

MOODY STILL LIVES

WORD PICTURES OF D. L. MOODY

by

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CHAPTER FIVE

IN ACTION OVERSEAS

MR. MOODY'S ministry overseas embraced the following trips:

1867—Four months in England and Scotland, including ten days in Paris,

1872—Three months in England and Ireland,

1873-5—First great campaign in the British Isles, the turning point in his career,

1881-4—Second extended campaign in the British Isles, including a brief visit to Paris,

1891-2—Third extended campaign in the British Isles, including a two-months vacation visit to the Holy Land.

W. R. Moody says in his *Life* (1900) that his father long cherished the idea of making a tour of the world, with missions in Japan, China and India. He left home in the fall of 1888 with this purpose in view, but found when he got to the Pacific Coast that he could not get released from engagements he had made out there. Again in the fall of 1891 while he was in England he thought of a world trip, but the doctors advised against it, chiefly on account of his heart. A bulky invitation to hold meetings in Australia and New Zealand, signed by all the evangelical forces in those lands, was received in February 1899, but was declined. However, he said to his son Paul in 1899 that when Paul was through college he would take him on a world tour, visiting India, Australia and China.

A dozen or more Japanese attended a College Student Conference at Northfield as delegates in 1898. Mr. Moody entertained them at afternoon tea. One of them said they hoped he would someday visit Japan. "Wouldn't you like to see Japan, Mr. Moody?"

"Would I like to see Japan? I would like to see the whole world for which Christ died!"

1867

His first visit to England was in 1867 for four months. Mrs. Moody accompanied him. He was quite unknown over there, but not for long, because he began attending meetings of all kinds where he might learn something for his own growth and knowledge, and also become familiar with British ways of working.

Soon he was being called on for accounts of his own activities in Chicago, and the unconventional methods and successes which he related, so different from anything in static England, made a stir and gained him many friends.

He is credited with having started a noon prayer meeting in the Aldersgate Street Y.M.C.A., in the heart of London, similar to the noon prayer meeting in the Chicago "Y." The first meeting was held on May 13, 1867, and it is still being held daily. Similar prayer meetings were started at other points in London and in the provinces.

On this trip he visited Edinburgh, and also spent ten days in Paris, where a great Exposition was being held. Daily prayer meetings were also started there.

1872

The Chicago Fire of October 1871 laid waste a large area in which the North Side Tabernacle had been promptly erected not far from the site of the Illinois Street Church. Sunday services were large and fruitful, but pastoral work and visitation were not possible as there were no homes anywhere near, only ruins. Finding, therefore, that he could be spared from Chicago Mr. Moody decided to visit England again to learn more of the Bible at the feet of English Bible students. He started in June 1872 with Mr. Douglas Russell, the English evangelist mentioned in Chapter II in connection with his filling with the Holy Spirit earlier in the year.

The two attended the Believers' Meetings in Dublin in July. These meetings were an outcome of the revival in Ireland in 1860-1. They were held annually in the city of Dublin, and were attended not only by believers from all parts of Ireland, but also by Bible students and teachers from England and other lands. Public meetings were held in the commodious Metropolitan Hall, and friends were also invited to the hospitable home of Mr. Henry Bewley at Willow Park for more private services and fellowship.

Mr. J. W. C. Fegan of London, one of England's outstanding Christian philanthropists, has told of Mr. Moody being present and of his keenness in gathering "nuggets." One day he asked a speaker:

"What's the best anecdote you know to explain justification?"

It happened that this speaker was not favorably disposed toward anecdotes. He was serious and emphatic in his ministry. He was aghast at the manner and matter of Mr. Moody's interrogation and retorted:

"There is no anecdote to explain justification. Justification is a conception so absolutely divine that it cannot be illustrated by anything earthly."

"Say," said Mr. Moody, "that's the best thing I've got this morning! Say that again! That's a better point than an anecdote."

Another of the speakers, Mr. Bland, asked Mr. Moody:

“Do you know anything of dispensational truth?”

“Never heard of it,” was the reply.

“It is the key to God’s plan in the Scriptures,” said Mr. Bland.

“That’s what I’m over here for, to understand my Bible better. Where can I get hold of dispensational truth?”

He spent the rest of that day and the next with Mr. Bland, all the time the latter could give him.

Mr. Russell has said that a number of evangelists who were present repaired to a hay-loft where they might together seek an increase of power from God. Except for prayers, only one sentence was uttered, when Henry Varley of Australia voiced the sentiment that has become a universal challenge:

“The world has yet to see what God will do
with a man wholly consecrated to him.”

Evidently that thought lodged in Mr. Moody’s soul. Mr. Varley told me that Mr. Moody spoke to him about it later on. Did he become such a man?

This visit is remembered for another incident that had important results.

Mr. Moody was determined not to get into work, but one day he went to the Old Bailey prayer meeting, and at the close of the service he was invited by a pastor in the north of London to preach for him the next Sunday. He consented.

The morning service seemed dead and cold. The people did not appear to be much interested. It seemed to him as if he had been beating the air. He said he felt it was a lost morning.

At the evening service, however, it seemed to him as if the atmosphere was charged with the Spirit of God while he was preaching. There came a hush from heaven upon the people, which showed that God was searching hearts. When he finished his sermon he asked all who would like to become Christians to rise, so that he might pray for them. They rose by hundreds all over the church. It seemed as if the whole audience was rising.

Mr. Moody said to himself: “These people did not understand me. They do not know what I meant when I asked them to rise.” So he put the test again. “All of you,” he said, “who want to become Christians just step into the inquiry room.”

They went in and crowded the room so that they had to bring in extra chairs to seat them all. The minister was surprised, and so was Mr. Moody. Neither had expected such results. When Mr. Moody asked those who really wanted to become Christians to rise, up rose the whole crowd.

What to do he did not know, so he told all who were really in earnest to meet the pastor there the next night.

Next morning he went over to Dublin, but on Tuesday morning he got a dispatch urging him to return, and saying there were more inquirers on Monday than on Sunday. He went back and held meetings for ten days, and four hundred were taken into that church.

After some time the secret of that marvellous manifestation of the Holy Spirit's working was revealed.

There were two sisters who belonged to that church, of whom one was bed-ridden. One day as the shut-in was bemoaning her condition the thought came to her that she could pray, and she began to pray God to revive her church. Before long she read in a paper an account of some meetings D. L. Moody had held in America, and she began to pray God to send him to their church.

Her sister came home the day Mr. Moody preached there and said:

“Well, who do you think preached this morning?”

She guessed the names of those with whom the pastor was in the habit of exchanging. Finally her sister said:

“It was Mr. Moody from America.”

The bed-ridden saint answered, “I know what that means. God has heard my prayers!”

She spent the afternoon in fasting and prayer, and in the evening the answer came in fire from heaven. Mr. Moody believed that that revival brought him back to England the next year. As a result of it he received invitations from Rev. William Pennefather, rector of St. Jude's, Mildmay Park, London, and from a Mr. Bainbridge, a prominent Methodist layman of Newcastle-on-Tyne, to hold meetings. But he had not come prepared for a long stay, so he returned to America after three months by the ship he had promised his wife. “But I have decided to return with my wife and children next summer. I am persuaded that God is going to do a mighty work in Great Britain.”

1873-5

This visit differed from previous ones in that it enjoyed unlimited publicity in print. A weekly religious paper called *The Christian*, originally *The Revival*, made a business of giving full reports week by week of the work of Messrs. Moody and Sankey, as well as of its offshoots.

These reports are available to any biographer or student of the campaign. W. R. Moody made copious use of them and other documentary material of the period. In his 1900 *Life* and again in his 1930 *Life*, just a hundred pages in each are occupied with this campaign.

Being the first invasion of Britain of its kind, there had been no general plan of campaign beforehand, no definite dates for local meetings, no idea of the length of the evangelists' stay, although they had not thought of more than six months or so. As a matter of fact, the two invitations Mr. Moody had received the previous year had fallen through by reason of the death of the friends who invited him and offered to pay travelling expenses. So they began at zero. But as soon as their arrival in Liverpool was known, a door opened, and in due time invitations came in, and continued as long as they would accept them.

From Liverpool they went to York to hold their first meetings. Thence their itinerary took them through several North of England towns to Edinburgh. Success there opened all Scotland to them, and after a number of missions they went to Dublin. From Ireland they returned to England, and after some campaigns in the provinces they finally spent four months in London, April to July inclusive, 1875.

England at that day was not as open as it is in our day. Social class distinctions were cast-iron. Sectarian prejudices, shot through also with class distinctions, hopelessly divided church-going people. Tradition ruled in all avenues of life. No Britisher would have a chance to do what an outlander might do, and what Mr. Moody actually did.

He was accepted by all classes. He had not been identified with any denomination, and stood on a platform which any evangelical believer could endorse. He was unconventional in his messages and manners, but not wilfully brusque or controversial. Naturally at first some of his methods rather shocked and disconcerted some people. They were novel, but never irreverent or merely sensational or fanatical, so they won their way by their proved value. Both in personal character and bearing he proved himself a gentleman and a good Christian. His spiritual success validated both himself and his methods.

All through his career a critical or hostile person had only to hear Mr. Moody and investigate his work firsthand to overcome his dislike and wish him Godspeed. And there were criticisms and hostilities and prejudices in England and in America: ministerial criticisms, false rumors and insinuations, ridicule, misjudgments, oppositions of atheism and other "isms." But he outlived them all. He turned criticism into a means of grace, and learned from it. He was ever ready to rectify mistakes in judgment or conduct, to ask forgiveness for even unintentional hurts and wrongs, and he tried never to repeat his mistakes. He could not work until he was at peace with everyone.

Through Mr. Moody's introduction Charles F. Goss was elected pastor of Chicago Avenue Church in Chicago. He had liberal views, and left the church in a few years. He came to Northfield to talk with Mr. Moody about his tenets, social and political as well as religious. Mr. Moody heard his story and then said to him, as Dr. Goss related the incident:

"Goss, whatever you do, keep sweet! I have been misunderstood, maligned, abused, but I made up my mind to keep sweet . . . You cannot do any good unless you keep sweet. . . , My advice to you is to keep sweet."

Perhaps his most notable innovation was the after-meeting. After a sermon Mr. Moody “drew the net,” expecting immediate decisions for Christ. He would ask those who decided there and then to receive Jesus Christ as personal Saviour to say out loud “I will,” or to raise a hand or rise to their feet—actions that publicly clinched and confessed their inner decision of heart and will.

Then bringing the meeting to a close he would invite all who had thus indicated their decision, and any others who were wavering, to meet him and the ministers and other Christian workers in an adjoining enquiry room, where further guidance on their great choice would be given them.

These plans may seem familiar to many readers, but it was Mr. Moody who first introduced and demonstrated their effectiveness even on the largest scale. They assured hard-headed decision, and cut out superficial emotion. Though he never counted converts, this individual dealing meant business, and led to numbers going on to the next step of joining the churches.

Another innovation that had good results was the all-day meeting.

England had been set on fire by the revival under George Whitefield and John Wesley a hundred years before. Messrs. Moody and Sankey achieved similar large results, not only in England but in Scotland and Ireland too. They are singing *Sacred Songs and Solos* throughout the British empire right down to the present moment.

The size of their audiences? No buildings were large enough to hold the crowds. Their closing meetings in the open air in Glasgow and Edinburgh were conservatively estimated at 30,000.

The spread of interest? People came from long distances, both ministers and lay people, and carried back the fire to their own communities and churches.

The results? The outstanding feature of the campaign was the large number of decisions for Christ. This followed because the people, especially in Scotland, were largely churchgoing people more or less instructed in the gospel. Mr. Moody came along with a challenge to immediate decision and confession of Christ, and he reaped a ready harvest. The converts joined the churches and revived them. Many of them are living yet.

Further, large numbers of professing Christians, and even Christian ministers, were moved to full and renewed consecration for service, and began to engage in definite and varied forms of Christian work.

Even to this day many of the older evangelists and workers look back to the Moody and Sankey meetings as the beginning of their life work. Many philanthropic and social activities existing over there to-day were born or quickened into new life and energy under the influence of the revival, for Mr. Moody always had social as well as spiritual vision and sympathy. An experienced newspaper man said somewhat recently:

“Drop out the leaders of Christian philanthropy in London that are Moody men, and you drop out the backbone of that philanthropy.”

The people who were reached for Christ? Rich and poor, aristocrats and down-and-outs, church-going people and the indifferent, university men and the less privileged, old and young, all classes. Thrilling stories of individual cases abound.

Mr. Moody's daughter was in Stockholm in 1888. She was taken by a friend to visit the palace. There she was introduced to a certain baroness who was a cousin of the king and lived in a wing of the palace. After a gracious reception the baroness said that every American was a welcome visitor because of what a great American, D. L. Moody, had meant to herself and to Sweden.

"Did you ever know him?"

"Oh," said Miss Moody's friend, "you did not catch this young lady's name. She is D. L. Moody's daughter." At this the baroness showed extreme pleasure and friendliness. Miss Moody was accorded the special privilege of being shown through the private living rooms of the royal family. At the head of the beds of each of the young princes she saw bookcases each supporting a marble bust of Christ, and on the shelf copies of several of her father's books of sermons that had been translated into Swedish, bound in rich red Russia leather.

The fire of the 1873-5 revival in England had been carried to Sweden. Many of Mr. Moody's sermons and Mr. Sankey's hymns were translated into Swedish. The great revival of 1877 in Sweden is considered a result. The Swedish people have been warm to Mr. Moody ever since.

During the World's Fair evangelistic campaign in Chicago, in 1893, he organized meetings for Swedes. A contingent comes to Northfield every summer for the General Conference. In driving through Norway on that same trip Miss Moody found many of her father's books in Norwegian in the country homes.

It seems from *The Letters of Queen Victoria*, 1862-78, published by authority of King George V (1926), that the Queen drew the line at the Moody and Sankey meetings. "It would never do for me to go to a public place to hear them." She thought the meetings were sensational, while as a matter of fact, had she but known their real character, they exactly suited her taste as she expressed it: "Eloquent, simple preaching, with plain practical teaching, seems to me far more likely-to do real and permanent good." Could Mr. Moody's preaching and teaching be more aptly described?

Sir George Adam Smith has written: "The religious movement in Great Britain from 1873 to 1875 stands supreme and deserves most thorough treatment. The history of this has never been written. The present generation do not know how large it was, and with what results upon the life of the nation." He threw himself into it, and speaks from personal experience.

John Wesley, by his preaching of righteousness and the revival in which he was God principal human instrument, saved England from such conditions as gave birth to the French Revolution, So the revivifying of the churches through Mr. Moody's influence was a powerful and salutary antidote and corrective of the materialism and doubt and repudiation of the Bible, its theism and supernaturalism, which followed as a wave the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species*.

This book, however intended, was a potent and dangerous weapon in the hands of unbelief. Mr. Moody's one foundation being the Bible as the Word of God, he unquestionably stayed the wavering faith of multitudes and made the impact of evolutionary thought and teaching far less disastrous and disintegrating than it would otherwise have been. Some questions could not thrive in the warm evangelical atmosphere his meetings promoted.

At this time Mr. Moody was 36-38 years of age.

How did he stand his unmeasured success? Did it spoil him? Or did he learn and grow by his large and varied opportunities in service for God?

He remained quite unspoiled in character, unharmed by popularity and praise. Reputation and eminence sat lightly on him. He realized that success was not in himself, but in the power of God the Holy Spirit. His reliance was at all times in God, and that saved him from the fear of man and circumstance. He never toadied to the rich, or even to royalty. He never patronized the poor or sin-smitten, but had compassion on them. He was honest and to the point with all classes.

He never commercialized his success. Never once did I hear him, in public or in private, refer to his British campaigns or any other meetings, to discuss them. He might use incidents by way of illustration, but that is all. One would never conjecture, living with him and hearing him preach day after day, as I did, that he had been the principal in such outstanding work. He so magnified the grace and power of God that he attracted no attention to himself. He taught converts that they were saved by Christ alone and must keep looking to Him for success in everyday Christian living. They must keep in touch with Christ through the Bible and prayer and witnessing for Him.

Further, he was rich in friends, but never abused the many friendships he formed and confidences he gained for personal advantage.

In her *Recollections of D. L. Moody* Mrs. Peter Mackinnon of Scotland gives a pleasing etching of him as she entertained him in 1874:

“It was delightful having him at leisure: he is so simple, unaffected and lovable, plays so heartily with the children, and makes fun with those who can receive it. He is brimful of humor.”

Reviewing this first extended British mission in the light of over 60 years, we must conclude that it has been unique in the history of the Church. Even Mr. Moody's later missions did not reach such magnitudes, and, of course, they lacked the thrill of newness.

Others from America have followed in his steps, notably R. A. Torrey with Charles M. Alexander as song-leader, and J. Wilbur Chapman accompanied by Charles M. Alexander, but they would be the first to admit that in Australia and India and other lands, as well as in the British Isles, their reception and such results as they had were largely due to the welcome and support they received from Mr. Moody's adherents.

Moreover, the 1873-5 British campaign has never been duplicated in any other land, not even by Mr. Moody himself. Britishers have come to America with good results. George Whitefield did a wonderful work in the early colonies. Gipsy Smith is the greatest of recent English evangelists known in America. But this country has never since been so homogeneous in population, so geographically compact, and above all so widely Bible-taught and church-going, and therefore as a whole so ready for harvest, as were the British Isles in the Seventies.

It seems as if that campaign must remain unique. Yet Mr. Moody would be the first to pray God to sweep the world once again with revival fire. Does it not need it? Would it not be a blessing in all spheres of life? It was his constant prayer and hope during his closing years.

1881-4

It may seem like an anti-climax to speak of another mission in the British Isles after that of 1873-5. Could such heights of usefulness and blessing be reached again? Could Mr. Moody reach or surpass his previous level of power in preaching and teaching?

There were similarities and differences in the two missions. Now, he did not arrive as an unknown evangelist with no actual engagements: instead, he came in answer to urgent invitations proffered in person at Northfield by Dr. Andrew A. Bonar of Glasgow, and by other friends of the previous mission. His name was a household word throughout the British Isles. Clergy and people trusted him, and were friendly, every town where he had been wanted him again. Mr. George C. Stebbins was his music director and leading soloist in this mission.

He began with a month in Ireland, then crossed to Scotland, and later was in Wales and England.

During this visit he received invitations from Cambridge and Oxford Universities, which he accepted and filled with history-making results. During the summer of 1883 he and his family came home for three months, and in November he began a campaign in London which lasted until June, 1884. This London campaign was carefully planned by a committee. In 1875 five large halls or theatres had been rented in different parts of London. Now the committee decided that instead of asking people to come to such halls they would go to the people in different sections of the city. Two movable halls of corrugated iron were planned for, each seating 5,180 people. While a three-week meeting was being held in a given locality, the other hall was being erected elsewhere. Eleven different sites were used in crowded areas, where the halls could be filled at afternoon and evening sessions daily except Saturday, with four or five meetings on Sunday.

It was at one of those meetings in the slums of Camberwell that a young medical student, passing by on outpatient maternity duty, stepped into the hall out of curiosity. Someone was leading in prolonged prayer. Mr. Moody stepped to the front and kindly suggested that while the brother was finishing his prayer the audience might sing hymn number so-and-so. This informality attracted the student. Mr. Moody's address impressed him still more as the real thing. He left the hall with his life purpose changed. This was Wilfred T. Grenfell, now Sir Wilfred of Labrador fame.

At the close of this campaign, Mr. Moody told a newspaper man who interviewed him that he felt the work in London had been better than in 1875: less of novelty and sensation, but more people reached and a deeper impression made. The weekly attendance was about 75,000 for thirty weeks, making a gross total of over two millions.

1891-2

The next overseas mission was in answer to a rather dramatic invitation. At the Northfield conference in 1891 John Smith and Dr. Moxey of Edinburgh were present. One night Mr. Smith stepped to the platform with a bulky package in his hands that proved to be an invitation to Mr. Moody from the Christian forces in fifty towns and cities in Scotland, asking him to make another evangelistic tour in that country. He said it was the most remarkable united memorial ever presented to a Christian worker by Scotland. The roll contained 2,500 names. Mr. Moody accepted the invitation with Mr. Sankey, and that fall they visited ninety-nine towns in ninety days, usually holding three or four meetings a day. It must have been on some such mission as this that someone says he heard M Sankey rise in a brief prayer before going on to the platform and say:

“O God, do tire Moody, or give the rest of us superhuman strength!”

In May 1892 Mr. Moody fulfilled a long-desired plan: he took a two-months vacation and with Mrs. Moody and their younger son Paul, was the guest of Scottish friends on a trip to Palestine. Going and coming, time was spent in France, Italy, Egypt, Switzerland, and he preached in a number of cities in these lands, as well as in Palestine. Mr. Moody was a keen observer, and learned all he could on such trips.

During this overseas visit Mr. Moody also conducted missions in Ireland and England as well as Scotland, always with spiritual results as formerly.

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