

● A revival which set a whole town talking. The story of ...

THE SECOND 'BATTLE' OF HASTINGS

THE picturesque town of Hastings, which every schoolboy associates with 1066—the year in which William the Conqueror defeated the Saxon King, Harold, at Senlac, was the scene of a second "battle" recently; this time a battle for souls. Youth for Christ was foremost in the fray, and Mr. Arthur W. Vint, on behalf of this splendid movement, provided a fine headquarters in which preparations went ahead for a great evangelistic campaign.

Forty-three churches co-operated and eighty-five Christian leaders and ministers gathered praying Christians together, for preparation meetings, in Wellington Square Baptist Church. There was a night of prayer led by Rev. John Thomas, who shared in the Y.F.C. Revival blessing in Belfast. Meantime, prayer groups sprang up all over the district and throughout a large area of the South Coast.

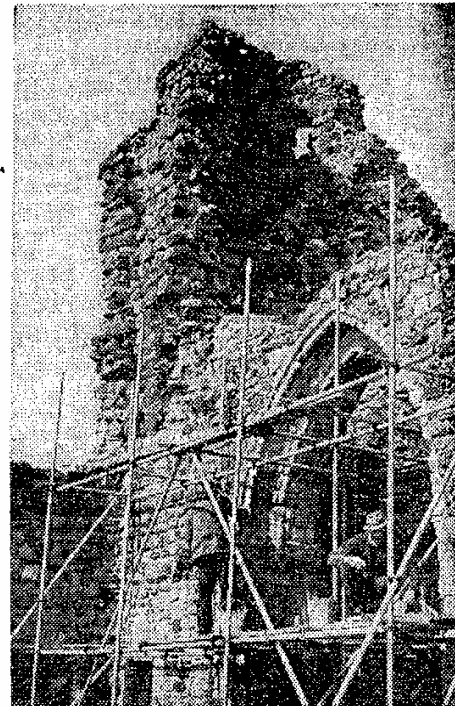
God blessed the efforts. Arrangements went forward unhampered. The Chairman was the Rev. C. G. Redgrave, Vicar of Fairlight, and the Vice-Chairman was the well-loved Canon C. C. Griffiths, of St. Leonard's-on-Sea Parish Church. The organisers were moved to hire the White Rock Pavilion. Indeed it may be said to have dropped into their hands, and in spite of the doubts of the manager of this splendid building, that it would be impossible to fill it every night for a fortnight, Eric Hutchings, Evangelist and Leader of the Y.F.C. Teams, knowing his Lord and perceiving a great vision, was undaunted.

The Hour of Revival opened on Sunday, toward the end of last year, with a full congregation singing favourite hymns. The Mayor, Alderman H. W. Rymill, gave a civic welcome, saying that as far as he recollected, it was the first time the Pavilion had been used exclusively for

strong guidance of the Holy Spirit, was amazed. It is many years since the South Coast has felt the impact of such a burden of prayer. People were changed. Bus drivers and conductors were glad to give every help in assisting people at late night meetings to their homes. When I arrived at Hastings Station, I found ticket inspectors and collectors directing passengers to the Pavilion. In the shops, assistants smiled and asked: "Are you going to the meeting to-night?" Not a Conservative, Liberal, or Young Farmers' meeting, or any other kind of meeting—but **THE MEETING!**

Waitresses in hotels discussed in kitchens the merits of Christ against any of the modern "isms." Some had never been to a place of worship ever; they came to the meetings and went away thoughtful. In White Rock Pavilion, doormen and officials snatched moments to stand for a while in gangways and corridors, listening intently.

THE Hour of Revival smashed through officialdom. A big community was undergoing a vital change. Let Canon Griffiths describe what was taking place. "We have definitely prayed to God to send His Holy Spirit down. He answered. The Campaign stops, but Revival goes on. By God's Grace it is going on—not for three days more, which by unanimous desire of thousands it is doing—or for three months or three years! It is here in our midst to stay. We are not now dependent on Eric Hutchings and the Youth for Christ team. This is not just an exciting thing of



In 1070 William the Conqueror built a castle at Hastings. These are the ruins to-day.

His moments upon the Cross, suspended in a universe—alone. Jesus bore the awful loneliness—dying for the wicked. For Him was the pain, the loneliness of those who go to their end unrepentant.

"Everything you think, every deed you do, is known to God." He entreated men and women to repent while there was yet time, bidding them realise that memory continues into Eternity. "You can't whistle for God on the deathbed or in an emergency—and where are you going to spend Eternity? You can miss Eternal Life in the Presence of God by an inch, miss it by a moment. Once exalted unto heaven, yet gone down to

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religious purposes for an entire fortnight, and mentioned that sufficient money had been raised even at that early hour for its hire.

Eric Hutchings, in his address, said people were passing through the hour of perplexity. Armed Forces could give no security, but the Bible said that when God spoke and His Word is obeyed, everything would be all right.

FROM that moment Revival was on. United intensive effort was the order of the day thereafter in open-air meetings, all-night prayer meetings, church services, in schools, hospitals and business houses. It was no unusual or unwelcome event to find the evangelists playing and singing in the beautiful restaurant of a local store.

Hastings, seeing youth in operation under the



As of old, Hastings fishermen repair their nets.



Left to right: Eric Hutchings, the Rev. and Mrs. Fletcher Tink, Ruth and John Grant, Joan Pountney, Ken Terhoven, A. W. Vint, Geoff Percival (piano), Russell Mills (violin).

the moment; it is something that goes on."

On the last night of meetings in the Pavilion we watched the auditorium filling long before the evangelists and musicians and song-leaders appeared on the platform. As the hands of the clock moved round, shops and business houses seemed to empty themselves into White Rock.

When Eric Hutchings rose to address this mighty audience, it was sitting tensely silent. "And thou, Capernaum, which are exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell" (Matt. 11: 23). There had been hardly a more evangelical town than Hastings, he reminded his listeners. "Almost everywhere one found men and women preaching Christ. Hastings has been a town exalted, almost to the point of Capernaum, a town exalted to heaven—but it may be that it goes down to hell." He gave them a picture of heaven; he showed them the other side also. Those who, refusing God's salvation, might never expect a place in His glorious heaven.

From Lamentations, he drew a terrible picture of a solitary city in all its agonizing loneliness. "If you want to know just what this awful loneliness is like, look upon the Calvary of Jesus;

Youth

hell, because you missed Eternal Life by perhaps only ten minutes."

THE hour for closing the meeting was drawing very near. From the balcony one looked down on bent heads, tense faces, weeping women, and strong men greatly moved.

We had heard a penitent woman testifying. Wife of a former high official of the town, she had known in earlier years all it meant to love Christ and do His will. She had served Him

in the East End of London and then—fallen from grace. She had once been "exalted unto heaven," and now looked into the future full of sorrow for the wasted past; a past in which she confessed she had sent others headlong to their doom. She looked back on a broken home. Not too late! Thank heaven for the Divine leading—it could be no other, which had taken her into an earlier meeting to hear that which had brought her arrogance to the dust. She wept bitter tears of remorse. Here she stood, then, on this last evening, doing her utmost to bring others back from the brink on which she had stood.

A group of us gathered round the piano, wrestling in prayer. At length God sent His Holy Spirit for a certain convicted soul—full and strong. The battle was over; the Lord Jesus Christ had won. I saw the light of truth on that girl's countenance—a plain, homely little face, rendered beautiful in the conviction of the saving power of our Lord. Surely it is one of the greatest joys to see a soul pass from darkness into His most marvellous light! "If I go, I'll go alone," I remembered she had said. Never alone again, for she walks with the Lord, and all who read this, wherever you are, pray continually, not only for the converts, re-born during this Revival, but for the future of young people who know no other life, save that spent in His service. —C.L.J.