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Chapter IX

MARRIAGE

It is no small part of the service rendered by the true Salvationist that he takes every part of his life as being also a part of his religion. He aims, at any rate, at reaching the Apostolic standard, 'Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.' I have been greatly gratified in observing how largely this principle is applied amongst us to all that pertains to marriage, and although it is, perhaps, a difficult theme about which to write, I will endeavour to make here one or two remarks which, while interesting to readers who have followed me thus far, may also help my purpose in these pages.

The Army rejoices in the marriage of its Officers. Every proper provision has been made for recognizing and sanctioning suitable unions. The beautiful example of a supreme affection, united with true consecration to the Kingdom of Christ, which is presented to the people by many of our married Officers, is doing something amidst influences that are all selfish and sensual to restore the lost idea of a happy and holy marriage. It is a combination which has been as rare as it is beautiful--a union of spiritual with secular virtues, of fervent piety and deep love for the Church of God with as deep human sympathy and human weakness, of high-strung enthusiasm for souls with great tenderness and patience and the love of little children.

I

Betrothal

Every Officer is counselled about the common mistakes of the day in this matter. Difficult as it is to lay down rules and regulations for love, we have found it both necessary and possible to give directions which have proved of the greatest value.

Thus, first of all, we try to make plain what love really is, and to distinguish it from the frivolous fancies and often despicable passions which shamefully usurp its name. And then we seek to make the young Officer see that while he or she may be just as happy and useful unmarried as married, any affection or regard which has marriage in view is a sacred thing — a thing apart



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from all that is merely selfish, that must look first on the things of others even before it looks on its own. And further, we urge that no such union ought to be contemplated except it be likely to aid in the usefulness as well as the happiness of both the contracting parties. That, in short, God must be first.

The discipline of The Army - I speak now as regards Western nations — requires that a certain time must elapse before Officers may enter upon any proceedings in this matter, and that whenever they do so they must speak to their superiors so that they may obtain their counsel and sanction. In an important sense The Army stands in the relation of parent to its Officers, and it insists upon the corresponding consideration, so that everything may be quite open and above board, and that advice may be given towards making a wise choice.

How far these arrangements are successful appears not only from the number of happy unions amongst us, but from the greatly increased usefulness of many of our married Officers. And that increase of zeal and devotion are often apparent also during the betrothal. Instead of the frivolities, or at best the selfishnesses to which many people seem to give free course during that time, we find more and more that the awakenings of tender feeling and the beginnings of the truest love may be brought into perfect harmony with the great purpose of a consecrated life. That this is so I think the following letters — typical of large numbers — passing between Officers while they were engaged to be married will afford some evidence. I am sorry that I cannot say something of the writers; but it would be obviously difficult to do so without disclosing their identity, and the letters have only been entrusted to me on the condition that this should not be done.

I take the following from a letter of proposal: —

'Let me speak my very heart out to you. I never did to any one else — I must to you! I always look on the union of men and women for anything else than the greatest happiness to both as a perfect sacrilege — if not sin! Marriages merely for interest, position, or any other thing you like to imagine, to me have always been a kind of market transaction, and have led to all sorts of miseries and woe. My ideal has been love! Love made beautiful — made holy by the Heavenly



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Flame. Love that makes the presence of each other a real Heaven. I dreamt not of the earthly love, such as we read of in stories, but a love with God in it, such as that of The General and Mrs. Booth. I remember so well how I prayed years ago that God would never allow me to do anything or take any step that would not be for the glory of His name, and I prayed asking that the one He would choose for me would be His choice. But to make perfect happiness there must not be the Divine side alone, or the human side alone — but both! This must be felt on both sides to make the union complete.

'Well, I could never consent to do this thing just because I feel it is God's will for me, and that personally I am happy. No, no, a thousand times no! Could I be happy if you were not? What I ask for myself, I must see that you also have. I want in you a loving counsellor and a loving help, but I must be the same to you, or how could we go together through difficulties and trials?

'Most dear — I would rather, and I have told God so, go through life alone and say good-bye to you for ever than know that you had married me just because you were afraid to make me unhappy. How could I claim to be unselfish if I asked you to sacrifice your desires and wishes to make me happy?'

I have not the answer to this heart-opening, but here I will quote from a very practical epistle addressed by a young woman to an Officer, to whom, if I am not mistaken, she has since proved all of which this letter gives promise. She writes from a station where a rough population is disturbing the Meetings: —

'I was pleased to have your last dear letter, and am glad to know you are well. I am also glad to know that Headquarters have so far settled our affair. As I have told you before, I should so much like to answer questions which my friends are always putting. However, I quite know that you have to be like me, patient until it is settled.

'I forgot to tell you one of the things brought up at the last Councils was that we should have time for self-improvement. Was most emphatic on that point, so if I were you I would go in all I



The H. Mann will.brook Collection

could, even if you have to do a little less visiting Have a copybook and write every day. I do not think it would hurt if you wrote to me oftener, do you?

'I do not want you to think I am unhappy. I am genial with the people.

'I have had much hard work; things might go better here, but is so discouraged. We had a Prayer Meeting before the evening Meeting on Sunday for order, and we had the quietest time, also 10s. collection, an increase of 55. 6 d. on the previous week. Next Monday we have a tea for Juniors, under the management of your humble servant, and at six o'clock one for Soldiers and friends. I am believing for success. Pray for me.'

'I take an extract from the reply to the above: —

'I received your letter yesterday, and was pleased to hear from you. I am going on as well as can be expected considering the circumstances are as they are. Of course it means hard fighting and prayer, but we can shout Victory through the Blood. I have no Lieutenant as yet, so you can guess how lonely I feel. Please pray for me. I had a Soldiers' Meeting last night, and got on well with them.

'I can give little time to study or reading yet. It takes me all my time to visit our people and to hold four Cottage Meetings, two Junior Meetings, besides the Open-Airs every night. You see the bulk of the Soldiers live in the villages round about. I have done some good visiting.

'My dearest — I have tried to let you have this letter before — this is the third time I sit down to try and finish it. First I went out visiting this afternoon, then returned, and after tea started again, then went to the Juniors. A wonderful work is being done amongst the children here; we had just upon 500 tonight, so that will give you some idea. We had a blessed Meeting with them. It is now past eleven o'clock, so you see how I love writing to you. Your letters do a great deal for me in helping me along.'



The H. Mann will.brook Collection

This kind of correspondence shows as perhaps nothing else could how the work of caring for souls is woven into the whole life of a Salvationist. Take this from a lover's letter — the writer is now the happy wife of the man to whom it was written: —

"Dearest —, I am writing you a few lines now, as I had now, as I have not time for a long letter. I had your precious letter. I was visiting all the morning — then had my D.O's inspection — then visiting again.

'One of our Soldiers is dying of cancer. He is choking and cannot speak, but he is well saved. I often go and sing to him. At times he seems mad with the pain. He is just struggling with death. The doctor fears his death will be awful, and then his wife said, "When it gets to the last, and he is so wild and in his agony, may I send for you, Captain, to be with him and pray?" Of course I said, Yes, gladly, but in my heart I dread such sights. They affect me so much afterwards, and a death like that must be awful to witness, but God will guide all and be with me! This is a world of sorrow!

'I then visited another woman who has had thirteen years of happy married life, but a year ago her husband did something which spoilt all her life and broke her heart. I tried to help her, but she seems so bitter now! Men of God are rare in this world! We do need to watch and pray! Keep close to God, dearest — I always think most men are selfish. Cultivate unselfishness and holiness — and exercise yourself in it.'

The following extract tells a secret of long waiting for a favourable answer, and tells it very prettily: —

'I was thinking to-day that, if things go all right, I should like very much if we could go together to visit C —, the Castle, etc. I spent a few days there last year, and I used to go down under the walls of the Castle in the evening and think about you and dream of the golden future. It was July. The sweet birds were singing in the bush, telling me to hope on, on, on. Below me the plain, where the river was flowing, covered with boats and steamers, and the other side was a



The H. Mann willbrook Collection

land like a garden. On my left was the sea, and, though you had not spoken, everything spoke to me of you.

'But I want to do His will, not my own, if it is death to my own inclinations fifty times. He does all things well. I believe that with all my heart, so I will trust Him to the end. I am thinking about you much. My heart prays for you, and asks God to uphold you. I trust Him, and I trust Him for you. I ask that He will bless you in your new appointment, and make your influence a blessing to all around you. What people want is heart, not head!'

From another group of letters, I take the following as a fair example of many:

'Yes; you are going to help me to keep the standard up, and, what is better still, to live up to the standard. I need bringing to book—and it is sometimes difficult to bring oneself to book. God is good to me and makes His burdens fit, and strengthens me to bear all He asks of me. But I need to know more. The ocean of His love and wisdom lies still ahead, and I am but a dabbler on the sea-shore of His fullness. You must push me out - nay, rather draw me out to you and with you. In Him is no lack of wealth, and there need be no want for us...'

Such cheer and heart-strengthening as the next — and it must be the last-extract discloses has perhaps more to do with the brave deeds done than we always realize: —

'Yes, you must come to visit me here before you leave — that would be so nice! I am so glad, dearest that you are happier now. Yes, never let yourself even contemplate such a temptation as giving up. Why, you must sing like the girl in the flames, "If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus 'tis now!" He will not allow anything to happen to us against His will as long as we put His honour first, and keep pure motives and aims. All will come right! Don't trouble about tomorrow —

Since of its grace you cannot borrow,

Why should you borrow its care?

Stand up for what is right. Do right yourself, and take up your cross, dearest, and never give way — except in your letters to me. I am here, so to speak, to help you to bear every trouble and difficulty, and if I have given my heart to you it is because God chose me for you, and I want in



The H. Mann willbrook Collection

every way to help, cheer, and inspire you. So be brave and happy. Surely going home would never help you, for if you went I could never leave my post. So I am glad you had the victory and are cheered up. Don't look at what others have, but at all God has given you and is going to give you! So let us trust Him and do His will.

'If ever I do become yours, God will have rewarded your faith. Now, may He give you such faith for souls and for Himself — faith that trusts Him in the midst of difficulties and trials.'

II 'Continual Comrades'

'I take you to be my lawful wedded wife and my continual comrade in this War. So runs The Army Marriage Service. And that may be said to be the central idea of the marriage union amongst us. The Kingdom of Jesus Christ first, and every other interest and desire subordinated to it. I believe that many of our married Officers have realized this high ideal in a remarkable measure, and that no small part of the wonderful success and honour which God has put upon them in their work has come of their beautiful devotion in yielding each other to the toil and sacrifice that it has involved.

The responsibility and authority with which The Salvation Army invests its women is not limited to those who are single. On her marriage to an Officer a woman remains an Officer. She is trusted as such, and continues to work as such, sharing with her husband the honour of success or the discredit of failure. But it is, no doubt, the man who is, as a rule, the chief gainer by the union. Upon the wife must fall, in the nature of things, a large proportion of the burdens of her husband's work, whether his appointment be to the charge of a Corps or to some often much more trying position on the Staff. To those women, working in many cases behind the scenes, prevented by the cares of home and the solemn duty of training little children for God from coming much into the public eye, I sometimes think we owe a debt which even The Army itself does not realize.



The H. Mamwell Prook Collection

To mention one matter only. Consider what the frequent changes of appointment involve. Whatever they may be, Army appointments are continually changing. Ours is real warfare, and in real warfare Officers must move about according to the exigencies of the war. This alone demands on their part a constant consecration, and many a wife and mother, when her husband has been disposed, like Jacob, to question the wisdom of his marching orders, has, in spite of the weariness of it all, answered with Rachel, 'Now, then, whatsoever God hath said unto thee, do.'

Yes, it is a great work which these continual comrades can do for each other. And it is a great work they can do in support of each other among the people. The infirmity of one may be — often is — corrected by the wisdom and grace of the other. Many a man, whose strength lies in his gifts of public work, finds in his wife a treasure of administrative skill and patient love, without which his platform efforts would produce very little abiding result. Many a woman who seems to the people 'the better half' in every way, rejoices in contributing to her husband's success, while knowing well that but for his gifts of organization, and the humble spirit which puts her first before the public, she would accomplish very little.

Thus the true partnership, not only for home and for time, but for the service of Christ and for eternity, is worked out to the glory of God.

To Officers who may chance upon these lines, I would say, let us strive to exalt — nay, to recall to the people — the idea of Christian marriage. It has sadly fallen out of mind. Selfishness and impurity have, so far as large masses of the population are concerned, blotted it out, and marriage in their eyes is largely a matter of selfish gratification or momentary passion. Millions of men and women have nothing before them on the subject but the filth of a prurient press, which serves up the nastinesses of the Divorce Court, or the still nastier filth of novelists who too often command the praise of good men.

And you who are married can best raise the standard by your own growth in purity, in love, in good works. Let men see in your patience and submission to each other, your care of each other's souls and in the outcome of that care, the same love as that with which Christ also loved the



The H. Mann will Booth Collection

Church and gave Himself for it. If they see that, they may turn away from their base conception of marriage, and be helped to strive after a union in pureness and love and the blessing of God.

III

'Instead of the Fathers ... the Children'

What was intended to be a biting criticism of The Salvation Army and its leaders used to be expressed in the words, 'Oh, this is a family affair.' But the sneer has turned out to be a prophecy! The Army is indeed an affair of thousands of families, and among them are many of the happiest flocks in all God's pastures. I cannot in these already lengthening pages speak of the homes of our Soldiers; I may treat of that at some more convenient time; but I must have a word about our Officers' children who have themselves become Officers.

And first of all there is the fact. I pass by The General and Mrs. Booth's devotion of their family to Christ and His cause, that has often been the subject of remark. I am speaking now of the ordinary Officers of The Army, and of their dedication of their children to the same work in which they have spent their own lives. In nearly every country flying our Flag this dedication is going on, for though the youth of The Army and of the great bulk of its Officers limits the number of instances in which their children have reached the age for service, a large proportion of those who are eligible for the Work are either Candidates or are already embarked on the same life mission as their parents. In some cases we have been able to commission four and five and six young people from the same home. In many more two and three; and in more still the firstborn has gone forth, followed not only by the blessing of father and mother, but by the love and prayers and faith of the younger members of the family, only anxious for their time to come to take their places in the fighting line.

What a comment this affords upon the slanders of those critics of ours who decry The Army system, who prate about the autocracy of its government, the 'oppression' and 'starvation' of its Officers, and the 'imminent collapse' which they think they see — because, I fear, they so fervently wish it would come! Here are the very men and women who are governed, who are oppressed, etc., not only remaining in our ranks themselves, crowned some of them with hair



The H. Mann will Booth Collection

grown grey in the service of the Cross, but aspiring, as the dearest wish of their hearts, that their children, endeared to them by every tie of human and spiritual relationship, should walk in the same path and become the slaves of the same tyranny!

The fact is that the true in wards of men's value and affection for Christ's Kingdom is revealed by their action with their children. When the world, and for that matter the Church, hears a missionary pleading for workers to go to the heathen, or a preacher of Christ asking for teachers to live in the slums, or an Exeter Hall speech-maker asking for young men and women to be trained for the ministry of Jesus, it is inclined to ask, 'What is going to be the vocation of the speaker's own children?' And if, as is, alas! too often the case, it gets for reply that they are going to be lawyers, or medical men, or engineers, or that they are going into 'politics,' or into something in the 'shipping way' with their mother's friends, the world and the Church, if they are outspoken enough just then, are apt to say something very true, though a little rude, and if they are not — well, they pass on, and take no heed to the appeal.

It is no exaggeration to say that thousands of children are growing up in our Officers' Quarters — and their number increases with wonderful regularity! — having before them this one idea, to become in turn Officers themselves. They are more familiar than any one else can possibly be with the difficulties and hardships and trials of an Officer's life, and yet they look forward to nothing else. Their lessons, their play, their companionships, their very dreams, are all coloured by that one ideal. The Captain's child of eleven, who met with an accident which involved the amputation of a finger, and could not be comforted until her father obtained from his superior a letter saying that this would be no impediment to her being an Officer if in the future she was found suitable in other ways, and then resigned herself to the suffering without a murmur, was just an example of the spirit that is abroad on this matter. When, as the years go by, these same children, in ever-growing numbers, present themselves at the altar, and take up the burden of the Lord, I say it is not only a tribute to the gratitude and to the sincerity and to the highest wisdom of their parents, but it is the work of God.

Let me quote some Words of my dear mother, Mrs. General William Booth, bearing on this matter: —



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'I ask how it comes about that these children grow up with this one ambition? Is not this the finger of God? Some of our critics do not find it so easy to put their children where they want them to be! Could all the powers of earth give these young men and women the spirit for this work apart from God? Some of you know the life and toil and self-sacrifice it entails. What could bring these children to embrace it.. as spirits are not finely touched but to fine issues, so surely God hath fashioned their souls for the work He wants them to do.'

The following touching lines, written by one of the Officers whose children already bid farewell to follow their parents' footsteps, give expression to the deepest wish of thousands amongst us:

Blessèd Jesus, save our children!
Be their Guardian through life's way;
From all evil e'er protect them,
Walk Thou with them, come what may.
In white raiment let us meet them
When earth's shadows flee away.

Blessèd Jesus, lead our children
Into paths of service sweet,
Up the hill of Calvary climbing,
May they and the sinner meet!
More than conquerors, let us see them
Bring their jewels to Thy feet.

Blessèd Jesus, make our children
Thine for life and Thine for aye!
When death's waters overtake them,
Be their Rock, their Light, their Stay!
Tender Shepherd, let us find them
On Thy breast in realms of day.