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VIII. FRANCE AND SWITZERLAND.

WHEN the day came for sending officers abroad, it was natural and fitting that the call should first be heard in the General's house. It was no wonder that his own child should be the first given up for the ransom of a foreign people. It was equally natural that our nearest neighbors across the Channel should, first of all receive such attention. And in March, 1881, the General's eldest daughter, Catherine Booth, with Miss Soper, now Mrs. Bramwell Booth, and two others, landed in France to seek the salvation of that country.

Nothing short of the accompanying ground plan could give any proper idea of the building that had been taken for their use; and it will be seen at a glance not only how difficult it must have been to obtain an audience in such a place but how all but impossible to get rid of them in a peaceable way, when once they were gathered together, if they became disorderly. Only the extreme difficulty of obtaining any building at all at a rent that the poor Salvation Army, or its still poorer offspring (L'Armee du Salut) could hope to pay, could explain the hiring of such a hall.

What a battle-field that Rue d'Angouleme was! First the battle to get people there without being allowed to hold any-thing like an open-air meeting, or even to exhibit about the neighborhood such appeals to the eyes as The Army delights, with such telling effect, to use. The sisters used to write an announcement of their meetings, or half print it, on the largest sheets of paper in their possession, which two of them would then stand near the gate holding up between them. But by dint of hard visiting, and conversations with men in the streets, a crowd was got. And it was a crowd!

"Why," said a somewhat alarmed sergeant of police, one evening, 'you got half the cut-throats of Paris here;' and, undoubtedly, for thorough badness of character, want of self-respect, and of the most ordinary regard for women, and general hardness of heart, the men, who almost exclusively compared that congregation, were all that even The Salvation Army could wish for anywhere.



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But then came the struggle of speaking to them, of singing, and getting them to sing, in a language that was foreign to the officers. They had studied French very carefully, and become considerably proficient in it, in English opinion; but when it came to speaking it before a turbulent assembly of Parisian rowdies, anyone can easily imagine that the French that was spoken was often more amusing than edifying to those who listened to it.

When Miss Booth and her little company went to Paris their address was Poste Restante. Dreaded, disliked and almost friendless, the little force began their campaign, and were soon in the heat of a glorious battle, some of the first scenes of which have been very graphically described by Commandant Herbert Booth, then 19 years of age, who was for some time the only man connected with the Expedition.

"Half-past eleven o'clock on Thursday morning I was sitting reading at Nottingham, when a telegram announced that I was to pack up, and come to London by the next train, from which place I was to proceed to Paris. Seven o'clock found me at Headquarters, and having received my orders, left by first train the next morning, and after a journey lasting ten hours, I reached the French capital.

"After some little difficulty the cab pulled up before what seemed to be a factory, but what proved to be the Salle du Salut (the Hall of Salvation). I had no difficulty in finding out that it was The Salvation Army, for, although I could not understand what was being said, I could plainly feel how it was said, and one of the great secrets of success with The Army is that we know how to say what we want the dying, perishing world to hear; and we have made up our minds that every Frenchman shall hear it.

"I entered the building, which is an oblong room capable of holding some 600 people. At one end there is a small platform, upon which sat Captain Catherine Booth and her Staff. I mounted and took a seat. The Hall was three parts filled with some of the most awful, degraded, and miserable-looking people I ever saw in my life. Women without bonnet or shawl, little children with dirty pinafores and unwashed faces, old men with uncombed hair and bony fingers, over the ends of which the nails protruded at least a quarter of an inch, whose skeleton forms reminded one more of demons Escaped from hell than of human beings; with young men and



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women with ashy pale countenances, all sitting with eyes fixed upon Miss Booth; wherever she moves their eyes follow her; she speaks, and every mouth, ear, and eye is open to catch what she says.

"Oh, what a sight! But still that was not all I was destined to see and hear that night, for I had not been seated long when a hymn was started, and some of these poor, wretched forms lifted their heads and sang, in the midst of their sin and sorrow—

"Viens a Jesus "

(Come to Jesus). Here and there I noticed a tear wend its way down those dirty faces, and as the singing went on; one young woman rose and came up from the back of the Hall, falling on her knees at the penitent-form; she then and there sought pardon for her past wasted life. Hallelujah! The singing goes on,

'Il pardonne,
Il pardonne
Maintenant.'

"'He'll forgive you just now.' And as we sang, these poor wretched souls looked at us as if they wondered whether it was really true that they could be ever forgiven. To my right I noticed three young men, whose faces clearly showed what an awful struggle was going on. At last they gave in, and with a firm step approached to fall at the form. Soon after I heard one of them pleading with the Lord in his own tongue, with hands clenched, and tears of repentance in his eyes.

"'Je te servirai coute que coute.' ('I will serve Thee, cost what it may.')

"On Monday night our meeting had been going on about half-an-hour when a band of young men entered the passage armed with a kettle-drum, two cornets, and sundry tin whistles, and another ardent youth, who by what we could make out, seemed to possess two saucepan lids. They entered a room at the top of the passage, and commenced playing. The effect of this music was merely to draw a few of those young men who do not know yet how to value the privilege of a Salvation Army meeting. The whole of the little street is at once alive. Dancing begins, and every-thing is in confusion. But we leave that giddy throng, and pass through the gates and into the Hall, where there are about 160 persons all sitting with rapt attention. There are six big



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women kneeling at the form, and here and there one can see an unhappy-looking face and a struggling tear, and yet they won't come! Night after night they sit and hear, and look and wonder, but still go away unsatisfied, and then come again, until one of these nights we are expecting God will sweep the lot into the fountain of His love, and they will be standing monuments of His tender mercy ever afterwards.

"Friday's meeting was the most wonderful and best attended since the opening. It had been announced that, it being Ascension Day, we should explain an Ascension into Heaven. This created much curiosity. 'I hear you are going up to-night,' said one man to Lieut. Cox, who had been visiting. 'I am coming to see how you do it;' and a good many others came to see how we did it, and found out that the way we got into Heaven was getting Heaven into our hearts, thus having a constant Heaven on the way to Heaven.

"It often happened that conflicts broke out in the meeting itself between that portion of the audience that from curiosity was anxious to hear all that was being said and sung, and another that would not endure the Word spoken, and which, with flashing eyes and gnashing teeth and clenched fists, would show every determination to put an end to the service. Some used to bring knives to the meetings, and when a cry was raised that we were Jesuits, there would be a general hubbub, during which many would stand up and open their knives.

"At such times" says the Commandant, "they used to begin to sing and go on till it was over."

"We had the unpleasant scene of a fight between two roughs in the prayer meeting to-night." said one of the reports of these days. "It was with difficulty that we succeeded in separating them, and in getting the worst of the two to the door, bleeding profusely. Scarcely had the people returned to their seats and the work recommenced, when they were thrown again into commotion by seeing the pugilist, who had remained, deliberately take out a large knife and commence to get it into stabbing order, preparatory to encountering his assailants and companions when leaving the Hall. We were thankful when he was eventually got safely off without further bloodshed."



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And the singing! It was notorious, even at a much later date, so much so that many people were induced to attend the meetings simply for the 'amusement of hearing English girls singing French.' The translation of the song-book had been carried out with very great care by French friends, no doubt well versed in their own language, but naturally ignorant of Salvation Army music; and our notes very frequently twisted the French accents so completely out of place as to make the singing really what they called it, "a true comedy."

And then our strange teaching! A few years ago it used to be commonly reported that there was, in France, quite a "hunger of the Word." It was said that so eager were the people to hear the plain gospel, that there could not possibly be any need for the peculiar work of The Salvation Army. Any number of persons could be assembled in any part of the country for Conference about true religion. The coming of The Salvation Army was, according to these reporters, not only needless but dangerous to the progress of the gospel, and accordingly no less than seventeen pastors and missionary workers in the city of Paris assembled to pray God to avert from the country this coming evil. Their prayers were not answered, and without wishing to utter a word of reflection on the work of others in France, I will only remark that we have found as little hunger there as anywhere else for the real, quickening Word of death and life, and less disposition, rather than more, to submit to a gospel which speaks of duties as well as blessings, of Holiness as well as Heaven, of a real supernatural spiritual life on earth as well as of a world to come.

The success won amidst all these difficulties in the Rue d'Angouleme was only too complete. Neighbors complained that the place was the resort of a crowd of the most terrible and disorderly characters; and the police, after one or two little attempts to preserve order, without any approach to a serious conflict with the people, such as the Parisian authorities always labor to avoid, ordered the room to be closed, and closed it remained for nearly three months.

Oh! how I should like, if it were possible, to tell the history of that three months' war! for I question whether, in all The Army's story, there have been three months equal to those for desperate fighting and complete victory. Imagine, if you can, the seventy-seven days or more, which came and went while the little company were kept hoping against hope for permission to re-open the hall, hoping to find another where they might be allowed to continue their work; or hoping to



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find some other road, along which to move forward to the attack on the country; those days in which the devil never ceased to assure them that it was all over with them, that whatever might be done elsewhere, there could be no hope of making a Salvation Army in France; those weary, weary days, that must have stretched themselves out as though they were weeks, in which, nevertheless, no soul of the little band wavered, in which nothing of confidence was lost, and God alone can say how much else was won!

It was during the closure of the first Hall that the new one on the Quai Valmy, which has ever since been the French Headquarters; was found; and once the services had been established here, it was not thought worth while to continue the use of the old place, of the closing of which a second time there was necessarily constant dread. Before leaving it, however, we ought to mention that no less than forty-five Soldiers of the first Corps were assembled in it at one time, almost all of them ready to testify to the glorious Salvation which they had received amidst its stormy scenes.

The new Hall was intensely interesting from the fact that it had been used in the days of the Commune as a battery, holes roughly made in the walls as embrasures for the guns having been filled up in a way that still leaves the trace of those awful days behind. This old foundry had, moreover, an iron door, which from the very first has proved most useful. Standing as it does by the side of a canal, with a gas illumination in front, which makes it clearly visible from the bridge and roadway that lead to the Buttes de Chaumont, this is indeed a battery, commanding some of the densest masses of Paris, and here, ever since October 16th, 1881, the war has been carried on with cease-less pertinacity and continued success. The very first night the great iron door was put to the test with stones, and inside there was also one of the disturbances that have been seen in the meetings all along. One of the habitual disturbers, a very furious fellow, came in, and began to say, "Citizens, this is all a maneuver of the Jesuits; our streets are going to run with blood again." The sympathetic part of the audience at once cried, "To the door!" and a number of them hustled him out. Two gendarmes had to come the same evening to maintain order outside.

Those who are acquainted with The Army will hardly need to be reminded that at this very door, only a few weeks ago, our beloved comrade, Jeanmonod, was struck, never to appear again at



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his post; and the scenes within as well as without the Hall during all these years continued much the same; the congregation changing and varying so much, that it would be difficult to guess how many thousand different people have, in this one Hall, been dealt with about their souls.

In November, 1882, however, the Maréchale, not content with the use of this one building hired one in another extremely poor neighborhood, Rue Oberkampff, where even more violent scenes took place than had been witnessed by The Army in Paris before. The resistance here to the truth was by pistol, dagger, and knife; and the officers were not only severely wounded on the spot in several cases, but were chased from the neighborhood often for miles, time after time, barely escaping under the care of the police, in trams and other public conveyances, so that no one could wonder or complain when in a short time the police order to close was forthcoming. The loss of rent, and other expenses consequent on such an order would, in itself, be no small matter to a poor Mission, even if the trial of being driven from the very people they most sought to bless were not too great to allow these minor consequences to be thought of. But that Oberkampff battery was not silenced before it had been the scene of one great Army event, for it was in this shop-barracks that the Rev. Mr. Charlesworth assisted his daughter on to a chair that she might speak, as he saw she was ready to do, in the midst of a scoffing, cursing group of men, and so fairly launched her into that life of turmoil and conflict for the King which we all trust may be prolonged and gloriously blessed for many years.

Shutting up The Salvation Army is not an operation that we should recommend to anyone who wishes to appear successful, even in this present life: for every time there is an attempt to shut the door in one direction there is sure to be a more violent outburst some other way; and no sooner was the closing of the Oberkampff Hall a certainty than all eyes turned towards Switzerland, invitations to which country had hitherto been put aside, it being thought impossible to attend to them while there was so much on hand in France.

In Geneva there was liberty. No difficulty was to be apprehended. We had already, we were told, many friends in that city, and there could be no doubt that not only there, but throughout Switzerland, we should receive a welcome, and find, comparatively speaking, an easy sphere of labor. Colonel Clibborn, a young Irish minister of the Society of Friends, who had joined The Army in France in 1882, went forward to prepare the way, and, in one or two private explanatory



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meetings he held, every sign of favor was present, and nothing that indicated any other but an easy victory for The Army. True, when it came to the ministry of a woman, there was some hesitation about the use of Halls; but, whatever this might have amounted to, prejudice gave way, and it was arranged that Miss Booth, accompanied by Colonel Clibborn and others, should be allowed the use of the Reformation Hall for one or two meetings.

For the first few days after her arrival in the city the prospect remained only too peaceful and quiet. She had come under the most respectable auspices, and the difficulty was to get anybody but the most respectable people to the meetings. Therefore a bill was submitted to the authorities, and, after their approval, was issued, announcing that at the next meeting The Army motto, "Blood and Fire," would be explained, and that Marechale Booth would "open the attack."

The object was achieved. The people who wanted no re-ligion came, and at once showed a disposition to disturb the proceedings. Surely it cannot be necessary to tell intelligent persons that Miss Booth did not wish for a disturbance; that she does not like to stand on a platform, unable to make herself heard, even by people close around her; that she prefers, after a long meeting, to be allowed to go home without being hooted at and pelted on the way; and that Colonel Clibborn, and the rest of her companions, although, by God's grace, able to bear rough usage, do not enjoy being kicked or hit, and would rather be excused, especially after a long day's work, if they can be permitted to go to their beds in peace. Yet it was a lady of Geneva, claiming the profoundest sagacity, who suggested to the public that it was the aim of our officers to get up a disturbance in order to serve their own purposes; and that lady, and others who have made similar statements, were certainly believed by many intelligent persons in Swiss Government and other circles!

Night after night the storm grew worse and worse; and although, thank God, in the midst of all the commotion scores of poor sinners sought and found mercy, yet the state of things became more serious from day to day, and the authorities, unwilling to show themselves in earnest against the disorderly mobs, rose up in their might and ordered the expulsion of the victims.



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It was on Sunday, the 11th, and Monday, the 12th Feb., 1883, that Maréchale Booth and Miss Charlesworth were expelled from Geneva – the Maréchale on the plea that she had broken the law as to collections, there being no such law in existence, the one indicated by a falsified title refer-ring only to collecting from house to house; and Miss Charlesworth for having disobeyed the proclamation of the Cantonal Council, which said, "The exercises of The Salvation Army are temporarily suspended" (Miss Charlesworth was at this time only seventeen years of age).

Captains Sitzer and Guillot and a Lieutenant were ex-pelled on similar pleas.

Driven from Geneva the little company set out, not for France, as every one had hoped, but for another Swiss canton, and were soon at work in the town of Neuchâtel. Here again it was evident that they were to have a serious conflict with every power combined. A pastor led the attack in a sermon in which he denounced The Army's excitement and so forth. It was evident that the authorities would not assist in preserving order at the meetings, for although they issued a proclamation calling upon the inhabitants to remain calm, it was with a clear intimation that they had much reason to be otherwise, and that it would be impossible for the authorities to maintain order unless the citizens were good enough to keep it. The citizens, assisted by others from neighboring villages, soon disturbed the meetings – so much so that it was ordered that the Hall should not 'be opened after sunset. The hour was gradually made earlier and earlier. But when at last the poor Salvationists contented themselves with meeting as early as five o'clock in the morning, they were still too late to obtain any respite from their persecutors. Sunday meetings were forbidden, and the Maréchale and her Officers assaulted whenever they were seen in the streets.

When public meetings were closed and the Officers and Soldiers met together in private houses for prayer, those houses were surrounded and attacked with fury. By-and-by a petition was got up against The Army, and a decree was published forbidding the meetings of The Army altogether, on the plea that it must be considered a religious corporation similar to the monastic orders.



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In spite of all the opposition and difficulties, a strong Corps of Soldiers had already been enlisted, and they now proceeded to hold meetings in their own houses, or on the hills and in forests, wherever they thought they might escape a little while from the vigilance of their enemies.

On the 9th of September, the Maréchale led a meeting at Prise Imer in the Jura Forest, five miles above Neuchâtel the prefect, chief of gendarmes, and fifteen gendarmes soon appeared on the scene, but respectfully listened to the whole of the meeting, after which Miss Booth and Major, then Capt., Becquet, were arrested, and taken before the President of the Council, who declared them to be his prisoners, but allowed them to go to a funeral at Geneva on the Monday, under £250 bail. The Maréchale and Miss Charlesworth were interrupted at the funeral and immediately after it were once more taken before the police and instantly expelled. For attending this funeral Col. Clibborn also was expelled from Geneva.

The following Sunday the Maréchale took part in another meeting in the parish of Rochefort, canton of Geneva.

Unwilling to remain longer at large under bail, the Maréchale had the bail withdrawn and went to prison, where she remained until the day of her trial, ten days later. Her imprisonment was voluntarily shared by Major Kate Patrick. Major Becquet followed her two days later, having been engaged in service elsewhere.

On Saturday, September 29th, the prisoners were taken to Bondy; When asked to plead the Maréchale said,

"It is true that we have prayed and spoken in the name of Jesus, notwithstanding the decree of the Conceil d'etat;" and Major Becquet said,

"I prayed to God after my fashion; the police forbade me; I continued to do so notwithstanding."

After two days' trial, the jury declared that, although the accused had taken part in a meeting contrary to the decree, they had not acted with any culpable intention, and they were therefore acquitted.



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The Directors of Police at once told the police to withdraw from the court, and the acquitted were left to the fury of the mob, who, but for the energetic intervention of lawyers and friends, would have run them "to the lake," as they cried. The next Sunday a meeting was held in Neuchâtel to demand the expulsion of the foreign Salvationists. The Government obeyed the crowd. But by this time we had hundreds of Swiss Soldiers; and since then not only has the work gone on as vigorously as ever, but no less than twenty-four Neuchâtelois have given up their whole lives to the war and become Officers!

Driven thus from both the cantons of Switzerland in which Corps had been established, the Maréchale and Colonel Clibborn returned to France to extend the war there, and to appear again in Switzerland from time to time as occasion required, to encourage the Soldiers to press on operations in that country. Perhaps the most memorable occasions of this kind were the grand review of Swiss troops in 1886, and the visit during March, 1886, of Colonel Clibborn with his brother to the town of Bienne, Canton Berne, where two years before our barracks had, been utterly wrecked, and the decree prohibiting meet-ings passed, and where, nevertheless, a valiant little Corps had been raised up. During this visit the Colonel and his brother were both seized and committed to prison in default of paying fines inflicted on them two years ago. Since this the Maréchale has held a great review of all the forces at Mutrux, where 1,500 persons were present.

The years that have passed since the invasion of Switzerland have been bright also with the extension of the war into seven departments of the South of France, so that we have now in France eighteen, and in Switzerland fifteen Corps under the leadership of 113 Officers and Cadets.

The stern limits of space, in view of the vast fields yet to be described, forbid any attempt properly to set forth the story of these advances, of the Maréchale's great meetings, season after season, in the Boulevard des Capucines Hall, or of the advance recently made into German Switzerland, where, in spite of every device of the enemy, four Corps have already been formed. We can only say that in Nimes, and in a number of the villages of several neighboring departments, thoroughly hearty and all but self-supporting, Corps have been formed out of which a number of French Officers have already been produced. The city of Lyons was also



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invaded at the end of 1885, and the French Army, with more than a hundred Officers raised in France and Switzerland, and with the attention of both countries fully gained, bids fair to become speedily a very great power.

The French "War Cry," entitled "En Avant," has played, perhaps, a far more important part in the war, proportionately, than the English "War Cry;" for although the numbers sold have of course been very small, as compared with our huge figures, yet this little paper has attained a much larger circulation than that possessed by any evangelical paper in France or Switzerland.

Sold on the boulevard, as well as in the back streets, and sent regularly through the post to almost every country in Europe, this little disturber, so often quoted with disgust by Christians, and with contempt by the secular press, has, we know, been the direct means, in God's hands, of the Salvation of many, and we know not to how great an extent it has helped to awaken or maintain life in many of the all-but-dead Protestants of the country, who look elsewhere in vain, in so many cases, for any helping hand.

Protestantism in France, maintained in existence with difficulty even as a form by the aid of Government grants, is scarcely able anywhere to maintain schools or any other voluntary agency of its own. Many Protestant temples are not only without pastors but are absolutely closed and unused, and in many cases pastors are as much opposed to anything like spiritual life or Scriptural teaching as the most violent opponents of Christianity could possibly wish; so that the work of The Army in France and in Protestant Switzerland, too, extends far beyond its own meetings. God is making us we trust a leaven that shall cause to spring again, in spite of all opposition and unbelief the faith which Protestants and Catholics alike had almost ceased to cherish.