

Revival Among British Soldiers

Remarkable Scenes Among the Troops in Training on Salisbury Plain. Ten Thousand Soldiers Join Pocket Testament League. Morals of Soldiers Improved.

BY GEORGE T. B. DAVIS.

A REMARKABLE SCENE.

A REMARKABLE Bible revival is in progress among the British soldiers quartered on Salisbury Plain and elsewhere in England. Already more than 10,000 of the troops on Salisbury Plain alone have joined the Pocket Testament League, and have agreed to carry a Testament with them and to read a chapter daily, and over 3,000 have declared their acceptance of Christ and enlisted under the banner of the King of kings.

The movement began some time ago, when Charles M. Alexander, the well-known gospel song leader, accompanied by two soloists, a pianist, and a representative of the Pocket Testament League, spent five days travelling from one Y.M.C.A. marquee to another on the Plain, holding gospel meetings. From the beginning the meetings were a great success. The soldiers crowded into the marquees, and when the tents were filled they side down the sides and the men stood outside during the service.

GOSPELS AS HYMN BOOKS.

The meetings began with the presentation to each soldier of the Pocket Testament League edition of the Gospel of St. John, containing hymns, pictures and stories. Using the gospel as a hymn book, Mr. Alexander led the men in singing appropriate hymns. The men quickly caught up the new choruses, such as "I am Included" and "Good-by, God Bless You," while they rang out lustily the familiar strains of the "Glory Song" and "Tell Mother I'll be There." Now and then the famous song-leader called upon one of the soloists to sing a hymn, such as "My Mother's Prayer," or "Will the Circle be Unbroken?" Again Mr. Alexander would stop the soldiers in the midst of a hymn and give them a straight talk on the manliness of living a clean, Christian life.

At the opportune moment the idea of the Pocket Testament League was explained, and the men were told how during the last six years the movement had swept round the world, and hundreds of thousands of all classes from one end of the world to the other had been enrolled in the League by making it the rule of their lives to carry a Testament with them and to read at least one chapter daily. Special Testaments, with waterproof covers, weighing only 2½ ounces, published by the Pocket Testament League Headquarters, 47 Paternoster Row, London, were offered to any soldier who wished to join. It was clearly stated, however, that in order to secure the Testament he must first sign a League membership card, and then sign the pledge in the Testament he received.

A RUSH FOR TESTAMENTS.

The eagerness of the men to make the promise and join the movement was astonishing. At one tent, when those who wished to become members were asked to come forward, the soldiers literally stormed the platform in their eagerness to join. At another tent over three hundred soldiers were enrolled in a few minutes. At still another there was not time to give out the Testaments that night, so the men were asked to present their membership cards, and secure the books at the marquee counter the next day. Early the following morning a stream of soldiers asking for Testaments began, and continued until thousands of men had been enrolled in that marquee.

During the closing days of the meetings conducted by Mr. Alexander, thrilling scenes were witnessed as the soldiers were asked not only to join the League, but to yield their lives to God. One night over a thousand men were crowded into a tent. Over three hundred joined the Pocket Testament League, and at the close of the service one hundred and ninety-two soldiers, in the presence of their comrades, rang out after the song leader the words "I accept Christ as my Saviour, my Lord and my King." The editor of a London journal, who was present, declared it was a sight he had rarely seen equalled.

Bishop Taylor-Smith, the Chaplain-General of the Forces, when asked for a word of encouragement to the men whose lives had been influenced, wrote: "My dear Mr. Alexander, I rejoice to hear of the blessing received on the Plain. May you see greater things than these, because of Christ's position and power. Give to

account of the Bible revival among the troops. He wrote:

"After a visit from Mr. Alexander and his party, the Lord manifested His presence in a remarkable way. Until then there had been few decisions for Christ, sometimes one and never more than two a day. After the above-mentioned visit and the introduction of the Pocket Testament League, there came upon the soldiers a great desire to hear the Word of God. As it was told out men were gripped by the power of the Holy Ghost, and how after hour they came to the tent, and with bowed heads confessed Christ. On one occasion a group of thirty were listening to the Gospel, when the speaker asked who would volunteer for the service of Christ. Immediately a non-commissioned officer, about six feet in height, who was on the outside, put up his hand and said: 'I will, sir,' at the same time pushing his way to the front. Within a few seconds twelve others joined him. No sooner had these been dealt with and prayers offered, than another group came forward. Thus it continued until the 'last post' sounded and the soldiers hurried away to their lines."

MOVEMENT INTERESTS LONDON EDITORS.

A few weeks later the Bible work among the soldiers had aroused such widespread interest that

Mr. Lane and Mr. A. J. C. Thomas, who has witnessed an almost equally wonderful work in a neighboring Y.M.C.A. marquee—were invited to London to tell about the spiritual movement among the troops.

To a group of editors of London journals who had gathered to hear the story, Mr. Lane told how the work began, and of its remarkable influence on the morale of the troops. He said:—

"For weeks we have had a stream of men coming to join the Pocket Testament League, and at the same time accepting Christ so rapidly, that I could not deal with them in ones

or twos, but I had groups of eight and ten and more. This has been done in the tent while the latest comic song was being sung. These men listened as intently as if there was no other sound or voice to be heard.

"A merchant of Exeter was there in the marquee one day, also the Wesleyan chaplain. They purposely stood at the back, where I could not see them, just to see what was taking place. The merchant said this: 'If I had read it in a book, or heard it from the lips of anyone, I would have discounted fifty per cent., and would not have believed the rest.' The chaplain said that he had never hoped to witness such scenes or feel the power of God as he did then. Directly the Bible book was opened and the Word of God was read, the whole expression on the men's faces was changed, and they became deeply concerned, and the result was that applications for the Testaments became so numerous that we could not supply them all. Men were bringing their names all day in dozens. One man would set a Testament, and I said: 'Let the others know you have a good thing; and the next day, time and again, the remaining number in that tent would come and join,



MR. HENRY J. LANE AND MR. A. J. C. THOMAS
And two of the ten thousand soldiers on Salisbury Plain who are in the Pocket Testament Movement.

the brethren from me, Hebrews 13: 20, 21. Believe me, yours always, J. Taylor-Smith, Bp. C. G."

Later, Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman arrived in England from America, and he and Mr. Alexander conducted two brief but notable missions in London. At their conclusion, at the earnest request of the National Council of the Y.M.C.A., the evangelists held three thrilling services for soldiers at the Crystal Palace and Wembley, when as the result of the inspiring messages in sermon and song, hundreds of the troops stood up and openly confessed Christ as their Saviour.

BIBLE REVIVAL SPREADS.

The Bible revival on Salisbury Plain did not end with the visit of Mr. Alexander and his party. The movement continued to spread among the men from tent to tent, and the demand for Testaments increased.

Mr. Henry J. Lane, a business man who has worked day and night in one of the Y.M.C.A. marquees on the Plain as an honorary worker enrolling soldiers in the League, and leading them to a decision for God, sent to the League headquarters in London a letter, giving a graphic