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A BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE FIRST SEVENTY YEARS OF SALVATION ARMY HISTORY IN NEW PLYMOUTH.

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By Major C.H. Morley.

THE FIRST SEVENTY YEARS IN NEW PLYMOUTH.

Although Salvation Army work was not commenced in Taranaki until the official opening of the New Plymouth Corps on March 1, 1884, the general public had not been left in ignorance of its activities, as both the local newspapers, the Taranaki Herald and the Daily News had carried frequent references to the movement in England, and, following upon the commencement of the work in Dunedin on April 1, 1883, there had been many press association messages about developments - some favourable, and others of a different kind.

The "Herald" of April 2, 1883, stated "The Salvation Army opened a campaign in Dunedin in the Temperance Hall. There was a small attendance. They wear neat uniforms, but appear very uneducated." A few days later, the "News," referring to the opening campaign, said, "The captain accompanied the singing on a concertina. They are said to be uneducated, and without money - the latter they hope to raise by their own exertions." (News, 7-4-1883;p.10;c.2.)

It is a matter for conjecture just how far the then editor of the News had his tongue in his cheek when he chided the N.Z. Churchman, published in Dunedin, for publishing an extract from "Punch" on the Salvation Army, particularly in view of later editorial comment.

However, in the News of March 31, 1883, (p.3;c.4) the "Churchman" was taken to task thuswise:- "The N.Z. Churchman, published in Dunedin, has had the questionable taste to

insert with approval a quotation from "Punch" on the Salvation Army. Considering that the remarks of the comic paper are pure burlesque, and that such was not the source from which to draw material whereby to judge a movement of which many just and good men in the Anglican and other Christian communions thoroughly approve, the action of the "Churchman" can scarcely be said to savour of that charity which a religious organ might be expected to display. The quotation made from "our witty contemporary" and which looks very queerly in a Christian magazine, is as follows:- "The Salvation Army was sure not to exist long without an imitation, and we are therefore not surprised to hear of a Salvation Navy under the direction of a person calling himself Admiral Tug. Admiral Tug has learnt the trick from General Booth of treating the most sacred things with almost blasphemous familiarity, and he has summoned his supporters with the following imitation of the Arethusa sea song:- "On Board the 'Allelujah,"

"Come all you sinners, young and old,
 With hearts once cast in heaven's mold,
 And join our Ker-istian Navy bold,
 On board the 'Allelujah.
 We're bound to floor the forts of sin,
 And the devil himself will soon cave in,
 Then join the side that is sure to win,
 On board the 'Allelujah."

As the movement spread to other centres, the local papers carried reports of riots and the formation of skeleton armies. Then, from an English newspaper, the "News" of May 5, 1883, (p.11;c.4.) quoted the following:- "A large number of respectable but short-sighted people who lent their favour and gave their money to the mischievous burlesque of a religious movement called the Salvation Army have now come to their senses. The Earl of Shaftesbury has denounced the whole business in terms of the strongest reprobation. The clergy are painfully aware now of the havoc their service has wrought among the humbler members of their congregations. The minds which are captivated to religion by noise and the language of carnage, by the symbols murder and incendiarism, are ill-balanced, and the after-effect is as painful as the getting sober to a man or woman who has been drunk for a lengthened period. There is hope that the worst is over. The funds are falling, and even an offer of 5% here below and salvation up above has not brought in the sinews of war to the General's satisfaction."

Reports of a different kind came soon after from Auckland and Dunedin. The "News" of May 19, 1883, (p.10;c.3.) reported that "the Salvation Army is actually reforming the larrikins of Auckland. The leader of the skeleton army and some of his men have joined the Salvation Army. And the pubs are emptying." The same paper, on June 23, declared, "It is noted that the Dunedin police cells have had fewer occupants lately than for some months past, and the Salvation Army is credited as the cause."

action is taken by the Salvation Army in the direction indicated. The Maoris are quite prone to become fanatical over any religious revival of their own, without having imported into their kiangas the uniforms, and drums, and brazen instruments of these blatant Salvationists. We are very glad, that, so far, we have escaped the infliction that these burlesquing 'capt-ains' have put upon other towns of the colony. We hope we do not want the Salvation Army here, and we are quite sure that to allow them to get among the Maoris would be sheer madness."

Two months went by, and that writer's fears were realised. The "Herald" of February 29, 1884, (p.3) carried the following advertisement:- "Salvation Army. Salvation meetings, To-morrow, Saturday the 1st., at 7.30 p.m., led by Staff-Captain Wright, assisted by Captain Bowerman, Cadet Newbold, and others, in the building known as Courtenay's Auction Room." Page two had this paragraph, "The Salvationists have taken Courtenay's Room for the purpose of holding their religious services in, and to-morrow evening the Rev. Mr. Wright, assisted by the Rev. Mr. Bowerman, will address those who may assemble to hear their views."

The War Cry of March 15, 1884, gives the information that prior to the indoor meeting, Captain Wright and Cadet Newbold held an open-air meeting in Devon Street, inviting the people to the indoor meeting which followed. The report states, "The room was crowded to excess." It further adds that good

meetings were held on the Sunday, and subsequent weeknights, and by the end of the second Sunday some twenty-four converts had been registered. Later Warx Cry reports indicate that many more converts were recorded in those early weeks.

The Borough Council were soon discussing the activities, for at the Council meeting on the Monday night, March 3, the problem of crowds in the streets was on the agenda. The report from the "Herald" (Mar.4;p.2;c.4.) reads, "Salvationists. A discussion took place as to whether crowds of persons should be allowed to congregatex at the corners of the streets, but the matter was allowed to drop." But not for long. At the meeting on May 5, 1884, (Herald 6 May,p.2;c.4.) Cr. Humphries moved:- "That the Council give instructions to the police to take steps to abate the nuisance caused by the people crowding round the door of the room where the Salvation Army meet, and to make all loiterers move on." At the next meeting, in June, a letter was received from the Inspector of Police, Mr. Pardy, stating that the Council's instructions relat-ive to the obstruction caused by loiterers on the foot-path in the vicinity of the Salvation Army Hall were being carried outk.

Mischievous persons sometimes tried to break up the meetings, and one man was prosecuted for kthrowing a "stink bomb." The actual cha-rges was of "having committed a certain offence..and to the annoyance of Her Majesty's subjects, that is to say, did expose a certain substance in the Salvation Army Hall, whereby an offensive and nauseous smell was caused, and damage done to the clothing of persons there assembled for worship." The case was

adjo-urned, and close search of subsequent papers did not disclose the ultimate outcome. (Herald 5-6-1884;p.2;c.3.).

Just a few weeks before this happening, another man had been fined £1-0-0 (costs £2-9-0) for assaulting the doorkeeper at the Hall. (Herald 17-5-1884. p.2;c.6.).

One incident which led to the appearance in Court of four youths occurred on the night of July 31 and the early morning of August 1, 1884. The youths were charged "with having, at Fitzroy, behaved in a public thoroughfare with intent to provoke a breach of the peace." The story, as told in court, was that a party of Salvationists had gone from New Plymouth to Waitara to commence meetings there, and the youths, well supplied with ancient eggs, had planned to greet the returning Salvationists with a fusillade of these ancient eggs. During the long wait, the youths had some disagreement among themselves used up the eggs on each other, and then waited to pelt the Salvationists with mud. The person who laid the information, a Mr. Phillips, did not press for a heavy penalty, but said he had brought the ^{case} charges in order that the Salvationists might be protected from such insults. The young men, now very sorry for their misbehaviour, were each fined four shillings and costs. (Herald, 19-8-1884. p.2;c.3.).

The early problems of obstruction in the streets came to the fore soon after Captain Robinson took charge of the Corps. He was prosecuted for causing an obstruction in Devon Street. It appears that the Flag and cornopean used by the Salvationists caused a horse to take fright, and a serious accident was

narrowly averted. The Captain was fined £1-0-0. He asked what the alternative would be, saying he had no money with which to pay the fine. (Herald 22-12-1884, p.2;c.5-6.) From some reminiscences published in connection with the Jubilee in 1934, it appears that the fine was paid by some Irishmen employed on the harbour works at Moturoa. In that report, too, it is incorrectly stated that the fine was £5-0-0 - memory over fifty years is not apparently always reliable. (Corps History Book.)

The growing work made it necessary to find more suitable accommodation, as Courtenay's Room was now too small. This building stood on the present site of the Men's Department of Whites Ltd. (1954.) The Herald of December 15, 1884, gave the news that "the Salvation Army are looking for a site of land, with the intention of building a barracks of their own in New Plymouth." (p.2.) A move must have been made soon after that announcement, for when Courtenay's Room, with all the other buildings in that block, was destroyed by fire on May 18, 1885, the Army Hall was opened to receive stock salvaged from the threatened buildings. (Herald 19-8-1885.)

This Hall was most likely the building known as the Iron Store, located on the north-eastern corner of Devon and Currie Streets, where the Australia and New Zealand Bank now stands. This building was used for some years, until in September, 1890, a building known as the Freemasons Hall, Upper Brougham Street, was purchased from the National Bank at an undisclosed price, the sale being effected by Mr. Corkhill. (Herald, 8-9-1890, p.2;c.4.) House No. 75 now stands on that site, just opposite

the entrance to St. Mary's Church grounds.

Eight years passed by, and then another move was made to renovated premises on the corner of Brougham and Powderham Streets, where the present Citadel is now situated. The old building was demolished in 1926, and the present one was officially opened by Commissioner James Hay, O.B.E., on June 4, 1927, Captain E. Thorne being the Corps Officer at that time. Territorial Headquarters advanced a substantial sum towards the cost of this building, and the final repayment - from the Buick Estate - was made exactly twenty-seven years later during the Seventieth Anniversary Celebrations, when Major Morley handed over a cheque for £203-0-0 to Lieut.-Commissioner Duncan, the Chief Secretary.

Bands early became a distinctive - if not always appreciated - feature of Salvation Army activity, and their development through the years has been remarkable. The formation of the first Band in New Plymouth, is, if one may use a well-worn phrase, 'shrouded in mystery.' A War Cry report of April 6, 1889, makes mention of a Band, but it was made up of only two players, whose instruments were a concertina and a harp! But evidently a band was formed sometime in 1889, for a report of the New Year's Day meetings at Inglewood, 1890, in a War Cry early in 1890, says the New Plymouth Brass Band took part in the series of meetings.

That a Band was definitely functioning in 1893 is proven by the following item culled from the "News" of October 10 of that year. (p.14;c.2.) I quote, "The town was enlivened on Thurs-

day evening by much music. The Town Band performed in front of the Alexandra Hall, and the Salvation Army Band relieved itself of martial strains in the centre of the town....When you get two strong, able-bodied bands bucking in for all ~~the~~ ^{they're worth,} ~~the~~ you feel as though you want to take the earliest train for the country. A "Lover of Music" has sent us a letter, but as it is not over-complimentary to one of the Bands, we won't take any risks. However, we might say our correspondent suggested that the worst band of the two might have gone to the beach or the cemetery while the other was performing. We leave it to the Bands to guess which was meant." But if the Band of 1893 was not altogether appreciated, foundations were being laid for the acceptable broadcast standard which listeners of 1954 appreciate.

The same issue of the "News" (21-10-1983, p.9;c.3.) carried a report of Court proceedings against some young men who had caused a disturbance during a meeting at Tataramaika, and who had allegedly assaulted Captain Kemp. The date of the offence was October 4, and one defendant was fined £1-0-0 (costs £1-1-0) and the mother was fined £5-0-0 (costs 11/-.)

During the early years quite a number of travelling groups toured the country in the interests of the work, the aim being to high-light some special feature of the work, and raise funds for the same. Sometimes it would be a Maori Band, or a group of vocalists, sometimes a group of children or even a couple of versatile musicians with a variety of instruments, or a party of Salvationists from India. All of these groups helped to

stimulate interest and also helped to dispel erroneous ideas as to the nature of the work being done.

Early opposition was gradually disappearing as the Army's aims became more clearly understood, as indicated by some editorial comment. "We are once again favoured with a copy of the report on the Salvation Army Social work. This very interesting production gives an encouraging story of rescue and reform....The Salvation Army has long ago demonstrated its ability to deal successfully with this class of work. We commend the report and the work to our readers." (News, 24-6-1901, p.2;c.6.)

No account of Army work in Taranaki would be complete without reference to the late Envoy Stephen Buick, O.F., who came to the province soon after the work commenced, and whose activities for almost seventy years made his name a household one. The first reference so far found to him is in the Sunday Services column of the "News" of September 23, 1893, where Mr. S. Buick was advertised to conduct services at Okato and Warea.

His service was recognised by the award of the Order of the Founder in 1926. This is the Army's highest award for service within the ranks. Many prominent citizens gathered when the award was presented to the Envoy, who was the first in New Zealand to be so honoured. The Envoy was then almost seventy years of age, but continued to defy Father Time until May, 1953, when he made a reluctant bow to old age.

He celebrated his 96th. birthday in Ward 3 of the Public Ho-spital. Present on that occasion were the Mayor, Mr. E.R.C. &

Gilmour, Mr. Aderman, M.P., Mr. P.B. Stainton, Chairman of the Hospital Board, and the Officers and Census Board Local Officers and Junior Singing Company of the New Plymouth Corps. On the following day, July 7, 1953, he was signally honoured in being the first New Zealand citizen to receive the Coronation medal.

His long journey ended peacefully on December 1, 1953, and the large number of people who came to pay their last respects, together with the eloquent tributes of representative speakers, left no doubt as to the place he had won in the hearts of the people, and of the influence he had exerted for so long.

His was a well-known name, but through the long years there have been many others, whose names were never widely known, who have toiled faithfully year in and year out, each and all making an effective contribution to the steady building up of the organisation which today has its established place in the life of the community.

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(Grateful acknowledgement is hereby made to the Taranaki Herald and the Daily News for permission to search their files.) C.H.M.