

The  
William Booth  
Collection

SERGEANT-MAJOR DO-YOUR-BEST  
OF DARKINGTON NO.1

## CHAPTER V: REVIVALS

Our Divisional Officer, Major Never-rest, was at our Corps last night, telling us all about a great Staff Council that they've been having in London, where The General – God bless him! – has been laying down the law that everybody has to rouse himself up, and go for the drink, and the sinners, and the devil in dead earnest all through the country – I'm not sure whether he didn't say all through the world; and the Major says that this means our Corps among the rest; and he says there must be a general shaking up of ourselves, and a desperate lot of fighting with the enemy, or else we shall be left behind.

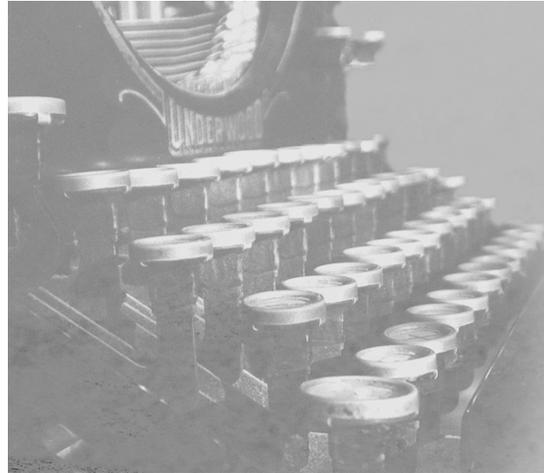
Oh, my, didn't the Major go it strong! And I quite agreed with every word he said. It made me feel just like the old days, when we couldn't rest without doing something fresh continually, and when we were mobbed in the market-place, and had every window broken in the Hall, and the Captain was locked up for a fortnight.

Don't I remember that time? I should think I do! My face was so covered with sticking-plaster, through the stones and scratchings of the roughs, that Sarah, my wife – God bless her! – could hardly find a clear spot for a kiss, and she declared that I looked more to her liking with all them patches on than ever I did before. She's a plucky little woman is our Sarah.

Yes, The General's all right. The dear old Army was made for fighting; and it's my honest opinion that it's the fighting what has made us Salvationists what we are. I don't know a single Corps that has gone down which has kept up the fighting; while I know a few, I'm sorry to say, that hasn't done much good since the fighting slackened.

And, to make a clean breast of it – which I might as well do while I'm about it – I think this very Corps of ours has settled down a good deal on the comfortable line.

Sarah says straight out that we're all stagnated, and that I'm stagnated myself – which is an awful thing to say about a Sergeant-Major! But she sticks to it.



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"Why," says she, "instead of shouting the roof off, like you once did when you prayed, and worrying the life out of everybody who was not killing themselves to save souls, now you pray quite elegantly, just like Captain Swellum used to do, and go on quietly and peaceably, whether there's anyone at the penitent-form or no."

Them are Sarah's opinions, and I am afraid she is not far wrong.

Now, I am glad that the Divisional Officer has come along, and stirred us all up; but I hardly see how we are going to do anything very powerful all in a hurry, fixed as we are.

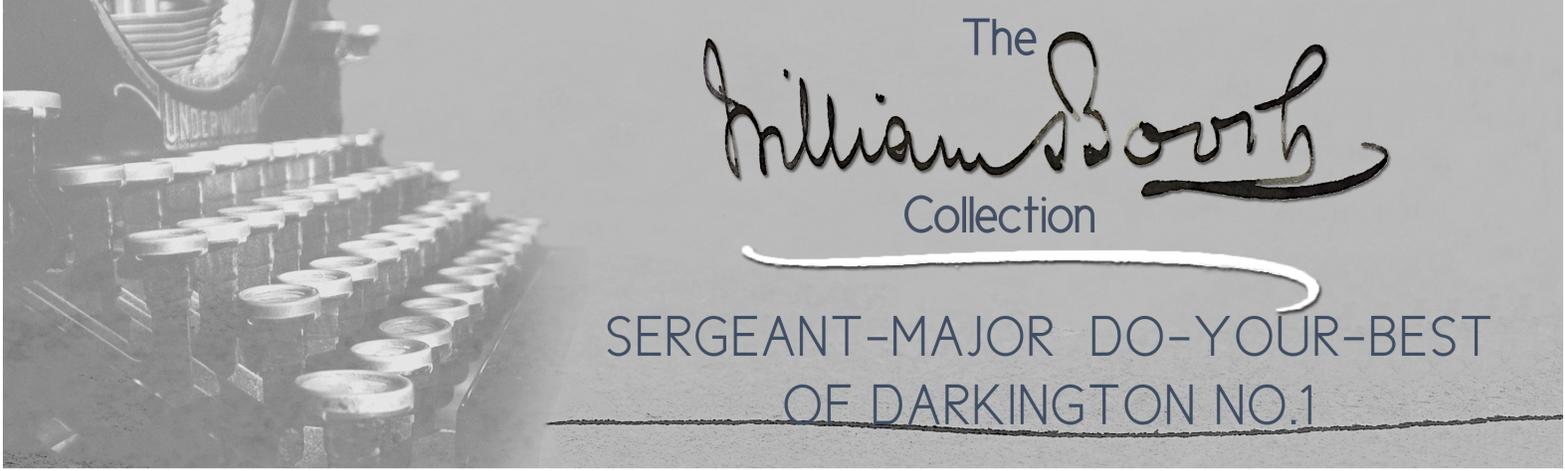
You see, our new Officers have just come in, and they're only two lads. Why, bless me, I don't think the Captain is much older than our Jack, and how he's going to manage a Corps like Darkington, with all these steady-going Soldiers and old-fashioned Locals in it, I can't see for the life of me.

But I must say the Captain is rather a promising-looking young fellow. I reckoned him up at the first meeting, and I says to Sarah, as soon as I got home: "Sarah," says I, "the Captain's the right sort. I felt it in my bones the first time when I heard him pray; but I'm afraid he'll find Darkington a difficult job."

But before I could get any further with what I was going to say, Sarah stopped me.

"Sergeant-Major," says she – Sarah is very proud of my rank, and she always gives me my title when she addresses me, either at home or anywhere else – "Sergeant-Major, you'll have to stand by that Captain. It's true as he is a young man, but that's not a fault, is it? Isn't it the young Officers who are so cheerful, and always willing to venture something, and who are so attractive to other young folks, and so easily led? Cannot a Sergeant-Major of your abilities do as you like with a young Officer when he wants to do the right thing, when some of them old cut-and-dried people won't listen to a Local Officer at all?"

"But, you see," says she, "perhaps it's the thought about my own children who are just gone out from the Training Home– both being so young – that makes me feel as



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though I want to mother all the young Officers that come along; and now, mind, Sergeant-Major Do-your-best, I hope you are going to stand by this young Captain, and do by him as you hope the Sergeant-Major is going to do by your own son, Jack, who is just gone into his new Corps."

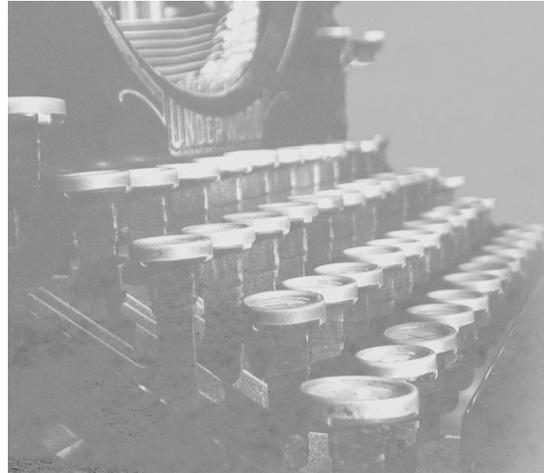
Now, I want to tell you what has happened lately.

What with one Captain going away, and another coming in, we didn't have a Soldiers' Meeting on Tuesday, and so the Captain got one on Friday, and a remarkable meeting it was, I can tell you. First of all, we sang the song, "Send the Fire!" and then the Lieutenant prayed. And then the Captain got up, and made a little speech.

"My dear comrades," he said. I liked the way he started off. He stood straight up like a man that knew what he was after, looked us all fairly in the face, spoke out strong, although in nice, easy words, so that everybody could understand him; and we all felt at once, that while he was of the humble sort, he was not without a will of his own. He didn't say much, but what he did say was to the point.

"Comrades," says he, "I've not been with you very long; but I've been on the ground long enough to see the Hall, a few of the Soldiers, to look through the Roll, to shake hands with the Local Officers, and to praise God for having Darkington 1. Then," says he, "comrades, I've also had a stroll or two through the place; I've looked at the crowded pubs and the theatre, and I've been inside that devilish low concert hall just round the corner; and I've seen the crowds of young people all rushing, giggling, and laughing, down the broad road.

"And, then, comrades," says he, "I've compared these thousands who are for sin, and the devil, and Hell, with the handful at our Corps who are for salvation, and God, and Heaven, and the thought has made my heart ache. Comrades," says he, "we must have a Revival; we must have something done. I'm here on purpose for it. These poor deluded slaves of sin and the devil have ears, and we must make them hear about Calvary; they have eyes, and we must show them a few Salvationists in dead earnest; they have hearts, and we must make them feel the dying love of Jesus; they have souls, and we must win them."



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And then he stopped a bit, and the tears came into his eyes, and he said: "Comrades, I've made up my mind to have a crowd of these poor sinners saved, or I'll die in the attempt, and you shall bury me in your cemetery."

And when he said those last words, it all seemed so real earnest-like, that I felt all tender, and I turned to look at Sarah, and she was crying like a child; and she said to me in a whisper: "Sergeant-Major," says she, "you're going to help that young man, or I'll leave you and go and live with Jack; for I feel I must go somewhere where sinners are coming to Jesus, or I shall die as well."

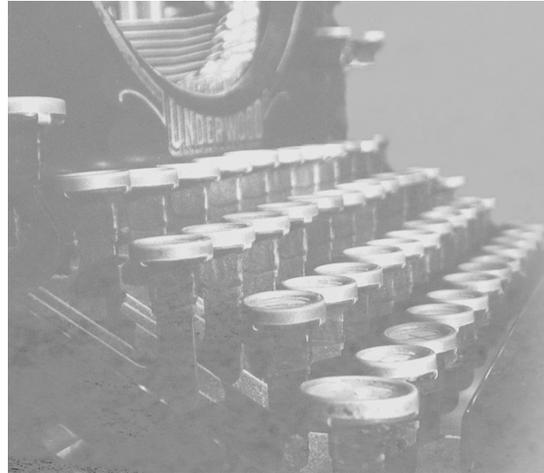
Well, now, after this, the Captain, he says: "Comrades, as to what is to be done, I don't exactly see at the minute. I've had a talk with the Sergeant-Major and with his wife " – which he had, and I'm glad he mentioned Sarah – "and I've had a word with the Treasurer; but I am going to think and pray about it, for I'm determined," he says, "to do something desperate; and I think we'll begin with a Half-Night next Tuesday, and have a meeting in the fair that they say is coming off on Wednesday. I find that I can hire a tent right in the middle of the ground, and we'll have a meeting on Sunday morning at half-past twelve opposite the 'Blue Boy'; and we'll all pray every day for the down-coming of the Holy Ghost on this town. Now," says he, "we'll read The General's Letter about the Fire."

His talk had not lasted more than ten minutes, and we were all sharpened up for what came after. But, there, you should have heard him. I wish the dear General had been there to hear that Letter read for himself. God bless him!

And when he said at the finish, "Let's all go down, and cry to God," my heart was fairly bursting; and before that bit of prayer was over there was a shaking among the dry bones of Darkington Corps, I can tell you.

Still, there wasn't many "Amens." Some of the old stagers, especially, were a little stiff.

The meeting wasn't a very large one either, and altogether I could see the Captain was a little disappointed. But I gave his hand a good squeeze when I said good-night;



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and although Sarah doesn't approve of Officers going out to supper, she asked him to go on with us, and have a bit of bread and cheese; but he refused with a kind "thank you."

As we walked home, Treasurer Always-the-same and Envoy As-you-were, who live just a little beyond our house, joined us on the road.

At first nothing was said. I must say for myself that I felt rather solemn like. The thought of the heavenly Fire coming to Darkington, of which we had just been hearing, and the talk of the Captain, had gone right into me; and, as to Sarah – well, she had hardly got her tears dry.

So we plodded on. At last the Treasurer put in a word: "What did you think of tonight's doings?" said he.

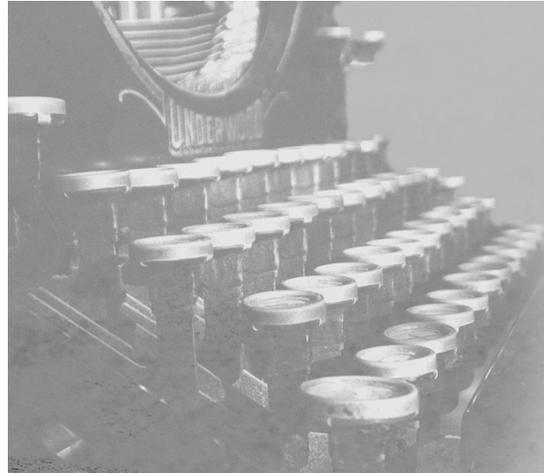
"Which part of 'em?" says I, because the Treasurer is a better scholar than I am, and I didn't want to make a mistake; besides, I felt that, being the Sergeant-Major, it was very proper that I should say the right thing, so I waited to know what part of the night's doings he meant.

"Well," says the Treasurer, "I mean the new Captain's speech."

"Well," says I, "I thought it was the very thing. Didn't you think so, Treasurer?" says I.

"Well, yes," he says, rather coldly; "I think it would be all right for some Corps, but I hardly see how that sort of thing fits us. I don't altogether approve of these spasomy kind of things. We are not in so bad a condition at Darkington, after all. We increased the Self-Denial and nearly doubled the Harvest Festival. We are out of debt; and if the Captain goes steady, he'll get full salary. The congregation is not much less than for the last three years, and the Juniors are looking up."

"But," says Sarah, putting in and dragging at my arm as I was helping her along – for she had done a hard day's work assisting Sister Break-down, who has been laid up with the influenza for three months, as well as doing her own work – "But," says Sarah,



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"what about the poor sinners and the backsliders which the Captain talked about, who are living wicked lives all about us, and dying every day, and going to the cemetery up our way; and what about a lot of our own half-hearted Soldiers who are nearly gone back to the world altogether, which the poor Captain knows nothing about as yet?"

"Well, yes," joined in the Envoy, who had not spoken up to now; "it is high time we had something done; but this Captain has hardly got into his Quarters as yet, and he doesn't know much about our condition or about the town."

"No," chimed in the Treasurer again; "how can he? Besides, see how young he is! Why, bless me, I'm old enough to be his father, and I was converted, let me see – he talks tonight about having been saved five years – why, I've been a Local Officer in Darkington Corps for ten years. I think I ought to know something about things. When he spoke to me about these new schemes of his, I gave him a pretty strong hint or two. But what I want to know is, who's going to find the money for this tent he talks about in the fair, and all these new measures? – that's what I want to know. No debt is my rule. Where's the money coming from?"

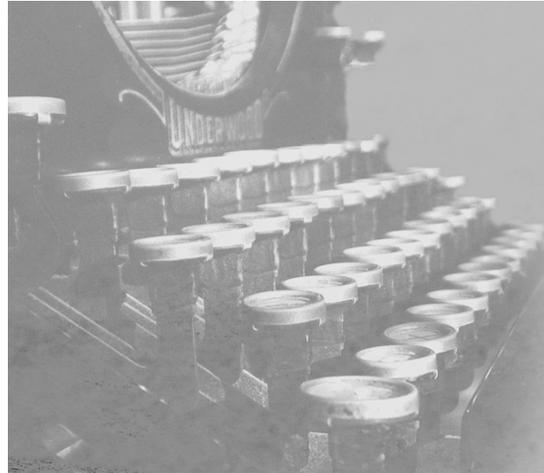
"Then," said the Envoy, "this will break in upon the regular course of the meetings, and you can't have such new-fangled things without the danger of spoiling what you've got a-going already. Besides, I don't like so much excitement in religion. These Letters of the General are about as much as I can stand."

"Yes," said the Treasurer, "let's go along smoothly and steadily. That's what I'm for."

"Well," says Sarah, "why don't you join the Chapel? Things goes on there smoothly enough, except when there's an election or some other hubbub of that sort!"

By this time we'd just got to our house, and I was mighty glad we had, for I could see Sarah was getting rather warm, and I was afraid she'd lose the blessing she'd got at the meeting. So I made the Treasurer and the Envoy come in and have a bite of supper; and we had a little prayer, and they both seemed quite softened like.

When they were gone, Sarah says: "I wonder if the Captain's gone to bed?"



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"Not he," I said.

"Well, then," says she, "it's only a few yards to his Quarters. Just run round, and tell him that, whatever comes or goes, Sergeant-Major Do-your-best and his wife are going to stand by him in having a good fight for the souls of the people of Darkington."