

ELIZABETH SWIFT BRENGLE

BY
BRIGADIER EILEEN DOUGLAS

WITH PREFACE BY
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FOREWORD

BY MRS. BRAMWELL BOOTH

THIS little book is a welcome addition to similar volumes—the life-stories of Salvationists. Differing from one another very widely, as they do by birth, by circumstances, by race—some like Mrs. Brengle, delicate and refined; others like Commissioner James Dowdle*, the Railway Guard, and John Allen, the Navvy, strong men, able for the roughest work—they yet are linked by a wonderful unity of spirit.

As I recall the impressions which have been made upon my own mind and heart when reading these books, I feel that we may say they resemble a bouquet of flowers gathered from a cultivated and well-kept garden. As with every flower, so the inspiration from each of these lives brings forth some particular aspect of beauty and grace. It is impossible to take any one from

* See page iii of announcements at end of volume.

among the rest and say of it 'This is the best.' As a garden lover has said, 'The best thing in a garden is not any particular flower, but the fragrance and beauty of all that are there'; so the best thing about these volumes is the fragrance of each life as it manifests some particular aspect of the work of God in the heart and experience of His children.

We are justified in using the simile of a garden, for has not God said that we are trees of His planting—that each soul may be like a 'well-watered garden'—that He comes looking for fruit.

In lives that the Sun of Righteousness has influenced — just as in flowers — there are varying beauties according to the different degrees of the Holy Spirit's work in various types of character. God is the Great Cultivator. The varying colours of the flowers, we are told, are due to the different way in which they absorb and reflect the sun's rays. But it is from the sun and the sun alone they derive their beauty.

Mrs. Brengle's life reminds us of the humble sweetness and yet dignity of the violet. Her life, especially its later part,

was more sheltered and retired than that of many Salvation Army Officers. This volume is as full of beautiful surprises as a violet bed in early spring.

Here are two instances of this grace. Early in the volume we read :—

‘ I have learned to trust Him entirely for results, and to leave results with Him. It is not necessary that I should see . . . but it is so necessary I should not shirk, that I should be sure I have done my utmost and left no stone unturned.’

And then, nearer the end :—

‘ My home with you [her husband] could not seem any more definite, personal, and delightful than my home with God.’

Yes, this is the record of a sanctified life. Such lives shine for Jesus in this dark world as the white flowers shine forth when we look into the garden at night. The others we scarcely see. The red roses are hidden, the purple violas, the crimson sweet-williams seem to have vanished because there is something lacking in the reflection of light they give. But the white flowers throw back every ray, and so stand out from the darkness. All through the ages holy lives

have shone forth in the same manner, bearing witness to the true Light—the light that is in them as well as the light upon them.

May this volume prove another call to all who read it to let the power of Christ appear in their life, so clothing them with the white garments of Full Salvation that they may make manifest all—not merely one here and another there—all the graces of His character, and be able to say with Mrs. Brengle :—

‘ He Himself is my realized hope, “ Christ in you, the hope of glory.” ’

FLORENCE E. BOOTH.

LONDON,

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CONTENTS

CHAP	PAGE
I. A CHILD'S SOUL AND ITS PROBLEMS . . .	I
II. AWAKENINGS	7
III. A TOUR IN EUROPE	14
IV. A RESOLUTION	21
V. A NEW PATH	28
VI. ARGUMENTS FOR AND AGAINST	33
VII. THE SERVICE SPIRIT	40
VIII. CONFLICTING ARGUMENTS	49
IX. A SUMMER'S WORK	58
X. AN ANSWERED PRAYER	64
XI. A SEPARATION AND SOME LETTERS	74
XII. A TIME TO REJOICE	81
XIII. DAUGHTER, WIFE, AND MOTHER	88
XIV. AS SHE HAD OPPORTUNITY	97
XV. THE LOOSENING OF THE SILVER CORD	107
A FEW EXTRACTS FROM MRS. BRENGLE'S WRITINGS	115

CHAPTER I

A CHILD'S SOUL AND ITS PROBLEMS

'The object lesson of a holy life alone will not be enough to bring a child to God without "diligent teaching."'—E. S. BRENGLE.

ELIZABETH SWIFT, or Lily, as she was more generally called, was brought up among the most ideal surroundings. The old-fashioned, comfortable, colonial farm-house, with its rolling meadow lands and magnificent view of distant mountains, was as lovely a home as a child could have. There was the river for bathing and fishing, the woods with their perennial treasures of flower and fern, and all the hundred odd things that children delight in. The farm-yards, with their horses and cows, and calves and chickens, and pigs and turkeys—all of this was enjoyed to the full by little Lily Swift and her brothers and sisters, not to mention an assortment of cousins that lived near by. An indulgent father, with the means of providing his children with the best of everything, and one of the most loving and affectionate of mothers, rounded out the child's existence.

By nature Lily was a healthy, happy, normal

child. Even the death of four much-loved little brothers and sisters was a sorrow from which her sunny nature rose undarkened. She would have been absolutely and entirely happy but for one thing. At an unusually early age she conceived a strong fear of going to Hell. She had been brought up in a strait, Calvinistic, orthodox fashion, and had absorbed the Westminster Catechism as soon as she could read, which was when she was about five years old. Her infant meditations on the subject were necessarily infrequent, for at seven or eight years of age life is very 'full of a number of things,' and one is very busy and active; but though infrequent, her meditations were none the less real. She decided that the doctrine of election was a very comfortable one—provided that you knew you were among the elect. But how was one to know? That was the great question.

Many a time she sat curled up, looking at a book in which she was apparently lost, but in reality listening eagerly to some theological discussion carried on by her father and some of his friends. However, intelligent though she was for her years, this was beyond her. Besides, a deep-rooted conviction was slowly forming itself in her small mind that one's eternal fate lay in one's own hands. Once she tried to get some light from her special friend and chum.

'Come 'long, let's eat cherries,' she suggested seductively one warm afternoon. So into the garden the two went, and up, up, up into the

great cherry-tree, as agile as a pair of monkeys. For a brief period they attended strictly to business, then Lily began :—

'Kit, are you elect?'

Kitty stared. Lily repeated her question.

'Why, 'course I am,' she replied.

'How do you know?'

Kitty crammed a handful of cherries into her mouth, and then mumbled something to the effect :
' 'Cause er gotter witness er Spirit.'

' 'Cause *what* ?'

Kitty finished her mouthful, and answered somewhat more coherently, and glibly as a small parrot : 'Got the witness of the Spirit,' and reached for another handful.

The 'witness of the Spirit.' Yes, to be sure it was in the Catechism ; but what was it ? She tried Kit again with a wonder as to her own election.

'Course, you're one of the 'lected,' that young person affirmed ; 'so's our mammas and papas and all our folks. What's the matter with you, anyway, Lil Swift?'

Just then a shout from below sent them scrambling down, and the doctrine of election was for the time forgotten in a mad romp. But it was constantly recurring, and she often wished there was something she could 'do' to avert the awful possibility of 'going to Hell.'

One Sunday she was taken to hear an evangelist who was preaching in a neighbouring church, and at the close of his sermon he asked all who desired to go to Heaven to stand up, and the

Christians there would pray for them. With many a fear, and with much inward trembling because of the jokes at her expense she would have to hear next day from the children present, little Lily rose. She had not an idea of repentance or of faith in God, but she did want to go to Heaven, and God accepted from the child the little she had to offer. Had her spiritual nature been as carefully nurtured as her little body, it would have been as healthy and whole; but the only solution to that burning desire to 'do something,' which is the invariable accompaniment of the new birth, was 'join the Church'; so that step followed the first.

After this there seemed to be nothing further; but the quick-witted child noticed that her Aunt Eliza, a member of the family, read her Bible with unfailing regularity and prayed a long time both night and morning. Aunt Eliza was adored by her nephews and nieces, and a more humbly consistent Christian it would have been hard to find. Lily's newly-opened spiritual vision soon connected her aunt's sweet temper and self-sacrificing life with her prayer and devotion, and she immediately adopted the same course herself. The praying was easy, for she had many childish sins of which to repent, and for which to seek forgiveness—a forgiveness that she was sure could come only by 'much asking.' But the Bible-reading was different. First of all, she read the whole book through, and then chose the Epistles for daily study. The discouragement that was the

result of this perusal would have daunted many an older and more experienced spirit. How, she wondered, could any one 'put away' all 'bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour'? Plainly, those who hate and quarrel, who are envious and self-seeking, 'shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.' Then, too, the Bible states that 'he that committeth sin is of the Devil.' Though this was all very puzzling, still Lily had no idea of giving up; she struggled bravely, if blindly, onward.

At college, some years later, she made another attempt to get more light on her spiritual problems. A certain energetic young Episcopalian, a born propagandist, asked her one day, 'Are you a Church member?' 'Why, yes,' replied Lily, somewhat astonished.

'I mean an Episcopalian. *We* don't count any other Church.'

Lily owned up to the fact that she did not belong to that section of the elect, and inquired meekly if it made any difference.

'Of course,' was the lofty reply. 'If you don't belong to our Church you're not a member at all. But you're very young. I'm twenty-two, and I don't mind explaining. Come on into the library.'

So for the next half-hour sixteen sat at the feet of twenty-two, and heard the mysteries of Apostolic Succession explained—and also the difference between regular and irregular baptism.

The hope that springs eternal grasped at these meagre straws. 'Does it make you good?' Lily asked eagerly.

'What do you mean?' her instructor demanded sharply.

'Does it make you keep your temper and do all the hard things the Bible says you must?'

'Nonsense, no one does that!' was the answer. And the conference broke up never to be resumed.

Sixteen, with the world, a world with goodly treasures to offer, tugging hard for ownership, was it any wonder that Lily decided she was too young to be a real Christian, and would wait until she was older?

CHAPTER II

AWAKENINGS

'The fear of death is an indestructible safeguard which God has set in our natures to protect the soul.'—E. S. B.

LITTLE Lily Swift was by no means naturally a spiritual child. Had it not been for the fear of Hell, she would probably never have given religion a thought. She was brimful of health and vitality, and all she asked of life was 'a good time.'

Neither was she a model child. Perhaps her most strongly-marked characteristic in these early days was her plain common sense. Not a few of her father's legal and judicial qualities had been handed down to her. She was also as self-willed a little maid as had ever been born. She was of the type that, with less intelligence, would set its face doggedly against authority and hang on for its own way in spite of repeated punishments and deprivations. But Lily was too sensible to act thus. She loved pleasure; and while her will might be unsubdued, she would yield her own way for a greater gain.

She was very fond of riding on horse-back, and one day her father overheard her give a rude

answer to the man who cared for her horse. He told her that she owed the man an apology, and that until this was forthcoming her horse was not to be saddled for her again. Boiling over with rage she assured herself that that day would never come. Nothing more was said. As far as the ordinary affectionate relationship between father and daughter was concerned the episode might never have occurred.

Time passed. Her young friends sought her for riding parties. Her mother urged her to go. 'Are you sick, Lily?' she asked anxiously.

'No, Mamma,' Lily would cheerfully answer. 'I don't act sick, do I? I guess I won't go to-day.' She was too truthful to say she did not want to do so.

One glorious morning she watched a party of her friends after calling for her in vain go trotting merrily down the road. She knew just where they were going, through the mountain and valley views that she never tired of. She pictured the happy time to which her bright wit and merry jokes contributed so much, and then remarked to herself, 'You—are—a—big—fool!'

Next morning she announced that she was going riding. There was no need for her father to ask whether the apology had been given. He knew his little daughter to be as honest and straightforward as the day. However, with her playmates she invariably had her own way, for, as her cousin remarked, 'None of us children could talk her down.' She was an adept in the art of persuading

them that her way and her plans brought the most fun. It took her about six years of her little life to learn that domineering and 'won't-play-if-you-don't' children were thoroughly disliked, and at an unusually early age she developed a great desire not only to be a leader but to be liked.

But the loving and lovable disposition—her inheritance from her mother—was always prominent. Once she was much concerned about a favourite cousin's toothache. Helen was suffering acutely, and the only remedy seemed to be extraction, from which the child shrank. Lily added all her powers of persuasion to those of the family's, but to no purpose.

'Look here, Helen,' she said at last, 'if you'll come and have that tooth out, I'll go with you and have one out too, and I'll have mine out *first*, and then you'll see it's not so bad.'

So the two trotted off together to the village dentist, and Lily hopped into the chair, opened her mouth and had a tooth wrenched out without even a shudder. Emboldened by this example of courage in one younger than herself, Helen followed suit and got immediate relief. Lily must have been very young at this time, for it was one of her first teeth.

'All the way home,' her cousin says, 'I kept asking myself, "Could I ever do that for another?"' But that was characteristic of her whole life.'

Her school teacher says of her: 'Lily was always a very pleasant scholar, willing to do everything required of her in her studies. She was

quick to comprehend, and committed easily to memory. She and my sister Kitty were always fast friends, and had much in common. They invented a secret language called "schooics," and wrote to each other in it. They were both specially good at spelling, and I had to resort daily to the dictionary to find words hard enough to puzzle them.'

Lily's love of study was further encouraged by the free access she had to her father's excellent library, and also by the fact that her father was a man who thoroughly enjoyed answering a child's numerous questions, and grudged no time spent in explaining any knotty point.

From her very earliest years she was a devotee of beauty. Beauty of scenery, of colouring, of form and feature, all appealed to her keenly. She wasted no time in mourning over her own lack of beauty, however, though the contrast between her and her sisters was apparent. They were blonde and plump and golden-haired, and little 'Pussy,' especially, was the sort of child that created a sensation and drew forth exclamations of admiration wherever she went. Lily was small and slight and brown. Her hair was dark and straight and cropped round by her ears. Her eyes very near-sighted. But no jealousy or envy ever found a place in her heart, her nature was too large and generous for that. She whole-heartedly admired Pussy's and May's loveliness, and wondered sometimes whether, if she wore the same clothes as her pretty cousin Helen, she would be pretty too.