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Chapter II

THE POOLS WE FISH IN

The wish of Moses, that not one or two only, but that all the Lord's people should prophesy, is probably receiving a larger fulfilment in The Salvation Army than in any previous time. At any rate, it would not be difficult to find amongst us many communities in which every member takes some share in public testimony for Christ, and bears some part of 'the burden of the Lord' in warning those around them to flee from the wrath to come. Many others there are, of course, where this work is only done by part of the total forces which should be available for it, but in a remarkable degree The Army in all its branches has been itself a kind of fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel - 'I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams, and on My servants and on My handmaidens I will pour out in those days My Spirit, and they shall prophesy. Especially has this been the case in places where we have been small in numbers, weak in material things, and where we have been despised and persecuted and opposed.

I

Beginnings

It is from amongst such witnessing communities or societies — known to us as Corps — of recognized Believers — or Soldiers, as we think it quite as scriptural to name them — that our Officers are called. All, or practically all, promotion is from the ranks. Less than ten in a thousand of our leaders have reached that position without having first served as followers. In the daily duty of the common Soldier, while yet he has no idea of becoming anything more, the future commander learns the great lessons of obedience and faith and love. There he learns what The Army is and does in its close contact with the people of his own class. There he learns to stand fire' as a witness for Christ in the stormy Open-Air Service. There he is taught how to push home the personal attack on the sinner, to keep the door when the great task is rather to keep his



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temper, to walk about in his uniform among people who have known him all his life, and by the most conspicuous methods possible to bear witness that he is a servant of Jesus Christ.

The man or woman who is detailed for that work must also find out how to go into the reeking public-houses selling 'The War Cry,' singing a song for Jesus amid the wickedness of the tap-room, and ready to pray whenever there is a chance. Every Soldier is also expected to do something of the collecting, the cleaning, the visiting, the Band playing, the caring for the children, the seeking after our lost sheep, and the score of other duties demanding attention. Tens of thousands of our Soldiers devote every moment of spare time snatched from their daily labour to the work of their Corps.

They delight that it should be so. Many of them owe to The Army everything they possess of happiness in this life, and all they can look forward to of peace in the life to come. In no unimportant sense it is their mother. It is their home. It is their friend. It is their recreation. It is the embodiment of all that ennobles and elevates their lives. Many even of those who fail to maintain the standard of Christian faith and service it has set before them still consider themselves as under its care, attending its Meetings, subscribing to its funds, and so far as they can forwarding its interests.

And in the conflicts of daily labour and personal testimony many victories are won which are never recorded except in Heaven. Here is an extract from the 'experience of a domestic servant', fully sustained by the witness of those concerned, which recently came into my hands. She had been converted some little time before the events referred to, but had not as yet ventured to believe it possible that she could be counted worthy for service in The Army, except as a Soldier of the Corps to which she belonged: —

'I do with all my heart thank God that He has always been by my side, and has helped me to keep true as a Soldier of His, and also of our much beloved Army. After my conversion, I was the means by my life of changing two of my fellow servants, and in my last situation all were gradually helped by the Light coming before their eyes. God did help me much then. We had quiet little



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Meetings of an evening, singing, reading, and praying together. It was very hard at first to get any one to join with me, but, God helping me, I succeeded.'

This upper housemaid, working to lead her fellow-servants to Christ, and finding it 'very hard at first to get any one to join with her,' makes a charming little picture of interior life in the ranks of The Salvation Army. The kitchen of a West-End house may be as truly a part of the mission field as a bit of Japan, if only you have the missionary there; and it is ever the missionary spirit that makes the true missionary.

'God opened my way,' continues this Soldier of Jesus, 'to visit my home in the country for a holiday. There I wore my uniform. I had a hard struggle there with the Devil. The first night I read and prayed with them, and explained to my best ability how I first found the Light and obtained that precious food for my soul. They thought it hard to give up. I tried and tried each day till late at night, thinking I should never see a change in their hearts. The Devil tried to make them sleepy. But I do thank God that with His help on the sixth day both my dear father and mother gave their hearts to Him with tears. I can never forget that visit home. It was on my Master's errand. Now I hear from home that the Prayer Meetings they have in the village are very helpful to the people.'

There is a Salvation Soldier on a holiday. It was on the sixth day that the victory came. It was on that day that this housemaid realized that her Heavenly Master's errand was fulfilled in her little excursion to the old home.

And now there is a Prayer Meeting in the little cottage where they used to be too sleepy to pray.

II The Call

It is, then, amongst men and women thus united by a common love for Christ and for each other, and so influenced by a common desire for the Salvation of the people around them, that we seek for those who are to become 'fishers of men' in a yet wider sense. It is by many means that we find them. Every Officer is urged constantly to be on the watch for them; our literature frequently



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contains appeals designed to influence them. Special Meetings are held occasionally, at which we gather young people likely to prove of good service if they were willing to devote their lives to the work, when the subject is dealt with by suitable teachers.

But it is not to any of these means, at any rate so far as we can tell, that we owe the large majority of the consecrated lives that are offered to us. It is rather to that direct and definite impulse, born, I believe, of the Spirit of God, which is usually described by those who recognize it as the call to the Work.' There is, I admit, sometimes an illusion. There is sometimes, perhaps, an element of selfish ambition. There is sometimes, possibly, a mere impression, passing away more quickly even than it came. But in the majority of cases that call is a very real, a very beautiful, a very powerful, occasionally a very terrible visitation, exercising an extraordinary influence over the lives of those who receive it, and often bringing about results, both immediate and remote, which altogether astonish those to whom they are known.

The call disposes at one stroke of difficulties which no human influences could remove. It comes with the imperative definiteness of a command, with the directness of an overwhelming conviction of duty. What before seemed absurd, unreasonable, unnatural, nay, impossible, becomes at once the only thing left to do. The young woman, for instance, who yesterday was just a happy, dutiful housemaid in your midst, is suddenly transformed by it — she feels, she says, that she must go. Perhaps you expostulate with her, you see difficulties — amongst them your own in finding another servant to take her place! — you inquire where she is going, to whom, and for what. She cannot tell you; she does not know; she does not seem very much to care. But about one thing you will find her quite settled: the Lord has called her to work for Him in The Army. That call, she sees well enough, involves going out from her kindred and her father's house, and the home and friendships of her whole life, and going whither she does not know, except that He will show her. All the rest, she will tell you, she leaves to Him and to the leaders He shall appoint for her.

And at the other end of the social scale the young man of good family, giving every promise of doing well (for himself), and of being a pride (and a profit) to his already sufficiently proud family, awakening to the need of the world, hears, as Paul heard, the voice of Jesus, and decides,



literally, to leave all for Christ's sake and the Gospel's. To every protest, to every appeal of selfish interest, he makes the reply that, being convinced — no matter by what means — of God's call to him, he can leave consequences with Him, and that by faith he can obey and go forth alone, neglected if not despised by every friend he has, into the place the Lord shall show him.

Such are ever the first acts of faith and obedience of the Salvation Soldier who offers his or her life for the work of a Salvation Army Officer. Here, in the willingness to really leave all for Christ's sake, is the first great test surrender of that life. Is not that surrender exactly the secret of the blessed consequences that so often come after? When the Lord has said to His servants of today, as He said to His servant of old, 'Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee,' does He not still add the old, but ever new, promises, 'And I will establish My covenant between Me and thee, and I will bless thee, and thou shalt be a blessing'?