



CHAPTER VIII

The Funeral — The Last Look — The Memorial Service — The Cemetery

Through the pall of the fog she is borne
To her rest;
Out of darkness
To light;
Out of suffering
To calm;
Out of sorrow
To joy;
Out of warfare
To peace;
Out of London
To Christ!

O Mother, still living though dead!
O worker, O martyr, O woman of God,
Be it ours now to take up thy burden and tread
In the steps thou hast trod!

G.E.

ON Monday, October 6th, Mrs. Booth's remains were brought to London. It had been decided that there should be no sort of demonstration on that occasion, but, both at Clacton and Colchester and in London, friends were waiting for the casket containing the beloved dead.

On Tuesday morning at eleven, Commissioner Howard, surrounded by a number of the International Headquarters Staff, and in the presence of many Officers, Cadets, and friends who had already arrived, conducted a short service round the coffin, opened. The seats from the centre of the Hall had been removed, a red canopy erected, and special barriers arranged so as



to permit of two streams of people passing the coffin, which was slightly raised at the head. Cadets and Officers of the various London centres and Corps were on duty, and carried out the arrangements made.

Our Mother lay as if in painless sleep. The features bore every indication of the past terrible suffering, while, at the same time, they testified quite as unmistakably to the placidity and patience with which it had been so long endured.

Although it was at first intended that Mrs. Booth's remains should lie in state for three days only, so many people desired to avail themselves of the privilege of a last look at her loved face, that it was found necessary to prolong this arrangement until late on Sunday night. More than fifty thousand people passed by. Members of Parliament and half-starved 'unemployed' alike did homage to the memory of the woman who never meddled in politics, and whose influence is yet felt throughout the social life projects of all Britain – aye, and beyond!

Catholics crossed themselves by her coffin, and even secularists did reverence to her. Ministers of all denominations were there, workers from almost every religious organization, great burly policemen, soldiers of the line in full uniform, mechanics fresh from the scene of toil, factory girls, mothers with babes in their arms, inmates of the poorhouse and denizens of the slums. Coloured and half-caste — Easterns and Westerns — met there and owned themselves one in her love and before her Lord.

Best of all, many turned from beside the plain oaken box which held the tired, wasted body of a saint, to give themselves to her God.

'That woman lived for such as me!' said one poor drunkard, sobbing.

The coffin consisted of a leaden shell enclosed in an outer case of polished oak, with brass handles. The inner shell was fitted with a plate-glass front, through which the face and shoulders were visible, and its lid bore a brass plate with the following inscription:



CATHERINE BOOTH
THE MOTHER OF THE SALVATION ARMY
Born Jan. 17, 1829
Died Oct. 4, 1890
'More than Conqueror'

Before daylight on the morning of Monday, October 13th, Mrs. Booth's remains were conveyed to Olympia, the largest building in London. The Salvation Army never gathered such a crowd before as collected all day long at its doors! The poorest of the poor, and the rich and honoured of earth, there jostled side by side at a common entrance. Servants and ministers of the Most High God, the elect among His chosen people, the outcast and the harlot, the best and worst of mankind, were drawn together to greet our Mother's plain, bare coffin, by the same unearthly influence under which a like crowd surged once toward the rough wood of her Master's cross. Twenty-six thousand persons entered the building by the turnstiles.

At an incredibly early hour people began to assemble. From three till six o'clock they poured into the vast building in one continual stream — Officers, Soldiers, friends, and members of the out-side public. Trains from all parts of London were constantly arriving crammed with passengers for Olympia.

By six o'clock the immense hall was quite full, and the sight from the platform was unique. Row after row, row after row of upturned faces, as far as the eye could reach. A slight fog, which enveloped the back part of the hall, only increased the idea of space and distance. The galleries which ran round the building were filled, and still Officers were running hither and thither with forms and chairs, trying vainly to seat the ever-inflowing crowd. At last every available seat was pressed into service, and late-comers were grateful even for standing accommodation.

Suddenly a dead silence fell upon the assembled multitude. A huge sign had been hoisted on the platform, which said, 'Perfect Silence!' Then the solemn, slow strains of one of The Army's Bands filled the building with its pathetic funeral march:



Summon'd Home — the call has sounded,
Bidding a Soldier her warfare cease.

In a few moments one could distinguish through the fog at the back of the Hall the tops of the draped Colours which headed the funeral procession. As one man the vast congregation rose to its feet, and every eye was turned towards the centre aisle, where the cortege was slowly making its way in time to the music of the Band. The procession comprised various ranks of representative Officers, Local Officers, and Soldiers.

The coffin was borne by a selected body of Staff Officers. Immediately following was the General and his family of children and elder grandchildren, the members of the General's household, with those who had been in attendance upon Mrs. Booth bringing up the rear. The Memorial Service was on the plan we have found so useful in very large gatherings of people — signs exhibited from the platform corresponding with instructions found in a pamphlet containing the Order of Service. Extracts from Mrs. Booth's writings, incidents of her life story, verses of her favourite hymns, messages from her all found place in it, and all classes of people had fitting words of exhortation — the unconverted, the unsanctified, the lukewarm, the worldly — while time was given for silent prayer and meditation, and appropriate choruses were sung to help decision.

The audience responded to the signs from the platform with wonderful fidelity and devoutness, and when at last all were asked to kneel and read the covenant, by the making of which with God Mrs. Booth's dearest wish for any Meeting — that people might be brought to a point, to a decision — was carried out, it was like a foreshadowing of the time when 'unto Him every knee shall be bowed,' to see so many thousands bend before God while they murmured: 'And now, in this solemn hour, through the atoning merits of Jesus, and in the presence of death, I come again to Thy footstool, and make this covenant with Thee.'

In face of that coffin, men and women, we believe, looked at themselves from the standpoint of the verge of the River of Death — at God, as from the foot of His oncoming Judgment Throne. And so looking, one by one they rose and sang:



Just as I am, Thou wilt receive,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve,
Because in Thee I dare believe,
O Lamb of God, I come.

Then slowly rose his sons and daughters around the Founder, and sang, in voices which quivered but which sang on to the end with a clearness which permitted one to disentangle the strain of melody and recognize the notes of different members of the family, one of the choruses with which they had sung their Mother through the Golden Gates:

We shall walk through the valley and the shadow of death,
We shall walk through the valley in peace,
For Jesus Himself will be our Leader
When we walk through the valley in peace.

At the second repetition the Founder also rose. When the song was ended the varied flags which framed the platform began to move again. Slowly they floated around, down, before the coffin. The guard of honour, which had stood, or knelt, around it, lifted their dear burden. The Founder left the platform, followed by his family. Close behind came the Staff Officers, and in silence as profound, 'mid awe and sympathy as visible as when they entered, the earthly remains of our Army Mother left her largest Meeting.

A white fog crept slowly up from the Thames and spread all over the Embankment on Tuesday morning, while the huge procession of Officers, forming to precede and follow Mrs. Booth's coffin to its final resting-place, gathered round the huge placards which marked their position. First came the Cadets — lads and lasses, the former bearing the Colours of 100 of the oldest Corps in Great Britain; then came the Field Officers, battalion on battalion, here and there above their ranks rising great banners marked with fragments of that last dear message of Self-Denial Week, or words from her Crystal Palace bidding — 'Victory is sure,' 'Meet me in the Morning,' 'Love one another.' Then came the Officers of the Rescue and Slum Work, the Social Officers, and the Headquarters Staff, graded according to rank and bringing up the rear, the entire



working staff of all Headquarters buildings with their wives.

The crowd pressed thick and hard on the 4,000 processionists even while they formed. The veteran Superintendent of the City of London police, whose services throughout the day seemed a labour of love, told us he had never seen anything like that crowd since the funeral of the Duke of Wellington, nearly half a century before: 'and then,' he added, 'the procession marched over an area not more than a quarter as great as has been thronged all through today.'

The people seemed to have gathered together in one great impenetrable mass, from the Embankment to the office of 'The Times,' in Queen Victoria Street. Only once was there any approach to what even looked like disorder on the part of the eager, waiting thousands. At Headquarters the procession parted to make way for the Founder, his family, and the casket which held the worn-out setting of our lost jewel. And here the feverish wish to see that plain oak coffin, placed on its open, flag-draped hearse, overbore every effort of the only half-comprehending police, and the crowd surged towards the door of Headquarters. The Founder stood in his open carriage through all the slow, sad miles of the journey. On either side rode one of his sons, and many of his elder Officers of high rank walked near him. In the carriages behind him were his children and children-in-law, and, last of all, the three little daughters of the Chief of the Staff. Over their carriage drooped the Stars and Stripes, carried on the box by a representative of the absent ones.

From one of the special correspondents of 'The War Cry' we quote the following account of the sight from one point of view:

'From Headquarters as far as the eye could reach the streets were crammed with people. All vehicles also — stopped on their way by the crowds and wedged into each other — had been seized upon, and were covered with eager watchers; the windows on either side were filled with faces, and along the tops of the buildings as far as the Mansion House was a continuous line of spectators. It was an almost overwhelming spectacle which met the Founder, as, standing bareheaded in his carriage, hat in hand, he crossed Cannon Street. Just here it seemed as though the people were most sympathetic, most deeply moved, and most demonstrative. Every head



was uncovered, hundreds of "God bless you's!" rang out, and scores of those nearest to the procession, among them many with rough and grimy faces, burst into tears. Indeed, every now and then it seemed as though all along the march everybody wept. Tears stood ever and anon in the Founder's eyes, tears fell down upon the Chief's hand as he raised his hat, and tears were flowing in the carriages behind; they trickled down the hardy features of the mounted police-officer who rode beside the carriage, and hundreds of the men, as well as women, who were nearest to the writer, had hard work to look at all at what was passing for the blinding tears in their eyes. It was beyond all else a demonstration of the people's heart.

'Of all places on earth least likely for the scene of a great outburst of popular affection for a woman, and that woman one who was also a woman of God, we should have selected the open spaces between the Royal Exchange, the Bank of England, and the London Stock Exchange. And yet here we are right in between them. Crowds on crowds of City gentlemen, merchant princes, rollicking traders, clerks, travellers, strangers, the idlers of fashion, and the hunters for pleasure, together with the roughs and rowdies, the poor and the outcast, the open foes of all order, and the secret enemies of all good — here they are shoulder to shoulder, crushed and crammed into a solid wall of humanity, watching in silence as we pass.

'It is a unique event in the history of this proud, money-loving city. Its machinery is stopped. It has to listen to the beating of its own heart, while the object-lesson which that coffin indicates passes before it. The gates of the Bank of England are closed, and the gold bags are unnoticed for the moment. The Stock Market empties itself into the street to listen to the songs about the Golden City and the Pearly Gates; the shops are shut; the public-houses and restaurants are empty, and over all has fallen the hush of reverence, the realization of the reality of goodness and self-sacrifice, and the consciousness of another world. " God bless the people!" again and again says the Founder. "God bless you all!" says the Chief, bending low in the saddle. And their responses are welcome to the thousands who hear them.'

On and on the slow line crept, to its military music. Past the Exchange and the Mansion House, up Bishopsgate into Shoreditch, one of Mrs. Booth's earliest battle-fields. The unknown woman-preacher, whom the police would very likely have taken little trouble to protect from annoyance



when she entered it first, held all London still today!

'I shall ask Jesus to give you a fine day for my funeral, Emma,' she had said once, 'so that you mayn't take cold.'

And the mists did part just before we reached the gates of Abney Park, and shafts of pale golden light fell over the fluttering banners, and made the quiet resting-place seem almost homelike. What met us when we made our way to the corner where Catherine Booth was to lie in the cemetery which has held so many leaders in God's cause, was, as one newspaper puts it, 'a platform instead of the green turf: a gallery of seats tier upon tier, instead of the yew or weeping willow; and for mourners, an earnest, intelligent, bright-faced, and cheerful crowd, who seemed, by their conversation, their hymns, their prayers, and their general demeanour, so positively secure of their salvation in the next world, that death had for them, personally and individually, no terrors whatever.'

Her children gathered close round her coffin, on a platform, an opening in the centre of which looked down into the grave. The General knelt, with eyes fixed on the coffin.

Commissioner Railton gave out the opening hymn of a service which proceeded exactly on the lines our Leader has laid down for his people's burial.

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee,

rolled skyward in a seldom-equa-lled volume of sound. Two Officers led in prayer, and another sang. The Scripture lesson was read by Commis-sioner Howard. Three members of the family spoke at some length. The fog was settling again, and darkness was coming on fast, when the Founder came to the front. He did his duty like a saint and a soldier, easily and strongly holding the crowd before him, as is his wont — most marvellous of all, holding his own grief under sway to the very end. Then he knelt down and tenderly kissed the coffin. One by one, amid slow-dropping tears, the family followed, prepared to perform their last sad office. One instant they



paused, arrested by the voice of the Founder, as he asked, in tones of anguish, 'Must it be now?' But he waited not for an answer; his next action was characteristic of the man, and a natural outcome of the heart which was stirred to its depths twenty -five years ago on behalf of the lost masses — he turned from the grave, and the precious, flower -strewn coffin, to clasp close the two sobbing daughters who clung to him, dashed aside his tears, and steadied his voice to whisper words of comfort and cheer. It was his voice which started again the ringing chorus:

Faith triumphant! Faith triumphant
Knowing not defeat or fear.

There he stood, his grey head sharply defined against the murky sky, through which the blood-red setting sun sent an unearthly lurid light that played over his pale face, and tipped with gold the dying leaves which rustled mournfully on the surrounding trees. It was a never-to-be-forgotten scene, one not of this earth, and there were hearts there who realized as never before what the power of God could do.

Commissioner Railton uttered the words of committal:

'As it hath pleased Almighty God to promote our dear Mother from her place in The Salvation Army to the mansion prepared for her above, we now commit her body to this grave — earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust — in the sure and certain hope of seeing her again in the Resurrection Morning.'

The service closed with a consecration vow.

'Blessed Lord — We do solemnly promise — Here by the side of this open grave — And before each other — That we will be true to our cause — And valiant in Thy service — That we will devote our-selves to the great end of saving souls — That we will be faithful to Thee — Faithful to one another — And faithful to a dying world — Till we meet — Our Beloved Mother — In the Morning. Amen.'



And while the family passed slowly down the steps and away through the oncoming darkness, it was to the strains of:

To the front! the cry is ringing,
To the front! your place is there.
In the conflict men are wanted,
Men of hope, and faith, and prayer:
Selfish ends shall claim no right
From the battle's front to take us,
Fear shall vanish in the fight
For triumphant God will make us.