

CHAPTER 10: The Wedding

My Dear Comrades,

Those who have journeyed with me thus far will remember that in previous Letters I have given our young people some counsels as to the principles which should guide them in selecting a partner; and have said something also upon the interesting topic of Courtship. I come now to the still more important theme—Marriage itself.

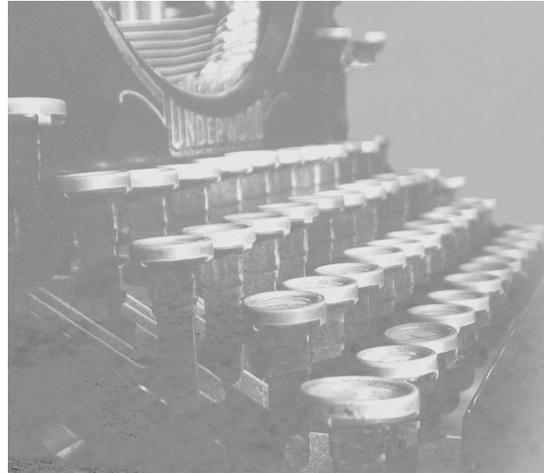
At the very gate, as it were, of the Union stands the Wedding Ceremony, on which a little homely advice will, I trust, not be thrown away.

1. My first counsel is, *Have a proper Salvation Wedding*. This piece of advice may appear unnecessary; but it is not so. You will find that friends and relatives belonging to the religious denominations around you, or those professing no religion at all, will often oppose the idea; but you must stand firm in your determination.

Come to an understanding between yourselves, and carry it through. If people, whom you would like to be present at the Ceremony, refuse to come, you cannot help their absence. You can tell them that, on this, one of the most interesting and important occasions of your life, you are resolved to bear witness to your Saviour's love after the fashion followed by your own people.

2. Resolve that, so far as you can prevent it, *none of the silly usages commonly prevalent on such occasions shall degrade the Ceremony*. You need not quarrel with friends, who think there is any conceivable value in scattering rice, throwing old slippers, or any other similar antiquated practices. If they imagine that such trivial customs serve to express their good wishes for your future welfare, let them observe them. But as Salvationists you will not be influenced by such foolish and old wives' fables.

The same remark applies to the notions entertained by some people with regard to omens and times and seasons. On no account would they be married on a Friday, or



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on the thirteenth day of the month, while the barking of a dog or the crowing of a cock at what they think an unseasonable hour, and I know not what else, would be regarded as reliable signs of "bad luck" for the future. Away with all such nonsense from the mind of the Salvationist! He has the assurance that none of the accidents of life can prevent the fulfillment of God's gracious purposes concerning him. To him all days are good, suitable alike for deeds worthy in themselves, and which will carry with them the approval of his Lord.

3. Determine that the occasion shall, as far as possible, be *a season of gladness*. If there is any period in the life of a man or woman that should be bright and cheerful, surely it is their Wedding-day. The novel circumstances in which you will find yourself placed, the presence and congratulations of your friends, together with the promise the event will give of joy and gladness, will be likely to banish from your minds all anxieties about the present, and to call into exercise a lively faith for the future. So be merry, and call together your Comrades, and bid them be merry with you. Bring out the comet, beat the drum, sound the timbrel, and lift up your voices to Heaven in praise and thanksgiving.

While thus expressing your joy, do something towards creating gladness in the hearts of others. Salvationists are not, often, able to provide expensive feasts for the poor and the needy. They are, as a rule, poor and needy themselves; but to the extent of their ability, they should, on such occasions, see that some humble Comrade, some lonely widow, or some needy stranger, share in the happiness and plenty of their Marriage-day.

4. While seeking to make your Wedding-day bright and cheerful, *beware of lightness and frivolity*. Human nature is prone to extremes; and it is in seasons of legitimate mirth that the temptation to foolish jesting, to giggling and empty laughter – always so unbecoming in Saints and Soldiers – is most likely to lead them astray. I do not think that such levity is, to any serious extent, common amongst us; but I have heard stories of giddiness and jocularities on these occasions which, while not, perhaps, actually wrong in themselves, have been very unlike Salvationism, and, consequently, calculated to do harm. Officers and Soldiers should be very careful to avoid these unseemly exhibitions.

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5. Arrange that the public ceremony shall, as far as possible, be the means of conveying spiritual benefit to your own souls, and, in addition, to the Comrades, friends, and strangers who may come to witness it. A Wedding has an attraction for strangers peculiar to itself. There are many people who will come to the religious ceremony connected with it, who would not under any other circumstances attend a Salvation meeting. Therefore, you ought to do what you can to make the service useful to them. The Apostle Paul says: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

Acting on that principle, an occasion, which I have shown to be one of the most interesting and important events of your earthly history, ought to be made to promote the end which every Salvationist should always have in view – the glory of God and the benefit of those around him.

6. *Avoid all vain display* and unnecessary expenditure. While providing things decently and in order in the sight of those attending the Service, do not allow your Wedding to be made an excuse for transgressing those rules of simplicity, modesty, and separation from the world which you embraced when you became Salvationists. When I read the descriptions of fashionable Marriages, now so common, and remember how frequently they are imitated by people in the humbler walks of life, I am grieved at the scandalous waste and the shameful pride and vanity displayed; and, alas I all openly sanctioned and endorsed by a religious service and by religious leaders.

Let my dear people keep as far as possible from anything approaching such foolish and extravagant exhibitions; and thereby compel the world to admire their simplicity, and to acknowledge the reality of their profession as followers of our meek and lowly Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It will help you to accomplish this if, in all thoroughness, you stick to your uniform.

7. *Seek an interview with the Officer* who will conduct the Ceremony a little time before the day appointed, and make plain to him what your wishes are with respect to it. Give him to understand, that while you desire that the Service shall be conducted with cheerfulness, you wish it to be made a means of spiritual benefit to those who



may be present.

8. Familiarise yourself with the nature of the Service, and more particularly with the part you will have to take in it. Consider carefully the solemn pledges you are about to make to God and to your Partner; and pray, earnestly, that He may give you grace to be true to them. By thinking carefully over the Service in which you are about to join, and weighing well what you will have to say, you will do much to prevent the nervousness and frustration so common to such an occasion.

When you are asked to speak, say a few words in a simple, modest, and earnest manner, honouring your Lord, by testifying to His past goodness in your conversion and preservation, and avow your resolution to serve Him faithfully in your new circumstances; exhorting all present to a full consecration of themselves to the doing of His will.

It will not only make you happier at the time, but increase the glad remembrance of the hour for ever after, if the Ceremony should be made an occasion for the bestowment of a great blessing on the Soldiers of the Corps, leading them to a fuller preparation for the Marriage Supper of the Lamb; and, if any of the sinners present can be induced to seek mercy, it will be more delightful still.

9. The same spirit which I have exhorted you to observe in the public meeting should govern any festive gathering that may be held in connection with it. I cannot perceive why the spirit which influences us in the public service should not equally pervade our conversations, songs, and prayers in the private feast.

In short, seeing that your Wedding-day is one of the most important days of your life, I think you should unite together in making it a time of heavenly satisfaction and spiritual profit, not only to yourselves, but to all concerned.

10. While avoiding all unsuitable familiarity in the presence of the public, you should, at the same time, treat each other with all the respect^ affection^ and thoughtfulness that are reasonable under the circumstances, and which you will feel to be each other's due.



11. At the end of the day, commence your new life by a re-consecration of yourselves to the service of God at the feet of your Saviour.