

A Short Sketch of the Life of Henry Clay Mabie

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Henry Clay Mabie was born in Belvidere, Illinois, on June 20, 1847. He had been converted at the age of eleven by a young minister named Henry G. Weston.

Henry lived a retiring and somewhat indifferent Christian life until the first year of his college course, during which time he had a very remarkable renewal of his spiritual life, which transformed him into an earnest and joyful evangelist.

In the fall of 1863, young Henry, sixteen years old, met D.L. Moody in Chicago. Henry had come from the Illinois home on a farm, to enter the old University of Chicago as a student. Mr. Moody made an impression on him for life. Never before had he seen a layman so making business, as Moody seemed to be doing, in order that others would to seek the kingdom of God. Having got a taste of joy in soul-winning, Henry never

lost it. Later, in 1906 Henry Mabie published a book on the subject, *Method in Soul-Winning*. It's a classic on the subject.

The school of the old University of Chicago, where he was studying at this time, being broken up by a case of small-pox in the building, he returned to his home, where, with the blessing of God, his presence was the means of one of the greatest revivals Belvidere has ever seen. On his return to college the same power accompanied him, and during all his four years' course the religious life of the college might be said to have been at revival pitch.

He graduated from the University in 1868.

After spending one year in the Theological Seminary he accepted a call to the State-street Church of Rockford, Illinois, and was married to Edith S. Roe, youngest daughter of his former beloved pastor Rev. C.H. Roe, D.D., of Belvidere. The four years of his first pastorate were rich in spiritual uplifting and revival power.

In 1873 he returned to the seminary, and was graduated in 1875. Meantime he served as pastor the little church just organized at Oak Park, Illinois. He served as a pastor in Illinois, Massachusetts, Indiana and Minnesota:

- Rockford, Ill., 1869-1873;
- Oak Park, Ill., 1873-1875;
- Brookline, Mass., 1876-1879;
- First Indianapolis Church, Indianapolis, 1879-1883;
- Belvidere, Ill., 1883-1885;
- St. Paul, Minn., 1885-1888;
- Central Baptist Church, Minneapolis, Minn., 1888-1890.

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In temperament and spirit Mabie was evangelistic, and it was not long till this special power began to be recognized both in his own and in other churches of the state. He had excellent oratorical powers, and many not of his own congregation were drawn to his public services.

In the fall of 1875 he received and accepted a call to the pastorate of the First Baptist Church in Brookline, Mass., which he served until August, 1878.

At the commencement of Brown University in 1878 he preached the annual sermon before the Society of Missionary Inquiry. Early in 1879 accepted a unanimous call to the First Baptist Church of Indianapolis, where the blessing of God rested upon his

labors abundantly. He came into intimate relations with the Baptist Missionary Union, and for three years was a member of the Executive Committee.

With his ardent temperament and earnest desire to be useful, he entered into all his new duties with the warmest enthusiasm, but they soon proved too much for his strength, and brought on a severe attack of nervous prostration. This was so obstinate that he felt a change was imperative, and in August, 1878, removed West again, and accepted the call extended to him from Indianapolis, Indiana. During this pastorate, while somewhat despondent on account of his health, he had a peculiarly rich and helpful spiritual experience. which gave a new cast to his preaching and practical aims as a minister. It was also a large factor in the recovery of his health.

In 1882 was conferred upon him the title of Doctor of Divinity by his alma mater, the University of Chicago.

In 1884 he went back to Belvidere, his childhood's home, for a season of rest. Here he spent sixteen months, and the Lord gave him a glorious harvest of souls.

In 1888, after a three years' pastorate in St. Paul, Minn., he went to London, England, to attend the World's Missionary Conference. This was one of the turning points in his life, bringing him, as it did, into contact with the great missionary interests of the world; and after spending two years with the Central Church, Minneapolis, on his return he was called, in 1890, to the office of Home Secretary of the American Baptist Missionary Union (1890-1908). Before entering upon his work at home he was sent out to view the mission fields, a tour which occupied eight months, and has been a great help to him and his colleagues ever since. The countries he visited were Japan, China, Burma, Assam, and India (1890,1913,1914). He represented the American Baptist Missionary Union at the Morrison Centenary Conference in Shanghai (1907). He is the author of an illustrated work giving an account of this tour. *In Brightest Asia* is its title, and it has enjoyed a wide circulation. Since his return from the mission fields he conducted active and successful campaigns in the interest of Foreign missions throughout the Northern States.

Henry Mabie and his family were regular participants at the Northfield Conferences during late spring and summer. The conferences were associated with a host of great and well-known Christian leaders, such as D.L. Moody, Ira D. Sankey, G. Campbell Morgan, John R. Mott, Charles Alexander, H.W. Webb-Peploe, and R.A. Torrey.

Henry Mabie was raised on a farm and liked to be outdoors in nature. He liked horse driving and to work in the garden. He hated tobacco, and always said it was a filthy habit. He would mention it as a vice. George Campbell Morgan was one of Mabie's best friends. Mr. Morgan was a nervous man, with a twitching in one cheek. One day Mr. Morgan was seen with a cigar. In Northfield smoking was not known because it was forbidden. The only remark Henry made on the smoking of Dr. Morgan was to his wife: "I understand Mr. Morgan's physician is of the opinion that an occasional cigar may prove helpful with certain nervous ailments". After a while the people at Northfield seemed to forget all about his smoking. The Auditorium at Northfield were always crowded for Mr. Morgan. This Auditorium was from time to time also Henry Mabie's place to preach.

Christians who knew Henry Mabie personally, acknowledged his brilliant prospects of usefulness. He was a man of ability and culture, of wisdom and grace. Dr. Mabie was a great personality; a man of strong intellect, of great heart, and shepherd spirit. Someone who heard him preached the convention sermon at the Judson Centennial testified: "Henry C. Mabie was blessed with a truly tremendous, towering, indeed mammoth personality". Another Christian once remarked: "And among those not now in the Society's service but still spared to us, the flamingly evangelistic and Christ-loving Henry C. Mabie!"

Henry ranked among the leading American Baptists of his day. Great as a preacher, theologian, writer, and evangelical leader, he was greatest as a missionary statesman and soul-winner.

Henry Mabie is known as a philosophical worker, not so much because he was a master of philosophy, but his mind had the philosophical bent. He delighted to analyze

and to explore underlying causes and motives. He was a Christian, who from a Biblical perspective, wanted to get to the meaning of things.

His writings are known for their pointy expressions. For example, he marked Christ's death as 'vicario-vital'. He also spoke of the "death-resurrection mid-process." The resurrection was in the death, and the death is in the resurrection. This was a 'moral radium' which is released in the believer's spirit when he yields himself to the Christ of the Cross. Jessie Penn-Lewis and T. Austin-Sparks highly valued Mabie's three books on the cross.

On April 30, 1918, at the age of nearly 71, after a life of an abundant fruitful ministry, Henry Mabie died at the home of his daughter in Boston. He was survived by his wife, two sons and three daughters.