

# THE YALE ALUMN WEEKLY

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## THE YALE MISSION.

### The New Building Nearly Completed. A Sketch of Ten Years' Work.

The men of Yale are just completing one of the most important pieces of work ever undertaken by the voluntary religious organization of the University. The final touches are now being put on the new building of the Yale City Mission.

This Mission has for ten years exerted a growing influence upon the lives of College men. The part which it has played in reconciling the student and town factions in a locality years ago famous for the campaigns of the college bully, as well as the rare opportunity which it offers for College men to come in contact with the so-called laboring classes, has not before been brought to the attention of friends of Yale. Its steady development makes a story full of interest, comprising as it does a hitherto unpublished chapter of Yale effort.

It was in April, 1888, that the first attempts were made by students to conduct religious meetings in that part of the Grand Avenue district known as the "Bowery of New Haven." A. Alonzo Stagg, Yale's famous pitcher and now Professor in the University of Chicago, who originated the plan, was at that time Secretary of the College Young Men's Christian Association. He enlisted the support of a number of Eighty-Nine men prominent in the athletic, literary and social life of Yale. Corbin, Gill, Pinchot, Parsons and Fisher were among the number who assisted in the founding and fostering of the first Yale Mission. A small room was rented on the third floor of Washington Hall on Grand ave., and meetings were held regularly on Sunday and Friday evenings. Tradition has it that at first some considerable opposition was aroused among the corner devotees, who failed to understand the motives which prompted a little body of college men to put in an appearance twice a week at so unusual a place, and to stand about the doorway inviting them to the service, and, after an hour's interval to disappear with as much regularity. It is even related that Yale muscle as well as Yale brains had sometimes to assert itself among the more boisterous element. But gradually those who had before been sceptical began to stumble quite regularly up the two narrow flights of stairs to the little room on the top floor, which was bright and warm, even if not luxuriant, and where good music might be heard.

During the five years on Grand ave. the meetings increased greatly in size, and the students soon started a boys' club, prompted no doubt by the small army of street urchins who gathered about the door and plead for admittance when the music was going on up stairs. The general location was not, however, the best for the boys, and not long afterwards this branch of the work was moved to Orange street, and later to Welcome Hall on Oak street. In both branches of the work engaged in up to this time, the coöperation of several of the city churches had been secured.

### AN EXPERT'S EXAMINATION.

The room on the top floor of Washington Hall was, however, unsatisfactory as a general meeting place for the mission. Its distance from the en-

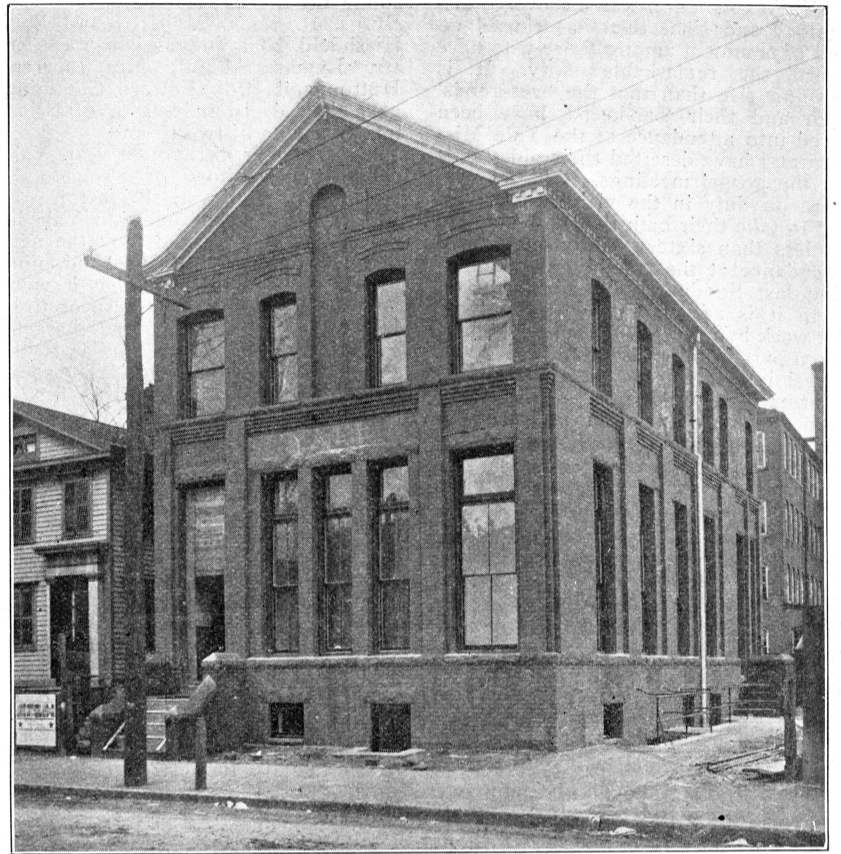
trance kept away many who might otherwise have slipped in to back seats near a street door. The two long flights of creaking stairs were a pretty rigid test for a bashful and distrustful stranger who eyed the whole procedure of the students suspiciously as if it were a trap set for his especial capture. Mr. Shaw noted in his report of 1892 the imperative need of a building with a large room on the ground floor easy of access, but no acceptable one was to be found in the immediate neighborhood. On the other hand, Mr. A. J. Ervine, Dr. Schaufler's assistant in New York City, who made a special study of the district for ten days in 1892, confirmed the students in their belief that they were in the right field. He reported that there was no district in New York City so utterly destitute of missionary effort as that surrounding this part of Grand Avenue in New Haven.

Finally a change became imperative. Much as the students regretted leaving their old ground, the work had now developed so as to require a whole house with other accommodations besides those for meetings. On November 19th, 1893, the first service was held in new quarters at 215 East street, three blocks above the Yale boat house. A two-story wooden building with rooms for night lodgers had been rented in a factory district. The proximity of this new location to the docks and railroad tracks introduced a greater number of transients than before and necessarily a greater proportion of professional beggars. A student superintendent took charge of the building, running the lodging house and sleeping there in special quarters provided for him. Meetings were now held on three days of the week, Sundays, Tuesdays and Fridays. Some fifty different students engaged in this work during the first year at East street. A Bible class was organized, meeting Sunday morning under the charge of a Senior. The Reading Room, a new feature, was open on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday evenings and on Sunday afternoons. Meetings for boys only were held on Friday evenings.

### THE LODGING HOUSE.

The lodging house which had been introduced at East street was a success from the standpoint of numbers. On the average twelve lodgers a day were housed and fed. But experienced city missionaries, who were personally acquainted with the "rounders" and professional beggars, inspected the tenants on several occasions and reported that the generosity of the College men was being greatly imposed upon. To offset this, cards were issued without which transients could not get lodgings and which had to be signed by some student connected with the Mission before being presented to the superintendent. But even then it was found that the men were being systematically deceived. The writer remembers very well one exceptionally refined looking man, who presented himself for lodging and claimed to be a newspaper man in hard luck. He was neatly dressed and an intelligent and fluent conversationalist on all subjects, and professed to be sincerely seeking for the truth. He remained at the Mission for several days, attracting and winning the sympathies of all with whom he came in contact. One morning he appeared in an exultant state of mind, bearing a letter which he showed to the superintendent and which stated that he had been appointed special correspondent for a well known New York paper to the Paris Exposi-

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Photographed for the WEEKLY by Corbin & Konold.

tion, with a large salary per month. The next day he appeared at the superintendent's office clad in a fine suit of black with a valet attending him and presented a check for \$15 in payment for his lodging bill, which amounted to less than one third of the check. As soon as he had received the change he at once disappeared, and when the superintendent came to present the check at the bank of course to his great surprise he found it worthless. Several other cases of a similar nature might be quoted. But perhaps such cases were to be expected and the wonder should be that they did not happen with greater frequency, for in the months from October, 1897, to June, 1898, 2,200 lodgings were given and 150 articles of clothing distributed.

As early as 1896 educational features were first started. A Glee and Banjo Club concert proved an exceedingly attractive drawing card, and was greatly appreciated. Lectures on Monday evenings on such subjects as "Football," "The Klondike" and "Switzerland," the latter illustrated with stereopticon views, drew large and interested audiences. A special effort was made to have general entertainments on Saturday evenings to keep the men from squandering their week's wages.

### QUARTERS AGAIN OUTGROWN.

Such in brief was the second period of the Yale Mission in the East street district, characterized by the introduction of the lodging house system and its gradual abuse, and also by the first beginnings of educational features. At the close of last Spring it became apparent that the Mission had outgrown its present quarters, and that the time had come when the Yale Association would be justified in returning to the old and more favorable location on Grand avenue and in building a structure suited to its needs. The private

subscription list was circulated among undergraduates and alumni shortly after May 1st, and in three months over \$5,000 had been subscribed and paid in, two-thirds of which was from undergraduates.

The new building now in process of erection is situated on Franklin street, just a few doors south of Grand ave. It is a two story brick structure with well ventilated auditorium on the first floor to seat 150, lighted with 12 large windows. In the basement is a room for a boys' club to be open every night in the week, and four shower baths. On the second floor are rooms for a library of specially selected works of literature, in charge of a student prominent in literary work; a reading room, lighted by a glass roof above, to include eight newspapers and periodicals, and two smaller rooms for educational classes besides the superintendent's quarters. The lodging system has been modified by introducing safeguards against imposition, and educational features have been emphasized and accommodated to the work. The whole structure is heated by furnace and lighted by gas. Religious meetings are to be held regularly on Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday evenings, and entertainments on Saturdays. If sufficient interest is manifested educational classes on practical subjects will be conducted by students. The reading room will be open every night and noon and other features will be added from time to time as the work warrants. While the new building has been in process of erection this Fall, a store on the corner of Grand avenue and Franklin street, two doors away, has been rented, and meetings held regularly. Over seventy different College men have already been down to take part in the different services. The room has been packed on Sundays, and fairly well filled on week days. It may be interesting in this connection to quote a few words which recently appeared in a New Haven daily re-