

## THE INTERNATIONAL INVESTIGATION DEPARTMENT

This is a curious and interesting branch of the work of the Salvation Army. About two thousand times a year it receives letters or personal applications, asking it to find some missing relative or friend of the writer or applicant. In reply, a form is posted or given, which must be filled up with the necessary particulars. Then, if it be a London case, the Officer in charge sends out a skilled man to work up clues. If, on the other hand, it be a country case, the Officer in charge of the Corps nearest to where it has occurred, is instructed to initiate the inquiry. Also, advertisements are inserted in the Army papers, known as 'The War Cry' and 'The Social Gazette,' both in Great Britain and other countries, if the lost person is supposed to be on the Continent or in some distant part of the world.

The result is that a large percentage of the individuals sought for are discovered, alive or dead, for in such work the Salvation Army has advantages denied to any other body, scarcely excepting the Police. Its representatives are everywhere, and to whatever land they may belong or whatever tongue they may speak, all of them obey an order sent out from Headquarters wholeheartedly and uninfluenced by the question of regard. The usual fee charged for this work is 10s. 6d.; but when this cannot be paid, a large number of cases are undertaken free. The Army goes to as much trouble in these unpaid cases as in any others, only then it is not able to flood the country with printed bills. Of course, where well-to-do people are concerned,

it expects that its out-of-pocket costs will be met.

The cases with which it has to deal are of all kinds. Often those who have disappeared are found to have done so purposely, perhaps leaving behind them manufactured evidence, such as coats or letters on a river-bank, suggesting that they have committed suicide. Generally, these people are involved in some fraud or other trouble. Again, husbands desert their wives, or wives their husbands, and vanish, in which instances they are probably living with somebody else under another name. Or children are kidnapped, or girls are lured away, or individuals emigrate to far lands and neglect to write. Or, perhaps, they simply sink out of all knowledge, and vanish effectually enough into a paupers grave.

But the oddest cases of all are those of a complete loss of memory, a thing that is by no means so infrequent as is generally supposed. The experience of the Army is that the majority of these cases happen among those who lead a studious life. The victim goes out in his usual health and suddenly forgets everything. His mind becomes a total blank. Yet certain instincts remain, such as that of earning a living.

Thus, to take a single recent example, the son of a large bookseller in a country town left the house one day, saying that he would not be away for long, and disappeared. At the invitation of his father, the Army took up the case, and ultimately found that the man had been working in its Spa Road Elevator under another name. Afterwards he

went away, became destitute, and sold matches in the streets.

Ultimately he was found in a Church Army Home. He recovered his memory, and subsequently lost it again to the extent that he could recall nothing which happened to him during the period of its first lapse. All that time vanished into total darkness.

This business of the hunting out of the missing through the agency of the Salvation Army is one which increases every day. It is not unusual for the Army to discover individuals who have been missing for thirty years and upwards.