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Dear Aunt. Colonel Kelly.

You wrote to me recently when I requested information regarding the possibility of me leaving a small gift to The Salvation in my Will. You asked the question 'do you have specific reasons for supporting The Salvation Army?' and this has made me ask the same question of myself.

Compassion is a large part of my beliefs, and this is what The Salvation Army has always shown.

As a historian, I know about the wonderful work The Salvation Army did in both world wars to care for soldiers who were serving in desperately hard conditions. Recently I read what one infantry officer serving in France wrote in his diary in 1916, and I would like to quote part of it to you. He wrote: 'The Salvation Army has given many a wounded man the drink that has provided him with sufficient strength to reach the main dressing station alive. Officers and privates, all religions and no religion, friend and foe will find a helpful welcome from that splendid organisation.' What a wonderful testimony this is to the dedication, values and courage of The Salvation Army over many years.

However it was a personal experience – and quite a recent one – that confirmed my intention to remember The Salvation Army in my Will.

Last Christmas I listened to The Salvation Army band play in the town centre as my family rushed about buying last-minute presents. As the band played, your team of collectors held their tins out and said 'God bless you' to people who dropped in their coins. Then one of them, a Salvation Army officer, noticed an alleyway beside one of the shops. A homeless man who had been sleeping in the alley was trying unsteadily to get to his feet. The officer immediately went to his aid.

The first thing that struck me was that as he reached out to help him, the officer called the homeless man 'sir' – something I suspect he wouldn't have been called for a very long time. He steadied the man and then produced a flask from his bag and gave the man a hot drink from his own cup. I questioned whether I would have had the moral strength to do the same. It was a true act of kindness and a connection with a human being in desperate need of support.

The compassion of The Salvation Army is needed now as much as it ever was. I wish you well for the future and if a small gift in my Will can assist you in your valuable work, then I am delighted.

It is now my turn to say 'God bless you'. The world would be a far poorer place without you.

Yours sincerely

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