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General Booth
a Great Man.

A biography of the late General Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, will shortly be published by Mr. Harold Bagby, and in the Book Monthly the author gives an insight into the remarkable personality of the late general.

"When I was a boy," he says, "the name of William Booth came to me on the breath of laughter and sneers. He was a humbug, a mountebank, a fool, a rogue, a coarse-minded, self-seeking, and blasphemous character.

"I saw pictures of him, and disliked him horribly. What a dreadful person—a Svengali of the religious tub! I can see those pictures now. They represent a tall man in a passion, the face pale, the eyes blazing, the oily black hair disordered, the clenched right hand raised furiously above his head, the froged coat flung open, the red jersey shining fanatically. And underneath there was always a text about Hell Fire.

"Later in life, I must have been about eight-and-twenty, I met this extraordinary person. He was a patriarch living in a little red-bricked suburban villa. His manner distressed me. I felt that he was something of an opportunist. I went away and wrote an article which gave a full account of our conversation and my impressions of the man. It pleased me. I felt I had got at the very soul of William Booth. Forgive me, I was eight-and-twenty, and young for my years.

"Instead of being angry with the proofs of that article, William Booth took a fancy to their writer. I began to see him with a fair frequency. I became fond of him. I thought his ideas were ridiculous, but for the man himself it was impossible not to feel a warm affection. I never knew a fanatic so gentle and human.

"Then I saw him on two occasions when he spoke to me intimately of his spiritual passion. On the last of these occasions he was blind. He sat close to me. I could feel the strain of the old man's soul as he struggled to make me realize the agony of God for the salvation of the human race. That day I loved the man, but with no sense of his greatness.

"When it came to writing his life, that is to say, reading his private diaries and his more sacred letters, I found myself in a very different frame of mind. There were days and days when he seemed to me the truest-hearted and the profoundest-minded man of his century. I could not help feeling that he towered above such scratchers of the surface soil as Gladstone, and was infinitely nearer to the tremendous secret of Christ than Newman. I kept asking myself: Suppose every man had done what he demanded? For example, who will deny that this revivalist did not see the uttermost truth of politics when he said, 'You cannot make a man clean by washing his shirt?'

"I began to see more clearly what was his aim. The dogmas which ruled him, and which once had bothered me, slipped out of sight. I saw that he was simply hungering and thirsting for the happiness of humanity. I saw that he had embraced religion because God had flashed into his soul the sublimest truth of human life, and because he knew that without a change of heart, without a new birth of the spirit, no man can be happy. There were moments when a Tolstoyan spirit of self-annihilation almost took possession of me. I had to fight for the discriminating and critical spirit of the biographer; and when I had got it I felt farther from the Kingdom of Heaven, and wonderfully insignificant.

"As I look back on the works of this biography I am struck by two main characteristics of William Booth. First, the passion, the beauty, and the self-sacrifice of his love story—revealing him as one of the tenderest men that ever loved and idealized a woman; and second, the courage of his heart from boyhood upwards.

"Those who read these two volumes will find that it is the story of a valiant spirit as ever lived, perhaps the very bravest man of all time. They will find that his courage was called upon to face fearful issues in boyhood, that his early manhood was almost broken by its load of poverty and neglect, that when love came to him, transposing everything and for the first time creating a passionate hope of joy in his heart, he had the courage to contemplate its abnegation for the sake of his Master; and then they will go on to find how this courage faced the hatred of the world, the desertion of disciples, the disillusion of his dreams. And they will see him wrestling with an inscrutable Providence in what mystics call the dark night of the soul, unable to bear the agonies of his wife's deathbed and the silence of God to all his clamorous cries for mercy. And finally they will see him, a mild and beautiful patriarch, hailed by huzzing millions in every quarter of the globe, consulted by statesmen, entertained by monarchs, adored by his vast army, and neither bitter nor puffed up, but weeping in secret over the sufferings of children.

"I do not know a finer story in all the range of literature. It is a thousand pities, nay a million pities, that it could not have been written by his own hand, for then its immortality would have been as certain as Hamlet's. But even as it is in my telling, full of imperfections and little peddling criticisms, it does at least help to make intimate acquaintance with this great Englishman, one of the strongest and bravest spirits that ever loved humanity and endeavored to serve God."

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War and Marriage.

The war has cut off hundreds of thousands of young men who, if they had survived, would have made admirable husbands. Inevitably, therefore, we see young women of charm and refinement marrying men whom we feel, uneasily, to be not quite worthy of them,—says a writer in the London "Times." Like many another social problem, this is seen to be essentially a matter of arithmetic. And this arithmetic leads us to a curious speculation. Will the average British mother be led to modify her traditional objection to the arranged marriage? That institution, as established in most continental countries, is never likely to become official-

ly recognized here. But, the optimistic policy of *laissez faire* must, one would imagine, be affected by the hard facts of the situation. The arranged marriage has long been traditional among those whom Disraeli used to call the "high nobility," and it obtains also among large sections of the working classes. But the great middle class regard it with a curious kind of prudish horror. They are indeed Romantics, deeming impious any attempt to direct and control the loves of their young. Actually they take more trouble over their daughters' boots than over their daughters' marriages.

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