

Reminiscences

The Rev. W. H. Stone, M.A., Vicar of St. Mary's, Kilburn remembers **5th November** 1883

On returning to Cambridge after the long vacation, I was invited by J. E. K. Studd and the Cambridge Christian Union to join the sub-committee in carrying out the arrangements for a mission conducted by Mr. Moody at the invitation of the Union. The Corn Exchange was secured for the Sunday evening meetings and the gymnasium in Market Passage, now the Conservative Club, for the week-day evenings. A large choir of university men met regularly under the direction of G. E. Morgan, of St. John's, to practise those hymns which were likely to be required. A committee, including members from nearly all the colleges, handed a personal invitation to every undergraduate member of the university. The daily prayer-meeting was well attended by the men; all was now ready, and on Sunday evening, **November 5th**, we proceeded to the first meeting in the Corn Exchange.



The great building and annex had been seated to hold some twenty-five hundred persons. On the platform, in front of the choir, were the Rev. H. G. S. Moule, John Barton, James Lang, Henry Trotter, and a few others. Seventeen hundred men in cap and gown were counted entering the building. Every one was provided with a hymn-book. In they came, laughing and talking and rushing for seats near their friends. Little attention seemed to be paid to the preliminary hymn-singing of the choir. A firecracker thrown against the window caused some disturbance.

Then Mr. Moody asked a clergyman on the platform to pray, but men shouted "Hear, hear!" instead of Amen, and Mr. Sankey's first solo was received with jeers and loud demands for an encore.

The reading of the Scripture was frequently interrupted, and Mr. Moody's address was almost unheard by reason of the chaffing questions and noises which came from all parts of the Exchange. Still the evangelist persevered with the most perfect good temper, until a lull in the storm enabled him for five minutes to plead with "those who honoured their mothers' God" to remain for a short prayer-meeting. After the singing of another hymn, during which many left the building, some four hundred remained for a brief prayer-meeting, amongst whom many of the rowdiest men were seen to be quiet, impressed, and apparently ashamed of their recent behaviour.

With heavy hearts we took our way to our respective colleges, but Mr. Moody seemed undaunted and full of hope for the ultimate success of the mission.

On Monday we assembled in the gymnasium, and the sight was enough to depress the spirits of the most sanguine, for only a hundred came to the meeting. After the address, Mr. Moody spoke to every man in the building. When, on asking a man if he were a Christian, he received the answer, "No, but I wish to be one," we saw that the effort was not to be in vain, for on that night one who was afterwards to row in the 'varsity boat, and then to become a missionary in Japan, decided to serve the Lord Christ. A few more came on Tuesday night. On Wednesday a letter appeared in *The University Review* written by J. E. K. Studd, reminding the members of the university that Messrs. Moody and

Sankey had been invited by certain undergraduates to conduct the mission, and that they were entitled to the treatment usually extended to invited guests. This letter had an excellent effect throughout Cambridge, and some two hundred came to the evening meeting.

On Thursday afternoon Mr. Moody gathered a meeting of some three hundred mothers of the town of Cambridge in the Alexander Hall to pray for university men as "Some Mothers' Sons." Mr. Moody described this meeting as unique in his long experience. Mother after mother, amidst her tears, pleaded for the young men of the university.

That night the tide turned. Who that was privileged to witness it will ever forget the scene? I may remind old Cambridge men that there is a gallery in the gymnasium used as a fencing-room, and approached by a long flight of steps from the gymnasium below. The preacher's subject was "The Marriage Supper of the Lamb." At the close of his address he asked any who intended to be present at that marriage supper to rise and go up into the gallery — a terrible test.

Amidst an awful stillness a young Trinity man rose, faced the crowd of men, and deliberately ascended the stairs. In a moment scores of men were on their feet, following him to that upper room. Many that night made the great decision. Some of the men who then received the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour are known to me to-day as honoured servants of God in positions of great importance. On Friday night there was an increased audience, but no meeting on Saturday.

What would happen on the last Sunday night was the question in every one's mind.

Eighteen hundred men assembled in the Corn Exchange for the final service. In perfect stillness the great gathering listened to a simple address on "The Gospel of Christ". The annex was arranged for the after-meeting, and one hundred and sixty-two men gave in their names at the close as desirous of receiving a little book which might prove useful to those who were seeking to know the power of the Gospel of Christ.

Many men came to see Mr. Moody at his hotel, some to criticise, some to apologize for the unseemly behaviour of the first night, and some to receive that help he was so fitted by God to give to those who were seeking the way of peace.

The impress of this mission still rests upon the religious life of Cambridge. Its influence is felt in many parishes at home and in many of the dark places of heathendom. No one who took any part in this mission could have been tempted to glorify the human agents or ascribe its success to them. It was the work of God. Mr. Moody had none of those qualifications which would mark him out as specially fitted to influence the members of an English university; unlettered and ignorant of the customs of university men, by the power of God which rested upon him he accomplished a work of which no adequate account will be given until the Day of Christ...