



## CHAPTER VI

### On the Banks of the River

AS Christmastime grew on, it appeared as if at any moment the Golden Gates might open before Mrs. Booth. From Sunday, December 15th, on to Christmas Eve, her state of exhaustion seemed to leave no possible hope of her spending Christmas Day with her family on earth. All through its hours, her family waited for her last word before her voice should melt into the song before the Throne. Toward the evening of Boxing Day, however, she rallied in a remarkable manner. From that time onward, one of the most trying features of her illness was the almost rhythmic recurrence of terrible fits of exhaustion and hemorrhage, which brought her repeatedly into the very mists of the Valley of the Shadow, and in any one of which her physicians considered that she might depart. Still, no sudden glimpse through the Gates of Heaven, had they opened for her quickly, could have borne such transcendent testimony for our faith as the way in which The Army Mother and those more precious to her than life were sustained, through constantly-repeated death partings; through days and nights of waiting for the delayed summons. Those hours we indeed full of the manifested glory of God, crowded with words of revelation for which we can but thank Him unspeakably. Many of her utterances in the face of death were carefully chronicled. The following is a faithful transcript of what passed in the sick-room on one of those never-to-be-forgotten days, while her family gathered about her for last messages.

'Tell the people that all we say and sing about souls, when we get here does not look enough; they look worth – they look worth it all. I wish I had always estimated their value more as I do today. It looks such a few that we do get.

'You are going to take hands with me. I can-not get hold of all your hands, so Emma will be one side and you, Pa, the other, and you must take hold of hands all round like they do with the electric battery, and I shall feel I have got hold of you all, till the Light meets me on the other side, and then you can let me drop, safe in the arms of Jesus.

'I don't care about my body, I have done with my body. It has been a poor old troublesome affair. I shall be glad for it to be sealed up. It is time it was. Oh, I have dragged it very wearily about.





Never think of me as in the grave. I shall not be there, anyway.

'I believe there will be the same differences in people there that there are here, and those who like to sit in a corner playing a harp all day, they will let them, perhaps; but the people who will prog about and look after things and help the good, they will let them. I don't believe there are so many of them that one can be spared. I shall get about, you may depend. I have in this world, and I shall in the next. I shall know what you are doing. I shall know all about it.

'Oh! I wish I could let you know. I wish there was some way of getting a letter to you when I am gone, but perhaps I shall be able to in dreams and visions of the night.

'Love one another, love one another. Stand fast together, and the Devil can sneer at the Booths. You can afford his sneers while you stand together. Never mind what people say. What does it matter to me now what the world says about me? Not a bit, not an atom. Oh! I would not give a farthing for all their good opinions. I am comforted in one way to think that I have never betrayed my Master at the tables of the rich. I have made their hearts ache many a time. I knew they would hate me, but I did not care. I never pandered to their opinions, nor stroked them down in their pharisaism. Never! and my soul I can truly say loathed their dainties.'

The Founder: 'You never flattered the brewers.' Mrs. Booth: 'No, no. I would not go to Mr.—'s great gathering. I had an invitation to go, and I told him how I should expect to hear the wails of widows and orphans mixed up with the songs, and I should expect the grass under my feet to be red with their blood. I would not go, and you know I would not have had the brewers' money, but you converted me over that. I used to want to send their money back to perish with them, but you said it was better to take it from them to undo some of the mischief they have done. Oh! I feel like flying. I tell people I shall get about. I don't believe I shall be fastened up in a corner playing a harp. I shall let the folks do it who like, but I shall come progg about if I can. I shall come and see you if I can, and whisper things to you, some things that I have not been able to say—'

Commissioner Railton had now entered the room, and turning to him, she said: 'I shall see your



mother. What shall I say to her?'

Railton: 'Tell her I am at it still.'

Mrs. Booth: 'She will understand, I suppose. And your father – what message shall I give him?'

Railton: 'Tell him that both his boys are stick-ing to the work he told us of when he went away.'

Mrs. Booth: 'Not long since I saw your brother. Give him my love.' Then, tenderly stroking the grey head of the Founder, bowed by sorrow at her side, she shook his hand while she wept and pressed it fervently, and said, 'We two are so joined. I can't be in Glory and leave you behind for long, I am sure ....

'I shall tell the Lord I have kept His interests first, and therefore He must let me go and look after you all. The journey won't matter to me then.'

Her eyes now rested on each of her family who were closely gathered around her, and, picking out the two servants, she said, 'Dutton, stand where I can see you, and you, too, Sarah. Remember, divisions and schisms and distrust are of the Devil – of the Devil. I know him. He comes at me He says, "Oh, you are leaving all your children, and the world and the Devil will be too much for them"; but they won't, will they?'

All the Family: 'No.'

Mrs. Booth: 'Don't let him get an advantage. Now all of you join round. I cannot use this poor hand. Join your hands and I shall feel I have got hold of you all. Join them like they do at the galvanic battery. O Lord!' she said suddenly, fixing her earnest gaze upward, 'O Lord, send the divine galvanism upon us all,' and a deep 'Amen!' came from every heart.

'Oh, be not faithless!' she continued, with her voice quivering with the love that beamed in her striking face. 'I have been so wanting in faith. Oh, what would I give if I had had more faith and





been more courageous!' While she wept aloud she said, 'Have faith in God. Don't be afraid of the Devil; don't be afraid of evil tidings. Don't be afraid of them that can kill the body. Have faith, faith, mighty faith! I am going into the dark valley believing. I am so ashamed of myself. I am so disgusted with myself in many respects. I don't want you to publish what I have done. I am so ashamed of the little bit I have achieved, and if I only had had more faith I might have achieved so much.'

Mrs. Booth-Tucker, anxious that her mother should bless the absent members of the family, brought the photographs of each of them and laid them upon the bed. Taking a letter just received from one of her daughters, she pressed it to her lips, and then placed her photo, with that of her husband and the baby, fondly upon her bosom, saying, 'My darling girl! She is a brave, beautiful soul, and if she is a bit too cautious, never mind. I think you had better be a bit over-careful whom you send, than to send those hollow, self-seeking people who never put God in the place of themselves.

'Though I think we ought to have a people with some gifts, because they cannot otherwise very well get the ear of the people; but, Oh, goodness is the great thing. Truth, sincerity in the inward parts, and you cannot tell when it is there unless it comes to light in the outward acts.

'Where's Fritz?' she said, referring to Commissioner Booth-Tucker – 'a beautiful, transparent, saintly character,' and, raising his photo to her lips, she handed it back to Mrs. Booth-Tucker. She continued, 'I say, they will have a copy of "The War Cry" up there in the celestial characters, and I shall read it to Abraham, Noah, David, and Job, and Paul, and the angels, and I shall make them listen to the stories if they don't know them all, and we shall have an extra song! And Eva, don't you forget that man with the handcuffs on. Find him. Go to Lancaster Jail, and let somebody go with you and find that man. Tell him that your mother prayed, when she was dying, for him, and that she had a feeling in her heart that God would save him; and tell him, hard as the ten years is, it will be easier with Christ than it would be without, and God will hold him up against the wretched people he is going amongst.

'I did want to have done something for the prisons and for the asylums. Oh, my God, if You will





but come and burst up the wickedness of the world! Oh, the wickedness of the world! Those poor Indians,' she continued, turning to Mrs. Booth-Tucker. 'I was going to sleep. No, I was not, for I was wide awake. But I was lying here the other night, and such a funny thing happened. The gas shone on that brass knob' (pointing to-wards it), 'and there came up the most perfect African face. Two eyes. I shall never forget it to all eternity. It looked like a woman's face, and there was a white cloth around the top of her head, such as they wear, and her eyes seemed to come out to me. I had just been thinking of Heaven, and how I should enjoy it, when that woman's face seemed to say to me, "Won't you help us, won't you help us?" And I said, "Oh, yes, Lord, I will go anywhere to help poor struggling people- struggling, many of them, after God, better than I have done. I would go on an errand to Hell if the Lord would give me the assurance that the Devil should not keep me there.'

Then her concern for her children's health seized her again, and she said:

'I wish I could teach you all – Oh, I wish I could! – that God has respect to His natural laws, and that He won't work a miracle to keep people from being burned if they run into the fire. Take care – care. Oh, I have travailed in birth for my children, not only when they were born, but ever since, and it has been hard times.

'But I shall meet you all in that eternal world where wickedness is no more, and we shall have it all to ourselves and the Lord. Oh, there will be thousands and millions of those who have sought Him the best they knew, and served Him with the best they had, too. They will be there.

'Ah, don't forget what I said to you about Mrs. Railton' –who was absent– 'Oliphant, don't forget. And Celestine (Mrs. Oliphant) and Nellie, is it? And David (Railton). I should like to have seen the children. I love that child particularly.'

Mrs. Booth turned to Dutton, an old servant, and said, 'I am going to eat the angels' food. I shall never be faint any more. Advise with Emma and the General. They will help you to be a little tender with Tommy (Dutton's son). I wish I could have seen the boy. Tell him it pays to be good, and he ought not to risk losing his soul. Don't be afraid of boring him. Let him be bored. People



who won't serve God ought to be bored. Bore him till he gives in. Give my love to your mother and your poor old father, too. Is he ready?

Dutton: 'Yes, ma'am.'

Mrs. Booth: 'Heaven will be a deal more like earth than we think, and we shall not be so much altered. It won't alter our souls.' Then to Sarah: 'Poor, dear Sarah! faithful Sarah! You will try and do what you can for them, won't you? I shall know all about it.'

'And, Forward! O Forward, be like your name. Presume on God doing for you what He has promised, and then go forward!'

We then sang:

My God, I am Thine,  
What a comfort Divine!  
What a blessing to know  
That the Saviour is mine!

While singing, Mrs. Booth, turning to the General, said, 'Don't you remember, in Cornwall, how they used to sing it? I have not been able to sing, but I shall soon be able now.'

Railton: 'You have made many others sing.'

To the Chief: 'I have had your boy here. Mind how you train your children. What is it that Jesus said? "They are in the world. I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil one." Keep them. Keep them. Keep hold of them. Never let them go. Keep them from the evil. I have helped Him to do it as long as I could, and now I trust them in His hands.'

Mrs. Oliphant having now come in, Mrs. Booth begged her to come to her side, when Mrs. Booth said to her, 'Celestine, you must do credit to your Dutch history, and be as brave as a brick for





the Lord. They were a brave lot, those old Dutch. Strengthen your husband's hands. When he is weak, you must be strong. Never go down under the mark. Don't go down. Fear not their faces. Ah, Celestine, you ought to meet us as a family. God has seen the sincerity of your father's heart, and He has brought you all as a family into The Salvation Army, and now He will make a Kingdom of you! Tell your mother not to give way when the pressure comes. Tell her to hold on to God as by her teeth, and stand to it.

'God could save the world in a few years if all His people were faithful. Oh, that I had been more courageous! Oh, that I had been more brave!'

Fearing that Mrs. Booth might be exhausted, the Founder begged her to rest, but she only answered, 'What does it matter? I have done with my body now.' The little maid now coming in, Mrs. Booth immediately saw her, and, beckoning her to her side, kissed her and said, 'You will be done doing the dishes soon, and you are going to be a Cadet. I have been very pleased with you while you have been here, because you have worked out of sight with a good will, and I think you will make a brave Officer. You will promise me, will you?' said she, as she laid on her head her trembling hand. 'Yes,' was the reply, 'I will,' while sobs stifled any other words that came to the lips of the distressed girl.

'Give me a kiss, then,' said Mrs. Booth. 'Promise me that you will never get spoiled by any unfaithful Officer, or who else it may be.'

Turning to the Founder, as she released the maid from her mother-like grasp – reluctantly, I thought, as if she would like her warnings and counsel to this young Officer to be but the voice which would find its echoes in the thousands of women-warriors all over the world – she said, 'Let us have a song, my precious one, my dearest.'

Victory for me,  
Through the Blood of Christ, my Saviour  
Victory for me,  
Through the Precious Blood!



was sung, but she soon broke in again, and exclaimed when we were half-way through, 'I shall have victory. I shall have it. I suppose this is the Valley. Cannot you tell? Am I in the Valley?' she said, questioningly.

The Chief, bending over her, said, 'You are nearing the Valley, and Jesus, I feel, is right here bearing you up with His blessed arms.'

Mrs. Booth: 'Well, if it is the Valley, then He will meet me – when you leave hold of my hand then He will take me – He who bears the world and all things up. Blessed Jesus! Just now on Thy arm I lean! The Lord be with you, and bless you, and make you mighty leaders, and keep you from the snares of the evil one.

'Oh,' she continued, as she fixed her fond gaze on her children, 'do not listen to their flatteries. Oh, do not listen! Shut your ears. Flattering lips are of the Devil; I would not listen to them. Don't listen! When the Devil sends somebody to flatter you, he has generally got somebody close behind with a dagger!

'I believe Jesus is coming to meet me. I believe it. I trust Him. He will carry me through. Though my heart and my flesh fail – and MINE is such a heart.

'Oh,' she said, with a sudden burst of tears and an emotion that made her whole frame tremble,' Oh, it seems as if it had got roots all round the world, clutching on to one and to another, and WILL not let them go! ...You can take care of them, Lord, better than I could. I do – I do believe He is coming, walking on the waters.'

She now closed her eyes while all joined hands, and she said, fixing her eyes upon one and another of her family, 'You are altogether mine and I have been yours, and I must be faithful to you. You have caused me much grief in my mind; not, thank God, by your sins – although, don't





let us underestimate our sins – not by your sins. If it had been that I should never have given you half an hour's peace. I never knew you cause me sorrow on account of voluntary sin. The Lord knew I could not live with wicked children. I gave you all to Him before I had any of you, or any prospect of you so far as that goes. I said, "God, they shall be Thine down to the third and fourth generation." And I remember, it comes up to me now, the covenant I made with the Lord long before I was married. When my mother had gone out, I used to like to get alone and pray aloud. Some objected to my shouting, but if people cannot pray without shouting, let them shout. And there were some prayers that I could not pray without shouting. I had to pour out all my soul. This was before I was married. I made the covenant. I have not been faithful in it all, I am sorry to say, but I covenanted from the bottom of my heart that all mine should be His, and I pleaded with Him until I got the assurance, till He accepted and told me that He would bring my sons from afar, and my daughters from the ends of the earth, and I saw His face and I knew His voice, and He has been faithful! He has been faithful! and I dare not say I have had to offer any back. It has been so costly sometimes that my heart has rebelled against the price. THAT has been the sting.'

After this descent almost to the grave, there came both a recovery of strength and a terrible increase of pain. Mrs. Booth held out stoutly against the customary use of morphia in cases like her own. She desired to live and die in full possession of her mental faculties, and considered it her duty to protest, up to the very limit of human endurance by example, against what she believed to be the too fearfully prevalent sin of flying to opiates for relief from pain, whose degree of intensity is no sufficient excuse for placing oneself within reach of a terrible and destructive habit. Her strong soul seemed regnant over pain, and her keen mind, undulled by drugs, was able to occupy itself with matters concerning the War to a remarkably late stage of her suffering. Not until August, 1890, would she consent to any but the most tentative attempts to soothe her sufferings by injections of morphia. One more deputation which she asked to see in the winter was of such a touching character that we feel we must reproduce at least a part of the account of it, written at the time:

'It is an impressive sight when the gaze of a child is fixed upon the features of some one dying. Mind is forcibly influenced by well-defined contrast, and a little girl of five summers peering into





the furrows traced by life's battles upon the face of the dying grandmother, is a striking picture. The picture was seen last week at Clacton.

'There are three little children, named Chris, Dot, and Jhai. The two former are girls, the latter is a boy. They sing solos, speak occasionally in the Meetings, and are taught to pray at home. They have travelled extensively, and small as is the number of their years – a total of sixteen between them – they have already won battles in the arena of life. All have histories, and for each destinies have been ordained by the kind care of The Salvation Army.

'There are also three other little girls, called Catherine, Mary, and Miriam. They and their brother make the Chief's family. Both these groups of children have been to see Mrs. Booth; all have stood at the bedside, looking on with tearful amazement, while the faculties of time have resisted the certainties of eternity; and while these children have looked, we have imagined. We have discerned sorrows and struggles in the way of these little feet. We have pictured their life-course as tumultuous, and measured out their share of difficulty and disappointment. But could we have unveiled from the misty future each misfortune and every sorrow, the gloom of them all could not have extinguished the glory of their grandmother's countenance. Her cup had been filled. Her bark had breasted all but every wave of life's ocean. We felt doubly secure in the assurances of the traveller within sight of the Harbour. She was shouting back to us that the end was worthy of it all. For our little ones, as for ourselves, we felt Life was worth living!

'So, gather the children round the bed. Let them put out their lips to be kissed, and then bid them watch and listen. The triumph of the warrior may inspire the recruit!

'Catherine is the first. She is the Chief's eldest daughter, named after the woman whose voice was now speaking, only too soon to be heard no more.

'"Well, ducky, I am going to Heaven; and if you die while you are a little girl, you will come to grandma, won't you?"

'Cath's tears increased. All the kind things she had intended to say were swept from her memory





by a flood of sorrow. Like older people, when she felt most she could express least. She simply sobbed, "Yes, grandma."

"There will be a lot of little children there, a great lot. Crowds of little children, more than you have seen at Exeter Hall; and I shall go among them and hunt, and ask for little Cath. I shall look for my Bramwell's little girl, and ask if she is there. Do you know how to get there, darling?"

'Cath remembered the lesson taught her at home, and said she did.

"You must pray to Jesus to take all the naughty out of your heart," continued the voice, "and make you one of His little lambs. He will, ducky – He will."

'The child had come forward for another kiss -perhaps the last she would receive. For a moment her brown tresses were mingled with the whitened locks of the head over which she was lifted – locks, whitened not with age alone, but by anxiety and pain. It was a mingling of life with death, of hope with accomplishment, of the past with the future, of the beginning with the end!

'Mrs. Booth placed her hand upon the child's and held it to her. She would have shielded the little one from every possible evil that lay in her track till as near to Heaven as she. Fire flickered in her eyes; they were looking upward. New depths of emotion had uprisen within her and tuned her voice afresh. She was praying.

"Bless the child! My blessings are nothing, but Jesus will bless the child. The Angel which redeemed me and her father and her mother, will bless the child, will watch her, claim her, seal her, and make her a valiant Soldier.

"Jesus, Father, I ask You, as I did for her father, to keep her from the evil that is in the world."

'Neither were Mary and Miriam forgotten. Mrs. Booth kissed them tenderly, and said, "You will come, won't you, and meet me again in Paradise? Love your father and your mother. Love them very, very much, and always be obedient. There – Good-night!"



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'Listen to the whispered acclamations on the lips almost dumb. They have not uncertainly found their echo in the voice of the father who brings his children for blessing! There is innocency and promise on the faces and in the tears of the little ones. Contemplate their lives, and also the lives that, by them, may be lived where God is! If your eyes are open you will observe in all this the fulfilment of something – something the Bible has said about consequences to the "third and fourth generations," and "blessings for children's children."