

## THE MOTHERS OF SALEM

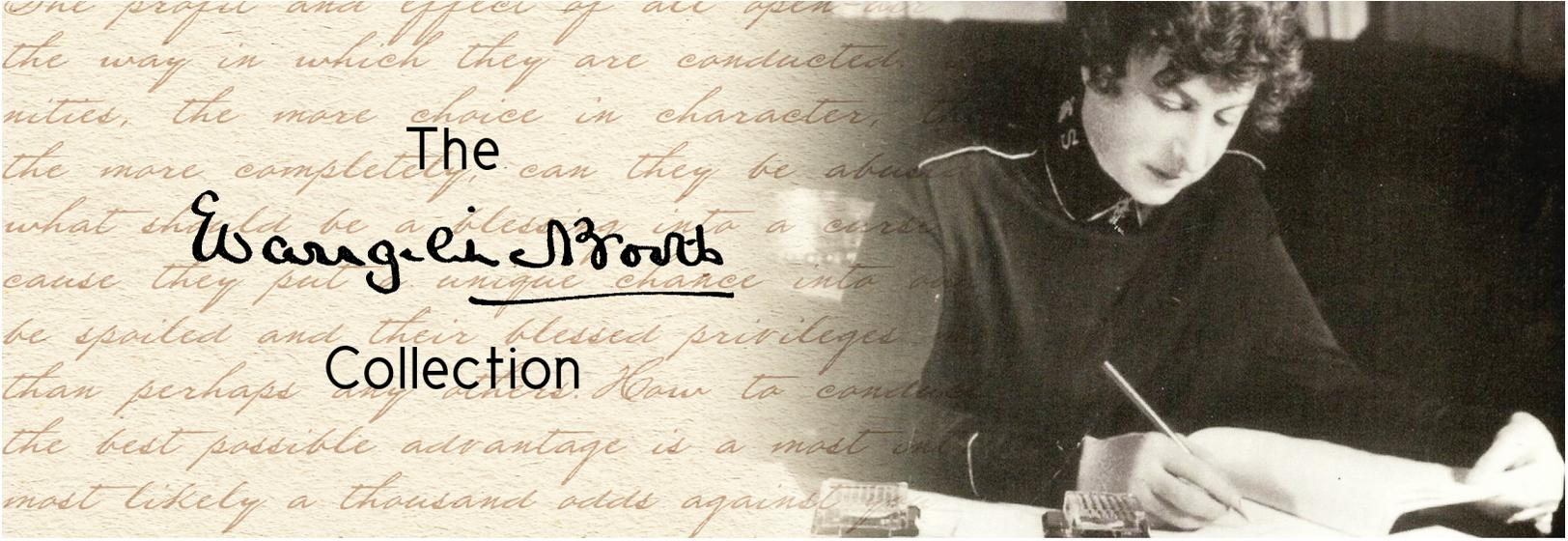
Ever since the day my baby tones first mingled with the gentle voice of my precious mother in that immortal song of childhood, "When Mothers of Salem Their Children Brought to Jesus," the scene to which it refers has been to me one of the most realistic in the life of Christ. I have hesitated from attempting to write or speak upon this wondrous episode in our Saviour's life, because I have felt that some would consider I was invading a realm in which I must in a very important sense be regarded a stranger. However, as I look upon the picture produced on this page, and remember that all I have and am I owe to the unwearied and tender efforts of my own wonderful mother to bring me in my earliest years into touch with the Great Shepherd of the children, I feel I ought to commit that such may be made a blessing to some dear mothers who must realize that their first and highest obligation to their children is to bring them to God.

I would like to say, first, that I notice these Salem mothers brought their children to Jesus themselves. It was a personal act on their part. They did not, as is too often the case with modern mothers, delegate the most important duty to other, who, no matter who they may be or what other qualifications they may possess, can never be so fitted for such a divine task as is motherhood. Alas, how few children can remember their mother as the one to guide their baby feet into the presence of Jesus. They do not connect mother with God and Heaven. Sad to say. She is not associated in their minds with the Church, with the Sabbath-school, with the Bible-reading, or, saddest of all, with prayer. For all these the children must look to Christian leaders, altogether away from mother's side, and mother's hand and mother's voice.

Is it not here that many mothers fail? There is no definite effort to bring their children into contact with Christ. Time and money and strength are spent on all other branches of education, but personal responsibility in the matter of getting the little ones to know Jesus as their

## SAVING, PROTECTING FRIEND

is neglected until the tender, plastic years have slipped by. Surely it should be the supreme purpose of a mother, as soon as her arms enfold the precious babe, to lift that little one to Christ!



Again, it is significant that these Salem mothers brought their children while very young. The three evangelists who tell the story describe the children as being "infants," "little" and "young," so they must have been very small. This should encourage every mother to begin early. You cannot begin too soon. My own dear mother used to say, "Be beforehand with the devil" – that is, do not wait till Satan has had the opportunity to sow all sorts of evil seeds in the little heart, but hasten to adopt every means to exclude these, and by sowing good seed make the first harvest reaped from that young soil one that shall be a joy to your own heart and honor to Christ.

We all know that the years of infancy and childhood are the most impressionable.

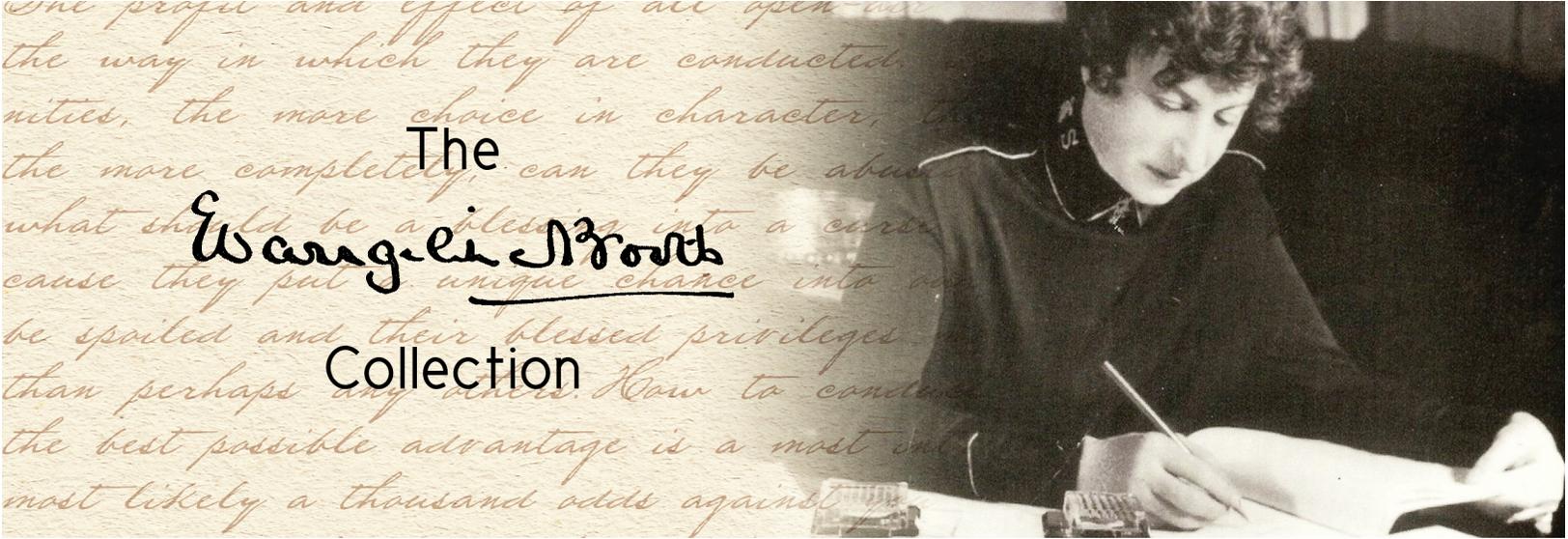
AS CLAY IN THE HANDS OF THE POTTER,

so the precious children are when in the hands of mother, and it were an infinite pity to allow such a formative period to pass without impressions, strong and enduring, being made for Him in whose image we would wish most of all their characters should be cast.

Then, I see that these Salem mothers brought their children to Jesus through difficulty, and extreme difficulty, for rebuke came just where encouragement and help should have been given – the disciples rebuked them. What an anomaly! Yet this is quite often what happens today – difficulties are encountered where we least look for them. Sometimes those who by position

SHOULD BE NEAREST TO CHRIST

Seem to be the very people who are repellent in their attitude toward the children. The weight of years and the burden of life have destroyed the spirit of sympathy with the happy freedom of childhood, and some folk who bear His name, I am bound to admit, are not always known by this same sweetness of disposition toward the young as that which He so graciously revealed. The artist's conception in our picture strongly appeals to me. There is nothing austere about Jesus, and the precious children can approach Him in a natural manner. The tiny child feels perfectly free to play ball, and the smallest babe is not afraid to go into His arms, although a Stranger. I blessed children and blessed mothers! Perfectly at home in the presence of Jesus! The only severity or harshness that was met with was in the disciplines, and this was corrected



"when He saw" – yes, He always sees, and be assured that He always sympathizes with you when disappointing and discouraging things happen – it "much displeased" the Lord, and He immediately vetoed their regrettable action, so we may be sure that Christ is always quick and ready to clear away the obstacles that ride up between your children and His arms.

For your encouragement I want to give special impressiveness to the fact that the effort of these Salem mothers was effectual. They succeeded. Jesus received them. He did more for them than their best expectations. Their highest hopes were that He would "touch" the children, but "He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them and blessed them." I wish every mother understood the

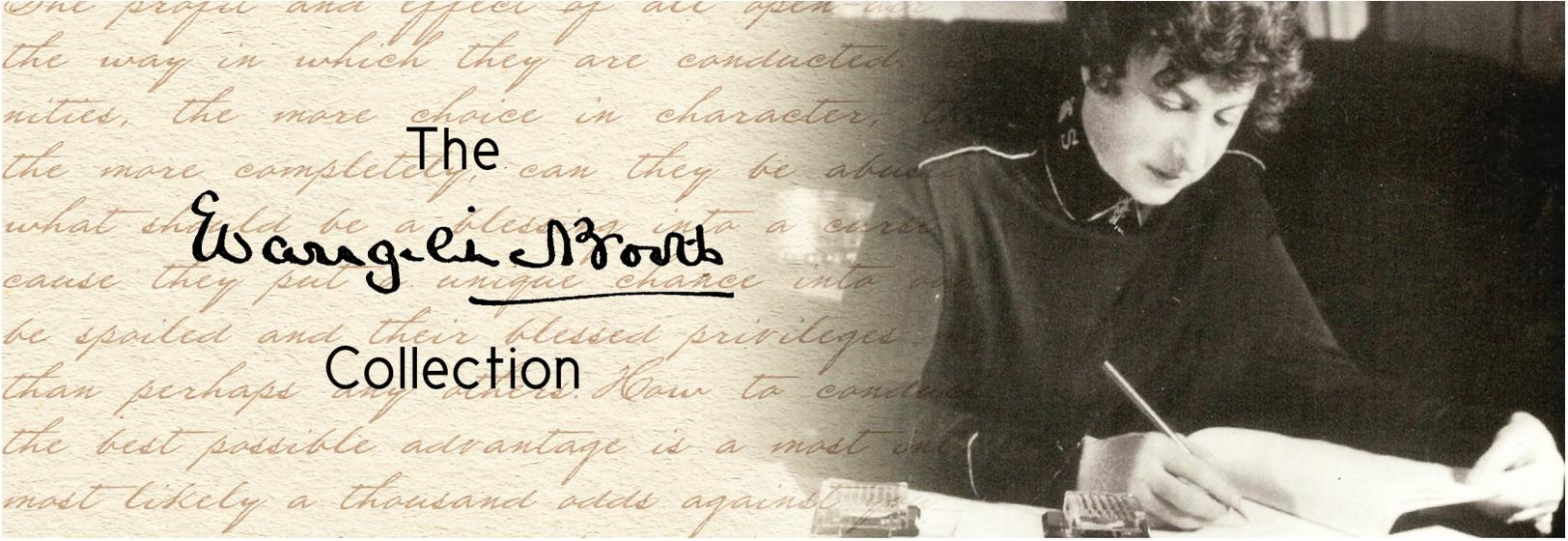
INFINITE WEALTH THERE IS IN THAT WORD!

If so, none could ever rest while their little ones were away from him, and The Salvation Army would not have anything like the work to do in the matter of finding and caring for such a multitude of lost boys and girls were the mothers imbued with the heart-hunger of the mothers of Salem.

Probably some mother who reads this will be saying, "How can I bring my children to Jesus?" Let me try to help you - and here the words of my own dear mothers come back to me: "You can bring them to Christ by DEFINITE DEDICATION."

Have you ever yet settled the question: To whom does this child belong? Surely, surely, careful though upon this can have but one result, and you will be led anew to recognize that God has an absolute claim, which claim you can only truly acknowledge by definitely dedicating the child to the service of God, as Hannah dedicated Samuel, Jochebed dedicated Moses, and Eunice dedicated Timothy, as my own dear mother dedicated me and never swerved from the spirit and purpose of that dedication, so that not only by the original act but by its perpetual maintenance she was constantly bringing me to Jesus.

Then you can bring your children to Christ by persevering prayer.



Here, too, I could give examples innumerable, showing the precious efficacy of mothers' prayer. Never forget that of all the prayers answered by Heaven it seems that mothers' are answered first. Take them to Jesus separately in prayer, as my mother prayed for us – by name, by disposition, by weaknesses, by gifts, by age – praying that we should each be gathered into the arms of Jesus.

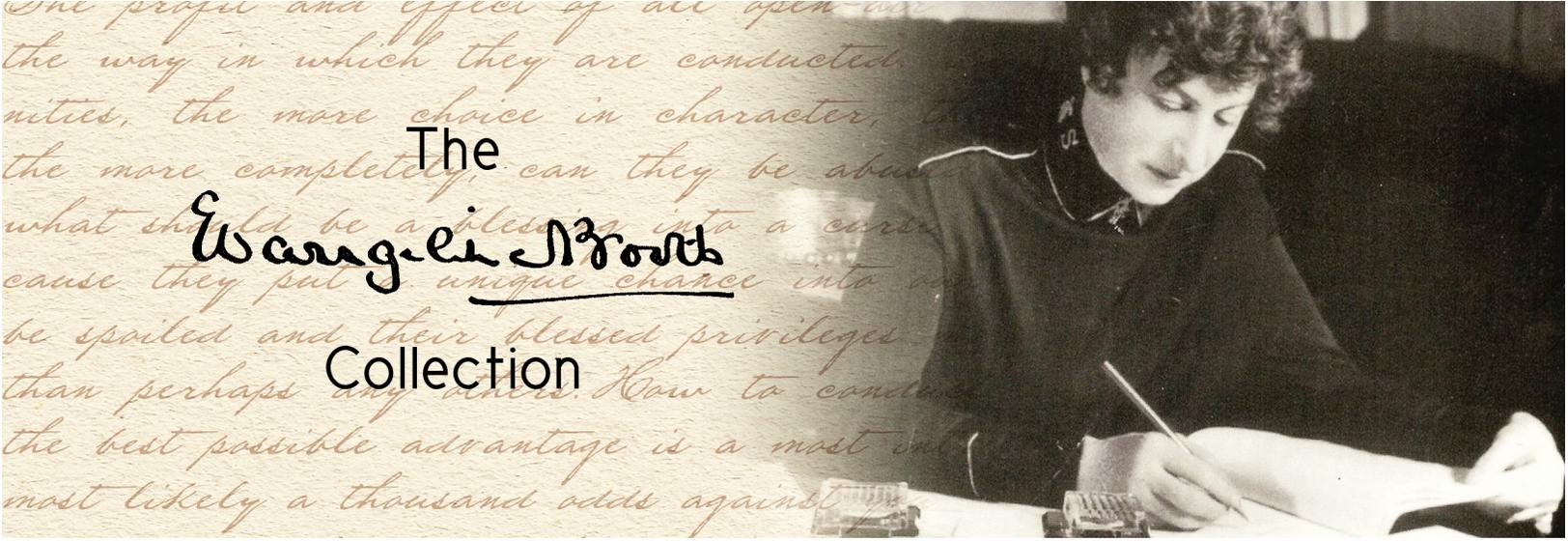
And while you pray, believe. Oh, how the Bible glistens with promises to parents concerning their children! God definitely and repeatedly pledges Himself to bless the children, and could there be anything more conducive to faith – faith demanding, faith all-conquering, faith blind to every force, faith asking the highest, greatest and best – than a mother's love for her children? This love will find the promises of God the surest of ground.

Then you must always bring your children to Christ

#### BY EXAMPLE.

"Example is more powerful than precept"; "actions speak louder than words." Somebody once said, "I cannot hear what you say, because of the noise of what you do." And then you know that at the back of all our doing there is the being. We must be right and the do will harmonize. If you have a right heart, filled with His Spirit, you will not only be bringing your children to Jesus, but you will be bringing Jesus to your children, and as they grow in years it shall be with them as it was with Moses, who, "when he was come to years, refused" the world chose God.

And, in closing, let us never overlook the fact- which will stand out as one of history's greatest long after the ages are forgotten -that Christ came to us a Babe, and was among us a Child. Have you ever thought? He could have burst upon humanity's vision in the fulness of His perfect manhood, but He chose the insignificant crib of infancy and the lowly path of youth. Thus, He forever dignified all childhood and forever consecrated all motherhood, and made us to feel that mother should be the gateway through which the great God shall come into infancy and childhood, and the gateway though which lambs shall pass into the fold of the tender Shepherd. Christ's birth and early years makes us to think that it there is one above others whom God intended should be more divine than the rest of creation



IT MUST BE A MOTHER.

Oh, by the ten thousand prayers over my cradle, by the memories of my own blessed and sainted mother, by the consolation in troubles, the fortitude in temptation and the sustenance in sacrifice that has come to because of her influence – by the promises of God to parents and the blessings of Christ to the children, I plead with you who bear that sacred name, live, not beneath its divine privileges, but use your unequalled, Heaven-given influence for its highest and best purpose and bring the children to Jesus!

(May 8<sup>th</sup>, 1915)