



DEVOTED TO TEMPERANCE, SCIENCE, EDUCATION, AND LITERATURE.

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MRS. "GENERAL" BOOTH.

THE MOTHER OF THE SALVATION ARMY.

A few weeks ago all the world was ringing with the news of the death of one of the most remarkable women of the time. People of all classes and creeds, whether otherwise in sympathy with the great movement of the Salvation Army or not, united in testifying to an appreciation of her worth. Said the *Methodist Times*, "The greatest Methodist woman of this generation has passed away, and London has recently witnessed in her funeral a tribute of popular devotion and esteem without a parallel in our time. We call her a Methodist, for a Methodist she was born, a Methodist she was reared, and a Methodist she would have been to this hour but for the folly and intolerance of those who at a critical moment drove her and her future husband out of the fold, and so deprived Methodism of one of the great original spiritual forces of the nineteenth century. What an irony there is in history! What subtle sarcasm lies in the fact that Wesleyan Methodism drove out William Booth for preaching the Gospel on a South London common, and the Methodist New Connection sacrificed his services because their wise men refused to see that he was manifestly called of God to be an evangelist! As we stand by the death-bed of Mrs. Booth, and realize what a world-centre of gracious influence that family has become, it is difficult to avoid bitterness when we remember that all that might have been Methodist."

Mrs. Booth seems to have inherited much of her talent from her father, who was in his day a speaker of considerable note and much in demand as a temperance lecturer. She was by nature unusually shy and retiring, and her most cherished companions were the books in her father's library. Married at the age of twenty-six, she travelled with her husband wherever his evangelistic duties called him, allowing neither health nor home duties of any kind to interfere with the, to them, most important of all business, the saving of souls. But not until her eldest child was over four years old was her voice ever heard in public. How the change came about is best told by herself by special request in one of her sermons.

"Perhaps, some of you," she said, "would hardly credit that I was one of the most timid and bashful disciples the Lord Jesus ever saved. For ten years of my Christian life my life was one daily battle with the cross—not because I wilfully rejected, as many do, for that I never dared to do. Oh, no! I used to make up my mind I would, and resolve and intend, and then, when the hour came, I used to fail for want of courage. I need not have failed. I now see how foolish I was, and how wrong; but, for some four or five months before I commenced speaking, the controversy had been signally roused in my soul which God had awakened years before,

but which, through mistaken notions, fear, timidity, I had almost allowed to die out. I was brought to very severe heart-searchings at this time. I had not been realizing so much of the Divine presence. I had lost a great deal of the power and happiness I once enjoyed. During a season of sickness, one day it seemed as if the Lord revealed it all to me by his Spirit. I had no vision, but a revelation to my mind. He seemed to take me back to the time when I was

the days of old, and re-visit me with those urgings of thy spirit which I used to have, I will obey, if I die in the attempt. I care not; I will obey." However, the Lord did not revisit me immediately. He let me recover and I went out again. About three months after that I went to the chapel of which my husband was a minister, and he had an extraordinary service. Even then he was trying something new to get the outside people. They were having

and testify, you know I would bless it to your own soul as well as to the souls of the people,' and I gasped again, and I said in my soul, 'Yes, Lord, I believe thou wouldst but I cannot do it.' I had forgotten my vow—it did not occur to me at all. All in a moment, after I had said that to the Lord, I seemed to see the bedroom where I had lain, and to see myself as though I had been there prostrate before the Lord promising that, and then the voice seemed to say to me, 'Is this consistent with that promise?' and I almost jumped up and said, 'No, Lord, it is the old thing over again, but I cannot do it,' and I felt as though I would rather die than do it. And then the devil said, 'Besides, you are not prepared to speak. You will look like a fool, and have nothing to say.' He made a mistake. He overdid himself for once. It was that word settled it. I said, 'Ah! this is just the point. I have never yet been willing to be a fool for Christ, now I will be one,' and without stopping another moment I rose up in the seat and walked up the chapel. My dear husband was just going to conclude. He thought something had happened to me, and so did the people. We had been there two years, and they knew my timid, bashful nature. He stepped down to ask me, 'What is the matter, my dear?' I said, 'I want to say a word.' He was so taken by surprise, he could only say, 'My dear wife wants to say a word,' and sat down. He had been trying to persuade me to do it for ten years. I got up—God only knows how—and if any mortal ever did hang on the arm of Omnipotence, I did. I felt as if I were clinging to some human arm—and yet it was a Divine arm—to hold me. I just got up and told the people how it came about. I confessed, as I think everybody should, when they have been in the wrong and misrepresented the religion of Jesus Christ. I told the people, although I had been occupying all the positions of a minister's wife, though I was young then I had been doing a great deal more than many an elderly one does in the church of God, in the way of meeting believers, and visiting and working behind the scenes, so that they had all been regarding me as a very devoted woman, and I told them so. I said, 'I dare say many of you have been regarding me as a very devoted woman, and one who has been living faithfully to God, but I have come to know that I have been living in disobedience, and to that extent I have brought darkness and leanness into my soul, and I promised the Lord three or four months ago, and I dare not disobey. I have come to tell you this, and to promise the Lord that I will be obedient to the heavenly vision.'

"But, oh! how little I saw then what it involved. I never imagined the life of publicity it was going to lead me into, and of trial also; for I was never allowed to have another quiet Sabbath, when I could speak or stand up. All I took there was the pres-



MRS. GENERAL BOOTH.

From a Photograph taken at Clacton on Sea, December, 1889.

fifteen and sixteen, when I first gave my heart to him. He seemed to show me all the bitter way, how this one thing had been the fly in the pot of ointment, the bitter in the cup, and prevented me from realizing what I should otherwise have done. I felt how it had hindered the revelation of himself to me, and hindered me from growing in grace, and learning more of the deep things of God. He showed it to me, and then I remember prostrating myself upon my face before him, and I promised him there in the sick-room: "Lord, if thou wilt return unto me, as in

a meeting in which ministers and friends in the town were taking part, and all giving their testimony and speaking for God. I was in the ministers' pew with my eldest boy, then four years old, and there was some thousand people present. I felt much more depressed than usual in spirit, and not expecting anything particular, but, as the testimonies went on I felt the Spirit come upon me. You alone who have felt it know what it means. It cannot be described. I felt it to the extremities of my fingers and toes. It seemed as if a voice said to me, 'Now, if you were to go