

RIDER HAGGARD AND THE SALVATION ARMY

No history of the thirteenth century pretends to be complete unless it deals with the wonderful religious revival associated with the rise of the Franciscans; and no history of the nineteenth century, and probably no history of the twentieth century, will be complete that does not deal with the work of the Salvation Army.

For many years the general attitude of cultivated people towards this work was one either of contemptuous indifference or of jeering derision. At last it has won its way to recognition, and there are few serious thinkers nowadays who do not recognize in the Salvation Army an invaluable social asset, a force for good which works effectively in those dark regions where, save for this force, only evil is powerful.

At the beginning, the Salvation Army was a purely religious body; but those at its head were driven into social work because of their sympathy with suffering. They had not planned out their work from the outset; they took it up, piece by piece, just as their hearts responded to appeal after appeal made by the suffering people with whom they were endeavoring to get into touch.

They prayed with and preached to men and women weighed down by the sorrows and misery of dire poverty, and then they found that they simply could not leave these men and women without stretching out a helping hand to them. They were brought in contact with wrong-doers and criminals, they learned their secret history, they found how great a proportion of human sin is connected with wretched surroundings; and then they felt ill at ease until they tried to help and reform those who had been even more sinned against than sinning. Thus by degrees their social work increased and took on a multitude of different forms, and their constant endeavor was, not only to regenerate the individual, but also in practical ways, by experiment and trial, to find out how best to do away with the circumstances responsible for the individual's fall. They steadily developed their work along the lines of self-help, self-management, self-support, for one of their great underlying principles is that the individual must co-operate in order to bring about his own moral and physical redemption.

Mr. Harold Begbie, in his very remarkable book "Twice-Born Men," has given a history of really noteworthy individual cases in which work of this kind has resulted in what can literally be called the "rebirth" of the men for whom it was undertaken; and Mr. Rider Haggard, in his book called "Regeneration," which he has dedicated to the men of the Salvation Army in token of his admiration of their self-sacrificing work for the poor and wretched throughout the world, has written an absorbingly interesting account of the social work of the Army in Great Britain. Mr. Rider Haggard is probably most widely known as a novelist, but, as a matter of fact, there are few men now writing English whose books on vital sociological questions are of such value as his, and hardly one among this small number who has grasped as he has grasped the dangers that beset the future of the English-speaking people, and the way these dangers can best be met. Mr. Haggard, for example, is one of the men most thoroughly alive to the dangers that threaten not only England and the older portions of the United States, but the newer portions of the United

States and Canada and Australia, from the drift of country people toward the city, and the unhealthy development of city at the expense of country life; and naturally he has felt a peculiarly keen sympathy with the Salvation Army's efforts to aid in bringing the people back to the land.

The Salvation Army has done social work in England in many different lines, and it has met the well-nigh infinitely varied needs of those among whom it has worked with an equally varied resourcefulness and a singular combination of zeal and sanity. Men, women, and children are all alike cared for. The Maternity Receiving Homes are among those which meet especially desperate needs in a spirit that is really Christian, that is really following the teachings of the Founder of Christianity. Yet, great though the good is that is done by these homes, great the achievement they represent in the rescue of poor creatures not really vicious, but far more often the victims of vice, all this is equaled by the work done in many other ways. One very interesting feature brought out by Mr. Haggard incidentally is that, in a sense which is more literal than figurative, the work of regeneration often means such a complete change in a man's nature as is equivalent to the casting out of devils. Few people who read his book can fail to be almost as much impressed as Mr. Haggard acknowledges himself to have been by what he witnessed of this kind. Mr. Haggard's accounts of the land and industrial colonies, small-holding settlements, and similar works give an almost startling inside view of the extraordinary combination of lofty disinterestedness, intense zeal and understanding, and first-rate business ability, which have enabled General Booth and those associated with him to accomplish so much in directing what otherwise would be the waste forces of benevolence to national ends.

I wish it were in my power to convey to others the vivid impression which this book on the Salvation Army has made on me; and perhaps I may be allowed to add that my own limited experience with the Salvation Army has in every respect borne out what Mr. Haggard writes of it.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT.