

The
William Booth
Collection

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

CHAPTER VII: LOOKING AFTER NEW CONVERTS

Now, I was telling you in the last chapter about the visit our Corps made to the fair, and what a downright good "go" it was. It just suited my taste, and made me feel quite young again, I can tell you!

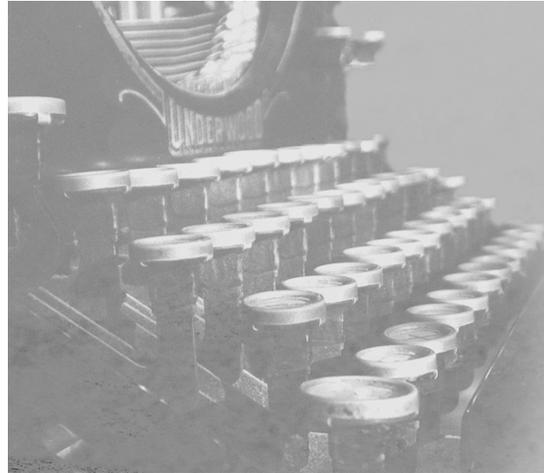
The poor drunkard we captured has turned out a capital case. I thought he would. Sergeant Look-'em-up took him home with him the same night, gave him a dose of strong tea, some good advice, had a good pray with him, and then saw him to his own place.

That was good, and, Oh, my word, wasn't his wife glad to hear the news! The poor little woman has been half starved, and the children – well, there's better times before them all, now, I hope.

But what do you think? This man turns out to be a sort of foreman in Deacon Propriety's mill, and one of the best workmen he has. The Deacon has had a lot of patience with him, and threatened to discharge him ever so many times on account of his drunken goings on. He says he has borne with him on account of his wife and children; but I suspect that his being such a clever fellow with the machinery, and such a good hand with the men, has had something to do with it.

Anyhow, the Deacon called on the Captain the next morning, to say how glad he was to hear the news about Will Boozham – for that is his name – and that he is sorry he said anything against our going into the fair; and that Sarah's speech had troubled him all night; and as how as Boozham 's case had quite altered his opinions about The Army; that he didn't understand us before.

And, then, he asked the Captain to pray for a son he has somewhere in Australia, who, he says, is a bit unsteady, and left a sovereign to pay for repairing the drum that he had heard was broken in the scrimmage; and then he told the Captain that when he was hard up he was to give him a call.



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Now, that did please Sarah when the Captain told us all about it at night.

"Sergeant-Major," says she, when we got home, "isn't that just what I've always been telling you – that the way to make friends and get money for the Corps is to go and get the poor lost creatures saved? While you all sit on your comfortable seats in the Hall, or stand in the Open-Air ring, at the very same spot you've been at since the days of Adam, and beg and beg from the same little set of people you've been squeezing all that time, you'll want money; and serve you right! But, if you will go into the devil's compounds, and fetch out the poor wretches that are dying and going to Hell with their drink, and their pride, and their blasphemies, then you'll get all the money you need, and the blessing of God into the bargain."

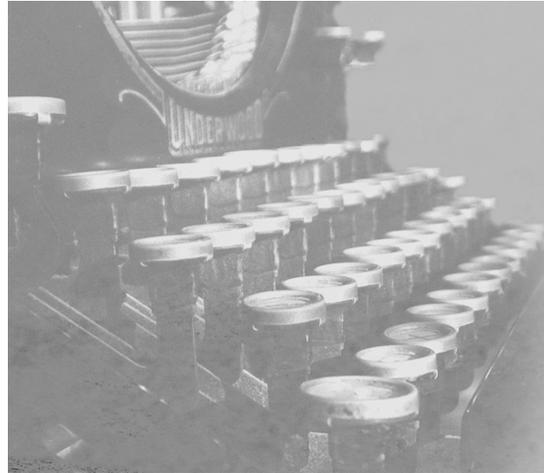
Now, I think this was rather rough of Sarah, because at Darkington No. 1 Corps we have three different stands; but I suppose there are thirty more which we might have if we went to look for them. So I didn't say anything to contradict her.

A few days after all this I fell in with Jim Grumbleton again. "Well," says I, "Sergeant, how did you get on at Frampton?"

"How did I get on?" says he. "Well, very poorly. I didn't enjoy myself one morsel. You see, Jennie went and took ill as soon as we got there; and the woman where we had lodgings was as crooked as she could hang together, and I was like 'a fish out of water' among the giggling crowd, and felt awful cowardly, to think that I hadn't got my uniform on, and wasn't going for them about their souls, for all I was worth. Then, I remembered the fair, and wished I had been with you. So I was real glad to get home again."

Then, I set on to tell him what a blessed time we had; and how I hoped we had got Will Boozham really saved; and I w[^] going on with quite a little sermon, when Jim interrupted me, and, says he: –

"Now, Sergeant-Major, you are a good fellow, and I like you very much; but, you know, I have no hope for Boozham – no, not that!" – and he snapped his fingers, and as he walked along he kicked a stone off the path – nearly through a shop-window close by.



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"No," said he, "he's not worth your trouble; and, if you have no more to show for your night's work, and your smashed drum, and the mess I hear they made of your new uniform, than Will Boozham, the game wasn't worth the candle."

"Sergeant," says I, "what do you mean?"

"Mean!" says he. "I mean that I don't believe that there's any hope for Will. Hasn't he signed teetotal, I don't know how many times? – and wasn't he a Soldier in our Corps for ever so long? – And wasn't he a Local? – and didn't they think he'd make an Officer?– and then didn't he go and tip it all over, and disgrace us all before the town? No, I'm done with Boozham; I've clean given him up."

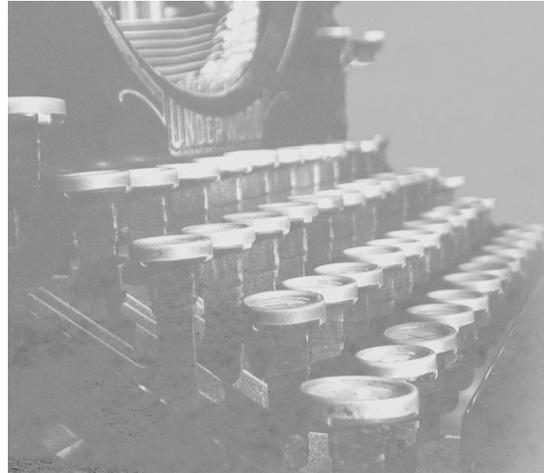
"What!" I says, "you, a Soldier in The Salvation Army, really cannot mean to say that, because a man has fallen, and got up, and then gone and fallen again, that he's to be left to perish – that we are to see him going down to destruction, and getting nearer and nearer the pit every day, and we aren't to make an effort to save him? Is that like Jesus Christ? Didn't He say we were to seek the lost sheep in the wilderness, and to forgive him seventy times, and more?"

But here we had got to the gate, and Jim bade me goodbye, with a queer look on his face, which seemed to say: "What a Simple Simon you are to believe in saving such fellows as Boozham!"

Now, I must say, I felt quite bad after this talk, seeing that I had got quite interested in poor Will; and I should have felt a good deal worse, but, just as I walked across the yard, who should I meet but Joe Look-'em-up, our Recruiting-Sergeant. So I made for him at once, thinking that he would be sure to know how Boozham was shaping.

"Sergeant," says I in a sort of whisper – for there were a lot of people about – "have you heard anything about Boozham?" I tell you, I was afraid of my life what his answer would be.

But Joe blurted out "Amen!" – loud enough to be heard all round about; and, says he, "Oh! He's all right. I've seen him every day since the fair night; and I'm going to hold



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on to him like grim death. I've made up my mind that the devil and the publicans shan't have him again, if I can help it!"

So I thanked God and took courage, and resolved that I would look up Boozham myself, for I felt rather condemned that I hadn't given him a call.

Still, although I was comforted, I couldn't help telling Sarah at dinner-time about Grumbleton's unbelief. You should have seen her! Instead of being put out, as I expected, she smiled one of her pitiful smiles – which, I suppose, was intended for me.

"Sergeant-Major," says she, "I thought you had more sense and more religion than to take notice of every poor unbelieving soul that you meet. Why, Grumbleton's half a back-slider himself! He thinks more of jaunting about with that unconverted girl of his, and going after his own pleasure, although he is a Sergeant in our Corps, than all the poor drunkards and their broken-hearted wives in the town of Darkington; and, now that poor Boozham's got on to his feet once more, he not only refuses to do anything to keep him up, but goes about discouraging everybody else that does. Because Boozham's been a Soldier and gone down, he says we are not to help him up, supposing that he might go down again! That's it, isn't it, Sergeant-Major?"

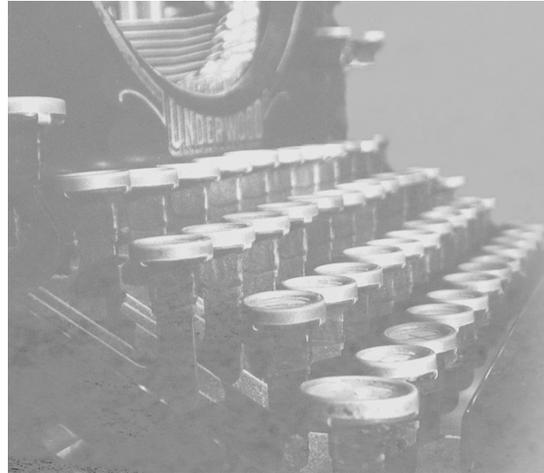
And I said, "Yes, that's it,"

"Well," Sarah went on, "if them are his sentiments, Sergeant-Major, is that any reason why we should refuse to pick him up? Is that the way we treat one another in the general goings-on of our lives? When anybody goes over in the street, do we refuse to help them on to their feet for fear they should fall again?"

"Sergeant-Major, I want to ask you a question, which you, as a Local Officer, ought to be able to answer me, who is only a plain woman."

"All right," says I, "go on,"

"Well, if your neighbour, Jim Brown, as is bad with what the doctors says is 'appoplexy'



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– which, I think, has come with having a great deal too much to eat, and a little too much to drink – well, if poor Brown as has a wife and six little children, falls down in a fit on the road yonder, over which those horses, and busses, and carts is rattling at such a rate, should we refuse to pick him up, and try and get him put straight for fear he should have another fit, and fall again in some other part of the town, and be killed after all? No, Sergeant-Major, you know we should not. You know that we should rush in, and hold up our hands, and turn the traffic on one side, while we dragged him away from the wheels and the horses' feet, and take him home, or to the hospital.

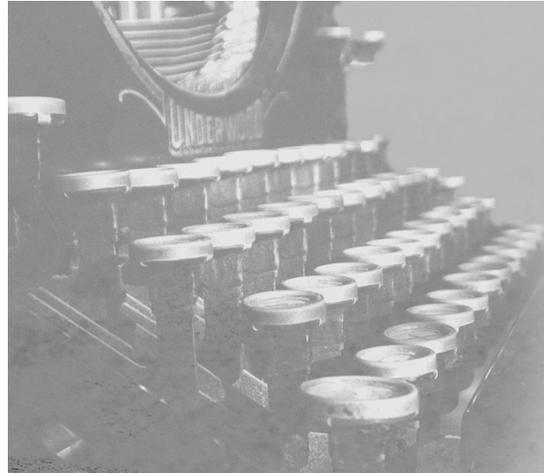
“Now, here is poor Boozham, and his half-starved wife. I knew her when she was quite a girl, and she was one of the best-tempered and happiest creatures in our Sunday school. Well, here she and her husband have fallen under the hoofs of these publicans, who don't care whose happiness and brains and lives they trample out, if they can get anything out of them. Shall we refuse to try and drag the poor wretches out of their clutches, for fear they should fall again? No, Sergeant-Major – that is a doctrine of devils!

“But, then, how do we know that Boozham will fall again? There's your boy Jack, Sergeant-Major, who's just gone to his first Corps, and who, you know, you're right down proud of. Well, now, when Jack was a little fellow he had the 'difteria' in his throat, and the doctor said there was just a chance of his getting well, although it would take a deal of trouble and sitting up of nights to pull him through; and that, if he did come round, he would always be having attacks of the same complaint.

“Well, you know that we did pull Jack through – although it was no thanks to you, Sergeant-Major, for you know it was before your eyes were opened by the blessed Army, and you pretended to be so distressed about him, being as he was your favourite boy, and that you comforted yourself with being drunk all the time.

“However, we pulled Jack through, and he has never had a bout of 'difteria' since, and he can shout louder and longer nor his father, and he takes a deal of beating.

“Well, now, here's poor Will Boozham – if anybody that knows him says as he's going



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to fall again, I am not going to believe 'em, for one. I made up my mind that I wouldn't let Jack die of the 'diftheria,' and watched him afterwards like a cat does a mouse, poor as I was; and we're all going to watch over Will Boozham, ain't we, Sergeant-Major? And keep him from falling, if we can; and if he does fall, which God forbid, we'll pick him up again. So there's your dinner, old man. God bless you! I've got a letter from Jack. But I'll keep it till night."