INTRODUCTORY

WHAT IS THE SALVATION ARMY?

If this question were put to the ordinary person of fashion or leisure, how would it be answered?

In many cases thus: 'The Salvation Army is a body of people dressed up in a semi-military uniform, or those of them who are women, in unbecoming poke bonnets, who go about the streets making a noise in the name of God and frightening horses with brass bands. It is under the rule of an arbitrary old gentleman named Booth, who calls himself a General, and whose principal trade assets consist in a handsome and unusual face, and an inexhaustible flow of language, which he generally delivers from a white motor-car wherever he finds that he can attract the most attention. He is a clever actor in his way, who has got a great number of people under his thumb, and I am told that he has made a large fortune out of the business, like the late prophet Dowie, and others of the same sort. The newspapers are always exposing him; but he knows which side his bread is buttered and does not care. When he is gone no doubt his family will divide up the cash, and we shall hear no more of the Salvation Army!'

Such are still the honest beliefs of thousands of our instructed fellow-countrymen, and of hundreds of thousands of others of less

degree belonging to the classes which are generally typified under the synonym of 'the man in the street,' by which most people understand one who knows little, and of that little nothing accurately, but who decides the fate of political elections.

Let us suppose, however, that the questioner should succeed in interesting an intelligent and fair-minded individual holder of these views sufficiently to induce him to make inquiry into the facts concerning this Salvation Army. What would he then discover?

He would discover that about five and forty years ago some impulse, wherever it may have come from, moved a Dissenting minister, gifted with a mind of power and originality, and a body of great strength and endurance, gifted, also, with an able wife who shared his views, to try, if not to cure, at least to ameliorate the lot of the fallen or distressed millions that are one of the natural products of high civilization, by ministering to their creature wants and regenerating their spirits upon the plain and simple lines laid down in the New Testament. He would find, also, that this humble effort, at first quite unaided, has been so successful that the results seem to partake of the nature of the miraculous.

Thus he would learn that the religious Organization founded by this man and his wife is now established and, in most instances, firmly rooted in 56 Countries and Colonies, where it preaches the Gospel in 33 separate languages: that it has over 16,000 Officers wholly

employed in its service, and publishes 74 periodicals in 20 tongues, with a total circulation of nearly 1,000,000 copies per issue: that it accommodates over 28,000 poor people nightly in its Institutions, maintaining 229 Food Dépôts and Shelters for men, women, and children, and 157 Labour Factories where destitute or characterless people are employed: that it has 17 Homes for ex-criminals, 37 Homes for children, 116 Industrial Homes for the rescue of women, 16 Land Colonies, 149 Slum Stations for the visitation and assistance of the poor, 60 Labour Bureaux for helping the unemployed, and 521 Day Schools for children: that, in addition to all these, it has Criminal and General Investigation Departments, Inebriate Homes for men and women, Inquiry Offices for tracing lost and missing people, Maternity Hospitals, 37 Homes for training Officers, Prison-visitation Staffs, and so on almost ad infinitum.

He would find, also, that it collects and dispenses an enormous revenue, mostly from among the poorer classes, and that its system is run with remarkable business ability: that General Booth, often supposed to be so opulent, lives upon a pittance which most country clergymen would refuse, taking nothing, and never having taken anything, from the funds of the Army. And lastly, not to weary the reader, that whatever may be thought of its methods and of the noise made by the 23,000 or so of voluntary bandsmen who belong to it, it is undoubtedly for good or evil one of the world forces of our age.

Before going further, it may, perhaps, be well that I should explain

how it is that I come to write these pages. First, I ought to state that my personal acquaintance with the Salvation Army dates back a good many years, from the time, indeed, when I was writing 'Rural England,' in connexion with which work I had a long and interesting interview with General Booth that is already published. Subsequently I was appointed by the British Government as a Commissioner to investigate and report upon the Land Colonies of the Salvation Army in the United States, in the course of which inquiry I came into contact with many of its Officers, and learned much of its system and methods, especially with reference to emigration. Also I have had other opportunities of keeping in touch with the Army and its developments.

In the spring of 1910 I was asked, on behalf of General Booth, whether I would undertake to write for publication an account of the Social Work of the Army in this country. After some hesitation, for the lack of time was a formidable obstacle to a very busy man, I assented to this request, the plan agreed upon being that I should visit the various Institutions, or a number of them, etc., and record what I actually saw, neither more nor less, together with my resulting impressions. This I have done, and it only remains for me to assure the reader that the record is true, and, to the best of his belief and ability, set down without fear, favour, or prejudice, by one not unaccustomed to such tasks.

Almost at the commencement of my labours I sought an interview with General Booth, thinking, as I told him and his Officers (the Salvation

Army is not mealy-mouthed about such matters) that at his age it would be well to set down his views in black and white. On the whole, I found him well and vigorous. He complained, however, of the difficulty he was experiencing, owing to the complete loss of sight in one eye, occasioned by an accident during a motor journey, and the possible deprivation of the sight of the other through cataract.

Of the attacks that have been and are continually made upon the Salvation Army, some of them extremely bitter, General Booth would say little. He pointed out that he had not been in the habit of defending himself and his Organization in public, and was quite content that the work should speak for itself. Their affairs and finances had been investigated by eminent men, who 'could not find a sixpence out of place'; and for the rest, a balance-sheet was published annually. This balance-sheet for the year ending September 30, 1909, I reprint in an appendix.[1]

With regard to the Social Work of the Army, which in its beginning was a purely religious body, General Booth said that they had been driven into it because of their sympathy with suffering. They found it impossible to look upon people undergoing starvation or weighed down by sorrows and miseries that came upon them through poverty, without stretching out a hand to help them on to their feet again. In the same way they could not study wrongdoers and criminals and learn their secret histories, which show how closely a great proportion of human sin is connected with wretched surroundings, without trying to help

and reform them to the best of their abilities. Thus it was that their Social operations began, increased, and multiplied. They contemplated not only the regeneration of the individual, but also of his circumstances, and were continually finding out new methods by which this might be done.

The Army looked forward to the development of its Social Work on the lines of self-help, self-management and self-support. Whenever a new development came under consideration, the question arose--How is it to be financed? The work they had in hand at present took all their funds. One of their great underlying principles was that of the necessity of self-support, without which no business or undertaking could stand for long. The individual must co-operate in his own moral and physical redemption. At the same time this system of theirs was, in practice, one of the difficulties with which they had to contend, since it caused the benevolent to believe that the Army did not need financial assistance. His own view was that they ought to receive support in their work from the Government, as they actually did in some other countries. Especially did he desire to receive State aid in dealing with ascertained criminals, such as was extended to them in certain parts of the world.

Thus only a few weeks before, in Holland, the Parliament had asked the Salvation Army to co-operate in the care of discharged prisoners and gave a grant of money for their support. In Java the tale was the same. There they were preparing estates as homes for lepers, and soon

a large portion of the leper population of that land would be in their charge.

General Booth told me the story of a celebrated Danish doctor, an optician, who became attracted to the Army, and, giving up his practice and position, entered its service with his wife. They said they wished to lead a life of real sacrifice and self-denial, and so, after going through a training like any other Cadets, were sent out to take charge of the medical work in Java. A recent report stated that this Officer had attended 16,000 patients in nine months, and performed 516 operations.

In Australia, the Government had handed over the work amongst the Reformatory boys to the Army. In New Zealand, the Government had requested it to take over inebriates, and was now paying a contribution to that work of 10s. per head a week. There the Army had purchased two islands to accommodate these inebriates, one on which the men followed the pursuits of agriculture, fishing, and so forth, and the other for the women. In Canada there was an idea that a large prison should be erected, of which the Salvation Army would take charge. He hoped that in course of time they would be allowed greatly to extend their work in the English prisons.

General Booth pointed out to me with reference to their Social Work, that it was necessary to spend large sums of money in finding employment for men whom they had rescued. Here, one of their greatest

difficulties was the vehement opposition of members of the Labour Party in different countries.

This party said, for example, that the Army ought to pay the Trade Union rate of wage to any poor fellow whom they had picked up and set to such labour as paper-sorting or carpentry. Thus in Western Australia they had an estate of 20,000 acres lying idle. When he was there a while ago, he asked the Officer in charge why he did not cultivate this land and make it productive. The man replied he had no labour; whereon the General said that he could send him plenty from England.

'Yes,' commented the Officer, 'but the moment they begin to work here, however inefficient or broken down they may be, we shall have to pay them 7s. a day!'

This regulation, of course, makes it impossible to cultivate that estate except at a heavy loss.

He himself had been denounced as the 'prince of sweaters,' because he took in derelict carpenters at their Institution in Hanbury Street (which I shall describe later), to whom he did not pay the Trade Union wage, although that Institution had from the first been worked at a loss. In this case he had made peace with the Parliamentary Committee by promising not to make anything there which was used outside the Army establishments. But still the attacks went on.

Passing from this subject, I asked General Booth if he had formed any forecast of the future of the Salvation Army after his own death. He replied that there were certain factors in the present position of the Army which seemed to him to indicate its future growth and continuity. Speaking impersonally, he said that the present General had become an important man not by his own choice or through the workings of ambition, but by the will of Providence. He had acquired a certain standing, a great hold over his community, and an influence which helped to concentrate and keep together forces that had grown to be worldwide in their character. It was natural, therefore, that people should wonder what would happen when he ceased to be.

His answer to these queries was that legal arrangements had been made to provide for this obvious contingency. Under the provisions of the constitution of the Army he had selected his successor, although he had never told anybody the name of that successor, which he felt sure, when announced, was one that would command the fullest confidence and respect. The first duty of the General of the Army on taking up his office was to choose a man to succeed him, reserving to himself the power to change that man for another, should he see good reason for such a course. In short, his choice is secret, and being unhampered by any law of heredity or other considerations except those that appeal to his own reason and judgment, not final. He nominates whom he will.

I asked him what would happen if this nominated General misconducted

himself in any way, or proved unsuitable, or lost his reason. He replied that in such circumstances arrangements had been made under which the heads of the Army could elect another General, and that what they decided would be law. The organization of the Army was such that any Department of it remained independent of the ability of one individual. If a man proved incompetent, or did not succeed, his office was changed; the square man was never left in the round hole. Each Department had laws for its direction and guidance, and those in authority were responsible for the execution of those laws. If for any reason whatsoever, one commander fell out of the line of action, another was always waiting to take his place. In short, he had no fear that the removal of his own person and name would affect the Organization. It was true, he remarked, that leaders cannot be manufactured to order, and also that the Army had made, and would continue to make, mistakes up and down the world. But those mistakes showed them how to avoid similar errors, and how and where to improve.

As regarded a change of headship, a fresh individuality always has charms, and a new force would always strike out in some new direction. The man needed was one who would do something. General Booth did not fear but that he would be always forthcoming, and said that for his part he was quite happy as to the future, in which he anticipated an enlargement of their work. The Organization existed, and with it the arrangements for filling every niche. The discipline of to-day would continue to-morrow, and that spirit would always be ready to burst into flame when it was needed.

In his view it was inextinguishable.