

Books and Authors

The Mother of the Army¹

This *Life of the "Mother of the Salvation Army"* is in many respects a wonderful book, and yet it is much too long, the two volumes together making nearly fourteen hundred pages. The facts which they contain are collected with care and edited with evident affection, but the work itself would have been vastly more interesting and helpful if it had been condensed to one-quarter of its size. It is so good that it ought to be better. Page after page is occupied with tedious moralizing and irrelevant matter whose effect is to cover up rather than bring into clear relief the beautiful character of Mrs. Booth. The first and the last impression which we get from an examination of this biography is that it will largely defeat its object because of its extraordinary length.

Another point by way of criticism is that the growth of the Salvation Army is traced too indistinctly. The chapter devoted to the beginning of the Army leaves an indefinite impression. That a great work was being done by General and Mrs. Booth in East London is clear, but what may be called the evolution of the Army is not traced with equal clearness. In a work which is both biography and history, and quite as much the latter as the former, more care should have been taken to bring into systematic order the successive stages of the Army's growth.

So much by way of criticism. No one can read the book without being conscious that he is in the presence of one of the most exalted spiritual personalities which this generation has known. Canon Girdlestone, of Wycliffe Hall, Oxford, England, was once asked whom he considered the greatest preachers in England. His reply was: "Canon Liddon, Mr. Spurgeon, and Mrs. General Booth." The order probably expressed his conviction as a Churchman. While Canon Liddon without doubt had vastly more influence in the universities, he surely had no such power among the common people and the poor as had Mrs. Booth. The story contained in these volumes may be condensed as follows:

Catherine Mumford was born in 1829, and much of her subsequent power is accounted for in the fact that she was the daughter of her mother. Her father was an accredited and successful lay preacher among the Wesleyans, a man of remarkable eloquence, who afterwards lost his spirituality, and for thirty years seems to have been a "backslider," until brought again to a Christian experience through the influence of his daughter. Catherine was fine-looking, a brilliant conversationalist, always sensitive to the sufferings of others, and even in her earliest years she displayed many of the characteristics of her after life. She hated cruelty with a perfect hatred, and was the friend of dumb animals and of the poor. Her early life was spent in the Wesleyan Church, and later among the Methodist New Connection. Finely educated, of earnest and intense nature, profoundly religious, it was natural that she should be devoted to winning men to Christ and to the alleviation of human misery. In 1852 she became engaged to William Booth, at that time a Primitive Methodist minister. The letters which passed between these young people are interesting and instructive. She had a lofty ideal of marriage, and approached it with a full appreciation of the possible results of an ill-considered union. She says: "I dare not enter into so solemn an engagement until you can assure me that you feel I am in every way suited to make you happy." This thought appears again and again. Of her own satisfaction there was no doubt, but she was wise enough to see how much depended on such an assurance of mutual affection as would make future surprises impossible. The story of her life from her marriage reads like "a new chapter in the Acts of the Apostles." At first Mrs. Booth never spoke in public. She was the inspiration of her husband, and her chief influence was in her home. After a while, however, while

they were living in Newcastle, she began to take part in the public services, surprising even her husband when she first asked permission to say a few words in the church. During his illness, shortly after, she took his place, and continued his work with a success which was gratifying both to him and to his people. William Booth was better fitted to be an evangelist than a pastor, and at first was encouraged in this line of service by his brethren. But after a short time, because of jealousy or misunderstanding, his Conference refused to set him apart to evangelistic work, and he withdrew from the Church in which he had been trained. Before that he had held evangelistic meetings in many parts of England, with wonderful results. Feeling that he had a special call to this ministry, and being supported in it by his wise and discerning wife, the step was taken which separated them from denominational affiliations, and left them free for the beginning of one of the most remarkable religious movements in modern times.

It is not necessary for us to sketch the rise and development of the Salvation Army. That is already a part of contemporary history known and read by all. Although the part of Mrs. Booth in that work is well known, it may not be out of place to recall a few of her characteristics, and the influence which she exerted in determining the development of the Army. In the first place, she was a whole-hearted, noble woman, possessed of tact and quick intuition. Her judgments concerning men and things seldom failed. The letters from her pen show that she had the instinct of an artist and the passion of a poet. She possessed what perhaps we may call the vision of God, so that things which to others would have seemed sacrifices, by her were undertaken with enthusiasm and gladness. She never forgot that she was a wife and mother as well as a soldier. It is not surprising that her career was ended after twenty-eight years of service; it is rather a surprise that any human being was able to do and to endure so much for so long a time. The care of a large family of children is enough for most women, but when to their training was added leadership in a religious movement with world-wide affiliations, it is difficult to understand how she found the time and strength for so much work. That her family was not neglected their subsequent history has proven. Where in modern times is there so large and prominent a family, all of whose members have been inspired with a common devotion to so high and holy a service? Heredity will not account for the Booths; they are what they are largely as the result of the spiritual environment created by the mother. Every member of that family is now in the service of the Army. Every one is thrilled with the same passion that distinguished Mrs. Booth, and all have something of that refined and delicate intensity which was her supreme characteristic.

Mrs. Booth had a peculiar power in reaching the cultured and wealthy. The General once said that he longed to be able to touch the poor with one hand and the rich with the other, but that he was not able to reach so long a distance. Mrs. Booth had that power. She played upon an audience of street loafers as an organist upon his organ, and she spoke to the rich and the nobility with the fearlessness of a Hebrew prophet. She was not only a preacher, but a reformer. Never were her bravery and constancy more conspicuous than in the memorable crusade in London against the social evil, when she linked hands with W. T. Stead and Josephine Butler in one of the hardest fights for good morals and common humanity that England has seen for many a year. Her position in the Army was that of the mother and the preacher; in the community it was that of a social reformer. While the General is a great preacher, he is pre-eminently an organizer. His wife, on the other hand, was able to touch as few ever did that note of tenderness and intensity which always sways an audience. And she was perfectly plain-spoken. Some of her sermons in the drawing-rooms at the West End amazed even her own family by their plainness of speech. In the distribution of forces she seems to have furnished the enthusiasm and the romance needed to inspire the Army which the General carefully organized. She lived to see her husband, who had practically been put

¹ *Life of Catherine Booth: the Mother of the Salvation Army.* By F. de L. Booth-Tucker. 2 Vols. F. H. Revell Company, New York.

out of the denomination in which he was trained, the head of the largest religious movement in modern Protestantism. She lived to see all her children actively at work in the cause which was so dear to her heart. The story of her last sickness has peculiar pathos. Two years before her death she was told that her days were numbered, and those were sacred years in that family and wherever her influence reached. The house in which she lived was regarded by the Salvation soldiers as their Holy of Holies, and the words she spoke were treasured by the poor among whom she labored as if uttered by an angel. In almost, if not quite, the last conversation with her family she uttered words which were the keynote of her character—she bade them all to “Be true, *true*, TRUE.”

Her children have taken up the work which she laid down. Mrs. Booth-Clibborn, La Maréchale of France, combines the intensity of the mother with the organizing ability of the father. Mrs. Booth-Tucker in India has shown the same heroic traits which her mother manifested in England. Mr. Bramwell Booth, who, next to the General, is the head of the Army in England, has proved himself not only a man of consecration, but of large constructive ability. Mr. Ballington Booth is Commander of the Army in the United States, and Mr. Herbert Booth of the Army in Canada.

Another interesting feature in the history of this wonderful family is that not only have the children followed in the footsteps of the parents, but those whom they have married have come into the same fellowship of consecrated service. Mrs. Bramwell Booth is one of the leaders in Christian work in England; Mr. Booth-Tucker is Commander of the Army in India; while all Americans know that even the “Mother of the Army” herself, in eloquence, spiritual power, and wise and consecrated effort, hardly surpassed the beautiful wife of Ballington Booth.

At the beginning of this notice we felt constrained to criticise the length and prolixity of this biography; we lay it down with the feeling undiminished. And yet it is a marvelous story of heroism, of lofty consecration, of impassioned earnestness and eloquence.



Christ in Modern Theology¹

The student of theology who believes that thinkers live in the nineteenth century has learned to take up anything from the pen of Principal Fairbairn with eager expectation. Nor will he find that expectation disappointed in this volume. It consists of two main parts; we quote his own description:

Our discussion will fall into two main parts—one historical and critical, and one positive and constructive. The historical and critical will deal with two questions: first, the causes that have so often made theology, in the very process of interpreting Christ, move away from him; and, secondly, the causes that have contributed to the modern return to him. The positive and constructive will also be concerned with two questions: first, the interpretation of Christ given in the Christian sources; and, secondly, the theological significance of Christ as thus interpreted.

Our main criticism of the work is that Dr. Fairbairn has spent so much time on the historical and critical portions of his book as to leave himself too little space for the presentation of his own positive views. Something more than half of the volume is taken up with historical criticism of past interpreters—valuable, certainly, yet covering ground which many others have covered before him. And of the second half of his book a considerable proportion is taken up in what may be called exegesis of the New Testament, leaving only a little more than a quarter of the volume for the interpretation of his own views. As a necessary consequence, this portion of his book is rather a synopsis of an argument than an argument. It is, at least, so compact that we are by no means always sure that we correctly arrive at his meaning. We often wish to ask him for an explanation; we often wish that he had elaborated his thought a little more fully, and with more ample illus-

trations. On the other hand, the very compactness of his thought makes it most suggestive. He continually puts into our minds clues which he does not follow out himself. His book is one of seed-thoughts which, as sown in a fruitful mind, ought to spring up in forms other than that which they would take on in the author's own mind. His exegetical chapters make us wish that he would write a commentary on the New Testament. His distinction between sin and transgression (p. 312) is finely put; his illustrations of Paul's antithetical habit (pp. 313, 314) are full of suggestion. In theology he is clear and courageous, and, without being polemical, is spiritually aggressive; witness, for instance, this sentence respecting the duty of constructing a new theology: “The most provisional attempt at performing the possible is more dutiful than the selfish and idle acquiescence that would simply leave the old theology and the new criticism standing side by side unrelated and unreconciled.” Witness, too, his denial that Judaism was really monotheism, and his affirmation that only through Christ and within Christendom has monotheism come to be incorporated in a real and idealized religion; witness, too, his very distinct denial of a current conception respecting the object of Christ's death: “His death was not the vindication but the condemnation of the law, and this is the characteristic attitude of the New Testament writers;” or his definition of Law, so much larger than that customarily given in conventional theology: “It was primarily instruction, a method of discipline through the truth and ordinances given of God, received and revealed by prophets and priests, written in the sacred books, explained, transmitted, and enlarged in the schools, read in the synagogue, observed in the Temple, incorporated in the religion.” If this definition be true—and we do not see how any careful student of Paul's writings can doubt it—then one of the distinct objects of Paul was to teach the direct reverse of that which the Presbyterian General Assembly has recently affirmed; for Paul taught that the Law, that is, the Bible, was not essential to salvation.

We admire this courage and clearness of our author even when we dissent radically from his view, as we do from his interpretation of the divinity of Christ, if we understand him aright. This, however, is one of the passages which we wish he had more fully elaborated:

We may say, then, the miraculous Person is the Person in His office, at His work, standing in His peculiar relations to God. Apart from these, living the personal life, He is the normal man; within these He is the Christ of God. It is here, if such an image may be allowed, as in our English Commonwealth. There can be no sovereign without the person, but the person is not the sovereign. Office and person are so mutually necessary that neither can be without the other. But the person within the office is not as the person without it. Without it, she is but a mortal woman, with all the characteristics of her kind; but within it, she becomes the sovereign, who can do no wrong, the source of law and justice, filling and, as it were, possessing the high court of Parliament, clothed upon with the authorities and the prerogatives proper to the head of a great state.

This is an admirable specimen of clear and lucid statement, though we do not think that its definition of the divineness of Christ satisfies either the intellectual or the spiritual wants of mankind. It is the person of our God that we want to know, and it is only as the very person of God himself is somehow transmitted into the personality of Christ and our acquaintance with Christ becomes an acquaintance with God, that Christ satisfies the deepest needs of humanity.

If the object of a book on theology is to give the reader a completed system which is “safe,” this volume will not compare with some others of a more conventional type; but if the object of a book of theology is to stir the heart and the mind with strong, clear thinking on divine things, no book certainly of the present season surpasses in merit Dr. Fairbairn's “Place of Christ in Modern Theology.”



Modern Meteorology. By Frank Waldo. (Contemporary Science Series. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York.) In six chapters Mr. Waldo here aims to present, in a concise and read-

¹ *The Place of Christ in Modern Theology.* By A. M. Fairbairn, M.A., D.D. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York.