

ECCE HOMO!

"Could you not watch with me one hour?"

Throughout the history of the ages perhaps no question has confronted the world which has evoked more curious questioning than this, "Could you not watch with me one hour?" For our finite minds to unravel the mystery in wrapping this pathetic appeal, we must first look at the circumstances which called it forth. I therefore proposed dividing this article into two sections:

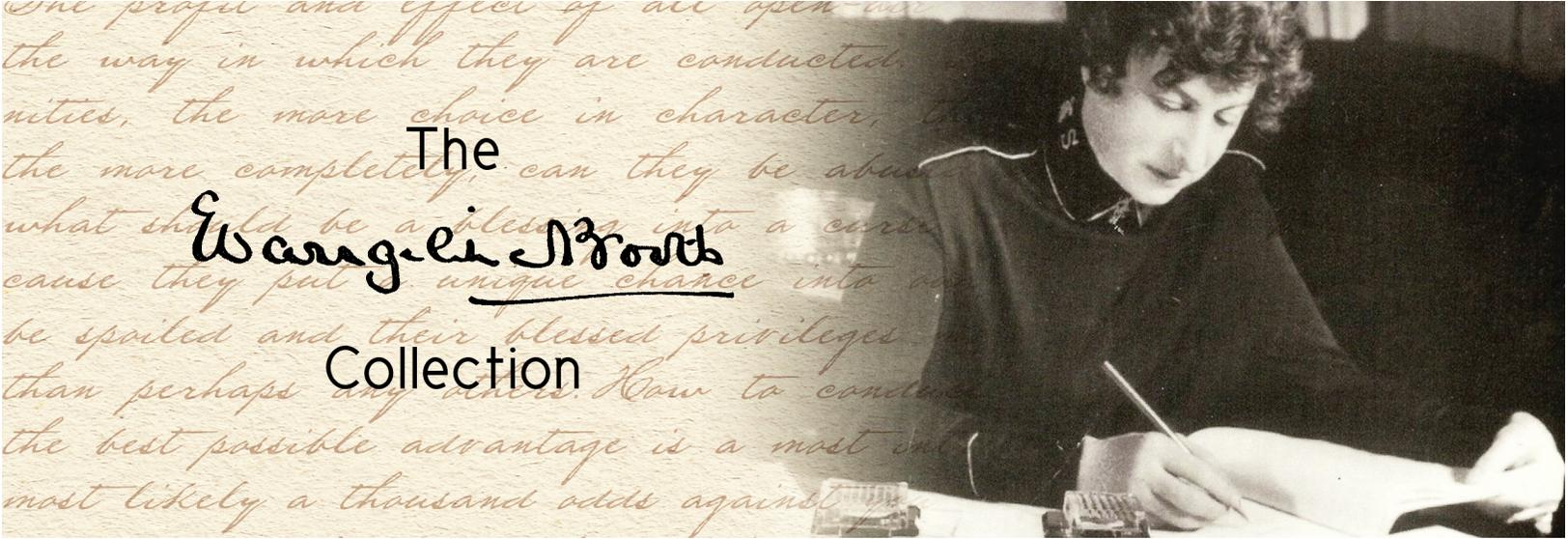
One, the hour, dealing with what constituted its bitterness, and what hung up on its triumph.

Two, the request itself, pointing out its nature, and the opportunity it offered.

1. — THE HOUR

IT WAS THE ONE HOUR OF ALL CHRIST'S LIFE.

It was the hour to which he himself had given so much thought; Often Speaking of it — sometimes saying, "it had not yet come," and sometimes, that it was to fulfill its eternal purpose "he came into the world." It was an hour in which the gaze of heaven, earth and hell focused itself upon the grief-stricken figure of the savior of mankind, as alone He entered the Valley of the shadow. The scene was in sharp contrast to the agony of that night and the tragedy of the morrow. Earthquake and terror crowded round the death hour on Golgotha; but nature was hushed as if in awe around the sacred sorrow of Gethsemane. The secluded shadows of the garden veiled even the moonlight's intrusion, while the massive tree trunks with the leafy burdens hid from sight the westward view of the fateful city of Jerusalem. Upon that tumult of grief, that paroxysm of suffering, that outpour of prayer, we would look with hearts changed with reverent love, as we think of the weight of this world's woe which bowed him there. The torture of physical pain, which was so soon to follow, was not more poignant than the keen of mental anguish which bid the falling of the blood sweat. He who on the morrow faced with majestic silence, both priest, procurator and howling mob; He from whom the most painful torture could not ring one



complaining murmur, was now prostrate with the pangs of a world's wrongs, and the momentous question of its redemption. He before whom the Devils had wailed and fled now lay on his face upon the ground, and the voice which had hushed the tempests and calmed the seas, and brought the dead to life, now murmured in broken accents: "nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done." But what was the source of all this agony — this bitter, bitter darkness, this passion which almost made his heart fail, which so tore his spirit, and oppressed his soul and afflicted his body as to make his sweat as drops of blood fall heavily to the ground?

"It was divine humanity tasting the bitter cup which sin had poisoned.

"It was Supreme compassion bending 'neath the weight of a world's woe.

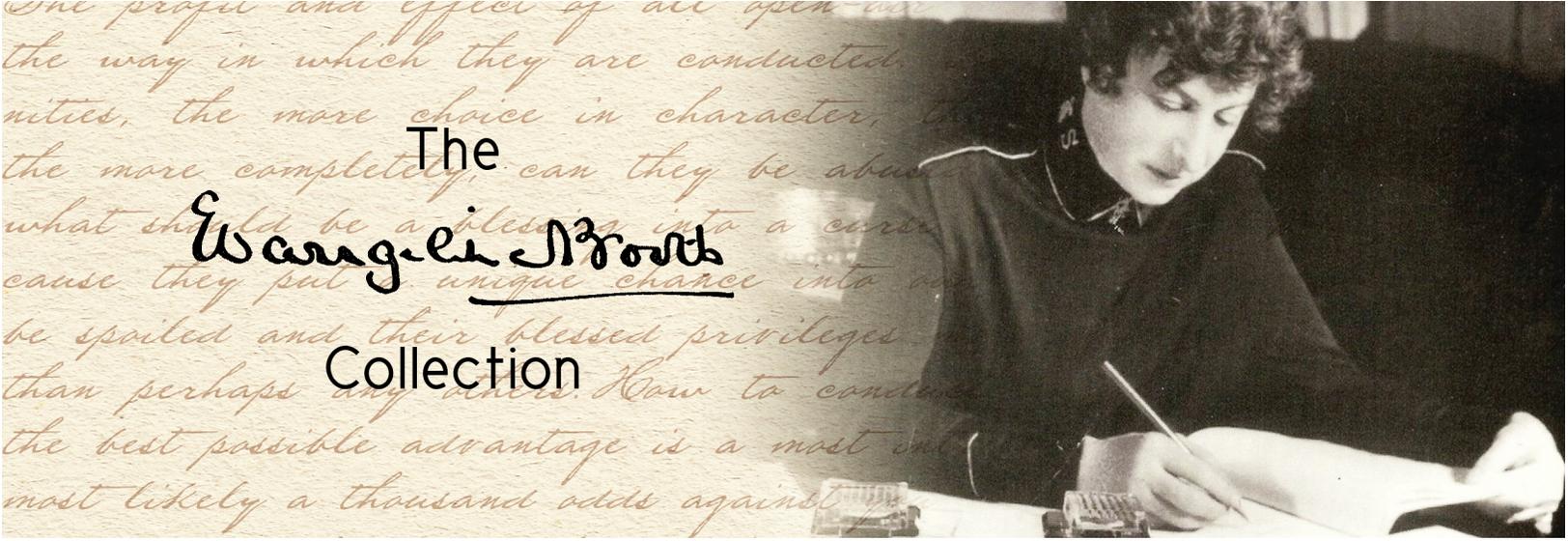
"It was blameless innocence paying the penalty of direst guilt.

"It was spotless purity wading through the cesspool of debased uncleanness."

It was the dark, dread agony of looking upon a ruined world swinging in the balances — in the one scale its doom, in the other its hope, and He himself this hour must decide which scale should drop.

Into this sanctuary of suffering Christ invited three chosen of his followers, asking that they should watch with him through its dread darkness.

Christ chose, and asked three of his humble followers to watch with him. He offered them this wondrous privilege of rendering him this small service during an occasion unparalleled in the history of all ages, and, as with all gods requests, we may be quite sure that there was some great purpose in it. Perhaps He was to gain — perhaps they were to gain — we shall see; Although, before going any further, I might say that Is it our own hour of trial, or the hour of another's affliction and test we are given the opportunity of sharing, we are brought up to it for a purpose — a purpose which has in it, as did this hour for Jesus and the sleeping disciples, possibilities of inestimable worth and everlasting issue.



IT WAS THE HOUR OF DESERTION

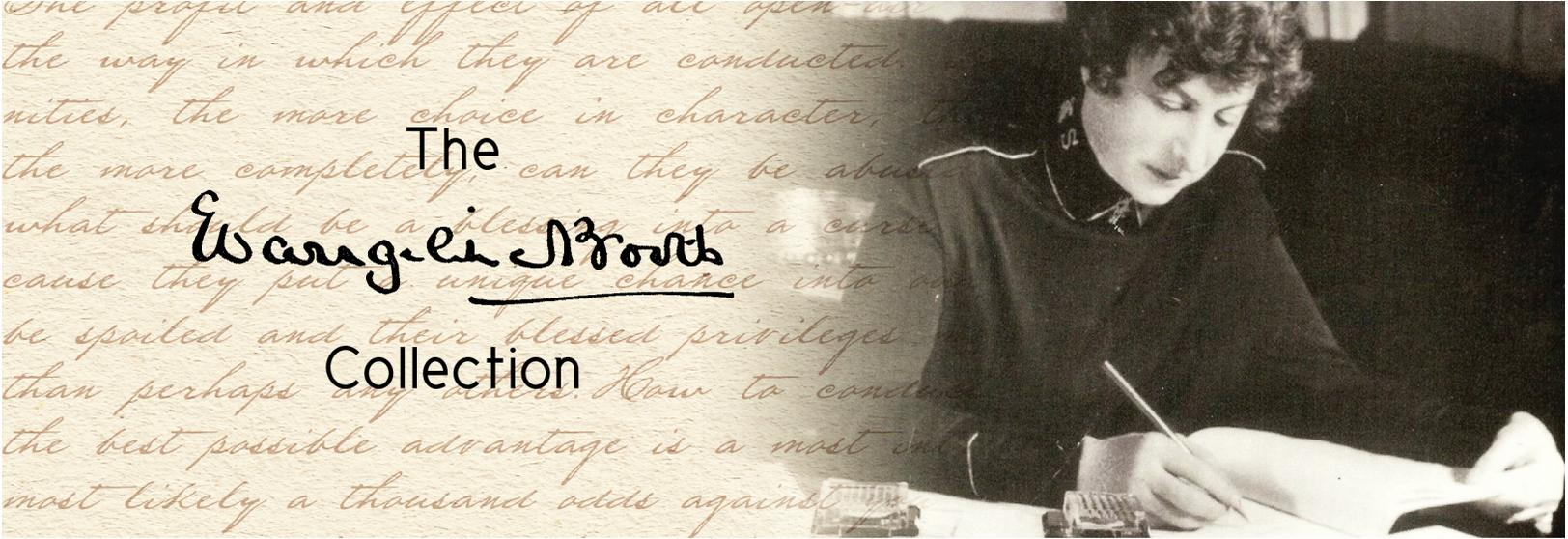
Those who had followed in his marches, and stood by to witness his miracles, had left him those who had made the great holiday of his homecoming some days before avowing their honor to steam by snatching down the branches of the ornamental palms, and throwing their mantels for his treading, gave no intimation of befriending him on the morrow. No child even had followed him, nor friend lingered or refused to leave him, no comrade through the halo of gentle and understanding pity around him. Not one soul — left — deserted! After all He had done for others, there was no one to do anything for him. He was forsaken — and forsaken in the one great hour of his life.

Christ's mind, in its divine sensitiveness and all knowledge, must have dwelt upon the various causes of all this desertion by those whom He had so passionately loved, and tenderly served, and from it He must have gathered a great deal of the bitterness of the Cup. What a specimen of mankind for whom on the morrow He was so greatly to suffer! How worthless and depraved the whole race must have appeared, and the devil would argue: "make not a sacrifice of all that thou art and hast for those who are so absolutely incapable of even estimating the smallest part of the greatest price it will cost."

This temptation comes to all those who spend and are spent for others, and yielding to it has been the cause of the overthrow of some whole lives of most blessed usefulness. Disappointment in those we have served and loved pinches the heart just as weariness takes hold of the limbs, and the pain of exhausted nerves strikes the back, and the throb of tired brain hammers away at the temples, and we are apt to think, after all, "what is the use of all this giving and so little gaining? This is no appreciation of our sacrificing; there are none to truly count the cost of all this tug and toil for others," and just when we should hold tightest to the torn hand of him who carried life's every disappointment through the wine press alone, and say as Jesus did, "nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done," have we turned aside to become deserters too?

IT WAS THE HOUR OF AGONY

Anticipated pains to sensitive natures are frequently worse than the reality.



Then physical pain, torturous as it may be, can never be compared to mental suffering, and into this one hour was pressed all the pang, the pain, smart and throb that is to be found within the whole realm of agony.

To what a keen extent did Christ realize the excruciating torture through which He was to pass on that dark, dark morrow, when the spikes would split the tender leaders of the foot: the nails tear the stretched palms of the hands; the thorns pierced the sensitive cells of the brow; the prick striving deeper as the blood gushed out; the arm socket strained and rend with the weight of the body tugging from the tearing hand; the scourge cut the skin, and the stone raised the purple and blue in all parts of the sacred form; and with rude blow and fiendish scratch "his face was to be marred more than that of any man's;" while muscle and limb become distorted, and exhaustion from the loss of blood and the indescribable torture of death from thirst to death from agony — Christ passed through it all in the garden this one black, bleak, bloody hour.

Surely in all this mental and physical agony Christ shared all the suffering which can crowd into a hospital ward, or stretch on a slum Garrett floor. When I hear of twisted joints, and remember all the awkwardness and suffering of a cramped, crippled arm, I think of Christ's dislocated limbs, and when I hear of racking pain and blistering sores I think of his five bleeding wounds; when I hear the cry for bread, or think of the parched tongues and fevered throats of famine, I think of his wilderness hunger in his cry of thirst in the death grip, and I say, "Oh, how He loved us when in that practical, passionate, outstretching sympathy He took all our pains upon his own body, that by his stripes we might be comforted on earth, and that by his death all our infirmities should be lost in the grave, giving us a perfect healing in a sure and glorious resurrection.

IT WAS THE HOUR OF BETRAYAL

To his Cup was added the bitterness of all bitters, in fact that it was one of his own who delivered him into the hands of his enemies! How the divine nobility of Jesus must have recoiled from this worst spectacle of all that is detestable inhuman ingratitude; This Despicable display of human hypocrisy, this embodiment of brutality, craft and malice; This ruined soul lost in the wreckage of a forsaken love and betrayed trust.



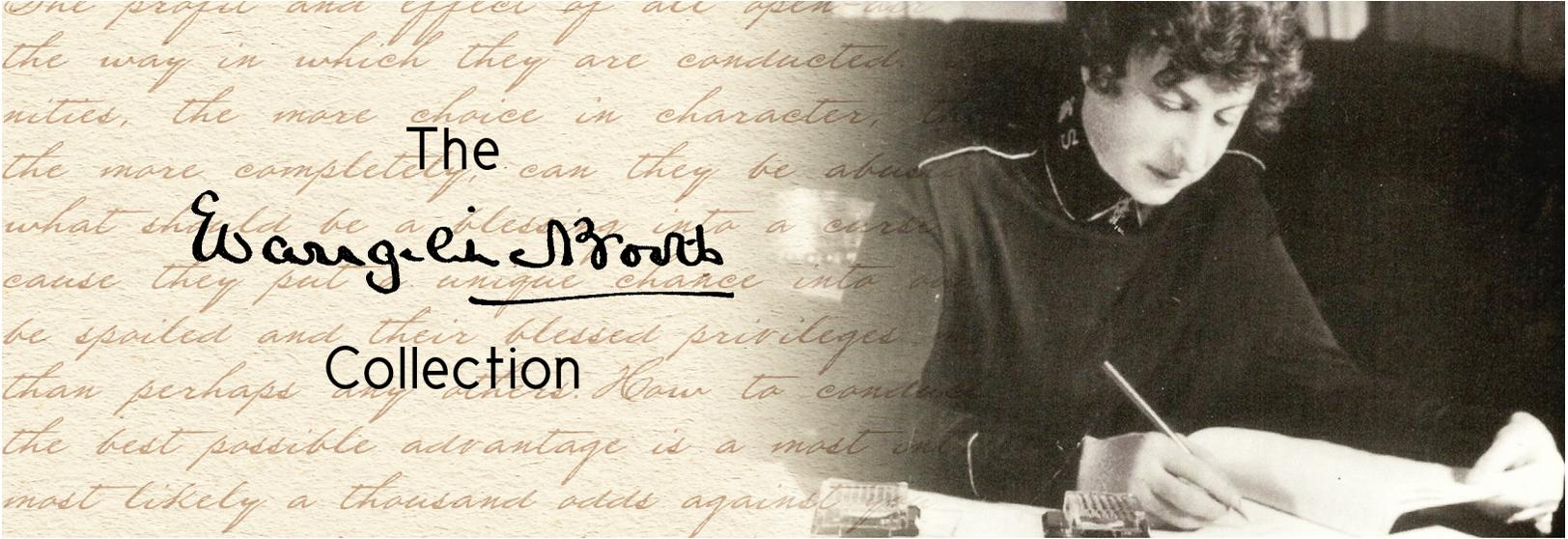
Judas did not only desert the group of Christ's chosen — not only dropped out from the following, but committed a much grosser and more grievous sin. Desertion, in all its phases and character, fills the backslider with enough sorrow to break the heart of Angels. What storms beat the soul; What sins stain the garment; What fears fill the breast when one steps out from the harbor!

"Oh!" said a young man in a meeting I was conducting, "since I became a backslider it has been such a rapid march down, the work has been so quick, the road has been so rough, the dangers have been so many, the way has been so dark that I have lost all — all I had that was virtuous, good and happy," and as his head went down into his hands he said, "I am just a heap of misery."

The man who has once known the blessedness of sins forgiven and the walk toward heaven can never experience any real happiness in that portion which is inevitable to those who forsake their God. Their nearest approach to happiness (and it is a gross libel on the word) is an indifference derived from a murdered conscience which leaves the soul to sleep in its darkness, as the quieted storms leaves the midnight no more disturbed by its intermittent flashes and its wakening voice of thunder.

But, deserting the cause was only part of Judas' sin — he sold his Lord. He sat with the favored and blessed few at the sacred meal; He looked upon the wondrous face of him whom he had witnessed through the years past give and suffer all things for others; he saw the darkened expressions fall upon the countenance of his fellow disciples as they became troubled beyond description at the saying of Jesus: "one of you shall betray me." He left in the lighted room, the happy band, the presence of the Savior, and full of greed, hatred and spite went out into the darkness with demonic passions hooting in every chamber of his doomed soul — and there and then struck the bargain which sold with his master his last remnants of hope.

There is a great deal of selling done. Some sell by their tongue, some by their inferences, some by their covered slurs at the life and character of others. Can there be anything more to be despised then for one who has been the recipient of the confidence, affection and hospitality of another to seek to damage or harm that other by spreading evil report which, whether it be true or false, is always a marketable value in gossip currency? I have known some stop right out from



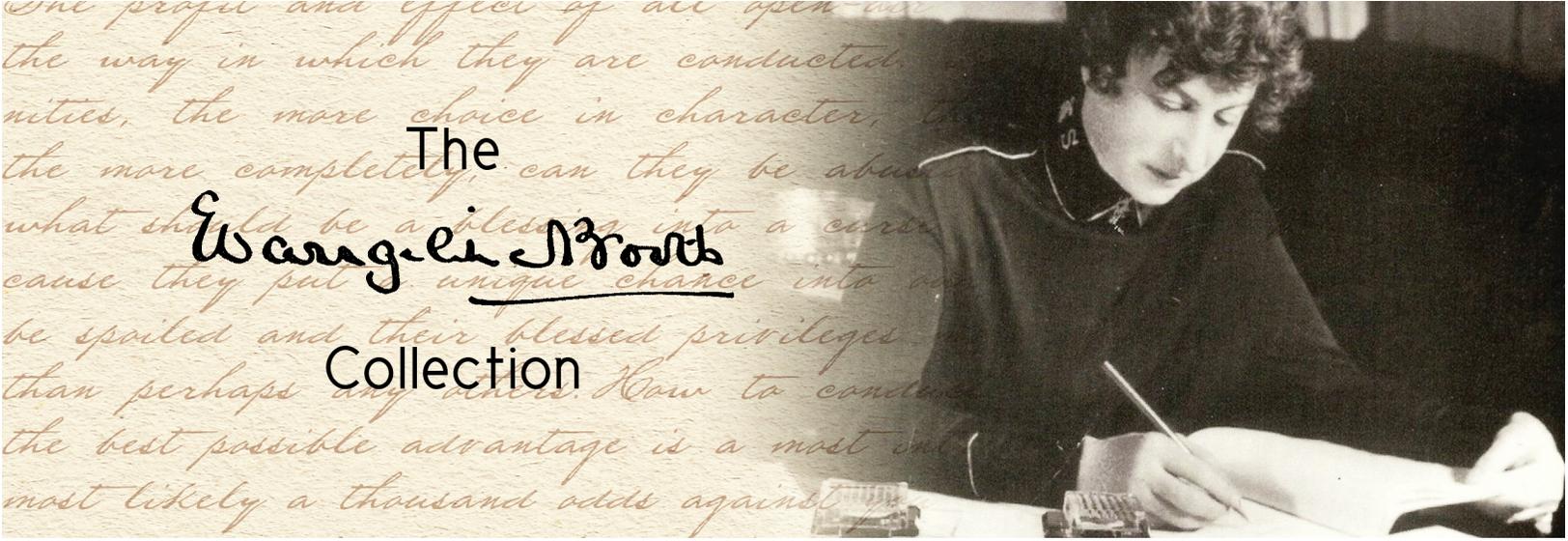
the lighted tea table and do this traitorous selling business for a great deal less than 30 pieces of silver.

Some sell the virtues of others by a despicable uncharitableness, imputing base motives to the purest of deeds, and dare to take into their own hands the judgment of him who alone can read the heart of man, and because some dear saint's garments shine a good deal brighter than their own filthy rags, they will announce amongst their titling circle that they are quite sure that such and such an act of sacrifice was only for the purpose of some self-gain.

Some sell on the general store principle. Every scrap of stumble, or mistake, or failing, or even peculiarity or misfortune that will fetch the worth of its travel, off they run, in a haste which will not always permit of tying the bonnet strings, or shoelace, with it to the gossip market — nay, they are very pawnbrokers of spiritual merchandise. They buy the confidences of others with all manner of assurances, and sell them over their counters for whatever they will fetch. They live, feed, and fatten on the business. Whenever I meet them, or see them or hear of them, I always think of Judas.

Bad, contemptible and wretched enough as all this is, yet it does not embrace the full height, breadth and depth of Judas' sin. He betrayed his Lord. Not enough to sell him and then leave him to his chance, but he pointed out to the enemy where he was. He made public his private confidences. He told them his secret place of prayer — the enclosure in the garden where they would find him, and in case, in the darkness of the night, so slight a figure could not be detected, he brought the light to show him up.

Is the dark, crimson stain of a sin so heinous found upon the garments of anyone who may chance to read these words? Have you ever done it — brought the light of knowledge of the most secret confidences with which your trusted position may have favored you, to fill the mouths of evil thinkers? Have you so misrepresented things, matters and men as too late in the tongues of God's bitterest enemies with false accusations against his children and his cause? Have you put the reason of your leaving the flag down to that contemptible lie so often resorted to — "lost confidence in your leader," inferring that he or she is a fraud, when the fraud has been in your own heart? Have you, because uncleanness in your own soul has driven you out from white and



heavenly surroundings, sought to betray the blameless character of the organization into the hands of purity's basest foes? Have you made the fact of your having been within the enclosure to assist in putting innocents into the hands of villainous guilt, and so betrayed your greatest benefactor — the army or the church to which you belonged? Is the weight of a sin so great on your soul? I ask not how you have done it — whether with oily tongue or raspy one; whether with the appearance of a Christian, or the brazen face of a rebel — I only say that if you have done it — belied your master and his children, and dragged the bloodstained banner of his cause through the gutter of abuse and slander, then you are to blame for the most malignant and infamous treachery, and in the name of all heaven I declare you guilty of high treason against him who loved you and gave himself for you, and unless you repent and do your first works, there await you the tempestuous on speeding of that remorse and despair which rushed in the doom of the lost soul of Judas.

WHAT HUNG ON THE HOUR.

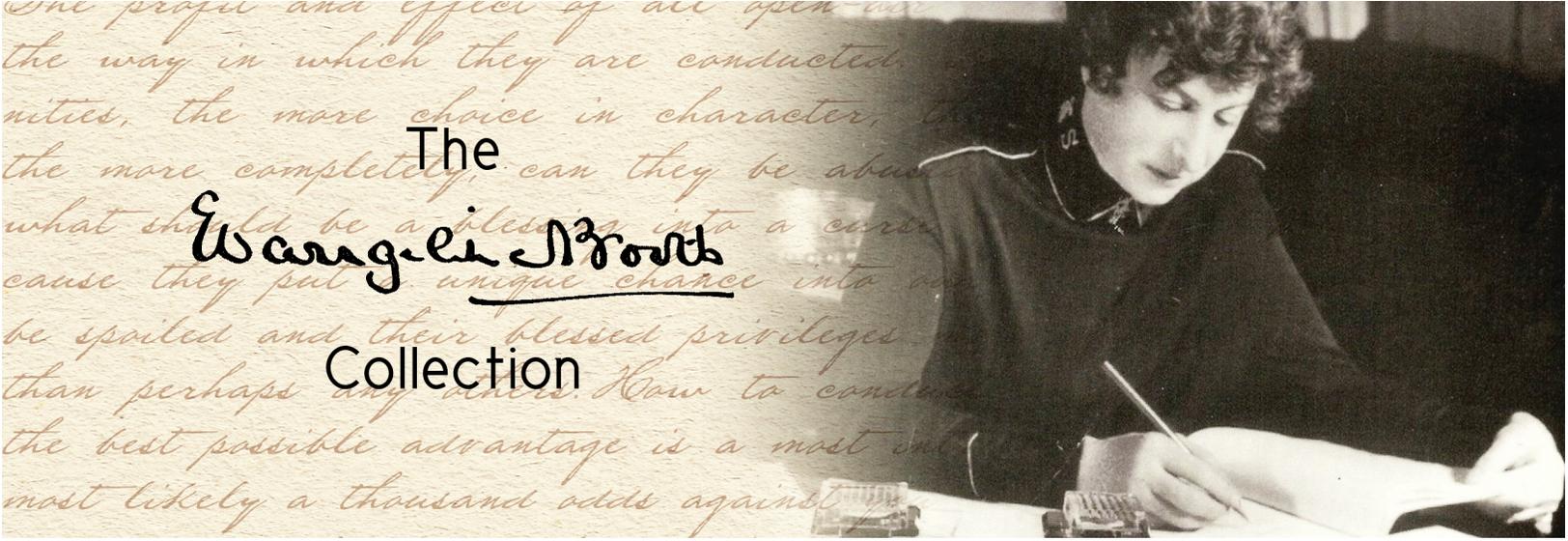
On this dread hour hunger more than those slumbering disciples, those crafty priests, that fickle multitude, that cruel hearted trader could imagine; more than earth could guess, Angels no, or Devils surmise.

Here was the seal to his blameless, beautiful life amongst men, and the merciful work of his three years ministry. Without this Crown of suffering the healing, helping, and teaching of the life of Jesus would have been incomplete, for it was his death which demonstrated his divinity, and declared by its following tomb bursting and glorious resurrection the supernal light of another and everlasting life.

It was the undeniable proof of all his miracles, "Oh," But you say, "he died as a common man!"

Yes! He died as only the man Jesus could have died, but he rose again as only God could.

We should do more rising with God if we could only do more dying with Jesus, and give more proof of divinity in us. Then was the extinguishing of the last smoldering embers of doubt in the minds of the almost persuaded; The fact which sent him forth triumphant to meet the wretch



which threw open heaven's gates to receive the blood washed. Out of this black, bleak darkness sprung the light of the world, showing all men the way back to God. It freed the slave, protected the captive, elevated womanhood, comforted the widow, met the cry of the orphan, righted the wrongs of the oppressed; Recovered the losses of the unfortunate; Wiped the tears of the bereaved, washed the sins of the guilty; that one hour when the love of heaven threw its arms around the sorrows of earth, and the two worlds kissed each other in acknowledgment that the broken, bleeding a body of a crucified Lord had bridged the Gulf.