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A SKETCH OF SALVATION ARMY HISTORY
By William Henry Withrow

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THE SALVATION ARMY

This active and energetic body has many analogies with the Methodism from which it
sprang. Like Methodism, it did not contemplate an existence as a separate church. It was not the
result of doctrinal difference, but of intense evangelistic zeal. The Rev. William Booth, its
founder, was a minister of the Wesleyan Church. With his noble wife, Mrs. Catharine Booth, he
labored with great acceptance, especially in evangelistic tours. As a local preacher he had been
wonderfully successful in out-of-door preaching, in the highways and hedges, reaching the hearts
of the people after the manner of the early Methodists.

The restraint of the Wesleyan organization proved irksome to the zealous evangelist, and he
sought a larger liberty in the New Connection Church. His special gifts as an evangelist were
recognized. He was permitted a sort of ranging commission through the midland counties. The
results were extraordinary. In seven weeks one thousand seven hundred people professed
conversion. In Yorkshire three thousand in nine months were added to the Church. The conference
unwisely wished him to abandon his roving commission and to devote himself to the regular

ministry. "I am called of God to this work," he boldly proclaimed, and although he had no prospects before him, nor even any security that he would be able to earn bread for his wife and his four little ones, he resigned the ministry and faced the world anew.

Mr. Booth opened his independent work in Cornwall, where in a short time four thousand persons professed conversion. He found that he had a special call to labor for the lapsed and fallen classes. His method is thus described in Mr. W. T. Stead's graphic sketch of his life:

"He set to work to get together a company of converted reprobates from all the midlands. At last he got together as motley a crew of reclaimed blackguards as ever mustered on a convict ship, or at a jail delivery of provincial assizes. Poachers, drunkards, wife-beaters, prize-fighters, and jail-birds of every degree of infamy, he eagerly enlisted in the service of the revival. Then he advertised them on every hoarding as the Hallelujah Band, and boldly advanced once more to the attack.

"This novel strategy had an immediate success. The chapel was crowded every night, and convicted sinners cried aloud for mercy at the penitent form. The Hallelujah Band became one of the greatest sensations of the midlands. The converted prizefighters attracted men who would not have stirred from their ale-houses to hear the whole bench of bishops, for an ex-jail-bird is more attractive to these sinners whom Jesus came to call to repentance than Mr. Spurgeon."

The centripetal attraction of the metropolis brought the evangelist to London in 1864. He began his work in Whitechapel, and after preaching out of doors, amid the rival attractions of the shows and shooting-ranges, led a procession to the tent. The work fascinated him. The wind blew the tent down, but, said the sturdy missionary, "we fell back on our cathedral, the open air." He began meetings in a stable, a warehouse and a theater.

That which fixed the special character of the army was its title. "At first," continues Mr. Stead, "there was nothing, or next to nothing, to distinguish it from the numberless evangelistic movements which from time to time make more or less impress on the indifferentism of the classes which are whitewashed with Christianity, and the heathenism of the masses who are more or less frankly pagan. The decisive change which stamped the character of the movement occurred in 1878. That which fixed the direction of the army's development was the choice of its title. This was hit upon almost by chance. Mr. Railton writes:

"We were drawing up a brief description of the mission and, in wishing to express what it was in one phrase, I wrote: 'The Christian Mission is a volunteer army of converted working people.' 'No,' said Mr. Booth, 'we are not volunteers, for we feel we must do what we do, and we are always on duty.'

"He crossed out the word and wrote 'Salvation.' The phrase immediately struck us all, and we very soon found it would be far more effective than the old name.

"From the moment that the army received its title its destiny was fixed. The whole organization was dominated and transformed by the name. To that it owes both its strength and its weakness. As an army it will raise recruits, train soldiers, and overrun many countries, and

achieve great victories. But it will always be an army in the midst of a civilian population. What the General does is not to collect permanent congregations, so much as to stir up the whole community and to attract by the magnet of his spiritual enthusiasm the few souls which have it in them to respond to his appeal for soldiers to go forth to proclaim the glad tidings of great joy unto all nations."

In his devoted wife General Booth found his other self, the very complement that he needed. She was a woman of sincerest piety, of intense human sympathy, of magnetic eloquence. She swayed the hearts of the people alike in the army barracks at Whitechapel and in drawing assemblies in Belgravia. She inspired, consoled and enbraved her heroic husband, and during her too short life was the "Mother of the Salvation Army," and lives in its enthusiastic affection as the Saint Catharine of England.

One conspicuous merit of the army and one marked cause of its success is its employment of gifted and consecrated women. The songs and prayers and exhortations of the Hallelujah Lass have carried the gospel to many a heart that would have been impervious to the most logical argument, and obdurate to the most fervent appeal. The army, with its martial methods, its military uniforms and titles, its drums and brass bands, its stirring music, its direct appeals to the conscience, its assault upon the very bulwarks of Satan's kingdom, made a prodigious sensation in the metropolis and the great cities of the United Kingdom. Its very persecutions -- and it received no small share of them -- developed the heroic character of its agents and won the sympathies of all who love English fair play.

"Short of the stake," continues their ardent admirer, Mr. W. T. Stead, "the Salvationists have endured almost every species of persecution. They have been fined and imprisoned in almost every country they have ever visited. They have been kicked, knocked down, stoned, covered with filth and generally treated as the off-scouring of all things. And the net result of it all is that now, as of old, the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.

"Much as the Salvation Army has been helped by its friends, it would have been at a comparative standstill but for its enemies. They have enabled it to pose as the champion of liberty of speech and liberty of procession; they have furnished it with a noble company of officers whose university has been the jail, and who have been tempered in the furnace of tribulation before they have been called to the ministry of love for the salvation of the lost. And let it never be forgotten that all these attacks from the outside have been of incalculable service to the organization. They nipped in the bud the tendency to disintegration; they stimulated loyalty, and they bound soldiers and officers together with a bond of affection which made the most iron discipline seem light. The greatest danger which menaces them today is the possibility of their becoming so respectable that they will no longer be exposed to the biting blasts of ridicule and denunciation, which, like Kingsley's 'Nor'-Easter,' has made them the men they are."

The Army has gone into all English-speaking lands, and into many foreign countries. This was not at first of set design, but through an overruling providence of God. "Why did the Salvation Army go to Australia? Because a quondam drunken milkman, who had been saved at Stepney, emigrated to Adelaide, and sent over an urgent summons for help to start the holy war in Australia. In like manner it was a convert from Coventry who, having settled in Philadelphia, brought over

the Salvation Army to the United States. But, when a door is opened, General Booth dare not refuse to go through it to proclaim the glad tidings of a gospel of happiness and love."

Mr. Stead's sympathetic character-study of General Booth is very well, so far as it goes. But it does not go far enough. It points out some of the elements of his success, but it does not sufficiently emphasize the supreme element -- the mighty power of God. Again has been gloriously fulfilled the Scripture, "and I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." The uplifted Christ has been the great attraction that has drawn the vilest and the worst to the foot of the cross, has renewed fallen natures, changed degraded lives, and given to outcasts the adoption of sons, the zeal of the martyrs, the marvelous ministry of a new apostleship.

General Booth is one of the ablest organizers the world has ever seen. He inspires enthusiastic devotion and is admirably sustained by able lieutenants. The most conspicuous of these are the members of his own family. His sons and daughters, consecrated to God from their birth, have also become energetic leaders in the Salvation Army, as have the wives of his sons and husbands of his daughters.

The largest and most successful branch of the army is that in the United States. It has erected great halls and numerous out-stations. It has a vigorous administrative center and many hundreds of active agents. Scarce a town or hamlet in the United States or Canada is unfamiliar with the striking uniform, the stirring music, and the fervent appeals of the Salvation Army. This organization exhibits consummate wisdom in the copious use which it makes of printer's ink. The War Cry, published in London, New York, Toronto, Melbourne and in many foreign lands, reaches millions of readers, is saturated with the vital principles of the army and is an active propaganda of its religious teachings.

Another feature of special importance of adaptation to the times is its social schemes. The bitter cry of London awoke a responsive chord in the heart of General Booth. The outcome of it was that remarkable book, *Darkest England and the Way Out*. His plan for the redemption of "the submerged tenth," and for its moral and industrial training for new citizenship in the Army workshops and on the Army farms won wide sympathy and cooperation. While it has not achieved all that was hoped, it has, nevertheless, accomplished much in the reformation of thousands and their restoration to lives of industry and morality.

Its social work in the United States, Canada, Australia, in the Teutonic, Scandinavian and in some of the Latin countries of Europe is an inspiring chapter in the history of Christian evangelization and social reform. There have not been wanting those who have predicted a rapid disintegration of the Army and revolt from the autocratic and military rule of the General. But his rule has been one of love as well as of authority, and, with a single exception, has been one of hearty concord and good-will. That exception has been in the case of the American branch of the Army. Mr. Bramwell Booth, the General's oldest son, seems to have thought that the conditions of the United States of America warranted more flexibility in administration, more recognition of national institutions and spirit than the administration in the old world. Hence, a separation has taken place, with the utmost professions of love and goodwill, from the Salvation Army.. A vigorous campaign is conducted under the name, the American Volunteers. The methods are almost identical with those of the Army. They embrace evangelization, social reform, especially the

visitation of prisoners and of the waifs and estrays of society. The Volunteers command largely the sympathy and financial aid of many who have no other connection with the Army.

The Army may be said to have lived down adverse criticism. Most of those, including some in the churches, who were at first opposed to its extravagant and noisy methods, have been won by its persistent zeal in well-doing. The chief criticism to which it has been subject is that in this time of Christian integration it seems to establish a new church, that, in some places, especially in the rural districts and sparsely settled parts of the country, it introduces a divisive force.

But in reply to this it may be said that most of the work of the Army is in the great congested centers. Here its work does not overlap that of the churches. It finds its special sphere among the lowly and the lost, whom it seeks to raise to the dignity of men and the fellowship of saints. The policy of the Army, it is understood, is to call in its outposts and concentrate in the larger centers of population.

The success of the Salvation Army organization has led to the adoption of similar methods in the Church Army and kindred organizations. These, under denominational control and restraint, may be free from some of the irregularities of the salvationists, but for the most part they also have been without their marvelous power and success.

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