one who beats the air, merely giving a lecture or doing an intellectual talk about his subject; but as one who wants to effect some radical change in the minds of those people. Thus the Salvation Army Officer wants to get people either saved, or sanctified, or filled with the Fire of God.”

And what do you mean by being “determined to have it”?



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"I mean that he feels that he is there by authority, not merely to pay empty compliments, and name the change he wishes, but to effect it. He is there to see it done, and that, if possible, before he leaves the ground. I attach great importance to this. And, as I have observed through life, those men who have been people of determination, –that is, who have resolved not to allow sinners to go to hell or to live in sin if they can prevent it—who say, 'We are sent on purpose to stop you; we will move heaven and earth rather than you should be lost,'—those are the men who make their mark."

And what do you mean, General, by "Perseverance"?

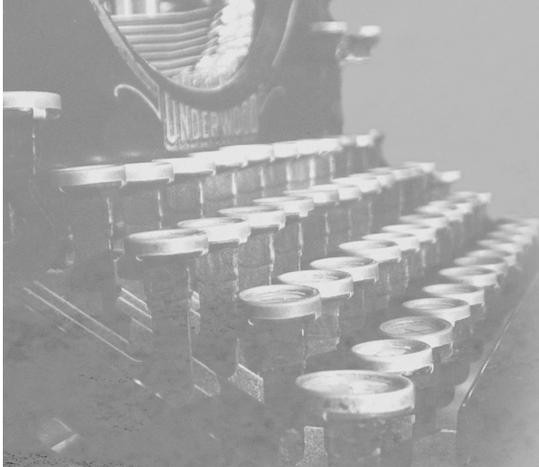
"Oh, I think that is the crowning gift of all. Because, if a man has not got every quality that is desired at the start, if he perseveres the needed gifts will come. No man can be an ultimate failure who keeps going on. Anyway, if an Officer has the most ordinary ability, and if God be with him, if he only perseveres, if he only stick to his business, and allows nothing to dishearten him, but presses forward from day to day and from month to month, he must become a very useful man in whatever department he may be at work.

The people who have shone the most and succeeded best, have not always been the people who have possessed the most brilliant abilities.

"The possession of ability often leads to pride, conceit, and the neglect of means, and especially the neglect of God. Such people commonly rely upon themselves and neglect God. The consequence is, and must be—failure. We all know 'a proud spirit goes before a fall.' Hence I often tremble for the future when people display any remarkable ability, knowing how great grace will be needed to keep them in those conditions of humility and hard work which are indispensable to success."

Have you observed, General, that this gift of perseverance is commonly possessed?

"Alas! No! I regard it as being the scarcest of any, and yet it is possible to all. But when, on the one hand, a man does come to achieve a certain measure of success, I have remarked that he often ceases from that persistent energetic application to his



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business which he at first exercised, and when, on the contrary, a man at the first start off does not succeed, he gets depressed and discouraged and gives up the attempt."

You have doubtless seen many illustrations, General, of the temptations to discouragement which Officers have to contend with?

"I see them in myself every day. In nearly every Scheme I undertake, in nearly every Paper I write, in nearly every preparation I make for the Platform, I have to fight at different points with discouragement to such an extent that I am tempted to give up. But I have scarcely ever persevered but that I have succeeded, and the success has reproved me for feeling discouraged, or has encouraged me to do better another day."

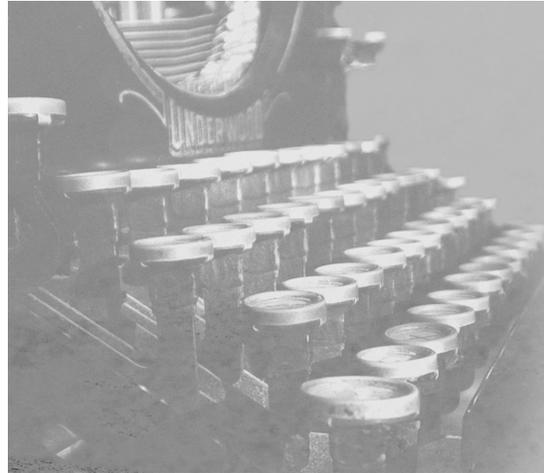
Then you think it is so with other people?

"I have no doubt that it is. I have no doubt that numbers of Officers give up when these trying, dark times come upon them. They give up their preparations for some great effort, take up something that appears easier, abandon schemes of usefulness, and are frightened to undertake new methods of labor which, if only grappled with, would be profitable to the Army and beneficial to the world, because, forsooth, 'There is a lion in the way!' "

You seem to feel strongly this, General.

"I feel very strongly indeed on the point, because I am certain that perseverance frequently makes just the difference, other things being equal, between failure and success. I am supposing, of course, that the Officer is a good man, and has a good thing in hand."

Excuse me, General, then you do not reckon that you have reached your present position solely through any particular gifts of genius, or through favorable circumstances?



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"No; although, I have no doubt God has given me certain abilities, for which I am very grateful, which have helped me, and which, perhaps, to some extent have given me an advantage over some of my comrades. But I am confident that a hundred times over I should have gone into oblivion and never been heard of any more, or that my life would have been a very ordinary one, had it not been for the grace of perseverance."

Would you regard perseverance as part of a man's natural disposition, or would you look upon it rather as a supernatural gift?

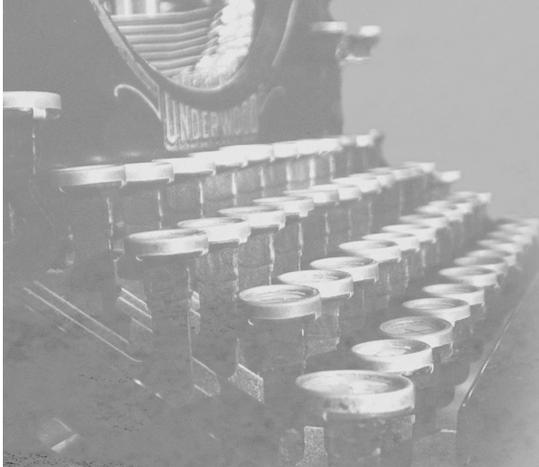
"I should say no doubt it has to do with the make-up of a man, Some people are naturally weak and vacillating, in which case a man ought to look out for the weak side of his character, set a guard upon it, and seek grace to help him."

But does not this involve a certain amount of self-denial and sacrifice?

"No doubt it does. No man can persevere, no man can engage in the war with the world, the flesh and the devil, without having to suffer a measure of crucifixion. Perseverance means the holding on in spite of the suffering, saying, 'Sorrow may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.' "

But were not your circumstances specially to your success?

"Well, no; I cannot say that they were. It is true that my early training was such as brought me into contact with the suffering poor, and my young heart was greatly affected by their trials and poverty. Then my early religious life was at once connected with a powerful outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and altogether my own instincts led me to see what I have already stated, that the experimental side of religion—the experience of the heart, was the great, if not the only valuable part of it. But, beyond that, I think my early life and circumstances, so far as any advantages went, were not to be compared with that of an ordinary Salvation Army Officer. In my religious experience I had no relative to help me, I had no Minister nor Church Dignitary who manifested any sympathy with me beyond the barest outward civilities."



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But have we not sometimes heard you describe an early friendship that helped you in those days?

"Yes, I and a young comrade, and we were of one heart and one soul on the matter of getting people saved. We worked, and struggled, and toiled together. The Church was against, us, and fought us by striving to bring the work which we commenced, which was

A MINIATURE SALVATION ARMY,

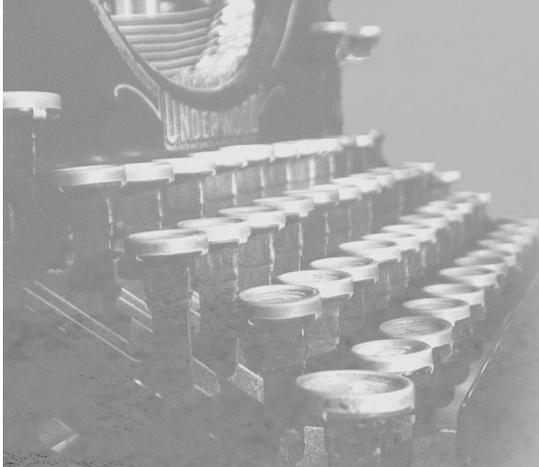
within the lines of church order. But this friend ruptured a blood-vessel when pleading with God in a cottage meeting one Sunday afternoon, and after a melancholy struggle with consumption died in triumph. I helped to get up the most remarkable funeral for him that had been seen in the town for years. Then I was left alone, and until I met my wife was really without any bosom spirit, and after that nearly every friend that has blessed us and helped us was the outcome of our toils and prayers and struggles; so that I cannot look upon my salvation fortunes as having been built for me by outside architects. I have reached my present position simply by the blessing of God and plenty of fighting."

Then you think our Officers are in a peculiarly favorable position for making not only a good start, but for going ahead?

"Yes. I don't say that it is possible for every one to become a General, but I do say that it is possible for every Officer who is willing to pay the price, whether man or woman, to reach a position, with God's blessing and by God's will, of great and honorable usefulness."

I suppose, in a long career like yours, General, you would not say yourself that it had been one of unbroken success?

"No; quite the contrary. I should say that, looked at from one side, my career has been one of innumerable defeats. I have lost no end of battles; I have had to make retreats without number; I have been floored again and again by the enemies of God and man. But when defeated, I have returned to the attack, and while I have lost ground in



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one direction, I have advanced in another; and where I have been floored one day, I have got up again and been victorious the next."

I suppose that you would say that war of any description waged against any considerable force pre-supposes occasional reverses?

"Yes, certainly it does. In fact, take our Saviour's career as an example. Again and again He failed. He could not do many mighty works in more places than once because of unbelief. He was withstood by devils, He was withstood by the Roman power, and He was withstood by His own people. He was taken by cruel hands. He was slain upon the cross and buried in the grave. But He rose again, poured out the Holy Ghost and shook the world, and He only wants a sufficient number of men and women of the same purpose, baptized with the same power, to take possession of it."

Then you would say, General, that the success of an F.O. depends rather upon his character than upon his circumstances?

"I should certainly say it depended on his character, on his pertinacious fighting, on his use of appropriate means, and on the qualities which I have described – the persistent warfare of a godly man."