

C. H. SPURGEON
AN INTERPRETATIVE BIOGRAPHY



C. H. Springer

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By
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Foreword by
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CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	<i>page</i>	5
FOREWORD BY THE REV. H. TYDEMAN CHILVERS „		7
Chapter 1. SPURGEON'S SECRET „		11
„ 2. THE CHILD IS FATHER OF THE MAN		31
„ 3. EDUCATION AND EDUCATING . „		54
„ 4. LEARNING BY DOING . . „		70
„ 5. SPURGEON COMES TO LONDON . „		90
„ 6. SPURGEON THE INNOVATOR . „		109
„ 7. SPURGEON'S THEOLOGY . . „		132
„ 8. THE GREAT ADVENTURE . . „		152
„ 9. SPURGEON AND HIS COLLEGE . „		169
„ 10. A DOMESTIC GROUP . . „		187
„ 11. THE PRINCE OF PREACHERS . „		201
„ 12. SPURGEON'S SOCIAL SERVICE . „		218
„ 13. SPURGEON THE WRITER . . „		229
„ 14. THE STORM „		242
„ 15. THE DAWN „		259
„ 16. SPURGEON THE MYSTIC . . „		268
„ 17. THE VALUE OF SPURGEON TO-DAY „		287

ILLUSTRATIONS

C. H. SPURGEON	<i>Frontispiece</i>
BIRTHPLACE AT KELVEDON, ESSEX	<i>facing page 31</i>
SPURGEON'S HOUSE AT NORWOOD	<i>„ „ 190</i>
BRONZE STATUE AT THE BAPTIST CHURCH HOUSE, LONDON	<i>„ „ 262</i>

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

C. H. SPURGEON has suffered much at the hands of biographers. This volume is not intended to be simply a biography. It is an attempt to interpret Spurgeon for our time and to give a picture of the manifold personality it was my privilege to know.

When Dr. Robertson Nicoll pressed me to undertake this task I learned that my beloved friend, Dr. W. Y. Fullerton, had entered into a contract with Messrs. Williams & Norgate to write a biography of Spurgeon. I placed some material at his disposal, and now the Joint Committee of the Baptist Union and the Spurgeon Institutions, in view of the Centenary of Spurgeon, decided to publish another volume. I undertook the task. It must be understood that I alone am responsible for the views expressed, though no doubt they would be endorsed by my colleagues.

I gratefully acknowledge the kindness of many friends in supplying first-hand information and placing at my disposal unpublished letters. I am particularly indebted to Mr. Spurgeon's sister, who has allowed me to use selections from family records and correspondence, which up to the present have not passed out of her hands. The Rev. M. E. Aubrey, Secretary of the Baptist Union, and the Rev. H. Tydeman Chilvers, Pastor of Spurgeon's Tabernacle, have given ready assistance and I have read the Official Minutes and made extracts.

The chapter entitled "The Storm," that deals with the Down-grade controversy, would have been omitted but for the fact that it would be impossible to write an interpretation of Spurgeon and omit the great controversies in which he engaged. It would be like writing a life of Wellington and leaving out the Battle

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

of Waterloo. The chapter has been submitted to several of my colleagues who opposed each other in the controversy. I am particularly indebted to the Rev. Thomas Greenwood and two other friends who desire to remain anonymous.

I am indebted to the courtesy of Messrs. Marshall, Morgan & Scott, the publishers of Spurgeon's works, for some quotations.

The page proofs have been read by the Revs. R. Birch Hoyle and Charles Herbert.

I am very conscious of the inadequacy of the work. It has been a labour of love and is sent forth in the hope that it will rekindle devotion to the One whom Spurgeon called Master and Lord.

FOREWORD

IN response to the request of the publisher, it affords me great pleasure to write this foreword and thus to be associated with my friend, Dr. Carlile, the esteemed author, without necessarily committing myself to everything he has written.

C. H. S. was undoubtedly a man for his time. What he would do in these days I do not know ; but of this I am assured, that if he were here, God would find in him a ready response to His will for the present time, regardless of what it might demand of him.

I never saw the great preacher, but am amazed at all I have seen and heard, during my nearly fourteen years at the Tabernacle, of that which the Lord did in and through him. It has, however, been my privilege to be in closest touch with many who knew him *personally*, not only as preacher and pastor, but in almost every path of life. What a testimony they bear to his life, character, and work ! It seems to me that Mr. Spurgeon not only exercised an influence *over* those around him, but, somehow or other, fashioned and moulded them after his own model—they are, in spirit at all events, so much alike : all taking after their leader, pastor, and friend. Although he has been dead over forty years, some of the older folk speak of him as if of yesterday, and their fidelity to his memory is unfailing. Faithfulness to the truth, love for the souls of men, independence of thought and action, and a deep love for the Saviour are characteristics of those actively engaged around me, who were brought to Christ by Mr. Spurgeon's gracious ministry. If I may say so, without being misunderstood, the spirit of Spurgeon still seems to hover over all the spheres of his work, whether it be the Tabernacle, Orphanage,

FOREWORD

College, Colportage, or Alms-houses, notwithstanding the drastic geographical alterations that have been made in some cases.

C. H. S. was evidently a *powerful* witness to and expositor of the Bible, and made a contribution to evangelical thought which can never be obliterated. The doctrines of Grace were his meat and drink, the Saviour was evidently a living Personality to him at all times, and he was a great lover of men. He was a theologian of the first order, and, as a preacher, a master of homiletics. His literary knowledge was surprisingly extensive.

What also has greatly impressed me concerning Mr. Spurgeon, gathered from the folk I know and am associated with at the Tabernacle, was his large-hearted kindness and generosity, which, doubtless, he unconsciously infused into others. How many were the men he started financially on their ministerial or missionary careers! Not a few have told me that they had gold coins put into their hands when, as students, they had given a good college address at the Tabernacle. The friends who continue most energetically a Ministers' Clothing Society, existing to help ministers, their wives and families in many ways, are as eager as ever, giving much time and labour to perpetuate the work the great leader commenced—even though the need is not exactly the same to-day. Truly he was a "Mr. Greatheart," whose very nature must have overflowed with tender affection, as many a church and minister of that day could well testify.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon *possessed a great mind*. His intellectual qualities were not apparent in titles, for these he repeatedly declined, but in the exercise of his far-reaching ministry, touching all classes and conditions of men. Leading politicians, scientists, naval and military officers, students in many branches,

FOREWORD

clergymen and ministers of all denominations were constantly to be found amongst his hearers, and when necessity demanded, he could rise to any occasion, at any time, and before great congregations uncompromisingly hold his own. As a preacher, Spurgeon was fully convinced of the truths he taught, and could always give scriptural reasons for his beliefs. The Bible was Spurgeon's message, armoury, confidence, and argument. He preached the eternal election of men to everlasting life, but he equally stressed human accountability to God ; he never flinched to declare that which in his own mind he could not perfectly reconcile, if it was in God's Word. *Grace* was one of the preacher's favourite topics and a word ever upon his lips.

What a soul-winner the Holy Spirit made of him ! I had not been in Montreal two hours, when visiting Canada and the United States, before I met those who attributed their conversion to Spurgeon's ministry, and in every place where I preached there were men and women who, with tears of joy, ascribed the great change in their lives to the illustrious preacher. Truly, God made His minister a flame of fire. In the membership of the Tabernacle, to this day, there are quite a goodly number who were brought into fellowship with Christ and His Church through one whom they still delight to call "*our beloved Pastor.*"

This brings me to observe that C. H. Spurgeon was not only a great preacher, but he was a pastor who wielded a spiritual influence and power amongst his flock. When asked for an explanation of the phenomenal success, he would frequently reply, "My people pray for me." What prayer meetings they had in those days ! Hundreds gathered on Monday evenings for the purpose of prayerfully following the services of the Lord's Day. The institution of the

FOREWORD

Officers' Prayer Meeting, when deacons and elders gathered in the vestry with their pastor until one minute before the time for the commencement of the service, also proved of great value. These, with many other smaller prayer-groups, are continued to this day, and if the numbers have in some degree diminished the fervour and spirit remains.

Despite the multifarious works that were always engaging his mind and soliciting his counsel, Mr. Spurgeon never seemed out of touch with his Lord. I was told by one very intimate with him, that when in his company, with several others, on a railway journey, they were jovially talking together, when, at an unexpected moment, he said, "Brethren, I have just remembered something, let us pray about it together," and having related the need, some minutes were spent in brief, terse praying, led by himself.

I am also told by another amongst us who revered the memory of Mr. Spurgeon, that at a deacons' meeting a great need in one of the branches of the work was discussed, and it was generally felt that prayer upon the matter should be offered by them at once. But Mr. Spurgeon interrupted with "Wait a minute, brethren," and taking a sheet of paper, wrote : "C. H. Spurgeon, £50," and passed it round for the others to add their names and amounts. When this was completed, he said, "Now, brethren, we can conscientiously pray." Such was the man who, in the providence of God, was born into this world one hundred years ago, and who, in the short life of fifty-seven years, was enabled to do a work which stands to this day as a witness to God's faithfulness and the power of His Gospel, and which touches the uttermost parts of the earth.

H. TYDEMAN CHILVERS.

SPURGEON'S SECRET

LONDONERS love pageants, they turn out east and west, north and south for a great occasion. Coronations and Jubilees will attract hundreds of thousands of spectators, but London's greatest crowds are for funerals. It is an English characteristic to pay honour to the departed. When Wellington's body was carried through the streets with all military pomp and simplicity, there was hardly standing space along the route.

Queen Victoria's Jubilee celebrations drew an enormous concourse to the streets of the capital of the Empire, but the crowds were small in comparison with those which lined the roads when a company of crowned heads and royal persons followed all that was mortal of England's great Queen.

February 8, 1892, saw London given up to the homage of a man without a title or even an academic degree, with no political reputation and no aristocratic connections. South London from the Elephant and Castle to Norwood Cemetery, a distance of nearly five miles, presented a unique and wonderful appearance. A national tribute, a funeral procession more than two miles in length, including men and women of all classes and conditions. The simple olive casket at the head was carried amid palm branches and flowers. The Press said that over one hundred thousand people had taken part in the memorial services, and that practically all London had suspended activities as a mark of respect for the dead.

"What are they waiting for?" inquired a stranger, looking upon the closely packed thousands standing at the entrance to Norwood Cemetery.

"Don't you know? It's Spurgeon's funeral," said a woman, almost under her breath.

"Spurgeon? You mean the preacher at the Tabernacle? Well, I never thought London cared so much about any preacher."

With uncanny insight C. H. Spurgeon at the close of a sermon on December 27, 1874, said, "In a little while there will be a concourse of persons in the streets. Methinks I hear someone inquiring, 'What are all these people waiting for?' 'Do you not know, he is to be buried to-day?' 'And who is that?' 'It is Spurgeon.' 'What? The man that preached at the Tabernacle?' 'Yes, he is to be buried to-day.' That will happen very soon, and when you see my coffin carried to the silent grave I would like every one of you, whether converted or not, to be constrained to say, 'He did earnestly urge us in plain and simple language not to put off consideration of eternal things. He did entreat us to look to Christ; now he is gone, our blood is not at his door if we perish.'"

Spurgeon was a psychic man, he had the gift of seeing the invisible. Not infrequently he literally told people things about themselves which they alone knew. In speaking he would give sufficient indication to enable the person to identify himself, and then add some detail which filled the individual with fear or contrition.

Spurgeon was much more than a psychic man; he was among the elect, one of the great souls far transcending all little barriers of parties and sects and even nationalities; he belonged to the world and to all time.

We cannot do without our great men, yet they must be related to us, and their lives explainable in the terms of our experience. Emerson says: "The world is upheld by the veracity of good men, they make the earth wholesome; they who lived with them found

life glad and nutritious. Life is sweet and tolerable only in our belief in such society and actually we manage to live with superiors ; we call our children and our lands by their names, their names are wrought into the verbs of language, their works and effigies are in our houses, and every circumstance of the day recalls an anecdote of them.”¹

That is true of Spurgeon. How glad and sweet life was made by him. Many homes are called by his Christian name : Haddon Hall, Haddon Villa, Haddon Cottage are all familiar. If his name has not become a verb it is an adjective ; his likeness is still to be found in thousands of homes. It is difficult even now to form an estimate of Spurgeon's influence. Dr. A. T. Pierson made an interesting calculation. He said : “ I find that Mr. Spurgeon must have preached to no less than ten millions of people. During his pastorate he must have received into the communion of the Church between ten and twelve thousand converts. His sermons must have reached a total of between twenty and forty millions of readers, and it is probable that to-day there are more than fifty millions of people reading of Christ Whom he loved, and of his labours in the past. His sermons have gone round the world, translated into twenty-three tongues and dialects we know of : French, Italian, Spanish, German, Dutch, Swedish, Russian, Chinese, Japanese, Syriac, Arabic, South American tongues, those of the islands of the South Seas, of the continents of Asia, of Africa and of Europe, into every part of the earth they have gone, and it is impossible to form a correct or exact estimate of the marvellous influence of that one voice and of that one pen.”

All Europe seemed anxious to hear the latest news when the great preacher lay sick in Menton. Inquiries

¹ *Emerson's Complete Works*, Vol. I., p. 274.

came from the highest and the lowliest in the land ; the whole Press made arrangements for special reports, and when the pilgrim came to the end of the journey, even Fleet Street stood at the salute.

The English newspapers vied with each other in their tributes to the greatness of the one whom they described as " the greatest and the last of the Puritans." *The Times* devoted columns to an estimate of Mr. Spurgeon's influence and an analysis of his qualities. Dr. Robertson Nicoll, in an eloquent article, after giving a summary of Mr. Spurgeon's qualities, wrote : " With all these he combines the manliness of a genuine Englishman. There is nothing weak or morbid about his mind ; indeed, if he has a defect it is that there is too little pathos in his sermons. He is, if we may be allowed the expression, a typical John Bull, and it is his John Bullism in religion that has made him so popular with all classes of the community. All know him to be every inch a man, and even those most hostile to his opinions are proud of him. The charity child who, on being asked who was the Prime Minister of England, replied, ' Spurgeon,' was not far from the truth."

John Bull was a nickname invented by a political writer more than two centuries ago.¹ The name has been used to describe and to caricature a typical Englishman. We know the type ; in caricature it has been represented wherever the English tourists have succeeded in making themselves objectionable. In England John Bull is rather proud of himself and not at all dissatisfied either with his name or his personality. In religion he has been described and derided by the novelists and by the self-appointed critics of their fellows.

¹ *Law is a Bottomless Pit, or The History of John Bull*, by John Arbuthnot, 1712.

It would be interesting to recall the Nonconformist John Bull from the pages of Charles Dickens or Mark Rutherford. No doubt there was some justification for the ugly portraits, but there is another type ; perhaps it is not too much to say that C. H. Spurgeon created the type, and that his greatest contribution to constructive religion was the representation, in incomparable speech, and the embodiment in his own personality, of the characteristics of the real John Bull consecrated to the service of Jesus Christ.

John Bullism in Mr. Spurgeon was that quality of downrightness which makes a man entirely dependable. His "yea" was "yea," and his "nay," "nay." He had no use for compromise in matters of religion. It would be impossible to conceive Spurgeon writing the kind of letter Hume wrote to a young fellow who was concerned about becoming a clergyman while he was doubtful concerning the Thirty-Nine Articles. Hume says : "It is putting too great a respect on the vulgar and their superstitions to pique one's self on sincerity with regard to them. If the thing were worthy of being treated gravely, I should tell him (the young man) that the Pythian oracle with the approbation of Xenophon, advised every one to worship the gods. I wish it were still in my power to be a hypocrite in this particular. The common duties of society usually require it ; and the ecclesiastical profession only adds a little more to an innocent dissimulation, or rather simulation, without which it is impossible to pass through the world."

Commenting upon this letter, Lord Morley says : "Apart, however, from the immorality of such reasoned hypocrisy which no man with a particle of honesty would attempt to blink, there is the intellectual improbity which it brings in its train, the infidelity to truth, the disloyalty to one's own intelli-

gence. Gifts of understanding are numbed and enfeebled in a man who has once played such a trick with his own conscience as to persuade himself that, because the vulgar are superstitious, it is right for the learned to earn money by turning themselves into the ministers and accomplices of superstition."

Spurgeon might have been the speaker instead of "Honest John Morley." He hated the very thought of playing tricks in the sacred realm of conscience. Some of his most stern and terrible words were spoken in condemnation of playing fast and loose with truth. He had sympathy and compassion for the thief, the harlot, and the drunkard, but for the dissembler he had the searchlight and the whip. What could be said for those who sell their spiritual birthright for so poor a mess of pottage as public approval? Perhaps they have a private hell of their own which even Spurgeon's rhetoric could not describe.

Of Falkland it was said, "He was so severe an adorer of truth that he could as easily have given himself leave to steal as to dissemble." Irrespective of the changes of public opinion, Spurgeon remained true to Truth as he understood it. Truth was not to him a circle including all error; it was rather a straight line.

John Bull stands for a certain frankness not easily distinguished from rudeness. He is often misunderstood, and John Bullism is a term sometimes used in disparagement. There may be something in it that suggests closing an eye to one's own faults and frailties while using an outspoken bluntness in the criticism of others; but it may be simply a love of reality, an attempt to clear the air and tear away the cloak of shams. It was that in Spurgeon.

There is a love of adventure about John Bull. He is a seagoing man, a pioneer. For him there is sheer joy

in trying the unknown path and sailing the uncharted ocean. Spurgeon's religion was not a conservative, prosaic affair of Sundays and of churches ; there was something of romance about it. It was a conflict, a going forth to the war, and, truth to tell, Spurgeon loved the battlefield. Moral opiates were not for him ; he felt the call of the blood, the response of chivalry.

It may be said that John Bull takes himself too seriously, has too much faith in himself. Yet it is not conceit, though if any man might have been forgiven for having a good opinion of himself, truly that man was Spurgeon. No building in London was large enough to contain the crowds desiring to hear his voice ; no church in the world had a roll-call of more than half the membership of that over which he presided as the chief shepherd.

It may be characteristic of John Bullism to cultivate a rough exterior that cares nothing for the opinions of others, but John Bull is peculiarly sensitive to praise and blame. Spurgeon once wrote : " I was reading an article in a newspaper, very much in my praise. It always makes me feel sad, so sad that I could cry, if ever I see anything praising me ; it breaks my heart. I feel I do not deserve it, and then I say : now I must try to do better, so that I may deserve it. If the world abuses me I am a match for that, I begin to like it. It may fire all its big guns at me, I will not return a solitary shot, but just store them up and grow rich upon the old iron."

Spurgeon all through his preaching related the Gospel of Christ to questions of conduct ; his standard of values was Christ-likeness, it was the one test of reality. In this his " John Bullism " was very assertive ; there were no half tones : the saved people lived the saved life. " By their fruits ye shall know them." He built upon foundations grim, but firm and enduring ;

putting all the weight upon the character and purpose of God as revealed in Jesus Christ.

"Any attempt to estimate Spurgeon's place in the religious life of England must take note of the outstanding fact that he touched the lives of great multitudes and quickened them to finer issues. No human computation will be able to reckon the number of weary toilers in the working and lower middle classes whose narrow surroundings have been brightened and idealised by the glow from the realm of faith to which he introduced them. It was a great thing which this man achieved, to convince multitudes of struggling people in the midst of a life which everything tended to belittle, that their character and career were a matter of infinite concern to the Power Who made them; that they could not afford to treat sin lightly or to throw themselves away as though they were of no account."¹

During a long life Spurgeon was supreme in the pulpit. Proud of his "John Bullism," calling "a spade" "a spade," he struck a new note in preaching. Natural but not vulgar, he was not fastidious in the choice of words; there was a bluntness, almost a rugged brutality about many of his utterances. With consummate art and absolute honesty he described things as they were.

Spurgeon made frequent use of illustrations and incidents drawn from the common experiences of the ways of the world. Other teachers sought to point the moral by quoting a classic tag, perhaps in the original. He told the simple tale, so familiar that anyone who possessed the seeing eye and the understanding heart might have related it. The "goings-on" of the Universe—to use the quaint phrase of Wordsworth, a writer he loved—always interested him. He was far

¹ *Christian World*, February 4, 1892.

more concerned with people than with places. He had the gift of seeing all that was there. The vast congregations enthralled by the charm of his oratory, may not have recognised how keen and penetrating was the observation that enabled him to draw word pictures with geometrical accuracy. All the details of the story were true to life; they were the reproductions of actuality, the trifles that make perfection. Charles Dickens in his crowded pages gave special care to "the thousand and one next to nothings" that make up the life of the common people. It was so with Spurgeon.

Of almost any one of the thousands of sermons Spurgeon preached and printed, it might be said, as Johnson said of Gray's *Elegy*: "It abounds with images which find a mirror in every mind, and with sentiments to which every bosom returns an echo."

The great preacher speaks to man, the universal humanity. He appeals to that which is possessed by each and recognisable by anyone. He holds up no vague ideal, beautiful as the clouds and as unsubstantial, but the truth that all can recognise.

Spurgeon was a great artist in words, modelling his speech upon the Authorised Version of the English Bible, Shakespeare, and John Bunyan. Long ago Sir William Robertson Nicoll suggested I should read the ten volumes of the *New Park Street Pulpit* and mark the classical quotations and allusions in the sermons; there are no writings of the time so rich in flowers from other gardens.

Spurgeon was deeply versed in the word values of our Saxon tongue. As Mark Rutherford says: "The English of the Authorised Version of the Scriptures is sufficient for nearly everything, excluding science, that a human being need know or feel." Spurgeon had not the Latinised phrases nor the polysyllabic sen-

tences of the preachers of his time. He talked the sweet simple English, transparent in its meaning, strong and unyielding, yet tender and welcome as the gentle summer breeze.

Thought and speech are inseparable. As Newman says : " Matter and expression are parts of one ; style is thinking out into language. This is literature, not things, but the verbal symbols of things ; not on the other hand mere words, but thoughts expressed in language."

There is no misunderstanding Spurgeon's meaning. He had the grace of sincerity and the gift of simplification. It is very difficult to be truthful in some forms of speech, and it is equally true that it is not easy to dissemble in straightforward phrases. Spurgeon was a lover of words, it was his delight to dissect them, to turn them about, and to see just where they fitted. Some of his spoken utterances seemed to lose in force when they were transferred to the printed page ; that was because he so scrupulously revised his own work and would insist upon the use of the right term to express his meaning.

Forty years have passed since Spurgeon's mortal remains were laid to rest. Great changes have taken place in the social and religious life of England. Forty years ago the minister was almost without competition. The mass of the people on Sunday evening, if they were too respectable to go to a public-house, could go to a place of worship or sit at home and doze. The cinema was unknown, the motor car was not even a dream, and cheap locomotion from the metropolis to the beauty spots of the country had not been thought about. There were halls, most of them small and unclean, where secularism was preached, but practically the churches had it all their own way.

Spurgeon was a preacher, the greatest of his time,

perhaps of any time or land, but a preacher is necessarily a middle-man, an interpreter. He does not originate his message, but clothes it in the thought of the day, and in most instances at the end of the day when the work is done he passes out of sight, almost as surely as the circles made upon the face of a lake when a stone is cast into the water.

The Spurgeon institutions remain to continue their beneficent ministry. The Metropolitan Tabernacle in which Spurgeon preached is something of a Non-conformist shrine. It still is the home of one of the largest congregations in London, and its activities are many. All over the world there are ministers who were trained in Spurgeon's College ; they proclaim the things for which he stood. What else is there indicating his influence ?

What is it that constitutes to-day our debt to C. H. Spurgeon ? Dr. Fullerton ¹ endeavours to answer the question. " The obvious answer will probably not be the true one. We may be inclined to say that Spurgeon's Tabernacle, Spurgeon's College, and Spurgeon's Orphanage are his legacy, but it would be nearer the mark to say that they are only his memorial. We can rejoice in the fine tribute their prosperity pays to his memory, but they can scarcely be looked upon as his chief contribution to the life of to-day. A similar verdict might be given as regards the amazing library that he has left us. I write facing what is perhaps the finest collection of his works : one hundred and three volumes bound in calf ; and the more I consult them the greater is the wonder that one brain and one pen could be responsible for them all. But they are not his legacy, they are not available to most people, and their very prodigality makes it difficult to find the way through them, but selections of them are still used and

¹ *Souls of Men*, p. 2.

valued. The most unexpected people sometimes testify that they read a Spurgeon sermon in preparation for Sunday, or actually read one before resting every night. I ask myself, what is it they are seeking? Whatever it is, it is his legacy.

"Now what is Spurgeon's legacy? At length, on awaking one morning, it came to me as if spoken by the very voice of God: 'His testimony to the converting power of the Gospel.' The conversion of his hearers was the constant aim of his ministry, and therefore the constant result of it. The word 'therefore' is not used thoughtlessly. His often quoted rejoinder to his first student came from his own experience. When Medhurst complained that he was not having conversions, Spurgeon said in assumed surprise: 'But you do not expect conversions every time you preach, do you?' 'Oh, no, of course not!' 'And that is why you do not have them!'"

Dr. Fullerton's opinion is worthy of all respect, but we are unable to accept it as explaining Spurgeon's legacy. Testimony to the converting power of the Gospel has been given for nearly two thousand years by almost every preacher whose name has survived for a generation. St. Paul left it on record that he was not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ. He gave his reasons. "For it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek, for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, the just shall live by faith." Later he declares, to his converts at Corinth¹: "I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, and my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power."

¹ I. Cor. ii. 4.

Testimony to the converting power of the Gospel might be quoted from Whitefield, Wesley, Moody and from Dr. Fullerton himself. All preachers of the Gospel who have had experience of the signs following which constitute the deepest joy of the ministry, can bear like testimony. They have learned by experience that He is able to save to the utmost, and if by some enticement of evil they have weakened their faith in the converting power of the Gospel, in that there may be the explanation of the spiritual sickness of the modern Church. We must go deeper before we find Spurgeon's secret. He was a colossal man, so many-sided. Of the few things about which he was sure, he was very sure, and we may be thankful for his priceless testimony. He certainly was a great expert in the art of dealing with the souls of men. It was given to him "to precipitate decision"; it would be almost impossible for Spurgeon to have doubted the converting power of the Holy Spirit through the Gospel. For many years scarcely a day passed without the news coming to him of some people who rejoiced in their new-found faith.

Dr. Marcus Dods, writing of Professor Drummond, declared that he was the most widely known, the most honoured, the most influential man of his time. He says, "No man, be he statesman, philosopher, poet or novelist, was endowed with so distinctive an individuality or wielded so unique an authority as Henry Drummond." We think the paragraph might have been written with far more truth concerning Spurgeon. No man of the Victorian age invaded the spheres of life with such penetrating and far-reaching influence. He was a massive personality, like a granite boulder torn from the rugged hillside, a landmark in the history of the Church, indicating a turning point, one of the men of destiny only given to the world in a wide cycle of years.

He was the last of the Puritans, that is of the great Puritans, towering above the men of his time as a great Alpine mountain ; an attraction to storms, a solitary figure, sharing the loneliness that is the price of leadership. He had no successor ; how could he have ? It was said with truth that when God shaped Spurgeon He broke the mould. Such leaders leave followers but not successors. Each man does his own work, and his work is not that of filling another man's place, but occupying the place to which God calls him.

What was it that made the son of an obscure country minister the greatest orator of modern times, the greatest evangelist since the days of St. Paul ? There have been many answers, but no explanation.

I recall a Friday afternoon in the college hall when Spurgeon was speaking. He said, " When I am gone, all sorts of people will write my life, they will have some difficulty in accounting for the position God has given me. I can tell you two reasons why I am what I am." He paused and slowly added, " My mother, and the truth of my message."

His mother and his message account for much. Was there ever a great man without a great woman somewhere near, frequently the mother ? How much did Augustine owe to Monica ? Not more than Spurgeon owed to the gracious, simple woman who told him at her knee the old, old story that he clothed in new forms and wondrous power.

Spurgeon undoubtedly had a whole-hearted belief in the truth of his message. He was impatient with those who qualified or modified the Gospel. He literally believed in the grace of God as the dynamic powerful enough to change lives and to save to the utmost. His Saviour was no dead Christ buried under the Syrian sky, but the Lord Who lives for evermore,

mighty to save. And yet—mother and message are not sufficient to account for the wonderful personality that took London by storm. Dr. James A. Spurgeon, "Brother James," who was co-pastor at the Tabernacle for many years, had the same mother and the same message, but he was a very different type of man. We do not compare the brothers, they were colleagues and worked harmoniously through the years ; perhaps it is not too much to say that James Spurgeon's assistance at the Tabernacle did much to keep his brother in the saddle. They were supplementary in their gifts, but as unlike as any two men could well be.

While on a visit to Florence with Mr. William Higgs, an American minister, being introduced to the pastor of the Tabernacle, said, "I have long wished to see you, Mr. Spurgeon, and to put one or two simple questions to you. Would you mind answering?" Mr. Spurgeon bowed. "In our country," continued the interviewer, "there are many opinions as to the secret of your great influence. Would you be good enough to give me your own point of view?" After a moment's pause, Mr. Spurgeon said, "My people pray for me." The questioner was rather taken aback by the reply.

"My people pray for me," showed the humility of the man and the value he set upon the prayers of other people. No doubt the interviewer had considered many solutions of the problem of the phenomenal success of the preacher. Spurgeon had unfailing faith in prayer. It was always a joy to him to know that he was remembered where remembrance is of most value. And yet "my people pray for me" is not the full explanation. Many other ministers were happy in the consciousness that their people prayed for them, but they were not Spurgeons.

The great questions that puzzle the mind are not answered in simple sentences, or by "Yes" or "No." Dr. Robertson Nicoll claimed to explain Spurgeon's power in three words: "The Holy Ghost." This is perhaps the best known to us, but it is not all there is to be said. The Holy Spirit works through human instrumentalities; once and again He inspires sovereign personalities who become leaders of the hosts. It is useless to attempt to explain them by the conventional standards of the time; they belong to no class or type.

It is not sufficient explanation to say that Spurgeon's greatness is accounted for by his personality. Personality is a much misunderstood word. It may be regarded as a matter of chance or accident, like fair hair or hazel eyes.—Other writers beside Dr. Johnson might have declared that "the use of language was for the concealment of thought."—What is meant by personality? The word "persona" from which the English word is derived, meant simply "the mask" worn by actors on the classic stage. All the characters in Greek and Roman drama used the mask when they performed. In Latin the mask is the "persona" from "persono," meaning "I sound through." The word came to signify the character personated. From the theatre it passed to the ordinary walks of life, and "person" stood for the character the individual presented to the world, the part he played in life. "All the world's a stage and all the men and women merely players; they have their exits and their entrances, and one man in his time plays many parts." The part that makes the impression that abides is the person, for in this life we can only judge by what we see and hear. The individual spirit is known to God alone, but that personality, what is it? A matter of fate, something from which there is no escape? Does

the word give the impression of powerlessness, as of the clay in the hand of the potter ?

Was it hereditary ? Spurgeon was a youthful prodigy ; it could hardly be otherwise. His father, the Rev. John Spurgeon, was frequently from home, and Charles had the study for his playground. He was said to be " always reading, never digging in the garden or keeping pigeons like other boys, but always books and books." If his mother wanted to take him for a ride she would be sure to find him in the study reading a book. Like many another little fellow he soon began to preach. Once when the children were missing, the father found them in the stable, James sitting on the manger, his sisters on straw below, and Charles standing before them in a full flood of oratory.

But there have been many prodigies of youthful genius. Voltaire could read when he was four and wrote verses from the cradle. At ten he was discussing important questions of the day. Haller knew the Greek Testament from cover to cover at ten, and made Homer and Horace his special favourites at twelve. Humphry Davy was making witty rhymes at five, Descartes was the little philosopher at eight ; Bentham was writing Greek and Latin at four, and passed his examination at Oxford at ten.¹

Heredity may not be the Hamlet of the drama. A great man, it has been said, condemns the world to the task of explaining him. There is a fascination in endeavouring to trace the river to its sources. Spurgeon was scarcely in his grave before his biographers were arranging his pedigree, though Spurgeon said, " I would rather be able to trace my lineage back to the men who suffered for righteousness' sake than to have the blood of the noblest Royal Family of Europe coursing in my veins."

¹ *Heredity and Human Affairs.*

All the researches in the realm of heredity leave us without any solution of Spurgeon's influence. The jargon of the Genetic Constitution required to produce the maximum of the highest type, leaves us where we were. The individual may be a whole population, the streams that contribute to the river may be beyond counting, and only infinite wisdom can tell what they add in value to the sum total.

Legends always creep into the life stories of the great. A man's biography may be written at his own expense. Spurgeon loved to regard himself as one of the people. He had the Scottish virtue of depreciation. It was quite pardonable to think that John Ploughman came from the labourers in the hayfield, the men who prided themselves upon their ability to plough a straight furrow.

Our great men are public property ; their lives are lived in the limelight of publicity. There is a justifiable curiosity to see them as they are. They engage the attention of the public, and while they live their private life they are so much in evidence that they are self-revealed.

The material for Spurgeon's biography is public property ; it is in the press of the period of his long ministry. He was not only a great leader, he lived one of the most public of lives. The things that he did and those that he said or wrote are all chronicled ; so much so that a writer of the period said, "Mr. Spurgeon's biography has been, as it were, constantly written up to date in the current periodic literature of his time. At his death nothing or almost nothing remained to be told respecting him."

Since Mr. Spurgeon's death a generation has grown up to whom he is little more than a name. Perhaps the time has come to interpret the man and his message in the light of the years. Like Dr. Johnson, Spurgeon

is one of those who gain by being impartially drawn, though unless he has vision and sincerity the work of an impartial biographer will be just as insipid as that of the neutral historian.

There have been many "Lives" of Spurgeon, there may not be room for another, yet somehow the biographers have depicted the great preacher, the orthodox theologian, the philanthropist, but we have not yet the full-length portrait of Spurgeon, that elusive, wonderful personality that might have been anything if by the grace of God he had not been what he was.

Those who are concerned with the framework of Spurgeon's life have not far to seek. These pages are not intended simply as a biography, but an attempt to give an interpretation of the man and his message for our time. To do this it is necessary to see the man as he was, not as he appeared to exaggerated affection or in the limelight that was so generously thrown upon his memory.

The new tendency in literary biography is to attempt to give the naked facts without any touches of idealisation. The fashion was introduced in America and described as "debunking." It was introduced into England by Mr. Lytton Strachey in his *Life of Queen Victoria*. It is all to the good that succeeding generations should have truthful portraits of the great ones of the past, but the "debunking" process seems to have gone to the extreme in attempting to discover defects in the heroes and leaders of bygone times.

It is not my intention to write a eulogy, though that might be pardonable, for in common with hundreds of ministers I am greatly indebted to Spurgeon. As a student I sat at his feet in the Pastors' College, and one of the greatest honours of my life was that he called me his friend.

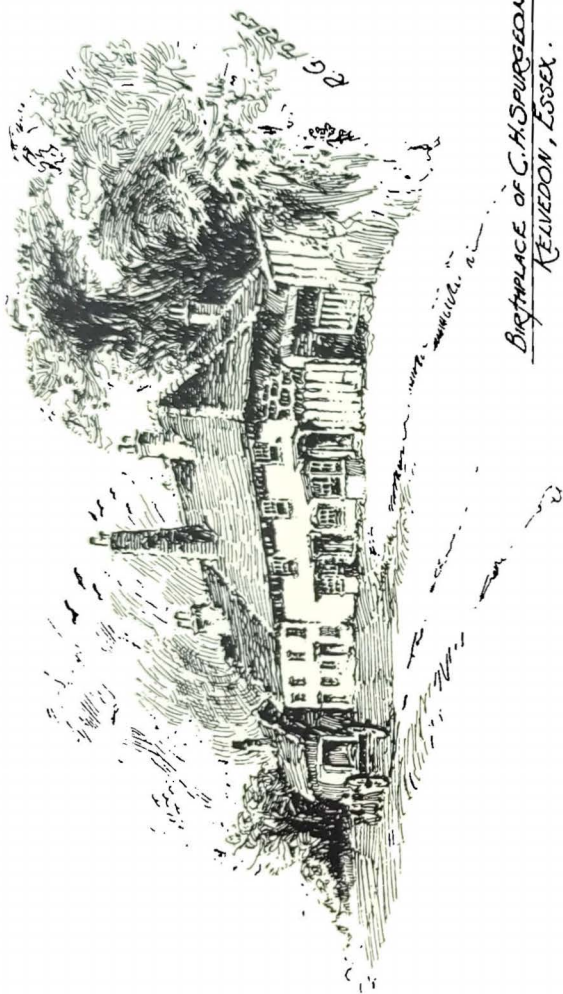
I recognise that the surest way to the dethronement of

the kings in the realm of thought is to claim for them despotic sovereignty. Each of the immortals elected to permanent influence must die to live. The local and sectional fall away ; errors in judgment, mistakes in exegesis, and the personal bias which dim the vision, must be recognised so that they do not obscure the enduring truth and wisdom. This is freely admitted in science, law, and literature. To forget it in theology is fatal. No preacher retains his supremacy except by becoming universal. Spurgeon, the Protestant Baptist, was a true Catholic, overflowing all limitations until his personality penetrated the life of the Church.

At one time it was generally expected that he would found another denomination. Nearly a thousand ministers had sworn fealty to him, and many thousands in the churches would have responded to his call. There were leaders of wealth and influence who urged that he should become the rallying personality of another communion. Never for a moment did he yield to the temptation. He hated sectarianism—the spirit that creates separation among Christians.

There have been few leaders of creative genius in religious history. Scholars, ecclesiastics, preachers, echoes, manipulators, but where shall we look for creative work ? Was there not something in Spurgeon's wonderful achievements which indicated creative genius ? Did he not present a new type of the Christian religion ? Does he not belong to the category of Athanasius, St. Francis, and the little group who in different periods of the world's history have given a new expression of religion, and have turned the current of religious history into fresh channels ?

An interpretation of the man and his message may be a contribution to the religious history of our country.



BIRTHPLACE OF C. H. SPURGEON,
KELVEDON, ESSEX.

THE CHILD IS FATHER OF THE MAN

MR. SPURGEON had some characteristics of the sturdy Hollanders : their love of flowers, their industry, their simple habits. The persecution of the Duke of Alva sent blessings to this land, not the least of them being the refugees who brought new industries to our shores. Among the refugees were the Spurgeons who settled in Essex.

The Spurgeon ancestry is a curious mixture : Huguenots, with their passionate love of Protestantism and freedom ; and Quakers, with their illumination of the inner light and dislike of all forms and rituals. There was one, Job Spurgeon, of Dedham, who in 1677 suffered for conscience' sake. A distress warrant was taken out against him, his goods were seized, and he was committed to prison for the atrocious crime of attending service out of church. Six years later, in 1683, he was again convicted for a similar offence. " On the 22nd of the month, called July, with three others, Job Spurgeon, of Dedham, was committed by warrant to Chelmsford Gaol. They were, after a few weeks, bailed out till sessions, but on their appearance there on the 3rd of October they were required to give sureties for their good behaviour, which refusing to do, they were re-committed to prison, where three of them lay upon straw about fifteen weeks in the midst of a winter remarkable for extremity of cold ; but the fourth, Job Spurgeon, being so weak that he was unable to lie down, sat up in a chair the most part of that time." ¹

Spurgeon's immediate ancestors were Congregational Independents. His father and grandfather

¹ Thomas Sharp in *The Friend*, February 26, 1892.

were ministers of Congregational Churches, so that in his personality different types were represented : Huguenots, Quakers and Independents came to flower and perfection in the Baptist.

Spurgeon was born at Kelvedon, June 19, 1834. His father was Pastor John Spurgeon. C. H. was first of seventeen children. His mother was a woman of unusual piety and prayerfulness. When John Spurgeon laid one of the corner stones of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, he related this incident which is not without significance. "I had been from home a great deal, trying to build up weak congregations, and felt that I was somewhat neglecting the religious training of my own children while I toiled for the good of others. I returned home with these feelings. I opened the door and found none of the children about. Going quietly upstairs, I heard my wife's voice ; she was engaged in prayer with the children. I heard her pray for them one by one. She came to Charles and specially prayed for him, for he was of high spirit and daring temper. I listened until she had ended, and I said to myself, 'Lord, I will go on with Thy work ; the children will be cared for.'"

Spurgeon owed very much to the influence of his mother. He loved to talk of the old homestead, and his last thoughts of literary work were connected with the project of a book upon Stambourne. He loved every bit of the old Essex town. Kelvedon and Stambourne were the world of his boyhood. The people had not the advantages of State education ; though Lord Ashley had commenced his brave fight for social betterment, very little headway was being made, and the times were hard.

John Spurgeon removed to Colchester, spending the week in the town keeping the books for a coal merchant, and on Sunday going out to Tollesbury where he

ministered to a little congregation, while Charles was at Stambourne with his grandfather.

A writer to the *Christian World* says: "Down in Essex, where I paid a visit last autumn, near Kelvedon, I heard that Mr. Spurgeon was regarded as a boy as somewhat shy and reticent, if not indeed somewhat morose. As a matter of fact, no doubt he was drinking in everything he heard and saw to be given forth again, however, with good interest when the time came. He was largely brought up by his grandfather, who was for fifty years Independent minister at Stambourne, a shrewd, clever old man he appears to have been, whom local tradition regards as the origin, so far as wit and wisdom are concerned, at all events, of that famous personage, John Ploughman."

Mr. Telford adds to our information. He describes the minister of Stambourne as "a preacher of rare spiritual force about whom one hearer said quaintly that a sermon from his lips made 'his wing feathers grow a foot.' He could mount up as eagles, after being fed with such heavenly food. A devout working man paid him a great tribute. 'He was always so experimental you felt as if he had been inside of a man.'"

Spurgeon grew up in the atmosphere of the evangelical faith. The boy learned the religious vocabulary of the old people who came to his grandfather's house. He described his religious experiences in the terminology of age rather than of youth. Many of his utterances now read as unreal; they belong to a long-forgotten past. The experience of conversion in all its essential features has never changed, but the language used to describe the great adventure of faith is so different that it almost gives the impression of indicating something totally different. "Christianity," wrote Henry Drummond some thirty years ago, "is learning from science to go back to the facts. There is, however,"

he continued, "one portion of this field of facts which is still strangely neglected and to which a scientific theology may turn its next attention. The evidence for Christianity is not the Evidences. The evidence for Christianity is a Christian."

Spurgeon saw the lives of those about him and he learned that there was something in them that he did not possess. He had, as he said, "a clear and sharp sense of the justice of God. Sin, whatever it might be to other people, became to me an intolerable burden. It was not so much that I feared hell as that I feared sin, and all the while I had upon my mind a deep concern for the honour of God's name. I felt that it would not satisfy my conscience if I could be forgiven unjustly, but then there came the question, how could God be just and yet justify me, who had been so guilty? I was worried and wearied with this question, neither could I see any answer to it."¹

There is something pathetic about the young Spurgeon suffering fear, distress, and grief because of the consciousness of his sins. The experience is only to be understood by recalling the fact that Spurgeon was much older than his years, that he was brought up among those who talked about the deeper experiences of the soul as commonplace. Sin may be judged by the standard of actual experience. Reading Spurgeon's writings at the time he was seeking the way to Calvary would give the impression that, like Bunyan's "Pilgrim," he had gone through the slough and the muck, that he had touched the bottom of the abyss, making the experience of the drunken tinker of Bedford his own.

There is another way of interpreting the consciousness of sin. It is by the failure to attain the ideal. "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, it is sin."

¹ *C. H. S. Autobiography*, I., p. 98.

It is out of date to write about the conviction of sin ; and yet is it ? The consciousness of wrong-doing, with the penalties sure to follow, is still a terrible reality. It would be better to drop the mask and to look plainly at the facts. Spurgeon says : " Personally I could never have overcome my own sinfulness. I tried and failed ; my evil propensities were too many for me, till in the belief that Christ died for me I cast my guilty soul on Him, and then I received a conquering principle by which I overcame my sinful self."

Mark Rutherford, in *Catherine Furze*, wrote : " I can assure my incredulous literary friends that years ago it was not uncommon for men and women suddenly to awaken to the fact that they had been sinners, and to determine that henceforth they would keep God's commandments by the help of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. What is more extraordinary is that they did keep God's commandments for the rest of their lives."

One of the most appealing passages in the literature of the soul is Spurgeon's description of an early experience under conviction of sin. For literary beauty and charm it should have a high place in any anthology of the literature of the soul.

" There was a day, as I took my walks abroad, when I came hard by a spot for ever engraven upon my memory, for there I saw this Friend, my best, my only Friend, murdered. I stooped down in sad affright, and looked at Him. I saw that His hands had been pierced with rough iron nails, and His feet had been rent in the same way. There was misery in His dead countenance so terrible that I scarcely dared to look upon it. His body was emaciated with hunger. His back was red with bloody scourges, and His brow had a circle of wounds about it : clearly could one see that these had been pierced by thorns. I shuddered,

for I had known this Friend full well. He never had a fault ; He was the purest of the pure, the holiest of the holy. Who could have injured Him ? For He never injured any man : all His life long He ' went about doing good.' He had healed the sick, He had fed the hungry, He had raised the dead : for which of these works did they kill Him ? He had never breathed out anything else but love ; and as I looked into the poor sorrowful face, so full of agony, and yet so full of love, I wondered who could have been a wretch so vile as to pierce hands like His.

" I said within myself, ' Where can these traitors live ? Who are these that could have smitten such an One as this ? ' Had they murdered an oppressor, we might have forgiven them ; had they slain one who had indulged in vice or villainy, it might have been his desert ; had it been a murderer and a rebel, or one who had committed sedition, we would have said, ' Bury his corpse : justice has at last given him his due.' But when Thou wast slain, my best, my only-beloved, where lodged the traitors ? Let me seize them, and they shall be put to death. If there be torments that I can devise, surely they shall endure them all. Oh ! what jealousy, what revenge I felt ! If I might but find these murderers, what would I not do with them ! And as I looked upon that corpse, I heard a footstep, and wondered where it was. I listened, and I clearly perceived that the murderer was close at hand. It was dark, and I groped about to find him. I found that, somehow or other, wherever I put out my hand, I could not meet with him, for he was nearer to me than my hand would go. At last I put my hand upon my breast. ' I have thee now,' said I ; for lo ! he was in my own heart ; the murderer was hiding within my own bosom, dwelling in the recesses of my inmost soul. Ah ! then I wept indeed, that I, in the very presence

of my murdered Master, should be harbouring the murderer ; and I felt myself most guilty while I bowed over His corpse, and sang that plaintive hymn :—

‘ ’Twas you, my sins, my cruel sins,
His chief tormentors were ;
Each of my crimes became a nail,
And unbelief the spear.’ ”

Years after, when Spurgeon was famous, in September, 1855, he preached in a field in King Edward's Road, Hackney, London. It was a lovely evening ; about twelve thousand people listened to a sermon lasting nearly an hour. It was afterwards printed with the title, “Heaven and Hell.” In it Mr. Spurgeon said, “I can remember the time when my sins first stared me in the face. I thought myself the most accursed of all men. I had not committed any great open transgression against God, but I recollected that I had been well trained and tutored, and I thought my sins were thus greater than the sins of others.”

Desperately in earnest, he sought the way of life. He determined to make a pilgrimage to every place of worship in Colchester in the hope that he might find that which he was seeking. “I set off,” he writes, “determined to go round to all the chapels, and I went to all the places of worship, and though I dearly venerate the men that occupy those pulpits now, and did so then, I am bound to say that I never heard once fully preached the Gospel. I mean by that they preached truth, great truth, many good truths that were fitting to many of their congregations, spiritually minded people ; but what I wanted to know was : how can I get my sins forgiven ? And they never once told me that.”

Poor boy, brought up upon books of devotion : Dr. Doddridge's *Life and Progress of Religion in the Soul*,

Baxter's *Call to the Unconverted*, and yet, not knowing the way. In truth the wind bloweth where it listeth. There came a time when what seemed to be the caprice of the weather brought light to the mind and joy to the heart of the youthful seeker.

Mr. Spurgeon's father, referring to the conversion of his son, said : " I was as I remain, in the Congregational Church, and it was to the Independent Church that I drove over every Sunday from Colchester to Tollesbury. Charles was going with me on the Sunday with which I am concerned. However, this particular Sunday turned out stormy, and his mother said, ' You had better go to the Primitive Methodist Church,' and he went."

Mr. Spurgeon himself takes up the story. " I sometimes think I might have been in darkness and despair until now had it not been for the goodness of God in sending a snow-storm one Sunday, while I was going to a certain place of worship. When I could go no further I turned down a side street and came to a little Primitive Methodist Chapel. In that chapel there may have been a dozen or fifteen people. I had heard of the Primitive Methodists, how they sang so loudly that they made people's heads ache, but that did not matter to me. I wanted to know how I might be saved, and if they could tell me that I did not care how much they made my head ache.

" The minister did not come that morning ; he was snowed up, I suppose. At last a very thin looking man, a shoemaker or tailor or something of that sort, went up into the pulpit to preach."

It is interesting to note that at least three persons claim to have been that very thin looking man. The Circuit minister was the Rev. Robert Eaglen. According to the Rev. Danzy Sheen, Mr. Eaglen was the preacher, though he does not seem to have been quite

sure about it himself, and when he was introduced to Mr. Spurgeon he failed entirely to convince him that he was the man who stood in the pulpit that morning.

Mr. Spurgeon himself never regarded the preacher as a minister but as a local. The text was, "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." The preacher bungled over the pronunciation. Spurgeon's representation could hardly be true had the preacher been a trained minister. The preacher began thus, wrote Spurgeon : " My dear friends, this is a very simple text indeed. It says, ' Look.' Now lookin' don't take a deal of pains. It ain't liftin' your foot or your finger ; it is just ' look.' Well, a man needn't go to college to learn to look. You may be the biggest fool, and yet you can look. A man needn't be worth a thousand a year to be able to look. Anyone can look ; even a child can look. But then the text says, ' Look unto Me.' Ay ! " said he in broad Essex, " many on ye are lookin' to yourselves, but it's no use lookin' there. You'll never find any comfort in yourselves. Some look to God the Father. No, look to Him by-and-by. Jesus Christ says, ' Look unto Me.' Some on ye say, ' We must wait for the Spirit's workin'.' You have no business with that just now. Look to *Christ*. The text says, ' Look unto Me.' "

Spurgeon thought the preacher had got to the end of the tether when, greatly to his surprise, the very thin man looked straight at him and said, " Young man, you look very miserable, and you always will be miserable : miserable in life and miserable in death if you don't obey my text, but if you obey now, this moment, you will be saved. Young man, look to Jesus Christ, look. You have nothin' to do but to look and live."

The preaching was crude enough, but it had in it the power of God unto salvation. Spurgeon wrote,

"I looked until I could almost have looked my eyes away. There and then the cloud was gone, the darkness had rolled away, and that moment I saw the sun, and I could have risen that instant and sung with the most enthusiastic of them, of the precious Blood of Christ and the simple faith which looks alone to Him."

There are many ways to the Way. Some find Christ with sudden and dramatic vividness, as Paul on the road to Damascus ; others grow up like Timothy, with the faith that was in their grandmother and their mother. John Bunyan's "Pilgrim" toiled along a weary way with his load upon his back, until he came to the Cross and there found release, as in an instant. God's way of bringing the human spirit to Himself cannot be standardised or stereotyped. The fact is the same, but the means vary with the experience of each individual.

The boy returned home with the new faith in his heart and a love-light in his eye. He wanted to tell his wonderful experience, but the hours wore on and he was tongue-tied. "That night," said his father, "we were all at home, and after reading a prayer I said, 'Come, boys, it's time to go to bed.' 'Father,' said Charles, 'I don't want to go to bed yet.' 'Come, come,' said I, whereupon he said he wanted to speak to me. We sat up long into the night and he talked to me of being saved and told what had taken place that day, and how right glad I was to hear his talk."

Spurgeon's experience found expression in the letters written at that period. His utterances were full of overflowing gratitude and love. He describes the working of the grace of God on the heart and life with a mellowness and fullness which are an amazement and a joy. He wrote many letters to his father and to his

friends. He believed with the moderns that the experience of conversion must have its verification in conduct.

The new psychology, or rather some of its exponents, are entirely sceptical of sudden conversion. They seek to trace this strange experience as the tourist would trace the streamlet backwards, from the river to the spring. They explain it, but those who are familiar with the clinic of the spirit have no doubts about the reality of the experience.

In 1873 Moody and Sankey began a wonderful mission in Great Britain and Ireland. Some of the meetings were held in Birmingham where Dr. Dale, one of the keenest reasoners, was then exercising his ministry at Carr's Lane. Dr. Dale wrote: "I had seen occasional instances before of instant transition from religious anxiety to the clear and triumphant consciousness of restoration to God; but what struck me in the gallery of Bingley Hall was the fact that this instant transition took place with nearly every person with whom I talked. They had come up into the gallery anxious, restless, feeling after God in the darkness, and when after a conversation of a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes, they went away, their faces were filled with light and they left me not only at peace with God but filled with joy. I have seen the sun rise from the top of Helvellyn and the top of the Rigi, and there is something very glorious in it; but to see the light of heaven suddenly strike on man after man in the course of one evening is very much more thrilling."

Spurgeon's conversion should be a great encouragement to those who preach to small congregations. It was said that the authorities at the little chapel were half inclined to cancel the service; it was so cold and there was no chance of warming the building, and the

worshippers were so few, almost to be counted upon the tips of the fingers. What might the world have missed had that service not taken place !

In the life of Thomas Hardy it is recorded that in the early years he was very concerned about spiritual things and agreed to accompany a friend to the Prayer Meeting at the Baptist Chapel. But a circus came to the town that day and the people did not go to the Prayer Meeting, they were so few that the meeting was not held. Hardy waited and waited, and then went away, wondering what value there was in prayer, and whether there was any reality in the faith of the little company with whom he might have prayed and perchance entered into the experience that Spurgeon knew.

Spurgeon's letters describing the event reveal the secrets of his heart. He said in after years, "A man's writing desk should be used to make his biography." That is so, providing the man did not write for the public. Spurgeon's letters to his mother warm the heart and bring a mist to the eyes. He writes from Newmarket where he had gone as usher : "I am most happy and comfortable. I read French exercises every night. I have 33 houses at present where I leave tracts." To his father he writes, "There are but four boarders and about twelve day-boys. I have a nice little mathematical class and have quite as much time for study as I had before. . . . Who can refrain from speaking of the marvellous love of Jesus which I hope has opened mine eyes. Now I see Him I can firmly trust to Him for my eternal salvation."

He knew how to delight in the Lord. There is really no justification for laughter except in belief in God. The normal experience of the Christian life is gladness, and Spurgeon had found the source of joy and entered into the rich heritage of those thirsty

pilgrims who came upon the well and drew to their hearts' content.

The literature of conversion reveals the varieties of religious experience, and yet the twice-born have certain unmistakable marks, which are the hall-marks of reality. It is not enough that the convert should experience that strange warming of the heart which Wesley describes. The warmth must become heat, translating sentiment into strength for service. Wesley's conversion was verified by the life to which it gave purpose. That strange hour on May 24, 1738, was really the hour of the birth of the great evangelical movement now united in the Methodist Church.

Spurgeon came to the Lord. When he looked to Christ he not only saw the vision, but, like Isaiah, heard the call to the vocation and answered, "Here am I, send me." Professor Coe¹ says: "In the absence of the heavenly quality in the life, no experience of eternal wonders is valid evidence of the birth from above. . . . The new heart is to be defined by its quality, not by its history."

Another writer² says: "The roots of a man's virtue are inaccessible to us. No appearances whatever are infallible proofs of grace. Our practice is the only sure evidence that we are genuinely Christians."

With all this Spurgeon agreed. Many passages of striking practical utility could be adduced in which he declared, "The acid test of the life is proof of the faith." He had no sympathy with the easy-going theology that seemed to regard conversion as little or nothing more than a change of opinion.

Spurgeon did not pass to full assurance in a moment. He records doubts and fears which were only overcome by prayer, and appeal to the Scriptures of truth.

¹ *Religion of a Mature Mind*, p. 208.

² *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 20.

He became increasingly sure that all hopes of human salvation rested ultimately upon the revealed character of God. It was not human attainment, not what man could achieve but what God, in Christ, had done for the world. He was fearful of building his hopes upon morality. He believed that the way to clean living was through a change of heart.

It is recorded of Chalmers that in his early days he preached morals alone, with no moral result. He became filled with the love of Christ and that power behind him engraved the ethical precepts on the heart of Scotland.¹

If the value of the new birth is to be judged by the life that follows, then Spurgeon's conversion was epoch making. It contained not only the transforming power of the individual, but the seed from which many trees of the Lord grew in all lands.

The value Spurgeon placed upon his conversion was shown by his anxiety to make the good news known to others. He began at once to share with his friends. There was no mistake about it, the youth had received something which created a revolution ; new ideals developed in his thought, new standards of values, and, above all, a passionate longing "to brother all the sons of men."

In our time psychology does not deny the reality of conversion, but seeks to explain it, and not infrequently to explain it away. The challenge to produce proofs cannot be ignored by the Churches, and every little Bethel, like the Zion at Colchester, can tell of the happening of the miracle, and can point to those who are living the life. Here are the facts of experience ; they are not to be gainsaid. "He breaks the power of cancelled sin." Spurgeon could have called thousands of witnesses in his time, many of

¹ *The Eternal Religion*, p. 103.

whom remain until this day, who could say with truth, each for himself, "Once I was blind, but now I can see."

Sudden conversion in the case of St. Paul, Augustine, Wesley, Spurgeon and a countless host, is not explained by any talk about hysteria or emotional extravagances. It is useless to write, in the jargon of the text-books, about "the subjects having a large subliminal region." It is entirely a question of proof, and, as Spurgeon would say, "The proof of the pudding is in the eating." He was an incomparable advocate ; he also claimed to be a witness. The "preacher of the Gospel" should be able to go into the witness-box and testify of that which he himself knows to be true.

The Spirit of God comes by many avenues, revealing Himself in different ways. God has spoken to men through His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. The truth is the same ; the manner of its presentation and the mode of its reception may vary with each experience, but once the soul has looked, as Spurgeon looked, and has received new life, there are the evidences. The fruits of the Spirit begin to grow. There is the Divine discontent that will not permit the soul to continue in wrong doing and disobedience. There is a new joy. Even the clouds have a new meaning ; their matchless white and blue and gold convey a message written in colours by the loving Father. The songs of the birds may become anthems of praise, and the laughter of little children a benediction to the world. Spurgeon declared that the changed heart changed the world.

John Masfield in that great poem, *The Everlasting Mercy*, describes Saul Kane, the drunken lout, foul of body and unclean of soul, making the great discovery of the love of God revealed in Jesus Christ. He tells the story of his experience :

I did not think, I did not strive,
 The deep peace burnt my me alive,
 The bolted door had broken in,
 I knew that I had done with sin.
 I knew that Christ had given me birth
 To brother all the souls on earth,
 And every bird and every beast
 Should share the crumbs broke at the feast.

O glory of the lighted mind,
 How dead I'd been, how dumb, how blind !
 The station brook, to my new eyes,
 Was babbling out of Paradise,
 The waters rushing from the rain
 Were singing Christ has risen again.
 I thought all earthly creatures knelt
 From rapture of the joy I felt.
 The narrow station-wall's brick ledge,
 The wild hop withering in the hedge,
 The light in huntsman's upper storey
 Were parts of an eternal glory,
 Were God's eternal garden flowers.
 I stood in bliss at this for hours.

Spurgeon records the joy unspeakable and full of glory that flooded his heart. His childhood contained many lonely hours and a deep experience of dissatisfaction. "I do from my soul confess," he writes, "that I never was satisfied till I came to Christ ; when I was yet a child I had far more wretchedness than ever I have now. I would even add, more weariness, more care, more heart-ache than I know at this day. I may be singular in this confession, but I make it and know it to be true. Since that dear hour when my soul cast itself on Jesus, I have found solid joy and peace, but before that all those supposed gaieties of early youth, all the imagined joy and ease of boyhood, were but vanity and vexation of spirit to me. That happy day when I found the Saviour and learnt

to cling to His dear feet, was a day never to be forgotten by me, an obscure child, unknown, unheard of, I listened to the word of God, and that precious text led me to the Cross of Christ. I can testify that the joy of that day was utterly indescribable ; I could have leaped, I could have danced. There was no expression, however fanatical, which would have been out of keeping with the joy of my spirit at that hour."

Long after he returned to his favourite subject. He could not understand how it was that preachers did not delight in proclaiming the doctrine of the Cross. To him it was meat and drink. He literally delighted in the joy of the Lord. "I bear witness," he said, "that never servant had such a Master as I have, never brother had such a kinsman as He has been to me ; never spouse had such a husband as Christ has been to my soul ; never sinner a better Saviour, never soldier a better captain ; never mourner a better Comforter than Christ hath been to my spirit. I want none beside Him. In life He is my life, and in death He shall be the death of death ; in poverty Christ is my riches, in sickness He makes my bed ; in darkness He is my star, and in brightness He is my sun. By faith I understand that the blessed Son of God redeemed my soul with His own heart's blood, and by sweet experience I know that He raised me up from the pit of dark despair and set my feet on the rock. He died for me. This is the root of every satisfaction I have. He put all my transgressions away."

Spurgeon's experience of conversion was the foundation of his theory of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. For him there were two sources of authority : the subjective experience of the believer who had passed from death unto life and entered the family of the twice-born ; and the words of the Scriptures, wherein he found explicit statements concerning the new birth.

He could say of his Lord, with all his heart, "He loved me and gave Himself for me."

It is impossible to disassociate conversion from the Cross. Whatever controversy there may be as to the doctrine of the death of Christ, there can be no controversy over the fact that in the New Testament the death is the cause of the new life.

There are definite results following conversion more sure than the Q.E.D. of Euclid's deductions ; one of them is the gift of joy. This life becomes of greater value. The daily round and common task are seen in a new light. Spurgeon wrote, "I can say concerning Christ's religion, if I had to die like a dog and have no hope whatever of immortality ; if I wanted to lead a happy life, let me serve my God with all my heart, let me be a follower of Jesus and walk in His footprints ; if there were no hereafter I would still prefer to be a Christian to being a king or an emperor, for I am persuaded there are more delights in Christ, yea, more joy in one glimpse of His face than is to be found in all the praises of this harlot world, and in all the delights which it can yield to us in its sunniest and brightest days."

Christian experience in all its phases is being studied psychologically. The new birth has received the most detailed attention. Next to that, the doctrine of the atonement has been examined. These are so linked together that even the non-Christian psychologist realises that they are inseparable. Theologians have held the same view. Denney calls the Atonement "Christianity in brief" and asserts that where there is no Atonement there is no Gospel.¹

Spurgeon recognised that the Cross, to do its proper work, must be preached. It was not enough to have it represented in art or in music ; it must be proclaimed.

¹ *The Atonement and the Modern Mind*, p. 14.

"We preach Christ crucified" was his proud boast. He knew that such preaching had in it the power of God unto salvation. The death on the Cross is wondrously linked with moral regeneration as well as justifying grace. Spurgeon's experience gave the emphasis to his preaching. He believed and therefore declared. He was an advocate and a witness.

Professor William James describes conversion as the harmonising of the divided self. He maintains that the convert is led to a unified moral and intellectual constitution. He quotes many instances from Christian biography.¹ "To be converted," says the Professor, "to be regenerated, to receive grace, to experience religion, to gain an assurance, are so many phrases which denote the process, gradual or sudden, by which a self hitherto divided and consciously wrong, inferior and unhappy, becomes unified and consciously right, superior and happy, in consequence of its firm hold upon religious realities."

Some of the psychologists seem to be engaged in the hopeless task of explaining the sunshine without reference to the sun. Christian conversion is inseparable from Christ. If the divided self is ever to be harmonised, it must be through the forgiveness of sin, the cleansing of the heart and all that is bound up in the phrase "eternal life." To Spurgeon it was wondrously simple. A little child could look and live, and the most acute intellect need not find the experience intellectually impossible.

Conversion is common to all religions, but however accurate the analysis of the psychic process may be, Christian conversion stands alone. It is not an end but a means. It may be approached from a thousand points along different avenues, but ultimately it resolves itself into union with Christ through faith.

¹ *Varieties of Religious Experience*, Lecture 8.

The human will is not entirely passive, but operating in accord with the Divine decree. "By grace," writes the Apostle, "ye are saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God."¹

True conversion carries with it a change of character, a new objective in life, an enrichment of joy and goodness, and a new social value of the individual to the State. It is the supreme fact of experience, the witness within oneself, the consciousness of union with the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the moulding factor of the Church, making the fellowship a river of life, otherwise it would be a stagnant pool.

Spurgeon ever declared that the origin of the new birth was in the purpose of God. No human agency was powerful enough to accomplish it. "In a sentence, conversion is an obtainment, not an attainment." Man had his part to play, but it was in response to the prompting of God. Apart from Christ human life was hopeless ; there could be no salvation except in Him. "In the religion of Christ," he says, "there are factors even on earth too heavy for one man to carry ; there are fruits that have been found so rich that even angel lips have never been sweetened with more luscious wine ; there are joys to be had here so fair that even the nectared wine of Paradise can scarcely excel the sweets of satisfaction that are to be found in the earthly banquets of the Lord. I have seen hundreds and thousands who have given their hearts to Jesus, but I never did see one who said he was disappointed with Him. I never met one who said Jesus Christ was less than He was declared to be. When first my eyes beheld Him, when the burden slipped from off my heavy-laden shoulders, and I was freed from condemnation, I thought that all the preachers I had ever heard had not half preached,

¹ Eph. ii. 8.

they had not told half the beauty of my Lord and Master, so good, so generous, so gracious, so willing to forgive ; it seemed to me as if they had almost slandered Him, they painted His likeness, doubtless, as well as they could, but it was a mere smudge compared with the matchless beauties of His face. All who have ever seen Him will say the same."

That early experience in the little chapel at Colchester decided almost everything for Spurgeon. He could never forget that, like the blind man who was healed by the touch of the Master, he had been made able to say, "Once I was blind but now I can see." Whatever criticism there may be concerning Spurgeon's position, there is no question that his theory worked. Tested by all the canons of pragmatism it still worked. Spurgeon himself declared that he had passed from death unto life. He proclaimed the message by which he had been saved. It was his joy to see thousands come into the same experience and rejoice in bearing the same testimony. If the test is to be judgment by results, then Spurgeon's doctrine of the Cross is abundantly justified.

Appeal might be made to the method of the Apostles in their preaching. Peter and Paul used the same method. Peter, whether preaching on the Day of Pentecost, addressing the people in Solomon's Porch, or replying to the High Priest, points to Christ crucified and calls for repentance and faith in the Crucified, who rose again from the dead and made the glory of the Easter Morn.

At Antioch or at Athens Paul follows the same method. He refers his change of life to Christ, and he declares that he will know nothing as the theme of his message but Christ crucified.

At Newmarket young Spurgeon found congenial work in the academy kept by Mr. Swindell. He re-

ceived a small remuneration and had the privilege of continuing his own education, especially in Greek. During this time he was greatly influenced by a saintly woman who was cook and general servant in the household, a big, sturdy soul in an ample body. She was very interested in the new tutor, and finding that he was "well disposed toward Godliness" she had frequent conversations with him. It is no discredit to the great man that he should have received some of his Calvinism from the humblest sources.

Mr. Spurgeon's first published book, *The Saint and his Saviour*, referred to Mary King. "I got all the theology I ever needed a good many years ago from an old woman who was cook in the house where I was usher." Mary King belonged to the Strict Baptists, and in later years, when adversity came, Mr. Spurgeon made her a weekly allowance.

May 3, 1850, was the birthday of Spurgeon's mother. It was the day of his baptism. He says that he was led to seek immersion by the study of the Church of England Catechism and the Greek New Testament. There being no Baptist Church in the neighbourhood of Newmarket, he went to Isleham Ferry and was immersed in the River Lark with two other disciples. Young Spurgeon rose early in the morning that he might spend time in prayer before walking the eight miles to the scene of his baptism. He does not appear to have united in membership with the Church at Isleham, his view being that baptism was a confession of faith; probably his determination not to join the Church was largely influenced by the distance of eight miles between Mr. Swindell's school and the place of worship.

His parents never shared his Baptist views, but raised no objection to his action. His mother wrote that she had often prayed that he might become a

Christian, but not that he might become a Baptist. With characteristic pleasantry he replied that it was just like the Lord not only to answer prayer but to bestow more than had been asked.

A great crowd witnessed the baptismal ceremony. Afterwards Mr. Spurgeon returned with Mr. Cantlow, the pastor, for prayer and rest before undertaking the eight-mile journey home.

EDUCATION AND EDUCATING

WARD BEECHER used to say that he who would succeed in life must be careful in the choice of his parents. Had Spurgeon been permitted to choose his parents he could hardly have done better than have chosen those given to him by a higher wisdom.

His education began in the home. His grandfather, who had much to do with his early years, taught by example and by precept, and his parents followed their father's plan. Spurgeon loved the old manse at Stambourne. "Oh, the old house at home," he writes, "who does not love it? The place of our childhood, the old roof-tree, the old cottage. There is no other village in all the world half so good as that particular village. True, the gates, the stiles and posts have been altered, but still there is an attachment to those old houses, the old tree in the park, the old ivy-mantled tower. It is not very picturesque, perhaps, but we love to go to see it. We like to see the haunts of our boyhood; there is something pleasant in those old stairs where the clock used to stand, and in the room where grandmother was wont to bend her knee, and where we had family prayer."

The training of the child did not lack an element of severity. He was still in pinafores going to a woman's school when he wanted a stick of slate pencil and had no money to buy it with. "I was afraid of being scolded for losing my pencils so often, for I was a careless little fellow, and did not dare to ask at home. What then was I to do? There was a little shop in the place where nuts and tops and cakes and balls were sold by old Mrs. Pearson, and sometimes I had seen boys and girls get trusted by the old lady. I

argued with myself that Christmas was coming and somebody or other would be sure to give me a penny then, and perhaps even a whole silver sixpence. I would therefore get into debt for a stick of slate pencil, and be sure to pay at Christmas. I did not feel easy about it, but still I screwed up my courage and went into the shop. One farthing was the amount, and as I had never owed anything before my credit was good. The pencil was handed over by a kind dame, and I was in debt. It did not please me much, and I felt as if I had done wrong, but I little knew how soon I should smart for it."

Something about the boy must have raised the suspicions of the father. He insisted upon being told the truth, and then delivered a powerful lecture upon the evils of getting into debt, how it might become a habit and bring ruin, even to bringing one's family into disgrace and oneself into prison. Poor little fellow, and he was only six.

"I was marched off to the shop," he says, "like a deserter marched into barracks, crying bitterly all down the street and feeling dreadfully ashamed, because I thought everybody knew I was in debt. The farthing was paid amid solemn warnings, and the poor debtor was set free like a bird out of a cage." The lesson was sufficient. Spurgeon vowed that he would never get into debt again, and he never did.

He became too big for the dame's school, though he had distinguished himself there, for Miss Ann Spurgeon, who lavished her affection upon her little nephew, declared that at the age of six years, when some children have advanced no further in spelling than words of one syllable, he could read with a point and emphasis marvellous in one so young. Beneath the wonderful stories of his childhood there is a very human strain.

The boy Spurgeon knew something of the value of education ; he had many privileges denied to the majority of his fellows. He was under good masters and did so well that quite early in life he was teaching pupils older than himself. Colchester, Maidstone, and Newmarket are associated with those early days.

One of his most prized volumes was a copy of *White's Natural History of Selborne*. It bore the following inscription : " Stockwell School, Colchester. Adjudged to Master C. Spurgeon as the first class English prize at the half yearly examination, December 11th, 1844. T. W. Davis, examiner."

In connection with his school life at Colchester there is a characteristic anecdote. On a certain winter morning the tutor so arranged the class that the boys at the bottom sat close to the school stove and enjoyed the comforting glow and warmth. Spurgeon was the top boy of the class and the arrangement placed him furthest from the stove. To the surprise of the schoolmaster the boy seemed smitten with unusual dullness, his answers were slow and hesitating. He lost his place and came nearer to the warmth until instead of being at the head he was at the bottom and not a bit disconcerted. The teacher was puzzled, but knowing the boy he had suspicions. The order of the class was reversed with exactly the result the teacher expected. When warmth was an honour to be gained by proficiency, Master Spurgeon soon found his way next to the stove.

Mr. Douglas tells us : " Even as a child he moved with a whole will. His first night at boarding-school shows that the motto attached to the Scotch thistle : *Nemo me impune lacessit*—no one touches me with impunity—was by no means foreign to his type. According to custom, he knelt down to pray before getting into bed ; whereupon he was interrupted by a

shower of slippers, etc., from all parts of the room. His mind is soon made up. Rising from his knees, he strikes out right and left, telling the disturbers of his peace that he must not be interfered with ; that he was not accustomed to it, and would not allow it. He then, having knocked several of the boys down, fell upon his knees and finished his prayer without further interruption ; nor was he ever again annoyed in like manner."

His education has been described by a number of writers who seem to know little about the man. He is himself largely responsible for the idea that gained currency in the early days of his ministry that he lacked educational equipment. John Ploughman was the character Spurgeon delighted to assume ; he belonged to the people. There was about him the healthy smell of Mother Earth and the fragrance of the haystack. Many of his quaint sayings and odd stories came from the fields and have a distinctly crude, rustic flavour, but Spurgeon's education was by no means neglected. He went to schools regarded in their day as among the best for boys of his class.

His parents did not undervalue the advantages of education ; according to Mr. James Spurgeon they exercised considerable self-denial to give their children the best within their reach. It is to be remembered that Spurgeon as a child played in the pastor's study, and from his earliest years was familiar with books.

The school at Colchester where he attended from the age of eleven to fifteen was a thoroughly good-class classical and commercial establishment. The pupils were drawn from the families of the tradespeople and the middle class. Mr. Henry Lewis, the principal, was described as a man of literary attainments of a superior order. His chief assistant was Mr. Leeding, the classical and mathematical tutor.

Mr. David Walker, of the College, Maidstone, was very candid in his expression of opinion concerning Charles. He wrote to his father the results of careful observation.

"Charles is a boy of good ability, good common sense and very fair acquirements, with steady work he will figure—but his habits are bad—there is a natural carelessness about him which is evident in the very manner in which he puts on his clothes. He wants those little things that would enable a boy of inferior talent to beat him. I have no doubt but he has been beaten by inferior ability and acquirements, and will be so again unless he attends to what I am driving into him.

"His knowledge of Latin, Greek and mathematics is not so well founded ; he has not had to contend with equals and superiors. He is willing to work and desirous of information. If he used his eyes and ears more and his tongue less, he would sooner gain his object. He improves in this, however, though we have not yet made a smart looking boy of him. His gait is bad, but that improves under an excellent drill and our constant admonition. A man must not only be good and learned, he must look so. Address is important in those who have to push their way."

Mr. Walker thought better of his pupil as the years passed.

In a note written in the *Sword and Trowel* some years later, recording the death of Edwin S. Leeding, Mr. Spurgeon said : "He was a teacher who really taught his pupils ; and by his diligent skill I gained the foundation upon which I built in after years. He left Colchester to open a school of his own in Cambridge, and I to go first to Maidstone, and then to Newmarket for some two years. Then we came together again, for I joined him at Cambridge to assist in his school, and

in return to be helped in my studies. He has left on record that he did not think that there was need for me to go to any of the Dissenting Colleges, since I had mastered most of the subjects studied therein, and his impression that I might, while with him, have readily passed through the University, if my being a Nonconformist had not come in the way. I have always looked to him, among the many of whom I have gathered help, as my tutor."

Spurgeon loved education for its own sake. The iron entered his spirit while he was teaching in Cambridge, where he knew the disabilities attached to Nonconformity and came in contact with various phases of university life not at all likely to increase his respect either for the value of degrees or the training required to obtain them. He would sometimes say, "Men of high degree are vanity ; men of low degree are a lie." He knew the empty pretensions of some of the D.D's. He could be scathing in his sarcasm, but it would be entirely mistaken to represent Spurgeon as indifferent to the value of scholarship.

The social life of Cambridge was very distasteful to the young Puritan. He regarded it as a temptation and a snare. He loved education, but what he saw of Cambridge called forth his indignation and condemnation.

"I was for three years a Cambridge man," he writes, "though I never entered the University. I could not have obtained a degree because I was a Nonconformist ; and, moreover, it was a better thing for me to pursue my studies under an admirable scholar and tender friend, and to preach at the same time."

Upon the advice of friends, Mr. Spurgeon determined to start a school of his own. An advertisement which appeared in the local journal indicates the confidence

of seventeen. "No. 60 Upper Park Street, Cambridge. Mr. C. H. Spurgeon begs to inform his numerous friends that, after Christmas, he intends taking six or seven young gentlemen as day pupils. He will endeavour to the utmost to impart a good commercial education. The ordinary routine will include Arithmetic, Algebra, Geometry, and Mensuration; Grammar and Composition; Ancient and Modern History; Geography, Natural History, Astronomy, Scripture, and Drawing. Latin and the elements of Greek and French, if required. Terms £5 per annum."

It may be a surprise to see Mr. Spurgeon described as "an educationalist," yet he was one of the pioneers, and he gave great assistance to the movement for the provision of continuation classes and evening classes for working lads. Out of that movement grew the Polytechnics with their magnificent curriculum and University extension.

The educational needs of the country were first recognised by the State in 1833, when a Government grant was made to the National and the British Schools. These two Societies provided nearly all the primary schools of the country. The exclusion of Nonconformists from Matriculation at Oxford and from Degrees at Cambridge resulted in the proposed creation of a London University, in 1826, which two years later took shape as London University College. It was a private enterprise and financed by shares. A rival institution—King's College—was opened. In 1834 University College applied to the Crown for power to grant degrees, those in theology alone excepted. Oxford and Cambridge put up a successful opposition, and not until 1837 was the University of London incorporated as an examining and degree-giving body, while University College and King's College continued as separate teaching bodies.

The economic tide turned in 1850 and a long period of commercial prosperity followed. Many parents, totally mistaken as to the nature of the life of the University city, and of the quality of the instruction given, sent their boys to Oxford or Cambridge. It is only fair to say that the best brains in the Universities were pressing for drastic reforms. The cost of residence and tuition fees was heavy, Oxford tutors admitted that a class, probably a large class, was shut out. A Cambridge degree, with its academic privileges, and the entire Oxford career, were reserved for those who could profess membership of the Church of England. It was exceptional for college scholarships and fellowships to be open without restriction to those who could win them by intellectual merit alone.

In 1849 a memorial, signed by members of both Universities and by fellows of the Royal Society, was addressed to the Prime Minister, in which it was complained that the system of ancient English Universities had not advanced and was not calculated to advance the interests of religious and useful learning to an extent commensurable with the great resources and the high positions of those bodies.

A letter to Lord John Russell complained about the way Fellowships were given. Exeter College had advertised for candidates and testimonials for a Cornish Fellowship, but a gentleman was appointed who produced no testimonials, who did not even offer himself as a candidate, was not examined, and was not even present at the College at the time of the examination ; whilst candidates who were there submitted to an examination of four days' continuance and performed all other pre-requisites.

It was the good fortune of Cambridge to have as its Chancellor Prince Albert, who was installed in March, 1847. Every public office to which the Prince was

called he took very seriously, and in the case of the University the fact made him a keen, well-informed critic of its studies. Without ostentation he initiated or took part in changes which increased the usefulness of the University.

The studies required by the courses leading to the B.A. degree were set out in detail. The course for the Previous Examination comprised a Greek Gospel, Paley's "Evidences," Old Testament History, a portion of the works of one Greek and one Latin classic, Euclid, Books 1 and 2, and Arithmetic. For the Poll Degree the requirements were a portion of the Acts of the Apostles, Greek Epistle or Epistles, classic authors as in the Previous, three of the six books of Paley's *Moral Philosophy*, Church History to the Council of Nicaea, A.D. 325, the History of the English Reformation, Arithmetic, the rudiments of Algebra, Euclid, Book 3 and part of Book 6, the Elementary Principles of Mechanics and Hypostatics; while to be admissible to the examination for the ordinary degree, candidates had to produce certificates of at least one term's attendance at the lectures of one of the professors and of having passed an examination therein.

The subjects were: Law, Physics, Moral Philosophy, Chemistry, Anatomy, Modern History, Botany, Geology, National and Experimental Philosophy, the Laws of England, Medicine, Mineralogy, and Political Economy.

The list sounds imposing, but its value disappears in view of the report of the Commission, which reads: "The Commission has learnt what most of them knew well enough already, that the examiners were satisfied with a very slight exhibition of knowledge as regards many of these subjects. The classical authors were commonly got up from cribs, the candidates displaying

a very meagre acquaintance with logic, and in the opinion of one examiner if decent Latin writing should be insisted on, the numbers of failures would be more than quadruple.”¹

The struggles for State Education resulted in the Act of 1870, when Mr. Foster succeeded in persuading the House of Commons that the cost would not really be great and the advantages would be limitless. Anything in the nature of Higher Education was ruled out of the State's activities.

The history of adult education in the evening continuation schools is a pathetic story. It is largely made up of a conflict between those who struggled to obtain an education in the evening when their work was done, and those who had to pay the rates from which the classes were subsidised, and who step by step opposed the movement. Those opposers had not learned that a democratic government cannot afford to have an uneducated electorate.

Spurgeon knew how impossible it was for the poor lad to obtain knowledge. Elementary schools were few and far between. Compulsory school attendance was of course unknown : even where it was advocated there was keen opposition upon the part of those who were desperately anxious to keep the working classes in their proper station. Education was regarded as dangerous. A few brave souls struggled to provide night schools, but they were very few. The private evening schools were expensive, and generally inefficient, mainly confined to the teaching of the three R's in elementary stages to men who had grown up without the means of securing the rudiments of knowledge but who had achieved a position which made them anxious at least to conceal their ignorance.

The Working men's college, for ever associated with

¹ *English Education*, Adamson, p. 415.

the names of F. D. Maurice and Charles Kingsley, had opened its doors in 1854. Its classes were available upon payment of small fees, but even these were beyond the reach of the vast majority of working boys. John Ruskin gave some of his lectures to small audiences in the College. Its art classes were fairly successful, but they were for the elect.

Toynbee Hall, Whitechapel, was not even a dream ; the Barnetts had not yet found their way to the East End to begin their labours of love. Morley College, the University Settlements, and the Bermondsey Settlements were far off. Professor Graham Wallas used to tell me of these early experiments, when we sat side by side upon the Evening Schools Committee of the old London School Board.

In the year 1862, eight years before elementary education became a State charge, Mr. Spurgeon established an evening school in the rooms under the Tabernacle. He was ambitious to dispense the advantages of education. The classes were intended to help young men who were desirous of taking part in evangelistic work, but they were open to all comers, and no fees were charged. The young men of the Tabernacle very quickly realised the value of the opportunity, and others, from sixteen upwards, came from all over London to join them. Some of the men, though well advanced in years, were scarcely able to read ; they knew nothing of the educational advantages of our time. Some of the tutors were engaged during the day in the work of the Pastors' College, but they gladly entered into the adventure, and teachers from day schools were found ready to join the staff. These evening classes afforded an opportunity to men engaged in manual labour to obtain free education during their leisure hours. Mr. Selway was in charge of the department of physical science ; he delighted

large classes by his lucid expositions and interesting experiments.

Mr. Ferguson gave a popular lecture week by week dealing with science or literature. Mr. Ferguson, known in the College as "old Fergie," was a great character. His mind seemed to be a repository in which all sorts of goods were stored. Mr. Spurgeon wrote: "Mr. Ferguson in the English elementary classes does the first work upon the rough stones of the quarry, and we have heard from the men whom he has taught in the evening classes, speeches and addresses which would have adorned any assembly, proving to demonstration his ability to cope with the difficulties of uncultured and ignorant minds."

Mr. W. Cubitt, and afterwards Mr. Johnson, took a prominent part in the work. The curriculum covered elementary subjects and, later, shorthand, book-keeping, and elementary mathematics.

Spurgeon's work in the direction of evening classes succeeded because it combined something of the recreative element with education. The popular lectures were really popular; they were not the learned dribble of old men whose words were difficult to hear.

Pitman's shorthand was attracting popular attention, and young men were inquiring where they could receive instruction. Mr. H. Pinkess wrote to the Tabernacle offering to engage a class-room for one night a week in which he proposed to give instruction in shorthand and to charge a small fee. Greatly to his surprise, he received a letter from Mr. Harrauld asking whether he would be prepared to consider an appointment, as Mr. Spurgeon would like instruction in shorthand given free for the benefit of young men who desired to improve their education, and also for the students, as he recognised how useful a knowledge of

shorthand would be in their ministry. He asked Mr. Pinkess to try to ascertain how many would be likely to join such a class. The question was put to the men before one of Mr. Ferguson's lectures and about seventy hands were held up.

The shorthand classes began in 1879 with about a hundred members and continued until 1896. They were always free, and open to any who cared to avail themselves of the opportunity, Mr. Spurgeon himself covering the entire cost.

The pastor of the Tabernacle realised that the greatest service education can render to any human being is to lead him to the discovery of his own powers.

Professor Jacks has recently reaffirmed that view. He says : "In order to accomplish that you must do two things : first you must manage somehow to liberate his energies, of which an immense reservoir lies hidden in every human being ; and next you must help him to discover the wonderful means nature has furnished him with for bringing those energies under beautiful control. If you think of education as a work of liberation and vitalisation you have got to the essence of what it can do for human beings."

Occasionally Mr. Spurgeon would pay surprise visits to the classes. Upon one occasion he found his way into the science class, where a lecture was being given upon botany. The tutor paused and welcomed the president, and explained the subject of study. Much to his surprise and to the delight of the men, Mr. Spurgeon talked intimately upon the theme for a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes and then broke off with the remark, "This is not my lecture."

Spurgeon knew the value of indirect influence in educational matters. Upon occasions he would laughingly suggest that they should have a spelling bee and he would present prizes. Sometimes the prizes

were booby prizes. The students were invited to put their hats on and Spurgeon would begin with the first man, offering some simple word which might be spelt in two or three different ways. The men who succeeded in passing the test kept their hats on, the others took them off, until at last there would be one solitary hat left. Mr. Spurgeon, when in very playful mood, would ask for the hat to be passed up to the platform. The prize was placed in the hat ; usually it consisted of a book.

Dr. Jacks very wisely says, " We need playgrounds for the body, but we need also playgrounds for the soul, and it is in them, I think, that the most enjoyable recreation, the most delightful and lasting of leisure occupations, is to be found."

It is not without significance that John Henry Newman, when Rector of the newly instituted Catholic University in Dublin, began a series of evening lectures, and made evening classes statutory, and their members eligible for degrees on passing the necessary examinations.

Mr. John Cassell, the publisher, gave great assistance to working-class education by his cheap publications. Mr. Spurgeon delighted in recommending the *Popular Educator*, which was for thousands of men the only available means of intellectual culture.

The London School Board continually sought to secure evening continuation schools. At first the Education Department recognised evening schools and assisted them with a grant, but the only grant-earning subjects were reading, writing, and arithmetic. When evening classes were being started the question of age limitation arose. In 1872 the Code of the year defined the maximum age of scholars, both in day and evening schools, as eighteen. It remained doubtful whether the regulation was merely a bar to the earning of the grant

or a prohibition of expenditure upon the education of adults. It was decided that the Board could not give education to persons over eighteen without charging a fee which covered the whole cost of their education.

What was known in 1901 as the Cockerton Judgment created a special difficulty in connection with evening schools. The legal decision was that the Board should not charge upon the rates the cost of persons who were not children within the meaning of the Education Act. A short Bill passed through Parliament legalising the payment for a year, but the Board of Education stipulated that the conditions under which grants would be paid were for persons under fifteen years of age.

London now possesses Polytechnics and Technical Institutes which are the pride of the country. The range of subjects taught, the efficiency of the teaching, and the results, are a delight to all lovers of education. The recreative schools have become extensions of the Universities, and now any boy or girl with sufficient determination may enjoy the pleasures of learning.

It seems almost a forgotten age in which the Committee of the London School Board began to make inquiries concerning educational opportunities provided in the evenings. One of the centres to which the Committee turned was Spurgeon's Tabernacle. There was the Polytechnic, somewhat crude in organisation and closely allied with religious teaching, but there it was, and there it had been for years, but to Mr. Spurgeon belongs the honour of being among the earliest pioneers to accomplish anything upon a large scale in the direction of education for working men. He and his colleagues dug the foundations and laid them well and truly that others might build upon them.

On the erection of the almshouses in connection with the Tabernacle the classes removed, and when the

College buildings were opened in Temple Street they were again transferred, and were held there until 1899.

In 1899 the London School Board had completed its organisation and provided far better equipment than could be found in any private enterprise. The trustees of the Pastors' College therefore considered the advisability of discontinuing their work, and passed the following resolution : "That taking into consideration the financial position of the College and also the fact of the opportunities for education offered by Polytechnics and kindred institutions, it was deemed desirable to discontinue the evening classes from the close of the present year."

Unfortunately there is no record of the number of students who attended Spurgeon's evening classes, but it is safe to say that thousands of young men availed themselves of the opportunities they offered.

CHAPTER IV

LEARNING BY DOING

SPURGEON began preaching when he was a child, and never lost the habit. "How do you learn to swim?" he once inquired, and answered the question himself: "Is it not by swimming?" He began the work of local preacher during his residence at Cambridge. He joined his friend, Mr. Leeding, the accomplished tutor whom he had known in Colchester, and united with the Church of St. Andrew's Street, made famous by the ministry of the great pulpit orator, the Rev. Robert Hall, and of the Rev. Robert Robinson, author of the well-known hymn, "Come, thou fount of every blessing."

Robert Hall had great fame in the university city, but never settled down happily. Upon one occasion he remarked, "I always say of my Cambridge friends, when I witness their contentedness in such a country, 'herein is the faith and patience of the saints.' My faith and patience could not sustain me under it, even with the unvarying kindness of my friends in addition." He described the Cam passing under King's College Bridge as "a stream standing still to see people drown themselves."

Many stories are told of Mr. Spurgeon's life at Cambridge, but none more interesting than the incidents in the romance of local preaching. Mr. James Vinter, familiarly known as "the Bishop," was the leader of the Local Preachers' Association. He was a shrewd man. He heard of young Spurgeon's success in the Sunday school, where he had been giving the closing address on alternate Sundays. Mr. Vinter invited the newcomer to go out to the village of Teversham to accompany one who was going to preach. In Apos-

tolic fashion the two disciples set out on their journey and talked of the Lord. Spurgeon turned the conversation to the service and expressed the hope that his friend would be mightily sustained in his preaching. The friend expressed great surprise and declared that he had never preached in his life and had no intention of doing anything of the sort. He was simply accompanying his young brother who was to take the service, and if he did not feel equal to it, they had better turn back. Spurgeon recalled what the "Bishop" had said to him. It was a cunningly devised sentence. "He just asked me to go over to Teversham for a young man was to preach there who was not much used to services and very likely would be glad of company."

Spurgeon decided to do his best. As they continued the journey he became silent and spent the time in prayer that he might be guided in what he should say. He determined upon the text, and years after, preaching at the Music Hall in the Surrey Gardens upon the words, "Unto you therefore which believe He is precious," he said: "This text recalls to my recollection the opening of my ministry. It is about eight years since, as a lad of sixteen, I stood up for the first time in my life to preach the Gospel in a cottage to a handful of poor people who had come together for worship."

Describing the sermon he says, "How long or how short it was I cannot now remember. It was not half such a task as I had feared it would be, but I was glad to see my way to a fair conclusion and to give out the last hymn. To my own delight I had not broken down nor stopped short in the middle, nor been destitute of ideas, as the desired haven was in view. I made a finish and took up the hymn-book, and to my astonishment a woman's voice exclaimed, 'Bless your dear heart, how old are you?' I solemnly replied,

‘You must wait till the service is over before making any such inquiries. Let us now sing.’ ”

Little did the congregation imagine that the lad standing by the fireplace in short jacket with full turn-down collar, who had not yet reached his sixteenth birthday, would become the pulpit orator of the century, and that the sermon to which they had listened would be regarded as historic in the annals of the Christian Church.

From that time Mr. Spurgeon was much in demand in the villages round Cambridge. He delighted to find a country cottage or a village green to which the people might be invited to hear the Gospel.

The countryside needed evangelising almost as much as any part of the foreign mission field. It is difficult to visualise the condition of the villages round Cambridge. A distinguished writer, a clergyman of the Church of England (Rev. Desmond Morse-Boycott) in a recently published work, gives a description of the Church of England nearly a century ago. He says : “England was a land of closed churches and unstoled clergy. . . . The parson was often an absentee, not infrequently a drunkard. Bishops filled their aprons with emoluments from sinecures, and did but little work. The rich went to church to doze in upholstered curtained pews fitted with fireplaces, while the poor were herded together on uncomfortable benches.

“It is beyond argument that the Church was, broadly speaking, spiritually moribund and discredited utterly. . . . There were a few earnest men who deplored her imminent collapse.”

Among the Free Churches there was the Wesleyan movement, but the fires were represented by the ashes. Spurgeon found congenial activity in going out in all weathers to tell the story that transforms the world.

"I must have been a singular-looking youth on wet evenings. During the last year of my stay in Cambridge, when I had given up my office as usher, I was wont to sally forth every night in the week except Saturday, and to walk three, five or perhaps eight miles out and back on my preaching excursions, and when it rained I dressed myself in waterproof leggings and macintosh coat and a hat with a waterproof covering, and carried a dark lantern to show me the way across the fields. I had many adventures."

Spurgeon loved Nature in all her moods. He enjoyed tramping the road in the midst of a storm. "When God is abroad I love to walk out in some wide space and to look up and mark the opening gates of heaven, as the lightning reveals far beyond and enables me to gaze into the unseen. I like to hear my Father's voice vibrate in the thunder."

What adventures he had ! Going to a cottage and amazing the occupants by asking permission to hold a service in their room, and if that were denied and the weather permitted, going round to the houses, inviting the people to come out into the open and join in the worship of God. He found peculiar pleasure in talking to the rustic crowds that formed the circle and listened with open-eyed amazement to the boy preacher.

Upon one occasion he tramped through the rain and found a congregation waiting. It was haying time and he took for his text : "He shall come down like the rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth." "Surely we had the blessing as well as the inconvenience. I was sufficiently wet and my congregation must have been drenched, but they stood it out and I never heard that anybody was the worse in health, though I thank God I have heard of souls brought to Jesus under that discourse."

Spurgeon never lost his love of local preaching. He

recognised the duty of liberating the lay forces of the faith. He knew enough of the history of the Church to convince him of the value of the layman's testimony. It may be recalled that the Early Church was a Church of witnesses. Gibbon, by no means biassed in favour of Christianity, tells in his famous chapter in which he attempts to explain the rapid spread of the faith in the Roman Empire, that the first cause was the fact "that it became the most sacred duty of a new convert to diffuse among his friends and relations the inestimable blessing which he had received."

Witnessing to the saving power of Christ is not a task committed to the ministry alone; it is an obligation resting upon each disciple. The teacher in the school is to find opportunity to tell the story, the soldier in his regiment must confess his allegiance, the rich man in his mansion and the poor man in his cottage, if they have found the Lord are alike under obligation to seek for others to share the blessing.

All the time the young preacher was learning by doing, it does not seem to have entered his mind that he was being fitted for the stated ministry. He regarded himself as a lay preacher. Perhaps it was the strain in his ancestry that came through the brave souls who left their native land under the fierce persecution of the Duke of Alva. It would be interesting to trace their connection with the Anabaptists. They constituted one of the most vital and forceful movements of lay evangelisation in the history of the Church. They afford striking demonstration of the power of each disciple bearing his own witness to the truth.

Among the early leaders was Johannes Denck, who may be said to have founded a Group Movement. In a few years he succeeded in forming a spiritual fellowship in many towns, and later Menno Simon, the real founder of the Mennonites, followed the example of the

scholarly and saintly Johannes Denck. For two hundred years they were without an institution for training preachers. Their movement spread even to the shores of our own land before the terrible persecution came. Every member of the Brotherhood regarded it as his duty to make known the living word. Whatever his occupation, wherever he went, the seal of his baptism was an anointing for service.

Spurgeon insisted upon the privilege and the duty of laymen witnessing to their Lord by bearing testimony to His saving and keeping power.

Dr. Robert E. Speer aptly expressed a layman's obligation. "Any man who has a religion is bound to do one of two things with it : change it or spread it. If it isn't true, he must give it up. If it is true, he must give it away. This is not the duty of ministers only. Religion is not an affair of a profession or of a caste. . . . The minister is to be simply colonel of the regiment. The real fighting is to be done by the men in the ranks who carry the guns. No idea could be more non-Christian or more irrational than that the religious colonel is engaged to do the fighting for his men, while they sit at ease. And yet, perhaps, there is one idea current which is more absurd still. That is, that there is to be no fighting at all, but that the colonel is paid to spend his time solacing his regiment, or giving it gentle, educative instruction, not destined ever to result in any downright, manly effort on the part of the whole regiment to do anything against the enemy."

"Bishop" Vinter exercised jurisdiction over thirteen villages in the district which came within the operation of the Lay Preachers' Society. In one or other of these Spurgeon was to be found night by night in the exercise of his ministry. He loved the work, and all unconsciously was preparing for the great ministry of future years. It was his custom to

rise early in the morning that he might have a quiet time of prayer and meditation. He would decide upon a text or a subject upon which he would meditate when he was free from teaching. He says : " What I had gathered by my studies during the day I handed out to a company of villagers in the evening, and was myself greatly profited by the exercise. I always found it good to say my lesson when I had learned it. Children do so ; it is equally good for preachers, especially if they say their lesson by heart. In my young days I fear I said many odd things, and made many blunders, but my audiences were not hypercritical, and no newspaper writers dogged my heels ; so I had a happy training ground in which by continual practice I attained such degree of ready speech as I now possess.

" There is no way of learning to preach which can be compared with preaching itself. If you want to swim, you must get into the water, and if you at first make a sorry exhibition, never mind ; for it is by swimming as you can that you learn to swim as you should. We ought to be lenient with beginners, for they will do better by and by. If young speakers in Cambridge had been discouraged and silenced, I might not have found my way here, and therefore I shall be the last to bring forth a wet blanket for any who sincerely speak for Christ, however humble may be their endeavours. The fear of there being too many preachers is the last that will occur to me."

When Mr. Spurgeon became settled in London he began a Lay Preachers' Association which is still a flourishing organisation. For many years it has continued a meeting week by week for training, and not infrequently the Tabernacle Lecture Hall has been crowded by young men eager to join the great company of those that publish the glad news.

Preaching in the open air to Cambridge villagers gave the boy preacher great delight. Many who listened to his words were not only impressed, but their lives were changed. Hyper-Calvinists and Church people not infrequently protested that the lad was either too broad or too narrow, but there were others who rejoiced in the message which was to them the word of life.

In *Lectures to my Students* Mr. Spurgeon devoted considerable attention to open-air preaching. "I am sure," he said, "that if we could persuade our friends in the country to come out a good many times in the year and hold a service in a meadow or in a shady grove, or on the hillside, or on a common, it would be all the better for the usual hearers. The mere novelty of the place would freshen their interest and wake them up. The slight change of scene would have a wonderful effect upon the more somnolent. See how mechanically they move in their usual place of worship and how mechanically they go out again. They fall into their seats as if at last they have found a resting place. They rise to sing with an amazing effort ; they drop down before you have time for a doxology at the close of the hymn because they did not notice it was coming. What logs some regular hearers are ; many of them are asleep with their eyes open, after sitting a certain number of years in the same old spot where the pews, pulpit and gallery and all things else, are always the same, except that they get a little dirtier and dingier every week, where everybody occupies the same position for ever and ever, and the minister's face, voice, tone, are much the same from January to December. You get to feel the holy quiet of the scene and listen to what is going on as though it were addressed to the dull, cold ear of death."

With that description he contrasts the scene in the

open air. He loved to preach in what was afterwards called Spurgeon's Tabernacle, near-by Minster Lovell in Oxfordshire. It was an ideal preaching place. "The inner temple consisted of a large square out of which the underwood and smaller trees had been cut away, while a sufficient number of young oaks had been left to rise to a considerable height, and then overshadow us with their branches. Here was a truly magnificent cathedral, a temple not made with hands, of which we might truly say :

‘ Father, thy hand
Hath reared these venerable columns, thou
Didst weave this verdant roof.’

I have never, either at home or on the Continent, seen architecture which could rival my cathedral. ‘Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah : we found it in the fields of the wood.’ The blue sky was visible through our clerestory, and from the great window at the further end the sun smiled upon us toward evening.”

The fame of the young preacher found its way into the chapels and he was invited to preach upon special occasions. The little church at Waterbeach was five miles away ; it was in a thriving community. Prosperity enabled the people to indulge their tastes in undesirable ways. It was by no means possible to describe Waterbeach as a Garden of Eden. When Mr. Spurgeon occupied the pulpit there were some who objected to boys being elevated to the pastoral office, but an invitation to the pastorate was given and accepted, and Spurgeon, like the Vicar of Wakefield, became “passing rich on forty pounds a year.” Deacon Coe described the boy preacher's first service. He said : “He talked amazingly, like a man a hundred years old in Christian experience.” Many came to

hear the youthful preacher because of some odd saying that had been reported in the village : not a few of them remained to give God thanks.

Spurgeon's intense evangelisation raised opposition ; it did more : it brought about something like a revolution in the village. Bad times came and prosperity gave place to poverty. Describing the village, Spurgeon said : " Did you ever see poor wretched beings that once were men standing or rather leaning against the posts of the ale-houses or staggering along the street ? Have you ever looked into the houses of the people and beheld them as dens of iniquity at which your soul stood aghast ? Have you ever seen the poverty and degradation of the inhabitants and sighed over it ? . . . I knew just such a village, perhaps in some respects one of the worst in England, where many an illicit still was yielding its noxious liquor to a manufacturer without payment of the duty to the Government, and where in connection with that evil all manner of riot and iniquity was rife."

Not a promising outlook for the boy pastor, but the work soon began to tell. The little thatched chapel was crammed, and some of the worst in the village who had been the curse of the parish became its blessing. Spurgeon says : " It was a pleasant thing to walk through that place when drunkenness had almost ceased, when debauchery in the case of many was dead, when men and women went forth to labour with joyful hearts, singing the praises of the ever-living God, and when at sunset the humble cottager called his children together, read them some portion from the book of Truth, and then together they bent their knees in prayer to God."

The first of the many converts was a poor woman. When the pastor heard her story he said : " I felt like the boy who had earned his first guinea, or like a diver

who had been down to the depths of the sea and brought up a rare pearl."

Many stories were told of the strange sayings of the boy at Waterbeach; most of them were untrue. Spurgeon used to say they were the work of those who palmed off bad jokes upon their friends.

The ministry at Waterbeach was a good preparation for that which was to follow. It allowed time for study which was used to the full. Spurgeon spent his morning in meditation and in writing in preparation for the pulpit. It would have been easy for the young preacher to have settled down in indolence. He was far better equipped than any member of his congregation was likely to be. He had the outlines of many sermons which he had preached with acceptance, but he was a worker and was not content with anything than that which was the best he could do at the time.

Mr. Spurgeon's father was anxious that his son should receive the best possible equipment. He therefore urged that Charles should make application to Stepney College, now known as Regent's Park College, to prepare more fully for the ministry. Dr. Angus preached in Cambridge on February 1, 1852. Mr. Spurgeon wrote to his father concerning the visit:—

"MY DEAR FATHER,—

"Mr. Angus, the tutor of Stepney, preached for us on Sunday, Feb. 1. Of course being at my own place, had no opportunity of seeing him, and was very surprised when on Monday I was told that he wanted to see me. I assure you I never mentioned myself to him, nor to anyone, this came quite unexpectedly. I suppose the deacons of our church, hearing of my doings at Waterbeach, had thought right to mention me to him.

"Well, I went to the place of meeting, but by a very

singular occurrence we missed each other ; he waited in the parlour, while I was shown into the drawing-room and the servant forgot to tell him I was come. As he was going to London and could not wait to see me, he left a letter : I want to tell you why I think it wise not to go to college *now*. I have waited because (1) I wanted to get a little more to tell you. (2) I do not want to appear to desire to go to college at your expense. I do not want to go until I can pay for it with my own, or until friends offer to help, because I do not want to burden you.

“ It is said by almost all friends that I ought to go to college. I have no very great desire for it, in fact none at all. Yet I have made it a matter of prayer and I trust, yea, I am confident, God will guide me. Of course you are my only director and guide in these matters. Your judgment always has been best, you must know best. But perhaps you will allow me just to state my own opinion, not because I shall trust in it, but only that you may see my inclination. I think then (with all deference to you) that I had better not go to college yet, at least not just now, for

“ 1. Whatever advantages are to be derived from such a course of study I shall be more able to improve when my powers are more developed than I can at present. When I know more I shall be more able to learn.

“ 2. Providence has thrown me into a great sphere of usefulness, a congregation of often 450, a loving and praying Church and an awakened audience. Many we hope already own that the preaching has been with power from Heaven. Now ought I to leave them ?

“ 3. In a few years' time I hope to improve my purse, so as to be at no expense to you, or at least not for all. I should not like to know that you were

burdening yourself for me. I should love to work my own way as much as possible. I know you like this feeling.

"4. I am not uneducated. I have many opportunities of improvement now, all I want is more time, but even that Mr. Leeding would give me, if it were so arranged. I have plenty of practice and do we not learn to preach by preaching? You know what my style is. I fancy it is not very college like. Let it be never so bad, God has blessed it, and I believe He yet will. All I do right He does in me, and the might is of Him. I am now well off. I think as well off as any one of my age, and I am sure quite as happy. If I were in need I think the people may be able to raise more for me. Now shall I throw myself out, and trust to Providence as to whether I shall ever get another place, as soon as I leave college.

"5. But no. I have said enough, you are to judge, not I. I leave it to God and yourself, but still I should like you to decide in this way. Of course I have a will, and you know it, but I say not mine but your will and God's will. I have just acknowledged the letter and said that I could make no reply until I had consulted my friends.

"I hope you will excuse my scrawl, for, believe me, I am fully employed. Last night I thought of writing but was called out to see a dying man, and I thought I dare not refuse. The people at W. would not like to get even a hint of my leaving them. I do not know why they love me but they do. It is the Lord's doing.

"Give my love and many thanks to dear Mother, Archer and sisters. If at any time you think a letter from me would be useful, just hint as much and I will do it.

"May God keep me, in every place, from every evil,

and dwell with you, and abide with you for ever, and
with my best love, I am, dear Father,

“Your affectionate son,

“CHARLES.”

It seemed a stupid blunder. Dr. Angus was staying at the house of Mr. Macmillan, the publisher. He was keenly interested in the fame of the pastor at Waterbeach and wanted to meet him. An invitation was sent and the doctor remained in the house. He was there when Spurgeon timidly rang the bell and was shown into the room where, by an exercise of patience, he waited for more than two hours until it was time for him to begin his work. He rang the bell and learned with amazement that Dr. Angus had just gone, having waited for nearly two hours. The girl had forgotten to say that she had shown Spurgeon into the drawing-room. Spurgeon afterwards declared that he was glad the mistake had been made.

The work went merrily at Waterbeach ; the income was £45 a year, though 12s. a week had to be paid for rent for two rooms. Some members of the congregation, knowing the difficulties, found ways and means of helping the young pastor, either with money or with eatables. He declared that he was determined to go on with this work, for he, like Augustine and St. Paul, had heard a voice, and the voice bade him not to seek great things for himself.

“I can testify,” he says, “that great numbers of humble country-folk accepted the Saviour’s invitation, and it was delightful to see what a firm grip they afterwards had of the verities of the faith. Many of them became perfect masters in divinity. I used to think sometimes that if they had degrees who deserved them, diplomas would often be transferred and given to those who hold the plough handle or work at the carpenter’s

bench, for there is often more divinity in the little finger of a ploughman than there is in the whole body of our modern divines. Don't they understand divinity? someone asks. Yes, in the letter of it, but as to the spirit and the life of it, D.D. often means doubly destitute."

There were candid critics at Waterbeach. A Mr. Potto Brown, the miller of Houghton, invited Spurgeon to preach in his chapel, and to be his guest from the Saturday night till the Monday morning. The host said, when they sat down to breakfast, "We always provide two eggs for the minister's breakfast on Sunday morning. The phosphorus in them feeds the brain, and it looks as though you will need plenty of mental nourishment to-day." After a while Mr. Brown put the question: "Young man, whoever persuaded you that you could preach?" After a good deal of explanation Mr. Brown inquired whether Spurgeon had gone to live at Waterbeach. It was in the early days.

"No, sir, I am at Cambridge, where I teach in a school."

"Oh, then," said Brown, "you're only an apprentice boy at present, just trying your hand at preaching. Your ministry is a sort of off-hand farm to be cultivated at odd times."

Invited to preach at Cottenham, Mr. Spurgeon went over. The old minister received him with some surprise. He said: "I shouldn't have asked you here had I known you were such a bit of a boy, yet the people have been pouring into the place all the morning in waggons and dickey-carts and all kinds of vehicles. More fools they." The old man was a little afraid that the boy would not be able to "last out" to the usual time of preaching.

When he paid a visit to Isleham, where he was baptised, Mr. Aldis was to preach in the afternoon, and

he was persuaded to take the services in the morning and the evening. The people at Isleham had borrowed the use of the largest chapel in the neighbourhood. In the morning, when Mr. Spurgeon entered the pulpit, there were seven persons all told. He felt put upon his mettle and did his best. When the evening came the church was overcrowded and great the rejoicing of the people.

Mr. James Spurgeon occasionally went with his brother upon his preaching excursions, sometimes driving him in a pony-chaise to the place of worship. He records that Charles was not only popular but was a preacher of considerable parts.

The rustic congregations knew the ring of sincerity. They might gape at displays of rhetorical fireworks, but they were not moved by them. As they listened to the youth of seventeen they were amazed at the depth of his experience. Many of his utterances bore indications of his industrious reading of the Puritan Fathers. But Spurgeon made the experience his own ; in truth, it was amazing how deep and varied his spiritual experience appeared to all who knew him. It was not simply that he read experimental theology with unflagging interest and profit, but that he himself was so sensitised in spirit that he took on the experiences of others and lived them until they became his own.

"Who is this Spurgeon?" was the question being asked, not only in the villages but in the towns. The quaint things that were reported remained uncontradicted : Spurgeon knew the value of publicity. He let them go, and his fame spread. He would have gone to College, his love of learning was an abiding characteristic, but he could not get away from the memory of the day when he walked back disappointed at not seeing Dr. Angus, and while crossing Midsummer Common there came a sound of words as though spoken

from the heavens : " Seekest thou great things for thyself ? Seek them not."

He was not blind to the advantages of college training. He was ever urging students to obtain all the equipment possible, but he felt for himself he must make up by personal effort what he would miss in tutorial assistance. It was the turning point of his career ; it compelled him to examine his motives. What was he seeking ? And he was not content until he could lay bare the inmost desires of his heart in the presence of his Lord.

Back to Waterbeach he went, to his little rustic crowd, quite sure that the pathway he was to take had been made clear. There was a light to his feet and a guide to his path. He worked with a will, reading carefully the utterances of the masters of the pulpit art, and assimilating all of value that came within his reach.

He has left on record that he rose early in the morning, spending some hours in quiet study, and in the evening testing his knowledge in the presence of a congregation.

Dr. Angus did his best to make another appointment with the young preacher that he might persuade him to enter college, but Spurgeon had made up his mind and never wavered in his determination that he would go straight on acquiring whatever knowledge came in his way. He saved up money to make a pilgrimage to hear the saintly John Angell James. Mr. J. D. Everett was occupying a post in a high-class school at Totteridge, near London. There was a vacancy for another assistant, and Mr. Everett suggested the name of Spurgeon, and, with the approval of the Principal, he wrote inviting Spurgeon to accept the position. He asked for a few days to decide definitely, and then declined, chiefly on the ground that he was unwilling

to give up his lay preaching. He said that during the year he had preached more than three hundred times and the little chapel at Waterbeach was uncomfortably crowded.

It was impossible for a preacher of Spurgeon's quality to remain unknown. Some of the people at Waterbeach who knew their lay pastor's worth, prophesied that he would soon be in a prominent pulpit, but it had not occurred to them that the pulpit would be in one of the oldest churches in the capital city of the Empire.

The invitation to a London church came about through an attack on the young preacher made at a meeting of the Cambridge Sunday School Union held at the Guildhall of the University city in 1853. There were two other ministers to speak, who were much older than Spurgeon. He was called to give the first address. Describing the incident he says: "I do not now recollect anything that I said on that occasion, but I have no doubt that I spoke in my usual straightforward fashion. I do not think there was anything in my remarks to cause the other speakers to turn upon me so savagely as they did when it came to their turn to address the large gathering. One of them in particular was very personal, and also most insulting in his observations, specially referring to my youth, and then in what he seemed to regard as a climax, saying it was a pity that boys did not adopt the Scriptural practice of tarrying at Jericho till their beards were grown before they tried to instruct their seniors.

"Having obtained the chairman's permission, I reminded the audience that those who were bidden to tarry at Jericho were not boys but full-grown men whose beards had been shaved off by their enemies as the greatest indignity they could be made to suffer and who were, therefore, ashamed to return home until their beards had grown again. I added, 'The true

parallel to their case could be found in a minister who, through falling into open sin, had disgraced his sacred calling, and so needed to go into seclusion for a while until his character had to some extent been restored.' "

Spurgeon's bow at a venture struck home. He learned afterwards that the minister was not creditable to his calling. Among those who were present was Mr. George Gould of Loughton. He was greatly impressed by Spurgeon's address and his unusual courage.

Mr. Gould knew one of the deacons of New Park Street Chapel, London, Mr. Thomas Olney, and urged that young Spurgeon should be invited for a Sunday. Mr. Olney seems to have forgotten all about it, but upon being reminded, consulted the officers of the church, with the result that a letter was addressed to Mr. Spurgeon at Waterbeach.

On the last Sunday morning in November, 1853, the boy, wearing the turn-down collar and short jacket, found his way through the mist to the little church where he was to preach. The walk made him all aglow, and in the full consciousness of physical strength he was eager to get on with the service. He turned to select the hymns. On the hymn-book there was a letter bearing the London postmark. It was unusual and was opened with curiosity. It contained a formal invitation to occupy the pulpit at New Park Street, where Dr. Rippon had once been minister. Spurgeon thought it was a mistake and passed the letter to one of his friends. The old man looked at it and shook his head. He was not surprised but sad. "Had it been Cottenham or St. Ives or Huntingdon," said he, "I should not have wondered at all, but going to London is rather a great step from this little place."

Mr. Spurgeon replied, regretting his inability to accept the invitation, but offering to serve on December 11. He wrote: "I have been wondering very

much how you could have heard of me, and I think I ought to give some account of myself, lest I should come and be out of my right place. Although I have been more than two years minister of a church which has in that time doubled, yet my last birthday was only my nineteenth. I have hardly ever known what the fear of man means, and have all but uniformly had large congregations, and frequently crowded ones, but if you think my years would unqualify me for your pulpit, then by all means do not let me come. The great God, my helper, will not leave me to myself."

The letter was sent in much fear and trembling. The answer came, accepting December 11. Spurgeon's humility is seen in the correspondence. He never appeared to lack confidence in God or in himself, and yet how lowly-minded the man was. He was sure of himself simply because he had no doubts concerning his God. His was not the empty vanity of the egoist who mistakes the ego for the cosmos. He believed that whatever God called him to undertake, God would give him strength to carry through.

There were many sad hearts in the village chapel when it was known that the pastor had been invited to preach in a London church. The wise old saints shook their heads solemnly and declared that they had always felt that the boy would go to London, but he was going too soon. There were others who were very certain that London was Spurgeon's destiny.

CHAPTER V

SPURGEON COMES TO LONDON

SUNDAY, December 11, 1853, is the most memorable date in the history of modern Baptists. It is one of the two or three great dates in the history of Christianity in England. C. H. Spurgeon preached at New Park Street Chapel. The chroniclers took no note of the day except to put on record that it was cold and dull without rain. The Press made no copy out of the boy preacher that day, and the religious papers seemed hardly aware of Spurgeon's existence.

The Baptist journal, *The Freeman*, took a year to discover the preacher, who in about the same length of time had become the sensation of the Metropolis. A recent work on "London Baptists" gives a list of dates indicating some of the more important eras in the Baptist life in London, and makes no reference to anything remarkable in 1853.

The Baptist Union Annual Assembly meeting in 1854 has no reference to Mr. Spurgeon. A resolution passed by the members of the Union indicates the condition of the denomination which was trying to ignore the young preacher. The resolution runs: "The Union learns with unfeigned regret that the rate of increase in the churches, as shown by the Association Returns of 1853, is smaller than in preceding years, and smaller than it has been in any year since 1834, the limit of the Union records, it being only at an average of $1\frac{1}{2}$ per church per annum; that while the impression made by this numerical statement might be somewhat modified by a regard to the temporary causes—such as emigration, for example—which have operated to the diminution of the churches (and the statement cannot alone be taken as a satis-

factory basis on which to form an estimate of the spiritual state of the churches) in the judgment of the Union it presents at once an occasion for humiliation and a loud call to united activity and prayer: the former in every department of the work of the Lord, the latter for the gracious outpouring of His Holy Spirit."

In 1842 the West London Group of Churches had sunk to fourteen. In the London Baptist Association there were twenty-six churches. In 1851 there were three groups of Particular Baptists, two of General Baptists, while the majority of churches were outside any group. It seemed to some a hopeless situation. The October meeting of the London Association in 1855 was attended by six ministers and three laymen, representing thirty-three churches. The denominational outlook afforded no inspiration to the visiting minister.

Spurgeon arrived in the city on Saturday afternoon. It was a sullen November day with a touch of east wind that seemed to go through every garment. He made his way to Queen's Square, Bloomsbury, where the deacons had arranged for him to stay at a little boarding-house.

"I walked the mean streets and passed the narrow alleys to get to my lodgings." Bloomsbury was not the home of those whose names appear in *Who's Who?* but rather of those who had been, and of those who were, putting up a brave fight in the hope that some day they would arrive. Spurgeon never forgot the impressions of that Saturday. He went alone to the boarding-house, and there found "young gentlemen" who very soon knew a great deal about the youth from the country. After the meal they sat round the fire in the dingy room that was dining-room at midday, drawing-room in the afternoon, and lounge in the

evening. The chairs were not too comfortable, and the antimacassars were well worn. The "young gentlemen" talked; evidently they intended to take the courage out of the newcomer. They seemed greatly tickled that the boy should presume to be a preacher, and that he had actually undertaken to preach in one of the historic pulpits of the city.

How interesting it would have been to have heard the conversation round the fire. Poor Spurgeon, as he listened to the descriptions of the preacher who had nearly a thousand people to listen to his marvellous eloquence; and the other, the man of the proprietary chapel, whose learning and culture were shown in every sentence. The young men flocked to hear him, he was a "spell-binder"; there were others: Dr. X, a very remarkable theologian. His congregation was not numerous—fifty or sixty at the most—but then it sometimes happened that Westminster Abbey with all its wonderful attractions contained not more than sixty or seventy at an evening service; and St. Paul's Cathedral sometimes had less. But the preachers! There were giants in the land.

"The study which these men underwent in composing their sermons, their Herculean toils in keeping up their congregations, and the matchless oratory which they exhibited on all occasions, were duly rehearsed in my hearing."

The temperature of the dingy room became unbearable, and Spurgeon excused himself and went to bed. He was shown into a little cupboard room over the front door and there lay down, but not to sleep.

"On the narrow bed I tossed in solitary misery and found no pity. Pitiless was the grind of the cabs in the street, pitiless the recollection of the young city clerks whose grim propriety had gazed upon my rusticity with such amusement; pitiless the spare room which

scarcely afforded me space to kneel ; pitiless even the gas lamps which seemed to wink at me as they flickered amid the November darkness. I had no friends in all that city full of human beings, but felt myself to be among strangers and foreigners and hoped to be helped through the scrape into which I had been brought and to escape safely to the serene abodes of Cambridge and Waterbeach, which then seemed to be Eden itself."

At breakfast the young gentlemen renewed the conversation. Where was it he was to preach ? Oh, New Park Street, the other side of the water, in Southwark. How would he get there ? Walk ? Well, it was a considerable distance. He should go along Holborn Hill to Blackfriars, and then through the lanes at the foot of Southwark Bridge. Was he going as he was, with the huge black satin stock round his neck, and in those baggy trousers ? He denied that his trousers were baggy, they were only full at the knees.

He started out. Why had he come to London ? Was he after all seeking great things for himself ? It is not surprising that Spurgeon was a Calvinist. It is impossible to explain an ordinary life without attempting the task of accounting for the strange happenings that seemed to be the working of fate. Almost all our great men have confessed to a consciousness that they were being compelled along the way they seemed to choose for themselves. Perhaps it is true that in the great moments of destiny there is no question of choice, there is the Divine urge.

Spurgeon trudged the streets on the way to his Thermopylæ, wondering, praying, fearing, hoping, believing. "I felt all alone, and yet not alone ; expectant of Divine help and inwardly borne down by my sense of the need of it." A lonely pilgrim on the way to his Calvary, torn between the desire to be back in

the village pulpit and the passion for adventure. One text returned to his mind many times during that walk : "He must needs go through Samaria."

Spurgeon did not like London, but he had only seen the merest indication of the hardness of the life of the city where he was to make his home. No one would credit Mr. Sidney Webb with the faculty of overstatement. Let him describe some aspects of the city that depressed Spurgeon. "The transformation effected in the course of three-quarters of a century in the manners and morals of the London manual working class is one of the most remarkable chapters of social history. Nothing but the unimpassioned revelations of the Blue Books or the incidental references of contemporary newspapers to what they took as a matter of course, can give an adequate vision of the abominations that, within the memories of men still living, prevailed in all the working-class quarters—two-thirds of the whole child population growing up not only practically without schooling or religious influences of any kind, but also indescribably brutal and immoral ; living amid the unthinkable filth of vilely overcrowded courts unprovided either with water supply or sanitary conveniences, existing always at the lowest level of physical health, and constantly decimated by disease ; incessantly under temptation by the flaring gin palaces which alone relieved the monotony of the mean streets and dark alleys to which they were doomed ; graduating almost inevitably into vice and crime amid the now incredible street life of an unpoliced metropolis.

"It was with this problem, only partly alleviated in its gravity, that the educational reformers of 1860 and 1870 had to grapple. It is, in the main, out of this material that the present working-class population of London—taken as a whole, perhaps the least turbulent,

the least criminal, and the most assiduous in its industry of any of the world's great capitals—has been fashioned.”¹

Spurgeon had read something of the history of New Park Street Church, but he was not prepared for the grim building upon which he gazed with not a little temerity. He says: “It seemed to my eyes to be a large, ornate and imposing structure, suggesting an audience wealthy and critical, and far removed from the humble folk to whom my ministry had been sweetness and light. It was early, so there were no persons entering, and when the set time was fully come there were no signs to support the suggestion raised by the exterior of the building, and I felt that by God's help I was not out of my depth and was not likely to be in so small an audience.”

Inside the building there were traces of a great past. There was Dr. Gill's chair upon which Spurgeon sat in awe and wonder; there were some portraits. In after years the impressions had deepened into memories and could be told readily, but then, on that fateful morning, he could only feel how marvellous it was that he should be there in that vestry, sitting in the chair of the learned man whose shoes he would have counted it an honour to clean.

In the long ago Carter Lane Chapel, turning out of Tooley Street, close to St. Olave's Church, had been the meeting house of those who were described as Anabaptists. That building had been demolished to make room for the approaches to the new London Bridge. Dr. Gill and Dr. Rippon with Benjamin Keach had served in the pastorate. Dr. Gill's ministry extended from 1720 to 1771; Dr. Rippon followed him and remained pastor until 1836, so that between them their pastorates covered one hundred and sixteen years.

¹ *London Education*, p. 4.

Dr. Gill was one of the most learned men of his day, and easily the most learned of his denomination. He came from Kettering, where he was born in 1697. He attended the Grammar School of his native town, and at an early age was famous for his classical acquirements. His zeal for knowledge was a passion, it became a proverb: "As surely as Gill is in the book shop." He applied for entrance to the academy in Mile End, with a view to becoming a minister, but his attainments seemed to the principal to make it unnecessary. He remained working at the loom and continuing his study of the Greek Testament and of the Hebrew language.

In London he soon became influential. He undertook an *Exposition of the whole New Testament* in three volumes, and the Marischal College, Aberdeen, conferred upon him the degree of Doctor of Divinity. When he was congratulated he said, "I never thought it nor bought it nor sought it." Gill's exposition was praised or blamed according to the individual outlook upon theology. Robert Hall described it as "a continent of mud," John Ryland called it "an ocean of divinity."

Dr. Gill was a keen controversialist and contended with Wesley and others. Some City men, anxious to hear his voice, arranged that he should deliver a lecture on Wednesday evenings in Great Eastcheap. A subscription list was undertaken and from 1729 the lecture was continued for over twenty-six years. When the famous preacher endeavoured to get the young people of his congregation to sing new tunes, one of the lady members waited upon him and explained her objection to the innovation. She wanted David's tunes sung. "Ah," said the Doctor dryly, "so do I. You get them for me and we'll sing them straight away."

Dr. Rippon, whose hymn-book became general, was of a different type from his predecessor. He devoted much attention to the music of the church and compiled a supplement to Dr. Watts' hymns, besides editing the *Baptist Annual Register* and taking a prominent part in denominational concerns. It is recorded of him that when George III. received the congratulations of the Dissenters on his recovery from sickness, Dr. Rippon was deputed to read the address, which he did, in his usual sweet and gentle tones. When he had read a passage specially referring to the goodness of God, he remarked, "May it please your Majesty, we will read that again." It was said that only Dr. Rippon could have taken that liberty.

Sitting in the vestry, Spurgeon dreamed his dreams ; perhaps the ghosts of the past flitted across his vision. The time came for the service to begin. At his request there was a word of prayer and then he went into the great building, not to face the multitude but to see a mere handful of people dotted about the church, representing altogether a much smaller congregation than would have assembled at Waterbeach. Brilliant traditions may be great burdens. It seemed that New Park Street was living upon its past.

Spurgeon preached from the words, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and cometh down from the Father of lights, with Whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning."¹ His treatment of the subject was fresh but hardly novel. He described the majestic figure of the Father of light. Here is a paragraph from the opening : "God is here called 'the Father of light'—comparing Him to the sun. It is most true that this lower world is the reflection of the upper one. In it, once, the face of God might have been seen as on some glassy lake ; but sin

¹ James i. 17.

has ruffled the surface of the waters, so that the portrait is broken, and presented only in pieces. Yet there are the pieces—the wrecks of the picture—and we will not throw them aside. Let us lift up our eyes on high, and behold the only object which is worthy to be called an emblem of Deity. We think we can see several ideas couched in the figure used in our text by the apostle.

“Yon sun has shone on my cradle, it will beam on my death-bed, and cast a gleam into my grave. So doth God, the Beneficent, gild our path with sunshine. Earth were a gloomy vault without Him ; with Him, it is light and joyous, the porch of a still more blissful state.”

At the close of the service the congregation was puzzled. Where did the young man come from ? He was unlike any supply. His voice had a haunting charm ; there was clearness and power quite unusual. It was true the deacons sniffed when the preacher took out an aggressive pocket-handkerchief with blue spots and did not seem the least embarrassed when it was displayed before the critical audience. Some of the old people had forgotten the youthfulness of the preacher ; he was wonderfully matured in his experience, and his knowledge of the Bible was very welcome.

At the evening service the morning congregation returned and brought others with them. There had been considerable talk about the newcomer. Was he eccentric or simply natural ? The subject of the sermon was from the Book of Revelation. “They are without fault before the Throne of God.” The theme was to the preacher’s taste. He had taken the text before, and in truth the sermon, in almost all particulars, was a sermon he had preached to his rustic crowd. The people were thrilled. Some were far

from being convinced that it would be wise to ask so young a preacher to occupy the pulpit again, but they were the minority. There seemed to be a strange consciousness that it was an extraordinary occasion.

At the conclusion of the service the people lingered in the church in a state of excitement, asking all sorts of unanswerable questions. Was he coming again? Why not invite him for a month? Was he an orator or were the sermons simply the usual star turn of travelling preachers?

The choice of the theme is the secret of the sermon. Like St. Paul, Spurgeon had determined not to know anything among men save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Whatever text he might take, as a beginning, it led to the Cross. On that memorable first Sunday in New Park Street pulpit, he had "let himself go" upon his all-absorbing theme. Anyhow, whether invited again or not, the people would know that he gave the first place to the Gospel.

Those who were without fault before the Throne of God were there through the atoning work of Jesus Christ. It would be a long and weary journey before a man could be found without fault; even if an angel were sent to find the man, "he might fly round the world many a time till his wings were weary, but never would he find the man without fault. Imperfection is stamped upon all things, and save the completeness that is in Christ Jesus and the perfection we have in Him, perfection is nowhere to be found beneath the skies; nor in heaven itself could it be found unless God were there, for He alone can make a creature perfect."

The preacher was a little hard upon those who in their own opinion were without fault, but could easily discover very many faults in their neighbours. It is interesting to note that among the faults Spurgeon

emphasised were the faults of the Pharisees, the sham sinners "who talk very daintily of being sinners. I have no good opinion of them. John Berridge said that he kept a rod for sham beggars, and I will keep one for these pretenders."

There was a word of rebuke for those in the churches who sang sweetly but lived poorly. "We know that in many churches some of the richer members will scarcely notice the poorer, but it will not be so above : there is true love there. We hear of church members who have been sick for months but no brother or sister has ministered to them. In heaven there will be no neglect. They cannot suffer there, but if it were possible that they could suffer, so sweet would be the love displayed toward each other, suffering would be removed."

There was a word of approval for those who sought unity. "There are some of us who can give our hand very readily to anyone in whom we see anything that is pleasing in the sight of God."

The choice of the theme is of tremendous importance. What might not have happened if instead of preaching Christ crucified Spurgeon had chosen one of the hundred questions being discussed at the hour?

Whatever may be the explanation it is a mere matter of history that Churches rise or fall by their attitude toward Jesus Christ. A preacher may stand up in weakness, fear and much trembling ; he may ask, as the greatest of all preachers asked, "Who is sufficient for these things?" ; and there will come the same reply. The man with a message concerning the deeper things of the spirit, the things that in reality are the same through all the ages, finds a congregation. Is it not an amazing thing that the word is still the word of life, that there is power to stop the fountains of grief,

to heal the wounded in spirit, to give beauty for ashes and the garment of joy for the spirit of heaviness ?

During a strenuous ministry, the most wonderful pastorate in the history of the church, Spurgeon was faithful to the early resolution he made concerning the aim of his preaching. History has splendidly justified his choice, and his experience in varied degrees has been repeated by multitudes of men and women who have proclaimed the same glad tidings. The minds and hearts of men have been entranced not so much by the moral example of the Lord or by the sublimity of the ethics he proclaimed, as by the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world.

That night settled the question of Spurgeon's future as well as the history of the church to which he preached. One of the deacons had brought with him a young lady who was greatly taken with the preacher, who afterwards took her for better, for worse, and rejoiced in the union.

Some of the people wanted a church meeting immediately to issue an invitation, others urged that he should supply for a Sunday or two. Mr. Olney tentatively made the suggestion of an early visit. "No," said Spurgeon, "I can't afford it." "Why not?" asked Mr. Olney's son, "young William," father of the present beloved deacon and evangelist. "I have two students who might leave me if they were left too long." "How much do they pay you?" "Ten pounds," was the reply. Taking from his pocket two five-pound notes, William said, "There's the money; we want you here." Thus C. H. S. found his Jonathan and William Olney his David.

Spurgeon went back to the boarding-house, but this time he walked erect. There was no fear in his eye when he faced the young gentlemen who wanted to tell him about the preachers they had heard. He did

not return alone, he was accompanied by Mr. Joseph Passmore, who afterwards became the publisher of Spurgeon's works.

Spurgeon found his way to the little bed in the box-room over the door, but this time it did not seem so small, and the noises outside were strangely hushed. Somehow he was assured that all was well. He was not an adventurer seeking great things for himself; he was willing to be where his Master wanted him.

Describing that first Sunday in London, he wrote to his father: "Should I be settled at London I will come and see you often. I do not anticipate going there with much pleasure. I am contented where I am, but if God has more for me to do, then let me go and trust in Him.

"The London people are rather higher in Calvinism than myself, but I have succeeded in bringing one church to my own views and will trust with Divine assistance to do the same with another. I am a Calvinist, I love what someone called 'glorious Calvinism,' but Hyperism is too hot spiced for my palate."

He seemed doubtful about the theology of the people at New Park Street. "It is Calvinism they want in London, and any Arminian preaching will not be endured." To the letter he added a little sketch of the front of the chapel. "It is one of the finest in the denomination, somewhat in the style of our Cambridge museum."

A day for sight-seeing in London was a great occasion. The young preacher from the Fens afterwards wrote to his father: "I spent Monday in going about London." It is not difficult to follow him along the road. The Houses of Parliament would certainly attract him. There was never any doubt about his love of oratory. His admiration for Mr. Gladstone

was deep and strong, and his sincere affection for John Bright, the Quaker statesman, who was his only competitor in oratory, deepened with the years. It must have been a thrill for him to have stood in the yard of the House of Commons. There was nothing of importance going on and he had no patron to take him in, but there was the home of British eloquence from which the spoken word had determined the destinies of nations.

Across the narrow road to the Abbey with its wealth of history in marble, there to dream with open-eyed wonder. He had come along the dingy, not over-clean thoroughfares to Trafalgar Square, where groups of the ill-clad and ill-fed stared at the fountains that did not play ; and then to the right he had crossed to the Park. His love of fine horses would be enough to compel him to see the Horse Guards mounted, and the Park would be like a bit of home ; there, amid the wind-swept trees and the roads thick with autumnal leaves, he had felt a new sense of freedom and calm. The autumn tints and the bare arms of the trees were all to provide illustrations in the romantic days when the London in which he now moved alone and unknown would be agog with stories about his personality, and men would turn out in thousands to listen to his voice.

In the afternoon he went to St. Paul's, climbed to the top, and, like all visitors from the country, was amazed to hear his own voice in the Whispering Gallery. On the way to the Cathedral he had crossed Seven Dials and the courts and alleys which gave place to the Kingsway, one of the finest roads in the Empire. Did he go through the Gardens to get to Holywell Street, the famous booksellers' row ? There is no doubt that he went there, for he left part of the Sunday fee at the bookshop and carried off Scott's *Commentary*

to add to his store. Then down a bit of the Strand, now so transformed that even he would have difficulty in recognising it.

There was the old Temple Bar that blocked the way and told of the prohibition that shut even kings and queens out of the precincts of the City of London. He would be sure to linger in his walk. Here were associations with the best and greatest in English literature. At the Cock Tavern the famous Club used to meet. The little house still provided good coffee as in the days when Dr. Johnson and his friends, poets and playwrights, used to meet there and tell of their achievements. There Pepys had entertained one of the many pretty women who provoked his wife to jealousy, and there Boswell had listened to the wonderful conversation of Johnson as the great Doctor talked with his beloved Oliver and other members of the famous literary club.

Spurgeon had not a little of the journalistic gift, and Fleet Street upon his first visit was, as it is now, the tongue, if not the brain, of the world. How little did the country lad dream that in a few months Fleet Street would be eager to obtain copy concerning what he said and what he did?

Down Ludgate Hill, and across the road, he would not have seen the spacious avenue under Holborn Viaduct, but he might have lingered at the street market which is still represented by Farringdon Street Station. Books were displayed on barrows, and little stalls lined the fringe of the pathway. Almost anything could be bought, from a box of pins to a pair of trousers—it was not an uncommon thing for the buyer to go to the back of the barrow and try his trousers on. There was everything a man wears and that a woman is supposed to wear; stalls laden with meat and fish, bread and confectionery. It was a revelation to Spurgeon.

The sight-seer made the most of his day, and what a

day for a young man from the country ! His penetrating insight and fertile imagination enabled him to gather a veritable store-house of incidents and illustrations for the years to come.

He returned to Cambridge and was affected by the sorrow among his people at Waterbeach. Somehow they realised that the happy association with their lay pastor was nearing an end, that for him the hour of destiny had struck, and he must move. It is our fate in this strange existence to be compelled to move on. There were forces at work in London, in Waterbeach and in Mr. Spurgeon, all moving in the same direction.

The young pastor was not over-eager ; he acted with diffidence and with caution ; he referred to the harmony existing at Waterbeach and the devotion of the people—he had accepted the invitation to Waterbeach for a period of three months and was at liberty to withdraw at any time—but when he returned to preach at New Park Street again there was a quiet assurance that gave him inward peace.

He accepted an invitation to preach for two Sundays in January. The Church had decided to invite him for six months. From a private letter he learned that there were only five voting against the invitation. They were lukewarm, but the overwhelming majority was enthusiastic. Mr. Spurgeon did not like the idea of preaching half a year. He wrote with genuine modesty : “ After well weighing the matter I dare not accept an unqualified invitation for so long a time. My objection is not to the length of the time of probation, but it ill becomes a youth to promise to preach to a London congregation so long until he knows them and they know him. I would engage to supply for three months of that time and then, should the congregation fail or the Church disagree, I would reserve to myself liberty, without breach of engagement, to retire, and

you could, on your part, have the right to dismiss me without seeming to treat me ill. Should I see no reason for so doing and the Church still retain their wish for me, I can remain the other three months, either with or without the formality of a further invitation ; but even during that time (the second three months) I should not like to regard myself as a fixture, in case of ill success, but would only be a supply, liable to a fortnight's dismissal or resignation.

" Perhaps this is not business-like, I do not know : but this is the course I should prefer if it would be agreeable to the Church. Enthusiasm and popularity are often the crackling of thorns and soon expire. I do not wish to be a hindrance if I cannot be a help."

New Park Street wanted the preacher at once, but he would not agree, and finally they arranged to accept his suggestion that, as he had given them four Sabbaths, he should give Waterbeach four. He does not discuss the question of stipend, simply saying : " Pecuniary matters I am well satisfied with."

The little Church at Waterbeach had some hopes that in three months the pastor would be tired of London and more than a little homesick. Some of the people dared to express the desire that London would be tired of Spurgeon and he would come back, wiser, if a little saddened, by the experience.

Spurgeon's success in London began before he realised what was happening or the Church officers were quite alive to the rustling in the pews. The three months' probation was cut short by a written request from male members of the Church that a meeting might be held to give an immediate invitation to Mr. Spurgeon to the settled pastorate. The church filled up rapidly. The prayer meetings were revived, and what was much more important, there were the signs following the preaching of the Gospel, and continual

applications for membership from those who had been brought to the Lord under the new ministry.

The Church Meeting was held and a resolution conveying the invitation was passed. The reasons justifying the call were stated to be that during the brief ministry of the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon "we regard the extraordinary increase in the attendance upon the means of grace, both on Lord's Days and week evenings, combined with the manifest fact that his ministry has secured the general approbation of the members, as an encouraging token that our Heavenly Father has directed His way toward us in answer to the many prayers we have offered up for a suitable pastor—and as there are several inquirers desirous of joining our fellowship, we consider it prudent to secure as early as possible his permanent settlement among us."

Nine days after the meeting Mr. Spurgeon wrote to his "Dearly beloved in Christ Jesus. I have received your unanimous invitation as contained in a resolution passed by you on the 19th, desiring me to accept the pastorate among you. No lengthened reply is required; there is but one answer to so loving and cordial an invitation: I accept it."

There is another paragraph in the letter which should be remembered. "I ask your co-operation in every good work, in visiting the sick, in bringing in inquirers, in mutual edification. Oh that I may be no injury to you but a lasting benefit. I have no more to say saving this: that if I have expressed myself in these few words in a manner unbecoming my youth and inexperience, you will not impute it to arrogance but forgive my mistake."

Spurgeon was settled in a London pastorate, in a big gloomy old church that had been the home of great traditions and large cobwebs. It had sometimes been discussed whether the building in such an out-of-the-

way position, with a great brewery on one side and a vinegar distillery on the other, ought not to be sold, and the congregation transferred to places of worship nearer their homes. But the scene was soon to change. The back street was to come to the front and to be the goal of throngs of eager worshippers and not a few Press men as keenly eager for copy. Spurgeon and his deacons might have been appalled if they could have seen the future. Very few churches in London—only six among the Baptists—possessed an individual membership of more than three hundred persons, and the congregations had dwindled for years. There was an outcry of the faithful against the decline of religion and the increasing desecration of the Lord's Day. It was not a time when the Churches found their work easy and ministers swayed public opinion. The outlook was gloomy ; it was the darkness before the dawn.

SPURGEON THE INNOVATOR

LONDON—unchurched London—soon responded to the preacher from the Fens. There was no doubt that he was a living voice and not an echo of the dead past. Unlike the popular preachers of the day, he did not simply attract members of other churches, but made his appeal to the man in the street. Men and women of all types, from the highest to the lowest, came to the services. He was the theme of conversation and the subject of criticism.

From the first it was seen that Mr. Spurgeon did not fit into any of the categories of the types of ministers in the Metropolis. He stood alone. By the staid and orthodox he was regarded as an innovator and opposed at every new departure. In one particular the critics were right: there was nothing of the conventional type about Mr. Spurgeon, either in the man or in his method. He had learned the meaning of St. Paul's words concerning the gift of tongues, and certainly could say "In the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue."¹ He talked the language of the common people, colloquial but not vulgar, though some of his fastidious critics were not able to distinguish between one and the other. Heart thoughts, he declares, are the best thoughts, and should be spoken so that the people can understand them.

A critic wrote: "To the pith of Jay and the plainness of Rowland Hill he adds much of the familiarity, not to say the coarseness, of the Huntingtonian or the ultra-Calvinists. 'It has been my privilege,' Spurgeon

¹ I. Cor. xiv. 19.

says, 'to give more prominence in the religious world to those old doctrines of the Gospel.' But the traits referred to present themselves in shapes and with accompaniments which forbid the notion of imitation, and favour the opinion of a peculiar bent. Neither in the style and structure nor in handling is there appearance of art, study or elaboration. 'This,' he says, 'I am sure of: I tell you all I know and speak right on. I am no orator but tell you what springs up from my heart.' "

All the same Spurgeon was an orator and an elocutionist. One of the most famous dramatic critics of the day, Mr. Sheridan Knowles, described him as "absolutely perfect in his oratory," and declared that had he been upon the stage he would have filled the largest theatre without trouble. Those who had the privilege of hearing Mr. Spurgeon read Shakespeare, shared Mr. Knowles' opinion.

Spurgeon was dramatic to his finger-tips. He not only uttered the words, he acted them. He made the simple things live; every movement contributed, so that when he preached, the whole man was engaged in conveying the message. A bitter critic, probably Mr. James Wells, writing in *The Earthen Vessel*, January, 1855, said: "The laws of oratory have been well studied and he suits the action to his words. This mode of public speaking was, in the theatres of ancient Greece, carried to such an extent that one person had to speak the words and another had to perform the gestures and suit with every variety of face and form the movement of the subject in hand. Mr. Spurgeon has caught the idea, only with this difference, that he performs both parts himself."

In later years, before a service he might seem dull and heavy of countenance; the eyes lacked glow and lustre, the face was full and the thick lips tightly pressed,

but when he rose to speak a transfiguring process began. As he warmed to his subject the eyes lit up until they became a fire, flashing flame. The whole countenance was transformed so that it seemed impossible that it could belong to the apathetic figure of a few moments before.

Spurgeon rather gloried in the idea that he was breaking the conventions that were as cobwebs. According to his own confession he was not very much concerned with the particular form of his approach to the mind. He declared to the people of Scotland, who were a little shocked, that they did not understand him. "Why, bless your hearts," he said, "I would preach standing on my head, if I thought I could convert your souls, rather than preach on my feet. I am not very particular about how I preach." Later, when he was charged with disregarding the dignity of the pulpit and described as a "ranting fellow," he said, "My motto is *cedo nulli*—I yield to none. He refused frankly and flatly to be "cribbed, cabined and confined" by the conventional rules of the time.

The first great breach of ministerial etiquette arose over the question of ordination. He had accepted the pastorate of New Park Street Chapel with all its traditions and decorum, but he had not been properly ordained. The suggestion was made to him that there should be an ordination service with perhaps a tea and a public meeting. The prayer could be offered by one of the London ministers and the charge to the church and to the minister given by two others, and the whole procedure would be regularised. To this the young pastor replied in a lengthy letter to the Church Secretary. He objected to the service of ordination upon various grounds, holding that his ministry had been recognised by God and that he required no further authorisation. He did not accept

the doctrine of delegating power from minister to minister. He believed every church had a right to choose its own minister, and certainly needed no assistance from others in appointing him to the office. If the church insisted upon it he would be willing to submit, "but it will be submission. I shall endure it as a self-mortification in order that you may all be pleased. I would rather please you than myself, but still I would have it understood by all the church that I endure it as a penance for your sake."

Needless to say, the service was not held and Spurgeon was not ordained, but shortly after he preached upon the minister's true ordination, taking for his text the words, "Son of Man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel ; therefore hear the word of my mouth and give them warning from me."¹

Spurgeon was never very happy over the conventional prefix descriptive of ministers as "the Rev.;" he preferred "the name his mother gave him." In the early years "the Rev." became "Pastor," though he had no liking for prefix or suffix. Several eminent Nonconformist ministers followed his lead, notably Dr. R. W. Dale and Charles Vince.

When Mr. Spurgeon came to London the traditional garb of the Nonconformist minister was a long frock-coat of black cloth, a high stock with a white cravat, completed by a silk top-hat. Spurgeon soon discarded the traditional vestments ; he wore a short frock-coat, almost a jacket, an open vest, turned-down collar and small black bow. His hat was soft felt, approaching the Trilby shape. By the irony of fate, the "rebel's" dress which brought a storm of criticism, has long been the recognised uniform of Free Church ministers.

Perhaps the greatest innovation was that Spurgeon turned the pulpit into a platform. The artificial and

¹ Ezekiel iii. 17.

impersonal mode of address was far removed from the thought and speech of ordinary people. The new-comer surprised London by his utter disregard of the etiquette of the pulpit. He adopted a direct method of address just as personal as the prophet's form of speech when he said to the offender "Thou art the man." There was no doubt about his meaning. The vague ambiguity that could be made to yield half a dozen interpretations gave place to a pointedness with meaning inescapable.

New Park Street Chapel was all too small for the crowds anxious to hear the new voice. The road was blocked Sunday by Sunday, and the church officers were compelled to consider the question of enlargement. The seating accommodation was increased, and in the meantime Exeter Hall, in the Strand, was taken for the Sunday services ; but even that, spacious as it was, was not large enough for those desirous of hearing Spurgeon. Exeter Hall was only available for a brief period, and the question arose where to house the people. There was nothing available except the music-hall in the Royal Surrey Gardens, but that was a building capable of seating ten or twelve thousand persons, and London knew nothing of religious services in places of popular entertainment.

Immediately critics and caricaturists attacked the preacher on the bare suggestion of holding services in a music-hall ; but Spurgeon was not to be deterred, and so the news went round that on October 17 Spurgeon would be before the footlights.

It was a terrible ordeal. When the preacher found his way to the side entrance he discovered that the building was packed from floor to ceiling and some thousands of persons were still unable to gain admission. Mr. William Olney and Mr. Spurgeon had some days before gone over the building and expressed their

mutual fear that it was too large for the purpose, and that the adventure was almost too hazardous. Nothing of the kind had ever before been attempted. Great audiences gathered by Wesley and Whitefield had been in the open air. While they were timid, they were yet encouraged by the greatness of the undertaking. What a triumph it would be for the Gospel to be proclaimed to twelve thousand people under one roof !

The doors of the building were opened at six o'clock. Within a few minutes the three galleries, the orchestra and the area were overcrowded ; there was no further room. Dr. Campbell of *The British Banner* wrote : “ The spectacle of its kind was one of the most imposing, magnificent and awful ever presented to the human eye. No adequate idea of it can be conveyed by description ; to be understood it must have been seen, and they who beheld received an impression which no time will ever obliterate.”

The service commenced with the reading of Scripture and a hymn, but in the following prayer a terrible thing happened. Suddenly there was a cry of “ Fire ! ” and in another part of the building a voice cried, “ The gallery is giving way ! ” The scene that followed is not easy to describe. There is a record in the minute book of the New Park Street Church. “ Just after our pastor had commenced his prayer a disturbance was caused, as it is supposed, by some evil-disposed persons acting in concert, and the whole congregation was seized with a sudden panic. This caused a fearful rush to the doors, particularly from the galleries. Several persons, either in consequence of their heedless haste, or from the extreme pressure of the crowd behind, were thrown down on the stone steps of the north-west staircase, and were trampled on by the crowd pressing upon them. The lamentable result was

that seven persons lost their lives, and twenty-eight were removed to the hospitals, seriously bruised and injured. Our pastor, not being aware that any loss of life had occurred, continued in the pulpit, endeavouring by every means in his power to alleviate the fear of the people, and was successful to a very considerable extent. In attempting to renew the service, it was found that the people were too excited to listen to him, and those who remained dispersed quietly. This lamentable circumstance produced very serious effects on the nervous system of our pastor. He was entirely prostrated for some days, and compelled to relinquish his preaching engagements. Through the great mercy of our Heavenly Father, he was, however, restored so as to be able to occupy the pulpit in our own chapel on Sunday, October 31st, and gradually recovered his wonted health and vigour. The Lord's name be praised ! ”

A fund was raised to assist the sufferers, and all that was possible was done to comfort the mourners. Mr. Spurgeon suffered terribly. He removed to the house of a friend at Croydon, and there seemed to linger in the approach to the valley of the shadow of death, but there came a day of gladness and he, with restored vigour, came back to his pulpit and determined to go again to the music-hall. It was decided that the services should be held in the Surrey Gardens on Sunday morning, a very severe test of the preacher's power of attraction, but the result was the same : the building was too small for those who came from all over London—indeed, from all over the country—to that wonderful service.

Criticism was bitter in the extreme. The silliest tales were not too silly to describe the eccentricities and antics of the “pulpit mountebank.” A popular little book, *Punch in the Pulpit*, described the Surrey Gardens

service. After referring to the size of the building and the sale of literature before the service, the writer says : " But suddenly the business of buying and selling is suspended, the din of conversation is hushed ; something unusual has taken place ; there is whispering, there is the interchange of significant looks, there is pointing with the finger, till at length all eyes are directed to one particular spot, for now it is as clear as the noonday that my Lord This, and my Lady That, have taken their seats on the platform. Now an air of satisfaction pervades the assembly, now it is thought that dissent is looking up, or that some important event has taken place in that kingdom which is not of this world, and which cometh not with observation, or with outward show.

" The sermon was of the serio-comic kind ; it produced smiling, tittering, and now and then a loud laugh. The divinity of it was more in accordance with the writings of Dr. Crisp, or of Dr. Hawker, than with the writings of the New Testament. Indeed, in many respects, the sermon was, I think, in direct opposition to our Lord's Sermon on the Mount. The preacher of the music-hall often speaks with approbation of those who are considered to be Antinomian divines. I will not however deny that on this occasion there was the pleasing and energetic utterance of many good things ; but, upon the whole, it seemed only a semi-religious service, highly gratifying to those who thirst after excitement as the drunkard thirsts after brandy or gin. I felt that pathos was wanting, that reverence was wanting, and that almost everything was wanting to make the music-hall the house of God and the gate of heaven.

" I was very much struck with the resemblance between the preacher of the Surrey Gardens and the preacher of the Surrey Tabernacle. It is true that one

is in the morning of life, and the other is in the evening of life. The voice of one is clear as a bell, and the voice of the other is husky as a bagpipe. It is also true that one nicknames the other a 'duty-faith' man, and calls 'duty-faith' one of the mysteries of hell. But with these exceptions, the resemblance between them is very striking. I believe that both are kind and amiable men, and that in this respect they rise above their creed. Both belong to the Hyper school, where arrogance is always exhibited, and humility is seldom taught. Both have some gold, but also a more than usual quantity of brass. Both deal very largely in that mawkish thing called spiritualising."

The Rev. C. W. Banks, in his little paper *The Earthen Vessel*, published a detailed criticism of Mr. Spurgeon—a terrible criticism for the writer. After some words of praise Mr. Banks says: "What is he doing? Whose servant is he? What proof does he give that instrumentally his is a heart-searching, a Christ-exalting, truth-unfolding, sinner-converting, Church-feeding, soul-saving ministry? This is the point at issue with many whom we know, a point which we should rejoice to see clearly settled in the best sense and demonstrated beyond a doubt in the confidence of all the true Churches of Christ in Christendom."

In a later issue of *The Earthen Vessel*, a communication bearing the signature "Job," which is believed to be the Rev. James Wells, says that Mr. Spurgeon was converted at the age of fifteen, and adds: "Heaven grant it may prove to be so for the young man's sake and that of others also! But I have, most solemnly have, my doubts as to the divine reality of his conversion." The writer states his reasons: they are very curious, but he is convinced that if not converted, Spurgeon is well disposed.

His doctrine did not suit Mr. Wells and the High

Calvinists. They would have nothing to do with him. Mr. Wells declared that "Spurgeon preaches all doctrine and no doctrine ; all experience, and therefore no experience."

The religious Press did its best to ignore Spurgeon, but to the honour of the secular journals, a number of them were fair in their comments and fairly accurate in their reports.

Sketches caricaturing Mr. Spurgeon were very popular ; they were sold in the public streets. "Spurgeon on the locomotive, the fast train" and "The Bishop on the old stage coach, the slow-coach" made an attractive pair, rivalling the famous cartoons of brimstone and treacle.

Stories were told of Mr. Spurgeon sliding down the hand-rail of the pulpit stairs at New Park Street. It was told with vivid detail ; it had only one fault : the pulpit at New Park Street had no stairs. Mr. Spurgeon wrote : " Friends who inquire about silly tales may save themselves the trouble. We have been enabled in our ministry and in our walk before God so to act through grace that we have given no occasion for the slanderers, save only that we have kept the faith and been very jealous for the Lord God of Israel. Many of the stories still retailed everywhere, are the very same libels which were repeated concerning Rowland Hill and others who have long gone to their rest."

Undoubtedly the preacher acted his subject. Being what he was he could not do otherwise. The *Evening Star* said : " There never yet was a popular orator who did not talk more and better with his arms than with his tongue. Mr. Spurgeon knows this instinctively. When he has read his text he does not fasten his eyes on the manuscript and his hands to a cushion ; as soon as he begins he speaks, and begins to act, and that not as if declaiming on the stage but as if conversing with

you in the street. He seems to shake hands all round and put everyone at his ease."

The Surrey Gardens services enormously increased Mr. Spurgeon's popularity. Each Sunday morning London was amazed to see the crowds flocking to the music-hall to hear the preacher in his teens. Writing of the period, Mr. Spurgeon says : " God was with us in mighty power ; conversions were numerous and some of them were of a striking kind, and all along through the years we worshipped at the music-hall there were perpetual discoveries of fresh workers, continued accessions to the Church, and constant initiations of new enterprise. The College, Orphanage, Colportage, College Missions and all our various branch mission stations have followed upon the advance made by the Church during these services. We have seen good brought out of evil, and in our case we have been made to say with David, ' Thou caused men to ride over our heads. We went through fire and through water, but Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place.' "

The services at the music-hall came to an end in 1859 owing to the directors of the company determining to have a series of Sunday concerts, which they thought would bring in more money, but really resulted in the bankruptcy of the concern. Then a return was made to Exeter Hall, and finally the congregation settled down to its temporary home in the Strand until the great Tabernacle was erected.

It is difficult to visualise Exeter Hall in the mid-Victorian period. Glimpses of the building and some caricatures may be found in the ironic pages of *Punch* and in the work of contemporary satirists : Dickens, Thackeray, Jerrold, Bernard and the Grossmiths. Charing Cross Station was not finished—hardly begun. The street was narrow and the shops along the Strand

a curious medley of ancient and modern, though the modern were far behind the erections of to-day. The traffic was even then a problem.

A contemporary says: "Carts, omnibuses and vehicles of every description got into problematical confusion, and every now and then came to a dead standstill, the horses benefiting by the involuntary rest thus accorded them. Now and then a wheel would get firmly locked in that of another vehicle, and a rapid change of highly-seasoned compliments would only be broken up by the fresh excitement of a horse having tumbled down, or a tub having rolled off a brewer's dray. Nevertheless, the pavement was freely sprinkled with dashing-dressed ladies and children, whom the attractions of the Lowther Arcade, or the excitement of a 'morning performance' had lured from the West End. Everybody seemed in a hurry."

The approach to Exeter Hall was usually blocked on Sunday morning and evening. The people came from every direction, but their goal was the same. It frequently happened that when the building was packed with three to four thousand persons, there were as many outside, clamouring for admission.

Walking down the Strand any week-day afternoon in 1854 the appearance would have been drab and very strange. It is almost impossible to conceive the Strand without electric light, wide footpaths and spacious shops, motor buses, taxis. There were no vehicles except those drawn by horse or donkey, or upon occasion a big dog. Most of the buildings were later Georgian, flat fronted; not a few with bricked-in windows, a reminder of a repealed window-tax.

Up to the 'nineties the old Strand presented a strangely mixed character with a curious flavour of its own. It may be that every part of London has its

distinctive atmosphere and flavour; certainly the Strand in the old days was very distinctive. Exeter Hall was the home of music and eloquence. During the week it was given over to concerts and conferences, but on Sundays it was the most popular building in the city. There was nothing to compete with it. There were no cinema shows, no cheap excursions to the country; but it would be a mistake to suppose that there were not plenty of opportunities for the people to employ their time in the parks and in the places of public resort.

On July 19, 1855, Mr. Spurgeon came of age and marked the occasion by preaching a special sermon. A larger congregation than usual listened and demanded that it should be printed. It appeared with a portrait of the preacher, looking somewhat worn and thin. All the sermons preached in Exeter Hall were put together in one volume under the title *Exeter Hall Sermons*. They had an extensive circulation and travelled to many lands.

It was not to be expected that the young preacher would be free from criticism. On the whole, the secular Press was kindly disposed, but some of the journals increased their circulation by their bitter attacks upon him. Editors had discovered that Spurgeon provided more copy than the rest of the preachers put together. It was at that time he began to collect what he called his "museum." The hobby yielded a very full collection of newspaper cuttings and cartoons containing caricatures and criticisms. On the front page he wrote in bold letters the inscription: "Facts, fiction and facetiæ."

In after years he found much amusement in turning the pages to read a choice paragraph to his friends, and some of the paragraphs were very choice.

"In my opinion," wrote one of the critics, "there

was in the service more of earth than of heaven, and more that was fitted to pander to an idle curiosity than to promote those holy purposes for which preaching was instituted and for which we should assemble together in the name of the Lord."

The *Morning Advertiser*, edited by Mr. James Grant, was a friend all through the days of ridicule. The *Lambeth Gazette* wrote: "The fact cannot be concealed, mountebankism is to a certain class of mind quite as attractive in the pulpit as in the field of a country town. The Rev. C. H. Spurgeon is now the star of Southwark."

Some of the ministers declared that Spurgeon was desecrating the Sabbath by his services in public halls. Perhaps their criticism was not untinged with jealousy. A very fair-minded writer describing the clergy to whose ranks he belonged, said: "Our clergy are too highly educated for the poorer classes, or rather let me say, they are the slaves of their education, they cannot shake off its form of speech. These forms are too rigid, too confined, and the clergy will not or cannot travel out of them and take up the forms of thought and speech which will suit a less educated mode of thinking and speaking.

"They lecture on Christianity as a Comparative Anatomist lectures on a Sequelette. If this bone of the Christian religion be here, this other bone must be there, and so on till they build up the whole fleshless array of bones, and then they clasp their hands—inwardly, it is true—and cry, 'There, there it is, my Scheme.' There is nothing personal in it; no life, no nerves."

The same writer, referring to Nonconformist churches in the Metropolis, says: "There is a settled melancholy at the back of the greater number of their ministers. Most of them have never lived, some of

them have not even tried to live. They know little or nothing of the world—excellent men, but profoundly ignorant of any human nature save what they find in themselves and in their wives. How can they preach? The one thing to preach about they do not know.”¹

The London Baptist Association held its annual gathering in New Park Street Chapel. The *Freeman*, getting over the shock of nerves, reported the meetings. “Perhaps the ministers and members of the several churches meet so often that an annual gathering is no novelty. Perhaps the walk through London streets or the jolt in an omnibus or cab has fewer attractions than the Whitsuntide jaunt by railroad or pleasant country lane, or perhaps the thing has escaped due attention amid the throng of metropolitan claims. But certain it is that the London Particular Baptist Association, holding as it does from a sense of duty a meeting every year, has only given generally the impression of being a somewhat dull affair. Indeed, it is not enlivening either to preacher or hearer to find oneself in New Park Street Chapel with a congregation of seventy people on a week-day afternoon.”

The gracious reporter continued: “This year we are bound to say all was different. The popularity of the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon, the recently settled Pastor at New Park Street, attracted a crowded audience.”

The reporter, perhaps afraid of saying too much, referred to the vigour and originality of the sermon, as indicating the reason for the popularity of the preacher, and adds: “These powers with due culture may by the Divine blessing greatly and usefully serve the Church in days to come.”

The Strict Baptists returned to the charge; they were not going to let Mr. Spurgeon have it all to himself. They would not even allow that it was quite

¹ Stopford Brooke, *Life and Letters*, p. 54.

certain that he was a Christian, to say nothing of his being a Calvinist. But still the crowds came. Mr. Spurgeon playfully wrote to his brother James : "Congregations more than immense. Received this year into membership in three months more than eighty ; thirty more proposed for next month. The devil is wide awake, but so too is our Master. The Lord Mayor, though a Jew, has been to the chapel. He came up to my vestry to thank me. I am going to see him at the Mansion House. Chief Commissioner of Police also came and paid me a visit in the vestry. But, better still, some thieves, thimblerriggers, harlots and others have come, and some are now in the Church, as also a right honourable hot potato man, who is prominently known as a ' hot-Spurgeonite.' "

Mr. Spurgeon travelled up and down the country and made one or two visits beyond the Border. It would be interesting to accompany him upon his country jaunts. How he loved to talk about them. He was ever at heart a child of Nature, delighting in the open landscape, the ploughed fields and the healthy brown earth. The fragrance of the hay was better to him than the perfume of my lady's handkerchief.

Nothing pleased him better than to take two or three friends and go off for a jaunt through the country lanes. In those early days he made many excursions, conducted many services ; he was peculiarly happy when surrounded by a rustic crowd listening while he told of the glories of his Master. Upon one occasion in the summer of 1857 three or four thousand people assembled at a little village called Melbourn, a few miles from Cambridge. The lonely place had never been so disturbed. For more than a week busy hands were preparing triumphal arches of evergreens and flowers surmounted with words of welcome. The

shops displayed bunting and the cottages put out their flags. When the day arrived, the weather being all that could be desired, the people came in great crowds. Carriages and carts were drawn close up and wedged in among the people. Many of them had been waiting for hours. Before announcing a hymn Mr. Spurgeon said, "I think our friends will do well to take the horses out of the carriages. We cannot edify the horses, but the carriages will be a great comfort to the occupants." This being done, the preacher in full clear voice, prayed for those present, their homes, their little children and old folk, and every heart seemed touched.

After the service a meadow was cleared and tea was served to about eleven hundred people who were too far away to get back home. And then came another crowd, and Mr. Spurgeon consented to preach again.

In the opinion of some, the largest service attended under one roof was at the Crystal Palace. On October 7, 1857, the day set apart as a day of humiliation and prayer on account of the Indian Mutiny, trains commenced running at half-past seven in the morning, and by noon an immense congregation had assembled. The pulpit erected in the north-east corner of the transept had done good service at the Surrey Music-hall. Competent critics declared that over twenty-five thousand persons were present and able to hear the preacher's voice without undue strain.

It is related that the day before he went with a friend to try the acoustics of the building and announced a text which was heard by a workman upon the building, who in after years declared that it was through the text that he came to know the Lord.

Mr. Spurgeon made great appeals for those who were suffering through the Mutiny; the widows and the

fatherless. There was a great response, over six hundred pounds being contributed in one collection.

The secular Press became more friendly. They recognised the great gifts of the young preacher and his absolute sincerity. The religious Press was not so kindly disposed ; they returned to their old criticism of the places in which the services were held and the dangers attending such large congregations. Upon one occasion Mr. Spurgeon, no doubt thinking of his critics, prayed, "Wherever people are assembled to worship God, that place is sacred, whether beneath the magnificent canopy of the blue sky or in a building such as that in which we are now assembled, every place is sacred when devoted to such a purpose, for Thou, God, art everywhere. May God be in our midst at this time, and let nothing frighten His sheep, and grant that they may feed in quietness."

The demands upon the preacher's time became a heavy tax. There were calls from all over the country for special services, and it was arranged that where he went to preach the collection should be equally divided, half being given to the fund for building a new Tabernacle.

At the request of his grandfather he consented to preach in connection with the Congregational Church at Stambourne. It was the old man's ministerial jubilee. The crowds were very great, and very busy were the ladies making tea. The old man was overwhelmed with joy and listened to his grandson with deep emotion. Sometimes there would be an interruption or two, as with Whitefield and Wesley, but Spurgeon was very alert and very quick at repartee, so that the interrupter was usually satisfied with one reply.

Many amusing incidents were related to little groups of friends by Mr. Spurgeon concerning his adventures

in preaching in country districts. Mr. Thomas Olney, "Father Olney" of New Park Street, was anxious that the pastor should go and preach at Tring, the little Hertfordshire town where he was born. It was not an easy matter to arrange for either of the three Baptist Churches to allow the use of the building for a service. The minister of one thought that Mr. Spurgeon was too high in doctrine, and refused. Another definitely declined on the ground that Mr. Spurgeon was not a sound Calvinist. Finally it was arranged that the service should be held in the third chapel where Mr. William Skelton was pastor and would take a risk on Mr. Spurgeon's orthodoxy.

The place was very crowded. The minister was present, and Mr. Spurgeon noted that his dress was very shiny. At the close of the service he rather astonished the people by saying, "Now, dear friends, I have preached to you as well as I could, I don't want anything from you for myself, but I note that the minister of the chapel might not object to a new suit of clothes. Father Olney down there," pointing to the deacon, "will give half a sovereign. I will give the same amount, and now you must give the rest." The sum was given and more than one suit was provided.

Mr. Spurgeon's popularity grew by leaps and bounds; from the time of the accident at the Surrey Gardens the crowds increased. There were no buildings in London sufficient to accommodate those who tramped from far and near to hear his voice. One of the papers said: "He owes nothing to the pomp and circumstance of priesthood. There the youthful preacher stands in all the simplicity of his unsophisticated character. He owes nothing to relation or rank or the accidents of life which have sometimes contributed to great temporary popularity. What, then, is the source of this unprecedented attraction? It lies

partly but not merely in the externals of his eloquence ; it is primarily in the soul of the man, a soul large, liberal and loving, a soul stamped by the characteristics of a little child while putting forth the powers of one of David's mighty men. He is one of a favoured class, few in number but great in importance."

In June, 1859, a violent thunderstorm passed over the south of London. A tree on Clapham Common was struck by lightning and a man who had sheltered beneath its branches was killed. Mr. Spurgeon saw an opportunity for impressing people with the solemnity of the occasion. He announced that he would preach on the very spot. A great congregation gathered on Sunday, July 10. Ten thousand people were said to be present. The young preacher used a wagon for a pulpit and preached what was described as a powerful and searching sermon on the words, "Be ye also ready." A collection was made for the widow and her four children.

Week by week the preacher occupied London pulpits without distinction of denomination. The *Sunday at Home* referred to the change coming over the religious life of London. "We certainly live, as our fathers and grandfathers before us would have said, in extraordinary times. As regards the immense amount of preaching we surely shall not err if we say 'there were never such days before.' The Puseyites have opened Westminster Abbey for Sunday services, it is full to overflowing. The aristocratic dissenters have opened Exeter Hall, it is crowded. Mr. Spurgeon, as everybody knows, is at the Music-hall, and keeps it full from top to toe."

The Church was becoming Spurgeonised. There were rumours of an enormous Tabernacle to be erected for the young preacher, and it was said that he wanted to modernise the praise part of the service, that he was

likely to bring out a new hymn-book and had himself written some hymns which had been sung.

The crowds continued to follow the preacher. When Mr. Spurgeon was asked how he secured such vast congregations, he said : " I did not seek them, they have always sought me. My concern has been to preach Christ and leave the rest to His keeping."

An indication of the young preacher's more abundant labours is seen in a week's engagements taken at random in the year 1856.

Sabbath, morning and evening, New Park Street ; afternoon, address to the schools. Monday morning at Howard Hinton's Chapel ; afternoon, New Park Street ; evening, prayer meeting. Tuesday, afternoon and evening, Leighton. Wednesday, morning and evening, Zion Chapel, Whitechapel. Thursday morning, Dalston ; evening, service New Park Street. Friday morning, Dr. Fletcher's Chapel ; evening, Dr. Roger's Chapel, Brixton.

It is not too much to say that Spurgeon was touching all classes of the community, not only those who were familiar with places of worship, but great numbers of educated and uneducated who were outside all organised religious influences. Had he been simply a preacher of the Calvinistic system of doctrine, such a result would not have followed. He was supremely an Evangelist. His great mission was to bring men into allegiance to Jesus Christ as their Leader and Lord. He was a life-changer, and in this mighty work he stands alone among those of his time, perhaps among those of any time.

There is no justification for the supposition that Mr. Spurgeon made no appeal to the educated classes. It may be seen from the reports of the persons attending this ministry at various periods that men like John Ruskin, James Grant of the *Morning Advertiser*, with a

number of newspaper men, were drawn by the preacher in a way that would have been impossible had he not been a physician of souls able to prescribe for the rich and the poor, the cultured and the ignorant. Among journalists the Rev. Jonathan Whittemore, of Ainsford, the editor of *The Baptist Messenger*, not only confessed his indebtedness to Mr. Spurgeon, but sought his literary assistance which was readily given, and between them there grew up a friendship which lasted until Mr. Whittemore's death.

In the early years those who were in closest touch with Mr. Spurgeon saw something of the martyrdom to pain which characterised practically all his public life. Sufficient note has not been taken of that martyr life which accounts for so much. He had been portrayed as the fearless orator, the keen controversialist, the persistent dogmatist, and he was all that, but there was another side. He was almost childishly sensitive, so that he was driven to the defence of an assumed indifference to praise or blame. He was very grateful for a genuine word of appreciation; to know that someone had been really helped by his utterance would bring tears to his eyes and thanksgiving to his lips.

There was about the man a subtle quality of sympathy, so powerful that the suffering and sorrows of others became his own experience. He literally had a talent for suffering, a rare gift among strong men. To those who had suffered bereavement he was as tender as a woman toward a little child. He was oft-times broken down by the recital of another's grief.

The greater part of his career was lived in fellowship with physical pain. How bravely he endured his cross, and made suffering contribute to the comfort and the strengthening of others. In later years he would sit heavily in his chair in the private room—"the guv'nor's room"—at the College, and as he talked,

leaning hard upon his stick, every breath seemed drawn in pain.

"The enemy has me to-day," he once said, "in both knees. I am afraid I cannot walk to the platform." He straightened himself up as well as he could, tightened his lips, and with the aid of an arm on one side and his stick upon the other, he managed to get along the corridor and then into the College room where the rafters rang with the welcome of one hundred and twenty men. He was a little more erect; he got to the platform and took his seat. Then the enemy gave him another twinge; his face was drawn for a moment, but when he looked up with a new light in his eye, he said, "God gives to some a talent for suffering."

That afternoon many men felt ashamed that they had ever spoken of their paltry little aches and pains. They had seen a great soul in physical agony.

Looking out from my window over the English Channel, the ocean may be seen in many moods. In the grey dawn of the morning it is sometimes almost silent and still, then flooded with light in gladness caressing the beach. Perchance at eventide the clouds have lowered and the storm winds have blown up, gaining in speed until they drive at more than a hundred miles an hour. The waters are in a mad turmoil, they hurl themselves at all that comes within their reach. They moan and shout. The ocean has many moods, but not more moods than a great personality. Some men are a multitude; they do not play many parts, they *are* many parts, and each one in its turn is as real, as natural as any other.

SPURGEON'S THEOLOGY

MR. SPURGEON'S theology is only to be understood in the light of his personality. In the early days, and in the later years, he gloried in declaring his belief in Calvinism. In the first sermon preached in the Metropolitan Tabernacle he said, "I am not ashamed to avow myself a Calvinist, although I claim to be rather a Calvinist according to Calvin than after the modern debased fashion. I do not hesitate to take the name of Baptist. You have there," pointing to the open baptistery, "substantial evidence that I am not ashamed of that ordinance of our Lord Jesus Christ, but if I am asked to say what is my creed, I think I must reply, 'It is Jesus Christ.' My venerated predecessor, Dr. Gill, has left a body of divinity admirable and excellent in its way, but the body of divinity to which I would pin and bind myself for ever, God helping me, is not his system of divinity or any other human treatise, but Jesus Christ, Who is the sum and substance of the Gospel, Who is in Himself all theology, the Incarnation of every precious truth, the all-glorious embodiment of the way, the truth and the life."

The Calvinists of Mr. Spurgeon's day were mainly of the hyper-Calvinist school. They had Calvin's grim logic, but not Calvin's human sympathy. Mr. Spurgeon did not set out to be a theologian, but those who knew him had no doubt as to his wide reading in theology, and his intimate acquaintance with the Puritans. Probably his collection of Puritan literature was by far the most extensive possessed by any private individual.

Sir William Robertson Nicoll, writing to me in July, 1917, said of Spurgeon, "My acquaintance with him

was at the close of his life, and therefore very brief. . . . There are many things in his sermons which show that he was not at all the narrow and illiterate bigot that many people think him ; on the contrary he had a great breadth of mind ; he made serious concessions to the new spirit, and was far better read and far more able and powerful intellectually than most people knew."

Spurgeon's theology, as all genuine theology, takes colour from the individual temperament and outlook. He was a different type from Augustine and Calvin. He had the warm imagination of a poet and the passionate affection of a great lover, with an unsurpassed gift of rhetoric. These combined to give individuality to his Calvinism.

Calvin came to great eminence and authority as a theologian, but to me he is far more attractive as a Christian social reformer. There is still room for a study of the man who made the little city of Geneva the home of freedom, religion and education, so that to-day the League of Nations and the great international organisations have their headquarters in that city by the lake.

In 1536 John Calvin, a young Frenchman of twenty-seven, seeking religious liberty, passed through the city of Geneva, where Farel was preaching the Reformation. Calvin was persuaded to join in the work. Their zeal created a reaction. They were expelled from the city, but not for long. In 1541 Calvin returned. He was given almost a free hand in the direction of affairs, and "proceeded to govern (the city) as though he were not sure whether he was in charge of a university or a reformatory."

"The Laws and Statutes of Geneva" which Calvin formulated cover almost all matters of life and conduct, from the prohibition of baggy trousers and long hair to

polite forms of address and the banning of naughty words. Calvin set up a Consistory, an ecclesiastical court to supervise morals and manners.

Geneva's system of education is still an ideal to the majority of cities of Europe. It begins in the elementary school and proceeds by a process of elimination to the university. The Reformer set himself to build adequate premises to house the pupils. The university, until recently known as the Academy, developed rapidly and became famous throughout Europe as a centre of culture for Protestants of all lands.

The 400th anniversary of Calvin's birth and the 350th anniversary of the opening of both College and Academy, is commemorated in the Reformation Monument. Calvin's doctrine was that of the Reformers. He preached the Bible as the Word of God, the sole authority for mankind, that no priest is needed as mediator, and that man's conscience directed by God must be the judge of all actions. He applied his principles to liberty of conscience in other matters beside religion, and taught that no obedience should be given to Church or State that was not first sanctioned by conscience.

Mark Pattison says: "The Christianity of the Middle Ages had preached the base and demoralising surrender of the individual, the surrender of his understanding to the Church, of his conscience to the priest, of his will to the prince. The policy of Calvin was a vigorous effort to supply what the revolutionary movement wanted—a positive education of the individual soul."

The principles governing Geneva spread far and wide with the fires of the Reformation, affecting the destinies of Holland, Scotland and New England. Geneva prospered and became a beacon light. After twenty-three years of incessant toil Calvin died. All

his life he had been a sufferer, and death came as a release in his fifty-fifth year. The Consistory Court, meeting after his death, entered a simple minute upon its records. His name, with the date of his death and the pregnant words, *allé à Dieu*. His home, No. 11 Rue Calvin, has disappeared. The only memorial stone that I could find was a simple slab with the two letters "J. C.," and that may not have marked his resting place. His memorial in the realm of thought is the work written when he was twenty-six: *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, but to humanity his memorial will ever be Geneva. The Protestant world bears witness that it is the greatest of the little cities of the earth. Nations of all faiths have chosen as their common ground the home of liberty which he created. That is his imperishable monument.

Calvin is destined to remembrance not for his love of learning and his passion to make education the birth-right of every child, not for his advanced ideas of civil government, through which he made the city a model; not even for his amazing writings and commentaries on the Bible, nor for the book that is still the wonder and admiration of theologians of world-wide repute. He is remembered by the burning of the heretic Michael Servetus, and the dark chapter of his theology dealing with Predestination.

Spurgeon preached in Calvin's pulpit in connection with the international service of thanksgiving. He received the Medal of Remembrance, and it is said that he kissed it. He rejoiced in Calvin's practical work. Geneva, as he said, in Calvin's day was a city of refuge. It is an apt description, though a quotation, for in Calvin's time a colony of strangers acknowledging no allegiance, found a congenial atmosphere in which to live and to devote themselves to study. Exiles for conscience' sake were more than welcome. They

came from the ends of the earth, and so long as they kept within the limits of the law, they were protected. Yet Calvin cannot get away from the shadow of Servetus.

Spurgeon loved the many-sidedness of the man ; even in so serious a work as the *Institutes* he found space for paragraphs positively lively and entertaining. Speaking of the necessity for a Divine revelation, he relates how Simonides, being asked by Hiero the tyrant what God was, requested a day to consider the matter. The tyrant next day repeated the question, but Simonides begged to be allowed two days longer to prepare his answer. Time after time Simonides requests to be allowed to double the number of days for the consideration of the subject. At length he has to confess, "The longer I consider the subject, the more obscure it appears to me." ¹

Describing how the Divine Being appears in human form, he answers those who object to the Bible ascribing to God eyes, hands and feet. Calvin says : "Who of the meanest capacity understands not that God lisps as it were with us, just as nurses are accustomed to speak to infants." ²

On the guidance of Scripture he writes : "For as persons who are old or whose eyes are by any means become dim, if you show them the most beautiful book, though they perceive something written but can scarcely read two words together, yet by the assistance of spectacles will begin to read distinctly ; so the Scripture, collecting in our minds the otherwise confused notions of Deity, dispels the darkness and gives us a clearer view of the true God." ³

The doctrines of Election and Reprobation which

¹ *Institutes*, I., p. 5.

² *Institutes*, I., p. 13.

³ *Institutes*, I., p. 6.

Calvin proclaimed, have been a nightmare to many minds, and a cause of controversy from the time they were first made known. Calvin himself regarded them as terrible. Augustine and others taught a doctrine of Predestination and the absolute sovereignty of God over His universe, but most of them hesitated to go to the end of the logical process. Calvin was not a man to stay in intellectual half-way houses, he went straight on. He writes : " Predestination we call the eternal decree of God, by which He hath determined in Himself what He would have to become of every individual of mankind. For they are not all created with a similar destiny ; but eternal life is fore-ordained for some, and eternal damnation for others. We assert that by an eternal and immutable counsel, God hath once for all determined, both whom He would admit to salvation and whom He would condemn to destruction." ¹

Calvin was trained in the schools of the law, intending to become an advocate. His theology bears the marks of the legal training. He pushed the case for the prosecution relentlessly to get a verdict, even though the verdict was an outrage. There may be facts in the case unknown to the advocate ; theologians are not infallible. The reasoning faculty is not the only means of discovering the truth. Spurgeon used to quote Bengel with approval, and thought he was sound in advising that " it was not wise to try to look at what God was doing behind the scenes."

It is a strange paradox that the doctrine of Divine Sovereignty has produced heroes and nerved them to courage as no other teaching has done. The belief that all men are instruments in the hands of Divine power and wisdom could hardly fail to provide motive power for the most heroic endeavours. " Calvinism,"

¹ *Institutes*, III., p. 21.

writes Lord Morley, "exalted its votaries to a pitch of heroic moral energy that has never been surpassed. They have exhibited an act of courage, a cheerful self-restraint, an exalting self-sacrifice that men count amongst the highest glories of the human conscience."

In Spurgeon's day Calvinistic preachers dwelt largely upon Predestination and Reprobation, almost ignoring the great body of truth Calvin proclaimed. They did him a great injustice by their omissions. Systems of theology must be judged not by selecting one dogma and viewing it out of relation to the whole, but by honestly endeavouring to see the scheme in its entirety, noting how one doctrine reacts upon another, limiting, extending or qualifying.

It is not our purpose to defend Calvin's doctrine ; that may be left to the theologians who share his views, but it is worth while to raise a protest against judging a writer by an arbitrary selection of one chapter from his volume. Father Simon, a learned and famous priest of the Roman Catholic Church, paid him a great tribute. He wrote : "As Calvin was endued with a lofty genius, we are constantly meeting with something in his *Commentaries* which delights the mind, and in consequence of his intimate and perfect acquaintance with human nature, his ethics are truly charming, while he does his utmost to maintain their accordance with the sacred text."

Not a few theologians, like Dr. James Morison, earnestly entreated their pupils to read the works of Calvin, "one of the noblest of uninspired men." But there still remains the memory of Servetus and that chapter in the *Institutes*.

Oliver Goldsmith was asked by a young lady to advise her upon a really good commentary on the Scriptures. The genial author of *The Vicar of Wakefield*

replied that common sense was one of the best commentaries he had ever known.

Spurgeon followed the line of common sense in interpreting the Scriptures. He quotes Calvin frequently and protests, perhaps a little too much, that he is a Calvinist ; but he did not blindly follow the great master of Geneva. He shrewdly saw the limits beyond which no interpreter could safely advance.

Naturally Mr. Spurgeon's theology often brought him into controversy. His nearest neighbour was the Rev. James Wells, a leader of the High Calvinists. His references to Mr. Spurgeon were quaint and oft-times rude. With sheer enjoyment as well as ability, he attacked Spurgeon's departure from the true faith of Calvinism. Sometimes the pastor of the Tabernacle replied with equal warmth. In a lecture to his students upon sermons, he says : " Do not rehearse five or six doctrines with unvarying monotony of repetition. Buy a theological barrel-organ, brethren, with five tunes accurately adjusted, and you will be qualified to practise as an ultra-Calvinistic preacher at Zoar or at Jireh, if you also purchase at some vinegar factory a good supply of bitter, acrid abuse of Arminians, and duty-faith men. Brains and grace are optional, but the organ and the wormwood are indispensable. It is ours to perceive and rejoice in a wider range of truth. All that these good men hold of grace and sovereignty we maintain as firmly and boldly as they ; but we dare not shut our eyes to other teachings of the word, and we feel bound to make full proof of our ministry, by declaring the whole counsel of God."

Spurgeon's theology has not the regular symmetry of a cathedral, it is rather a quarry in which marble is found in strata running in different directions. In the published sermons there is a background of theology which will yield rich treasure to those who take the

trouble to seek. It is said that a theologian is seldom wholly right and seldom altogether wrong. Spurgeon's theology is to be read in the light of his time, and with regard to his genius. He followed the main outline of the great master of Geneva. He read the *Institutes* but rarely quoted from their pages. He sometimes turned to Jonathan Edwards, but it was rather to the bright side of the theologian of New England. My introduction to Edwards resulted from Spurgeon's reading of a lovely passage. Here it is: "God's absolute sovereignty and justice with respect to salvation is what my mind seems to rest assured of as much as of anything that I see with my eyes. At least it is so at times. But I have often since that first conviction had quite another sense of God's sovereignty than I had then. I have often had not only a conviction but a delightful conviction; the doctrine has often appeared exceedingly pleasant, bright and sweet."

The language of the Calvinistic theologian concerning the Divine decrees is ultimately the reflection and investiture of the deeper thought of the speculative philosophy that God's activity is to and from Himself. Spurgeon's Calvinism was shot through with his own type of religion and resulted in the sterner doctrines being interpreted with the tenderness of mysticism.

A recent writer upon *The Distinctive Doctrines of Calvinism* declares that "its most profound dogma is the self-sufficiency of God. It is not that of predestination, the sovereignty or providence of God, but the self-sufficiency of God, or, as the old theologians called it, the *aseitas Dei*. Why is it the most profound? Well, predestination, sovereignty, providence presuppose a relation between God and the world. But the doctrine of the self-sufficiency of God carries you far beyond that relation. It tells you that God triune is wise, good, just, holy, loving, veracious, mighty,

beatific, glorious in Himself ; that He needs no relation to anything outside Himself to realise Himself in these qualities ; that the existence of the world does not add to His glory in the slightest degree. He is not served by men's hands, as though He needed anything."

Professor V. Hepp recognised that the glory of Calvin is in the majesty of his doctrine of God. Spurgeon seized upon this, God was first and last, and everything depended upon the Divine will, but the will of God was to reveal the love of God. Few passages rank higher than Spurgeon's conception of the majesty manifesting the love of the Lord. His vision of absolute love remains as the spring of consolation to many a thirsty pilgrim. Spurgeon loved to discourse upon the all-pervading grace that came through Jesus Christ, upon the love of the Father that never lost its freshness. He was not greatly concerned to harmonise his theology. He recognised the difference between theology and religion. "The controversy," he writes, "which has been carried on between the Calvinists and the Arminian is exceedingly important, but it does not so involve the vital point of personal godliness as to make eternal life dependent upon our holding either system of theology."¹

It is the weakness of small minds to strive after a clear-cut system in which there are no mysteries that refuse to be reduced to harmony. Tennyson's ancient sage cries, "We poor creatures of a day break into 'thens' and 'whens,' the eternal 'Now.'"

" In seeking to undo
One riddle and to find the true,
I knit a hundred others new."

God's revelation makes plain a number of truths. They are stated without ambiguity. No doubt in the

¹ *Penny Pulpit*, Nos. 385-88.

Divine mind they exist in logical and harmonious interrelationship, but as we read them it is difficult to bring them into harmony. It is not that once a major truth is received all the rest will fall into their proper relations, so that we can see them as a whole, complete and harmonious. Spurgeon saw that in theology, as in life, there were problems beyond our power to solve. "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law." ¹

That Scripture practically covered the main outlines of Spurgeon's theology. In life we are constantly coming to roads marked "Private." Curiosity, which is the mother of learning, prompts us to explore the paths, but at the end of the road there is the closed door, the barred gate. It is so in all departments of knowledge. At the end there is the cul-de-sac. There is so much we wish to discover. God has kept some things to Himself and at least in this life they are not made known to His children.

It is a great gain to recognise the limitations of our knowledge. "Now we are learning bit by bit," as Dr. Moffatt translates St. Paul's words: "Now I know in part but then shall I know even as also I am known."

Calvinism leaves room for mysticism. It does not attempt to explain away the great mysteries that remain unrevealed. Truth, as we know it, does not form a perfect circle, but seems to lie in parallel lines that never meet. The sovereignty of God and the Fatherhood of God are equally clear in the Scriptures of truth; neither seems to stand alone. How far does the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God extend? Paul quoted to the Athenians their own poet: "For we are also His offspring." ² Calvin declares that the

¹ Deut. xxix. 29.

² Acts xvii. 28.

Fatherhood of God stretches as far as His sovereignty. By virtue of creation man is a son of God, and in an altogether unique sense he enters the family of God through faith in Jesus Christ. "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, 'Abba, Father.'"¹

There are three stages in the life of our human sonship to God. We are children by creation, and as such are the objects of His love. In the second place we are His children by redemption; and thirdly by the adoption and the sanctification of the Holy Spirit. Spurgeon loved to dwell upon the relationship of the believer to God in Jesus Christ. If one would know the wonders of the Divine love in communion with the Father, Spurgeon is an instructor of great value.

It would not be difficult to place in antithesis a number of doctrines which would require a great deal of ingenuity to harmonise. There is the doctrine of election and that of the covenant. Calvinism has been much criticised because of these tenets, and yet Calvin stated them in the words of the Scriptures.

There are the doctrines of sin and grace. Calvin's teaching concerning the depravity of human nature, if it stood alone, would be one of the most terrible chapters in literature. Man is totally depraved, he is not simply become "like a stick and a stone," as Luther taught; it is far worse than that. Sticks and stones are not active, but human nature works in opposition to God's will. The doctrine does not stand alone. There is the antithesis: the grace of God. It is sovereign and free; it gives in abundance and asks nothing in return. It is irresistible. As in nature there is a subtle and strange healing power that begins to operate wherever a wound is made, and works in the direction of healing,

¹ Romans viii. 15.

so in grace there is the active mercy of God which is from everlasting to everlasting.

Spurgeon delighted in the doctrine of grace. In his view no limits could be set to its operations. Like the sun in the heavens it was made to rise upon the evil and the good, and should lead men to the acknowledgment of God in Christ. He found peace for the heart and rest for the mind in the recognition that it was not his duty to bring into harmony the vast body of truth he found within the covers of the Scriptures.

Had God so chosen He might have made truth as clear as the Mediterranean sky, but He has left the clouds on the horizon. The verities might have been as visible as the Alps. Moral vision might have been extended so that the darkest depths might have been penetrated by spiritual sight, but we walk by faith, and faith always has something of a shadow across the vision. The things that are revealed are so many and so vital that it is good to learn at Spurgeon's feet that there are some things not made known.

With an eye for the practical, Spurgeon related his theology to the needs of the people. In a colloquial talk to students he says, "Do not make minor doctrines main points. For instance, the great problems of sublapsarianism and superlapsarianism, the trenchant debates concerning eternal filiation, the earnest dispute concerning the double procession, and the pre- or post-millenarian schemes, however important some may deem them, are practically of very little concern to that godly widow woman, with seven children to support by her needle, who wants far more to hear of the loving-kindness of God or Providence than of these mysteries profound ; if you preach to her on the faithfulness of God to His people she will be cheered and helped in the battle of life ; but difficult questions will perplex her or send her to sleep. She is, however,

the type of hundreds of those who most require your care. Our great master theme is the good news from heaven ; the tidings of mercy through the atoning death of Jesus, mercy to the chief of sinners upon their believing in Jesus."

How merry Spurgeon could be in discoursing upon what he described as almost holy trifling in the pulpit. He would depict "the preacher who was great upon the ten toes of the beast, the four faces of the cherubim, the mystical meaning of badger skins, and the typical bearings of the staves of the Ark, and the windows of Solomon's Temple. They reminded him of a lion engaged in mouse hunting, or a man-of-war cruising after a lost water-butt. He compared them to Harcatius, King of Persia, who was a noble mole-catcher, and Briantes, King of Lydia, who was equally *au fait* at filing needles ; but these trivialities by no means prove them to have been great kings : it is much the same in the ministry, there is such a thing as meanness of mental occupation unbecoming the rank of an ambassador of Heaven."

He believed that it was better to unveil the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ than to solve the problems of the religious Sphinx or to have cut the Gordian Knot of apocalyptic difficulty. Spurgeon's theology derived its authority from the Scripture. He recognised no source of our knowledge of God except through the Scripture. Where he seemed to refer to the inner light, it was always to be interpreted in the light of the spoken word, and that in the presence of the One Who was the Word of God Incarnate. His idea of the spiritual use of the Bible placed it beyond the scope of historical criticism, and made it self-attesting. He would say, "It is not for us to sit in judgment upon the Word but to let the Word judge us."

Finally there are three principles of religious authority : the Rationalist, the Mediæval and the Reformed. They depend respectively upon human reason, the utterance of the Church and the word of Scripture. Other theories of the sources of religious authority are but varieties of these three.

All are agreed that God is the absolute authority, but God may have been silent. It may be conceivable that He has not spoken. The new paganism is inclined to that view ; there is nothing new about it. Long ago it was held not only that the Creator had not spoken ; that if He had, the human intelligence was an insufficient apparatus to receive His message. If it is believed that God has spoken, that He has revealed Himself unto mankind, the question arises, " Is there any record of the revelation ? " There is no doubt that man cannot by searching find God. It is equally clear that if the Almighty desired He could make Himself known to man. Has He not done so ?

Spurgeon's answer was emphatic. He accepted the Bible as the supreme authority in all matters of faith and practice. The Church could only be a source of authority in making known the knowledge of God, and the human intelligence, however brilliant its theorising may be, can never be an authority.

Spurgeon held that in the Scriptures God had spoken all that was necessary for salvation and right living, that the proof of the Scriptures was the witness of the Holy Spirit in the believer, that the truth authenticates itself by its own light. When it is received sincerely it carries its own illumination.

Spurgeon's practical mind sought evidence of the value of the revelation in the effects its reception produced, and there he was on very sure ground. All through his life he made the Bible the ultimate standard of faith and practice. He took the promises at

their face value and used them in prayer and in preaching. In them he found great comfort and delight. It may not be possible for all to accept Spurgeon's position in reference to the Scriptures, but those who do not share his faith are ready to admit the value of such a belief. To Spurgeon it would have been as reasonable to question the promises of the New Testament as to question the value of the sunlight ; he lived in its radiance.

The stern truths of the Calvinist faith were held practically by all Protestants. They might have expressed their faith in the "Articles of Belief of the Church of England." These models of Calvinistic doctrine were accepted without question ; they are still the standard of faith in the State Church. Spurgeon, in common with the Evangelicals, believed that it was a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God. He preached the doctrine of eternal punishment. It became terribly real as he represented it with his vivid imagination and dramatic conception. It gripped the heart and not infrequently moved the conscience. It was the practice of the age for preachers to endeavour to frighten people into the ways of goodness, but that was not his method. Whenever he preached the sterner truth it was with tears ; he insisted that there was no reason why any soul should be lost, that whosoever would trust Christ would find salvation.

Over the tender aspects of the Gospel he loved to linger, and his great delight was in proclaiming the doctrine of the Cross. Calvary filled his soul with wonder and touched his lips to an eloquence hardly attained by any other orator.

The Gospel as Calvin presented it may be summarised thus : "A new Israel has been born, a new Holy City has been founded, established upon the Divine Law,

which has been deepened by the Spirit of the New Testament, directed by the Will and the Grace of God which deals out punishment and rewards, elected to be the organ for the glorification of Christ, the God-Man, in Whom the hidden electing will has become flesh, with power to create the community of the Church."

In Spurgeon's early days the Calvinistic preachers out-Calvined Calvin. They were not content with his stern representation of the sovereignty of God. They insisted that all that God did was of His own will and volition and for His own glory. Grace was pure unmerited grace and not in any way concerned with any thought of justice which the creature might desire to claim from the Lord of the world. "In entire and arbitrary freedom he lays down the law for himself, and this law is the law of his own glory, which is served both by the gratitude of the undeserved bliss of the elect and by the misery of the merited despair of the damned."¹

Spurgeon made the centre and soul of his teaching the love of God, revealed in the mercy of Jesus Christ. In one of the sermons preached at Exeter Hall on "Plenteous Redemption," he defined his doctrine of election. "Christ has redeemed the souls of all His people who shall ultimately be saved. To state it after the Calvinistic fashion, Christ has redeemed His elect; but since you do not know His elect until they are revealed, we will alter that, and say, Christ has redeemed all penitent souls; Christ has redeemed all believing souls; and Christ has redeemed the souls of all those who die in infancy, seeing it is to be received, that all those who die in infancy are written in the Lamb's book of life, and are graciously privileged by God to go at once to heaven, instead of toiling through

¹ *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, p. 582.

this weary world. The souls of all those who were written before all worlds in the Lamb's book of life, who in process of time are humbled before God, who in due course are led to lay hold of Christ Jesus as the only refuge of their souls, who hold on their way, and ultimately attain to heaven; these, I believe, were redeemed, and I most firmly and solemnly believe the souls of none other men were in that sense subjects of redemption."

Theoretically there were limits to redemption, but practically the barriers were all taken down. Spurgeon's doctrine was: whosoever will, let him come. Other preachers had a genius for creating limitations and restrictions, but Spurgeon saw a wideness in God's mercy, like the wideness of the sea.

It would be interesting to trace the points of resemblance between the Calvinistic doctrines and the teaching of the early Baptists. Upon the doctrines of Predestination and Salvation they were poles apart from the Baptist doctrine of freedom, "but the idea of the Bible which produces the idea of Predestination, comes very near to the Baptist conception of the Bible. The Baptists held the same view of the Bible as the moral law, and they also considered the constitution of the Primitive Church to be the ideal Church constitution. The basis of Calvin's argument is certainly very different from that of the Baptists. He does not share their desire to found a new and entirely different religious community instead of the Church. His one desire was to effect a radical reform of the Church in harmony with the teaching of the Scriptures, and for this he found Scriptural authority in a conception of God which was directed at the same time towards the creation of a Church which is scriptural, pure and holy. In so doing, however, he went beyond the idea of the Church as the organ of salvation, based purely upon

itself, and came into contact with the leading ideas of the Baptist movement."

The doctrine of the Church which Spurgeon held was that of the ecclesia, the "called out," who were regenerate through faith in Jesus Christ. He had no doctrine of unregenerate membership, nor did he admit that there was any place in Church fellowship for babes unconscious of belief. Through all his history he was keen on preaching individual responsibility. Men were saved or lost according to their relationship to Jesus Christ. The responsibility upon the saved individual led to the doctrine of personal holiness and progressive sanctification. The redeemed were not passive but active agents, workers together with God.

Calvin's doctrine of the character of the Fellowship became the teaching of Baptists, though they did not agree as to the content of the Law. It has been pointed out that Calvinism differed fundamentally from the Anabaptist Movement in its ideal of the law of Christ, which, so far as its content is concerned, governs the holy community. In this matter not only did Calvinism not shrink from taking part in the institutions of Relative Natural Law belonging to fallen human nature, but it felt no need at all to adjust its ethical ideal to the law of Christ in the New Testament, or to the Sermon on the Mount.

Ernest Troeltsch says concerning the Calvinist's attitude toward the world: "He finds it impossible to deny the world in theory and enjoy it in practice. This lack of system is contrary to his reflective and logical mind. He cannot leave the world alone in all its horror and comfort himself with the thought of a 'free salvation,' that kind of Quietism is totally opposed to his impulse toward activity and the idea of a 'finished salvation' is opposed to his orientation toward the aim of salvation which is yet to be obtained."

Spurgeon's practical mind rejected what he called a "duty-faith salvation," but insisted upon the duty of the faithful to follow the example of their Lord in doing good. For him the raw material of religion was "Trust in the Lord and do good." He possessed a combination of sanctified common sense and shrewd worldly wisdom. He did not withdraw from the world any more than the Good Samaritan held aloof from the one who had fallen among thieves.

THE GREAT ADVENTURE

IN a sermon at Surrey Gardens Music-hall Mr. Spurgeon said : " The Gospel should be preached where the people will come. We should have houses of prayer where there is accommodation for them and where they are regarded, though poor, as much as any other rank and condition of men. It is with this view alone that I have laboured earnestly to be the means of building a large place of worship, because I feel that although the bulk of my congregation in New Park Street consists of poor people, yet there are many in the humbler ranks of society who can by no means enter the doors because we cannot find room for the multitudes that come."

In June, 1856, a Committee was appointed to consider the proposals for building a new place of worship. They estimated that the ultimate expenditure would be at least £31,000. A church meeting was held and resolutions were unanimously passed that a tabernacle holding five thousand sittings should be erected and that subscription lists should be opened. Upwards of £3,000 was promised and the Committee were sanguine in their expectation that the rest would be speedily forthcoming.

At a later meeting Mr. W. Joynson, of St. Mary's Cray, presided and gave an additional donation of £200. Mr. Spurgeon described the work they proposed to do and the need for it. He said : " The Lord hath given me favour in the eyes of the people and blessed me with not a little success. The number of members has so increased as well-nigh to fill this place ; indeed, we have three hundred more friends whose names are on

the church book than are able to sit down in the area of the chapel to partake of the Communion."

Referring to his decision, Mr. Spurgeon continued : "Where are the crowds on the Sabbath evenings ? It is my duty to look after them. Long ago I made up my mind that either a suitable place must be built or I would resign my pastorate. . . . I would become an evangelist and turn rural dean of all the commons in England and vicar of all the hedgerows. Some nobleman, speaking of this matter, said : 'Who knows whether the place will ever be built ?' I wrote to him, saying, 'You need not ask that question, my lord ; there's a man alive who will earn the money.' Yes, it shall be had. I have prayed to the Lord and shall keep on praying, and He will not refuse my request."

Plans were prepared in competition and a design was chosen. It was not an easy matter to determine upon the site. It was necessary to find a comparatively quiet neighbourhood, free from the rush and bustle of the city. Finally the committee determined upon Newington, and a spot near the Elephant and Castle was chosen. There was some difficulty about securing the freehold of the site, but the Fishmongers' Company was persuaded to sell part of the land formerly occupied by St. Peter's Hospital, which gave accommodation to a number of old people and was supported out of the Knesseworth and other Trusts. The hospital was rebuilt at East Hill, Wandsworth, and the land at Newington provided just the accommodation required. Before the sale could be legalised a private Act was passed through Parliament, largely as the result of the efforts of Mr. W. Joynson, who covered the legal expenses.

Newington was originally "New Town," an outlying district of Southwark. The portion of the main road southward from the Elephant and Castle called

Newington Butts is thought, according to Northouck, to have been so designated "from the exercise of shooting at the butts which was practised there, as in some other parts of the kingdom, to train young men in archery." Other writers suggest that the derivation is from the family name of Butts or Buts who owned the estate. The old Elephant and Castle was the coaching station at which the four-in-hand stopped for refreshment and the horns sounded to call well-to-do travellers to the box seats. Now it is an ordinary public-house.

To-day a Sunday evening in that district rather suggests a Bank Holiday. It is almost impossible for the visitor to Spurgeon's Tabernacle to stand at the corner of the Elephant and Castle, with the roar of traffic in his ears, watching the crowded thoroughfares with their incessant procession of tram-cars, motor-buses, charabancs, and all kinds of vehicles, and realise that it is the Lord's Day.

London has taken in the suburbs of Newington, Camberwell, Stockwell and Clapham. The new Cinema Palace within two minutes' walk of the Tabernacle is one of the largest in London and is open every night. The roads are thronged with pedestrians. The old-time quiet has gone for ever.

The Newington where Mr. Spurgeon watched the building of the Tabernacle, and often prayed for those who were engaged in the work, and for those who afterwards should worship in that place, was a different world from the Newington of to-day. Then it was no uncommon thing to see the sheep and cows from a near-by farm being driven down the road. Now there are the costermongers' barrows, the taxis, and the crowds. The road has been widened several times, but still it is not wide enough.

All London seemed interested in the erection of the new building. It was one of the wonders of the time.

Early in the morning of the day of the stonelaying there was a prayer meeting. When the foundation stones were laid crowds blocked the decorated roads where laurel leaves had been used for triumphal arches. A streamer announced, "You are truly welcome."

It must have been a great day for Mr. Spurgeon. He had been barely six years in London and now he stood acclaimed as the most popular preacher, probably the most popular man in the country. But he had not forgotten the Voice that he heard when he saw no man : the Voice that said, "Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not."

Sir Morton Peto occupied the place of honour, and Mr. Spurgeon and his father took part in the ceremony. Mr. B. Carr, one of the officers, read a short history of the Church which he himself had prepared, and which is now in print.

"The reading of the admirable document elicited frequent and hearty cheers," but the event for which the crowd waited was Mr. Spurgeon's address, and there was no disappointment. He placed under the foundation stone a bottle containing a Bible, the Baptist Confession of Faith signed by Benjamin Keach, a declaration by the deacons, Dr. Rippon's hymn-book and a programme of the proceedings. He said : "No money was placed under the stone, they had none to spare. No newspapers were placed there ; however much they might be appreciated, it was not the place for them."

The building was to be "a Grecian place of worship. It seemed to me," said the pastor, "that there are two sacred languages in the world : there was the Hebrew of old ; there is only one other sacred language, the Greek, which is very dear to every Christian heart. Every Baptist place should be Grecian, never Gothic."

Referring to the denominational character of the

building he declared : " We have one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and dear to our hearts is that word, the communion of saints. Whosoever loves the Lord Jesus Christ in the spirit and in truth, has a heart welcome to communion with the Church of Christ. I see around us Independent brethren. I see also a Strict Communion brother, and he will address you. I have some of my dearest friends, ministers of the Church of England, and I glory in the fact that, however firmly a man may hold the truth, he can give his hand to every man that loves Jesus Christ."

It was not to be expected that the great adventure of building the largest Free Church in England would escape serious criticism. Two or three of the daily papers attacked the preacher on the ground that it was simply an exhibition of colossal vanity. Who was he to imagine that he could sustain a congregation of five thousand people Sunday by Sunday? No man had ever attempted such a foolhardy undertaking. Whitfield and Wesley had drawn great congregations, but not continually in the same place. They were wise enough to pitch their tent in different parts of the country. For anyone to go outside the Metropolis and build a mammoth Zion at Newington was simply courting disaster.

" A monster place of worship, like all other monstrosities, is a very doubtful propriety ; indeed, monsters should not be permitted to live." Dr. Whiston speaks a great deal about the signs of the times, " and perhaps one of these signs is a desire to take the world by surprise and to outdo all that was ever done before in the same line."

Some of the critics were philosophical, others theological, but they were all venomous. A clerical friend wrote : " A monster chapel is in the same category with a monster ship, a monster newspaper or a monster

bell. All monsters are expensive. Nature or art goes out of its way to produce them, and we must go out of our way to maintain them ; and what expenses does a chapel of gigantic dimensions necessarily involve, and what questionable expedients are resorted to for meeting those expenses ! Many of them will not bear the light unless we can believe that the Gospel may be made use of for getting architectural magnificence or any object of mere worldly ambition."

It was suggested that such a building as the Tabernacle would prove a kind of "vortex" into which would be drawn persons of other churches as well as persons of no church at all. This result would not only be pleasing to party spirit, but would be hailed as a mark of God's approbation of the building, or more particularly, of the minister officiating.

Fear was expressed as to what might happen. "A monster chapel is more likely to be the scene of a panic, with all its fearful consequences, than one of smaller dimensions." But the most interesting of all the objections to the adventure in church building was the cogent suggestion that a monster congregation is an injury to its minister. Mr. Jay said that "the practice of preaching three times on the Lord's Day was the devil's invention for killing ministers, but what is that compared with the labour of preaching several times a week to an overwhelming multitude ? No man can afford to do this, and God never qualified a man to do this, and no principle of religion and no necessities of the Church require him to do this.

"Here is a young man nearly overpowered with exertions in preaching to immense multitudes. Suggestions have been made that he shall go on the Continent to recruit his exhausted strength, and already there are rumours of a great meeting to welcome him back. This is just as reasonable as it would be to give

a bowl of brandy and water to a convalescent who had previously injured his health by drinking of that deleterious compound."

But Mr. Spurgeon went on with the great project, and many friends from all over the world came to his aid. While the *Saturday Review*, the *Christian News*, and other journals, with a multitude of pamphleteers, were declaring that the money for the Tabernacle would never be raised, a friend of a very practical turn of mind came to Mr. Spurgeon with a request that he would go for a drive with him. He then inquired the cost of the building. Mr. Spurgeon told him they would need about another twenty thousand pounds. His friend said, "I want to save you from anxiety. I shall place securities for twenty thousand pounds to your account, and you will use whatever you require so that the building may be opened free of debt." When that time came Spurgeon accepted a donation of fifty pounds from his generous friend. They must have been greatly amused to read the fulminations of the critics who were quite sure that the money would not be raised.

Mr. Spurgeon was needing rest and quiet. He visited Paris, but instead of resting he preached to crowds in the Eglise de l'Oratoire, and the American Chapel. At that time M. Provost Paradol wrote an enthusiastic critique, very remarkable from a Catholic.

Upon his return to London Mr. Spurgeon began preaching tours, with renewed zest. It was arranged that half the amount contributed in thank-offerings should be given to the new building, and half to the local church. These offerings amounted to several thousand pounds, of which the preacher did not receive a single penny. It was frequently reported that Spurgeon was making a pile of money out of his preaching, that he had a considerable establishment

in the New Kent Road, where he had a number of servants, in addition to keeping a carriage and pair in which he drove to New Park Street. One account described the magnificent fortune that had been left to him, but of which he had no knowledge. The reports gained such currency that at the stonelaying of the Tabernacle Mr. Spurgeon made special reference to them. "I approve," he said, "of ministers having a good salary for preaching and in this respect I would cordially say that I am for my own part perfectly satisfied, but if anyone should leave ministers a large sum of money they generally lose their voice or get an attack of bronchitis or something of that sort that puts an end to their preaching."

About this time a notable event happened which affected Mr. Spurgeon's growing popularity in the United States. At New Park Street, after the usual week-night service, a fugitive slave from South Carolina, John Andrew Jackson by name, was introduced by Mr. Spurgeon and allowed to give an account of his sufferings and escape. Mr. Jackson held the congregation for an hour, and when he had finished the excitement was white-hot. Mr. Spurgeon in the course of an impassioned address declared: "Slavery is the foulest blot that ever stained a national escutcheon, and may have to be washed out with blood. America is in many respects a glorious country, but it may be necessary to teach her some wholesome lessons at the point of the bayonet—to carve freedom into her with the bowie-knife or send it home to her heart with revolvers. Better far should it come to this issue, that North and South should be rent asunder, and the States of the Union shivered into a thousand fragments, than that slavery should be suffered to continue.

"Some American divines seem to regard it, indeed, with wonderful complacency. They have so accus-

tomed themselves to wrap it up in soft phrases that they lose sight of its real character. They call it a 'peculiar institution,' until they forget in what its peculiarity consists. It is, indeed, a peculiar institution, just as the Devil is a peculiar angel, and as hell is a peculiarly hot place. For my part, I hold such miserable tampering with sin in abhorrence, and can hold no communion of any sort with those who are guilty of it."

Many attempts were made to get Spurgeon to tone down his utterances. He was assured that no further help would be forthcoming from across the Atlantic and that the printed sermon would lose its American circulation. This was a perfectly true prophecy. The American publishers eliminated all the references to slavery. It was suggested that Mr. Spurgeon had discovered that he was mistaken. Henry Ward Beecher determined that the truth should be known, and declared that Spurgeon had not changed and had no responsibility for the omissions made in his sermons. Mr. Spurgeon was asked definitely to state his views. He replied, "I have written a letter to an influential paper in America and will see to it that my sentiments are really known. I believe slavery to be a crime of crimes, a soul-destroying sin, and an iniquity which cries aloud for vengeance."

Dr. Campbell of the *British Banner* pressed Mr. Spurgeon to write something on the subject, and did his best to convince him of the importance of a work, not necessarily voluminous, giving the Christian view of slavery. Mr. Spurgeon replied that he could not undertake the task, but he wrote a "red-hot letter" to the *Watchman and Reflector*, in which he said: "I do from my inmost soul detest slavery anywhere and everywhere, and although I commune at the Lord's Table with men of all creeds, yet with a slave-holder

I have no fellowship of any kind or sort. Whenever one has called upon me I have considered it my duty to express my detestation of his wickedness, and would as soon think of receiving a murderer into the Church or into any sort of fellowship, as a man-stealer. Nevertheless, as I have preached in London and not in New York, I have seldom made any allusion to slavery in my sermons."

The letter was reprinted in many American journals, and resulted in a complete boycott of anything referring to Spurgeon. A Boston correspondent wrote to the *Freeman* in 1860: "Our Baptist papers are overflowing with indignation and call on all publishers and booksellers to banish the books of our worthy young friend from their counters. . . . The poor slave holders are at their wits' end and know not what to do to save their doomed system. The *Montgomery Mail* says: 'The Vigilance Committee is engaged in burning books, and the two volumes of Spurgeon's Sermons have been contributed to their bonfires, and they will be burnt.'"

While the Tabernacle was being erected Spurgeon was prevailed upon to take a brief holiday, and he happened to be at Baden Baden at the time of the Conference in June, 1860, which was attended by the Emperor Napoleon and eight other crowned heads. "One can hardly walk in any direction without stumbling upon a Grand Duke or being run over by the horses of an Emperor."

Mr. Spurgeon wrote a little account of his experiences. Sunday was the day chosen by the Conference for its chief sitting. Mr. Spurgeon wondered why with all the days of the week equally available, "no haste compelling, no wars alarming," they must usurp God's Day as if they were lords of the Sabbath or irresponsible to the laws of Heaven. He witnessed

the departure of Napoleon III. for Strasbourg. Here is the pen picture of the historical event :

"The Emperor left for Strasbourg at ten o'clock p.m. and his train started in the midst of a silence more profound than I had ever remarked before. Standing on the edge of the crowd, I was astonished to the utmost at a stillness like that of death—a quiet which was not broken until the cause of it had departed ; then every man breathed freely, and as the Duke of Baden rode back to his castle, the people gave him loyal cheers, which contrasted with the gloomy silence with which the Gallic despot had been greeted. To my mind there was something truly dignified in this noiseless censure : to hiss might be but a display of weak impertinence, but to be sternly silent was the noble rebuke of resolute minds. I ought to have said that on Saturday there was a fine illumination at the Conversation House, which is the grand resort for the company who are staying in the neighbourhood, and the building in which is concentrated the gambling for which the town is famous. Beyond this one display I did not perceive a flag or light upon any house or hotel. This was very strange to me, for if in any English town there had been but one king, much less nine, there would have been some sort of display, unless, indeed, the unpopularity of one of the number had been great enough to compel the people to ignore the existence of the other eight."

It was quite impossible for Spurgeon to refrain from preaching. In almost every town he visited in Switzerland he was prevailed upon to speak, but his greatest joy was in Geneva. The historian of the Reformation, Dr. Merle d'Aubigné, took him to his home, the very house where Calvin lived, and finally he accepted an invitation to preach in Calvin's pulpit. His own account is worth preserving. "I was really allowed

to stand in the pulpit of John Calvin. I am not superstitious, but the first time I saw the medal of John Calvin I kissed it, and when the pastors saw my reverence for him they presented me with a magnificent medal. I preached in the Cathedral of St. Peter. I do not suppose half the people understood me, but it did not matter about understanding ; they were very glad to sing and to join in heart with the worship.

"I did not feel very comfortable when I came out in full canonicals, but the request was put to me in such a beautiful way that I could have worn the Pope's tiara if they had asked me. They said, 'Our dear brother comes to us from another country. Now, when an ambassador comes from another country, he has a right to wear his own costume at court, but as a mark of very great esteem, he sometimes condescends to the weakness of the country which he visits, and will wear Court dress.' 'Well,' I said, 'Yes, that I will certainly ; but I shall feel like running in a sack.' It was John Calvin's cloak, and that reconciled me to it very much. I do love that man of God, suffering all his life long, not only enduring persecution from without, but a complication of disorders from within, and yet serving his Master with all his heart. I want to ask your prayers for the Church at Geneva. That little Republic stands like an island surrounded by France."

The Metropolitan Tabernacle was completed by March, 1861. The architect was Mr. Pocock and the builder was very fittingly Mr. William Higgs, an officer of the church and an intimate friend of the pastor. The building was 146 feet long, 81 feet broad, and 62 feet high ; there were 5,500 sittings of all kinds. There was room for 6,000 persons without excessive crowding. The lecture hall provided accommodation for 900, the schoolroom for 1,000 children. There were

six classrooms with kitchens, toilet rooms, a ladies' room for working meetings, young men's classrooms, secretary's office, three vestries and ample store-rooms.

At seven o'clock on the morning of March 25 a prayer meeting was held. A week before there had been a prayer meeting followed by a bazaar, attended by over two thousand people. A large sum of money was still required if the building was to be opened free of debt, and the pastor had pledged his word that it should not be opened unless every penny was paid. When Mr. Spurgeon held the first service on the Monday afternoon in the great Tabernacle, the dream of his life was fulfilled. The building was thronged with a thousand people more than it was supposed to accommodate.

The congregation was extraordinarily representative. Men and women of all classes and conditions were in the vast audience. The text chosen by the preacher was: "And daily in the Temple and in every house they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ."¹ Mr. Spurgeon was evidently moved by the occasion. He began with a slowness of speech to which his hearers were unaccustomed.

"I do not know," he said, "whether there are any persons here present who can contrive to put themselves into my position and to feel my present feelings. If they can effect that they will give me credit for meaning what I say when I declare that I feel totally unable to preach; indeed, I think I should scarcely attempt a sermon but rather give a sort of declaration of the truths from which future sermons shall be made. I will give you bullion rather than coin, block from the quarry and not the statue from the chisel. It appears that the one subject upon which men preached in the Apostolic age was Jesus Christ."

¹ Acts v. 42.

The preacher continued to trace the theme of the Apostles and to declare that Christ and Christ alone would be the subject of his ministry.

In the evening the Rev. William Brock of Bloomsbury was the preacher. "Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice,"¹ was the text.

On Tuesday evening the first of the public meetings was held. Sir Henry Havelock presided. It was a meeting of contributors, and for several hours before the commencement a number of gentlemen were busily engaged in receiving and recording contributions brought by hundreds of voluntary collectors. The amounts varied from a few pence to many pounds. Rich and poor followed each other into the treasury. During the meeting Mr. Spurgeon was able to announce the welcome news that all the money required had been received.

At the close he said: "My friends, I would ask you all to offer one more prayer for me. What am I to do with such a work as this? It is not the launching of the vessel, it is the keeping her afloat. Who is sufficient for these things? How shall I, a young man, a feeble child, go in and out before this people? Blessed be God, there is a glorious answer to this question. 'My grace is sufficient for thee; for My strength is made perfect in weakness.'"

During the rest of that week, and during the week that followed, services were held night after night. Among the eminent preachers who conducted them were Dr. Winslow, Rev. Hugh Stowell Brown, Rev. John Blomfield and the Rev. J. A. Spurgeon. Henry Vincent delivered an oration upon Nonconformity which made a fitting conclusion to the wonderful series of services and meetings. There was in the history of the Church no parallel to these gatherings; perhaps

¹ Philippians i. 18.

the nearest approach to them was the service held when Spurgeon died.

The amazing experiences in connection with these opening services, the unprecedented sight of thousands of people walking out to Newington night after night, and the huge building with its accommodation for six thousand being insufficient to provide room for those who came, enabled the Press to realise that Spurgeon was not a mountebank or a charlatan, but, as Dr. Campbell declared, "an individual chosen for the accomplishment of a special work and mentally, morally and physically he is every way admirably adapted to his mission. His seeming defects in the eyes of some are special excellences. He is not to be judged by the petty rules that poor mortals have derived from the creeping experience of the past. Nothing were easier than to prove that he is often wild and erratic and transgresses the canons of the schools. He is above the schools, he is a law to himself and wholly unamenable to the tribunals of criticism. He simply exerts the powers peculiar and wonderful with which God has endowed him. He reads, he expounds, he prays, he preaches as nobody else did or probably will ever do. He is an original and a rebel in everything, but his insurgency notwithstanding, he is the impersonation of profoundest loyalty to a higher law. Comets are not less amenable to rule than suns ; through his disobedience he achieves his triumphs and rules the millions."

Spurgeon might well have felt appalled and awestricken by the task now awaiting him. The great adventure was achieved, the dream had come true ; he had the largest place of worship in the capital city of the Empire. At all the opening services the crowds surged about the doors, but what of the future ? Who could carry that weight ? Who was equal to that task ?

And yet even when depressed by the magnitude of his mission he was strangely sure that it would be carried through. His confidence was not in himself. Few men possessed more genuine humility, but he was very sure that God was with him, that he had not been seeking great things for himself, but that his motive had been to bring honour to his Lord, and to bring men and women to know his Saviour.

There were occasions during the building of the Tabernacle when faith was sorely tried. Upon one occasion Spurgeon was at a luncheon with Dr. Brock and other ministers. The doctor inquired how the funds were coming in. Spurgeon replied: "Quite well; but we shall need a thousand pounds for the builder on Saturday—and the Lord will send it." The doctor remarked, "Be careful; there is only a small margin between faith and presumption."

A few minutes later a telegram was brought in for Mr. Spurgeon. He read it and passed it on to the host, who saw the message from the church secretary: "Thousand pounds received for new building." Dr. Brock put down his knife and fork and said, "Brethren, I think we should rise and sing the Doxology."

Mr. William Olney reminds me of a similar instance. During the World's Great Fair at Chicago, Moody was dining with a few friends. He told them he needed seventeen thousand dollars for the Lord's work, and only one thousand had been sent in. He suggested that before they commenced their meal they should unite in prayer that God would send the remaining sixteen thousand. They did so. Before the meal was over a message was handed to Mr. Moody to say that friends at Northfield had subscribed over sixteen thousand dollars for the work in hand. Such instances should encourage faith.

There is clear distinction between conceit and

confidence. Spurgeon may have had great occasion and even justification for vanity, but those who knew him had no doubt about his honest and sincere humility. And yet he possessed always that confidence which belongs to great personalities, called sometimes against their own will and inclination to fulfil a great destiny.

SPURGEON AND HIS COLLEGE

SPURGEON's college is now housed in a beautiful mansion in South Norwood, made possible through the generosity of Mr. Hay Walker. There are forty-two students. As in the days of its foundation, the college is intended for young men who have been called of God to the Baptist ministry and have already preached acceptably for at least two years. The college fosters Evangelistic fervour and combines Evangelical teaching with sound scholarship. Over 1,300 men have been equipped by the college for their life work, and the list includes many of the most illustrious names in recent Baptist history.

The story of the college is a romance of faith. Spurgeon's ministry had given Baptists a larger place in the national life. His influence had broadened the theology of the time, deepened piety, and given an impetus to progress which rendered possible subsequent advantages. The influence of his college changed the current of religious teaching in England.

The Pastors' College was so named because it was for the training of pastors, or as is more likely, because it was the pastor's—C. H. Spurgeon's—most cherished creation ; the idea, formulation and support being his chief concern. Once, speaking of the college, he said to me, "By that I multiply myself." He called it his "first-born and best beloved."

Its beginnings were in stirring times. Traditional beliefs were already feeling the shock of the new views associated with the name of Charles Darwin. The teaching of the new economics, popularised by Charles Kingsley and John Ruskin, was filtering through the minds of the middle-classes, and of the more intelligent

working men. The Anglo-Catholic Movement, associated with the name of John Henry Newman, filled ultra-Protestants with alarm.

Spurgeon did not set out to counteract the tendency of the times, but to make an experiment. He found among his converts several young men who were beginning to preach, but whose educational limitations interfered with their usefulness. Among the most promising of these was T. W. Medhurst, a true Cockney, born in Bermondsey four months after Mr. Spurgeon's birth. He had served an apprenticeship to Mr. John Porter, rope-maker, a deacon of East Street Baptist Chapel, Walworth. After his baptism he received tuition from the Rev. C. H. Hosken of Bexley Heath, with whom he stayed, going once a week to study theology with Mr. Spurgeon, who was then lodging in the Dover Road. After six months he began to preach and great blessing attended his ministry ; at Kingston-on-Thames, Coleraine in Ireland, in Glasgow, and finally at Lake Road, Portsmouth. Nearly a thousand persons were baptised by him. It was very clear from the first that he was called to the ministry. Mr. Spurgeon recognised his gifts, and, after he had been conducting services for two years, determined at his own cost to provide for his education.

Then the difficulty began. Where could the young man be trained ? It was useless to send him to either of the existing colleges ; their examinations for admission were much too severe. Mr. Spurgeon talked the matter over with the Rev. Jonathan George of Walworth, who suggested consulting the Rev. George Rogers, Congregational Minister of Albany Road Chapel, Camberwell. A meeting with Mr. Rogers was arranged, and Mr. George accompanied Mr. Spurgeon and Mr. Medhurst. Neither could have anticipated the results of that meeting. Mr. Spurgeon

was greatly impressed by the transparent sincerity and solid learning of the one whom he afterwards said was preordained of God to be the first principal of the college.

In the little sitting-room they all knelt in prayer, and there in an amateurish sort of way the Pastors' College was ushered into life.

The story of the college has been told in brief by Mr. Spurgeon. "I had not even a remote idea of whereunto it would grow," he wrote. There were springing up around me, as my own spiritual children, many earnest young men who felt an irresistible impulse to preach the Gospel, and yet with half an eye it could be seen that their lack of education would be a sad hindrance to them. It was not in my heart to bid them cease their preaching, and, had I done so, they would in all probability have ignored my recommendation. As it seemed that preach they would, though their attainments were very slender, no other course was open but to give them an opportunity to educate themselves for the work.

"No college at that time appeared to me to be suitable for the class of men that Providence and the grace of God drew round me. They were mostly poor, and most of the colleges involved necessarily a considerable outlay to the student ; for even where the education was free, books, clothes, and other incidental expenses required a considerable sum per annum. Moreover, it must be frankly admitted that my views of the Gospel and of the mode of training preachers were and are somewhat peculiar. I may have been uncharitable in my judgment, but I thought the Calvinism of the theology usually taught to be very doubtful, and the fervour of the generality of the students to be far behind their literary attainments."

There is significance in the fact that the man who

was the first tutor, and afterwards the Principal, of the largest Baptist college in the country was a Congregationalist who did not accept Mr. Spurgeon's views upon baptism and disagreed with the President upon a number of other points ; and that among the earliest students were two Primitive Methodists and three Jews. For many years the text-book on theology was Dr. Hodge's *Outlines*, in which the Baptist view was strongly criticised.

The little college started on that life of faith from which it has not swerved, with no endowments nor list of subscribers ; with a staff of one man, it began a career which has brought blessings to hundreds of thousands and has carried the Gospel literally to the ends of the earth. The college has always been a missionary institution. Spurgeon declared that home and foreign missions were "two sides of the same penny."

In the early days the income was provided by three people : Mr. Winsor, Mr. W. Olney, and C. H. S. Spurgeon's liberality was not simply a matter of contributing the larger part of the income. As the work grew the increased expenditure made it necessary to seek other sources of supply.

The classrooms under the Tabernacle were used during the day to provide accommodation for the augmented number of students. Mr. A. Ferguson joined the staff and for many years had the classes in English as well as in other subjects. He was enormously popular with the men. At the end of each year, before they went home for Christmas, he was greatly surprised to discover upon his desk a presentation of books to mark the appreciation of those who had benefited under his training !

At the Annual Meeting of the college in 1862 the President was able to say : "My once despised lath

and plaster institution is actually in point of numbers already at the head of the Baptist body." There were over fifty men who studied during the week, and on the Sunday gave themselves to preaching in neglected areas.

A popular feature was the college supper. This began in 1865 when Mr. T. R. Phillips generously resolved to give a supper in the lecture hall at which a report of the work of the college should be presented and special gifts handed to the President. Upon the first occasion the sum contributed was £350. The second year this was increased to £900; and it grew steadily until the figure was considerably over £2,000.

During Christmas week of 1865 a great bazaar was held at the Tabernacle to secure funds for the erection of new chapels in and around London. The bazaar opened on December 26, when 1,700 persons visited the halls. Nearly £900 was received in two days. Mrs. Spurgeon's stall was a great attraction; the students had a stall to themselves. Each visitor received a letter from Mr. Spurgeon in which he described the spiritual destitution of London. He wrote: "I have used my utmost exertions to increase the number of our Baptist churches, and as a result solid and flourishing churches have been founded in Wandsworth, Stepney, Bromley, Redhill and Ealing, while the small place in Paradise Place has become a noble house of prayer, and in Bermondsey a chapel is nearly completed for the use of a congregation now in connection with the church in the Metropolitan Tabernacle and worshipping in a small room. From the success already achieved I am encouraged to attempt yet greater things."

The denominational paper, the *Freeman*, in a leading article upon Baptist colleges said: "The Baptists of Great Britain have nine colleges which are educating

264 young men with a yearly income of £13,379. It is significant and suggestive that one college receives nearly a third of these students and more than a third of these receipts. Evidently Mr. Spurgeon and his friends are more earnest and liberal in the work of providing collegiate training for the ministry than are the major part of our pastors and ministers."

The article was somewhat critical. It showed that the income of the Pastors' College was almost equal to the combined receipts of Bristol, Rawdon and Regent's Park.

Mr. Spurgeon had no idea of entering into rivalry with other colleges. His determination was to provide an institution to train men who would be able to present the Gospel in the language of the common people. His action was more than justified. In ten years the college men had baptised 20,676 persons. The gross increase in their churches was 30,677. The students went into districts where no Free Churches existed ; many of them began their work by holding open-air services in the market-place or at the street corner.

The Pastors' College never undertook to make ministers, but to help men who possessed ministerial gifts to obtain better equipment for their work. It set out upon a mission of its own, without intending to be a competitor with other colleges. Should it ever become just as other educational institutions, it will have ceased to be Spurgeon's idea.

What stories could be told of the little building tucked away behind the Tabernacle at the bottom of Temple Street ! There is no architectural beauty about it : just three floors of red brick with stone dressings. On the ground floor a large hall, a students' common-room, the arena in which pulpit gladiators fought, mixing metaphors and chopping logic. The

assembly hall was on the first floor : there conferences were held, upon which occasions the clans gathered from the ends of the earth and the chief of the clan sat at the middle table with Father Rogers and Mr. Gracey and Mr. Selway on one side ; Ferguson, Marchant and Hackney on the other.

On the same floor there were some small classrooms and the famous room at the end of the corridor where trial sermons were preached and many tears shed. It was in that room a budding doctor of divinity severely criticised a preacher for mixing his metaphors. He made sport of the paragraph : " These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear : clouds they are without water, carried about of winds ; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots ; raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame ; wandering stars to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever." How great was the critic's chagrin when Father Rogers said : " The quotation to which you refer is in the General Epistle of Jude, verses 12 and 13."

Friday afternoon was the great occasion when the " guv'nor," as Mr. Spurgeon was affectionately described, gave his lecture, and afterwards joined the men at tea. In the later years the tea drinking gave place to interviews with students in the little room at the top of the stairs. It was a holy of holies to many men. Spurgeon interviewed applicants for the ministry and talked with students about their difficulties and hopes. No man could have been more to his boys than this great leader to his raw recruits. If the four walls could speak, what stories might not be told. Spurgeon was a father confessor, very approachable. In his room at the Tabernacle servant girls and persons in very high positions, costermongers and scholars

told the secrets of their hearts, but on Friday the time was given to the students.

He was a true physician of souls. No man went to him in despair and came away without hope. It was an unforgettable experience to enter that little room for the first time. My impressions are recorded simply because they represent the experience of hundreds of men. Spurgeon talked of the ministry as a vocation and asked some questions now quite forgotten. He seemed hardly satisfied with the replies. Moving uneasily in his chair he said with emphasis: "There are many of our men in the ministry very poor, and not a few are regarded as fools; why do you want to join their number?" I had not thought of hardship or reputation. "No," he said, looking straight into my eyes, "there is less money in it than you may now be earning, and no social status." Then he rose from his chair, leaning heavily upon his stick; for a moment his face clouded with physical pain. He sat down again and talked about preaching until it seemed that there could be nothing greater or better either on earth or in heaven than to proclaim the Gospel.

How wonderfully he could talk in private, as in public, concerning his Lord. There was no doubt about the good news, the very good news of Spurgeon's Evangel. "You shall come into college," he said, and from that moment I have been one of "Spurgeon's men," glorying in the nickname even when it was spoken in disdain. In common with other men I did not always agree with my chief, but I had sworn fealty. It was not discipleship but devotion. Had he not prayed a prayer that seemed a consecration? In that room many a student rose from his knees with eyes very misty and no words that would come to his lips, but the "guv'nor" understood, and there was a light in his eyes such as is seldom seen in the gaze of

a strong man, but rather belongs to a mother's expression as she kisses the child she loves.

The "guv'nor" among his men was very much at home. His table talk was wiser than most men's philosophy. To know Spurgeon was a liberal education for the ministry. His readings on Friday afternoons were first-class lessons in elocution. He could make the English Bible live. The late Dr. Moxey, professor of elocution in Edinburgh, used to say that to hear Spurgeon read the parable of the prodigal son was better than listening to most sermons.

Just a little picture of a Friday afternoon in the college hall, when the "guv'nor" sat at his desk and talked. It was a red-letter day. He had been absent at Menton. The sixty or seventy students were reinforced by London ministers and some distinguished visitors. There was excitement and expectancy in the atmosphere when the door opened and the "guv'nor" was seen leaning heavily upon his stick. The men rose and the rafters rang with the sincerity of their welcome. He was pleased as a child with the welcome he received. He made his way to the platform and sat in the old seat, a striking figure, with heavy massive head covered by hair brushed right back, tinged with grey; shaggy eyebrows and drooping lids half covering the eyes that seemed dull and tired until they glowed and gleamed; thick lips and heavy jaw giving meaning to his mother's words: "Charles might have been a very bad boy had he not been converted."

The "guv'nor" quietly rose and extended his hand, the indication for prayer. Very tender and sweet were the supplications and thanksgiving. The address that followed was of a devotional character. The countenance of the speaker was literally transfigured as he described the increasing preciousness of the "Unseen but not unknown." There was no doubt

about the enthralling spell over that representative assembly. The speaker was absolutely forgotten.

Ravignan, the famous French preacher, said to Lacordaire : " I hear you had such a crowd at your last sermon that people sat on the top of the confessionals." " Yes," said the orator, " but you manage to get them into the confessionals ! " Was it Spurgeon's art or genius that enabled him to become so effaced that his hearers went away thinking of the subject and only afterwards recalling the speaker ?

The surroundings of the college were very grey. Outside were mean streets and inside all was as plain as it could be with decency, and yet no Mecca was ever more beautiful or more sacred. Spurgeon was most at home among his boys. Much might be written of the playfulness of the Prince of Preachers. Genius never grows up ; it has not only the child mind but the child heart. In many ways the " guv'nor " was just a boy, absolutely confident of himself and of others ; he was easily imposed upon and his sympathies readily responded to appeals.

He always loved a bit of fun. No memories are more cherished than those associated in the minds of his students with Westwood, the President's beautiful home at Norwood. He delighted to sit under the tree in the garden with old George—Mr. George Lovejoy, his serving man—standing near, while the students sat round and were regaled with a succession of stories that reminded one of the Rev. Arthur Mursell's experience. Spurgeon invited Mr. Mursell to join him in a trip to the Surrey hills. Mursell said that he would go, but added, " You must not talk ' good ' to me." Spurgeon inquired just what was meant. Mursell replied that he understood it was Mr. Spurgeon's habit when he took a man out for a drive to talk about religious subjects, and not infrequently to

offer prayer as the carriage went along. Spurgeon smiled and shook his head. "Don't be afraid, I don't desire to throw my pearls——" and then with a broad smile he added, "away."

On the journey Mr. Spurgeon told one story after another. Here is Mr. Mursell's account. "He poured out dozens of funny yarns which kept me laughing for nearly two hours. He stopped all of a sudden, seeing that I was not listening. 'What's the matter, man? You're crying; are you not well?' I begged his pardon and then looking into his kind eyes said, as well as the lump in my throat would let me, 'I didn't mean by not talking religion that I would not do anything but jest. Your kindness in stooping to the level I offered makes me terribly ashamed.' His voice and look changed and both grew rich with tenderness, and our conversation took a higher plane as he took my hand and spoke of the mistake of repressing what is best in ourselves."

One afternoon he said he had received a serious complaint from the well-to-do treasurer of a village chapel who was grieved at the mercenary spirit of a student who preached indifferent sermons on the Sunday before. The students were all ears. Who was it? And what would the "guv'nor" say to him? With a merry twinkle Spurgeon added, "Our brother received ten and sixpence as a fee, and the railway fare amounted to seven and elevenpence." Then turning to his private secretary he remarked, "Harrauld, write and tell him not to have any more sermons of the shilling and three-pence halfpenny sort, but to pay for those of a better quality."

Spurgeon had many problems to solve, but surely he never tackled a more difficult task than that brought to him by two girls. One of the students, rather fond of ladies, found himself involved in serious complica-

tions. He was engaged to be married to a member of the Tabernacle, a pleasant young lady employed at Mr. Allison's drapery store in Regent Street. He drifted into trouble by becoming engaged to another girl whom he met Sunday by Sunday when supplying a country pulpit. The second girl, desiring to be nearer her fiancé, obtained a situation in Mr. Allison's firm. The two girls met. They attended the Tabernacle together, and to the undoing of the student, told each other their secrets and made the terrible discovery : they were both practically engaged to the same man. They agreed to consult Mr. Spurgeon and to abide by his advice. He saw them and bade them say nothing of their interview, but to return next Monday. When they arrived they met the student, who had the surprise of his life.

Mr. Spurgeon talked to the man, using language that burned into the memory, and then he talked to the girls in the presence of the man, and assured them that such a lover was not worth consideration, but if either of them cared to have him they should agree among themselves. The girls were so impressed that the affair was "off." Spurgeon related the incident, perhaps, for the special benefit of some others.

In the old days the students lived in college houses. Mr. Spurgeon was anxious that the men should have the advantages of home life. The old college continued its Annual Conference until the Down-Grade Controversy, when it was reconstituted and another chapter of its history began. Illustrious visitors from all over the world found their way to the college. Moody and Sankey during their mission in London paid a visit on the Friday morning and received a great welcome.

The conferences provided opportunities for old students to compare notes and to listen not only to the

"guv'nor" but to some of the foremost men in the country. Spurgeon was never happier than at a conference meeting or the reunion held in his own home. All the students were made welcome to the household. The beautiful grounds in the rear of his garden provided opportunities for social intercourse and for games, and what games the students played : cricket, bowls, tennis and darts, while C. H. S. sat under the tree holding a succession of personal interviews with men who sought advice. If any were foolish enough to overstay their time, Harrauld or one of the deacons would appear on the scene to announce the next comer.

Spurgeon never seemed to forget a student ; although a man might have been absent from the reunion for years he would have the joy of being addressed by name. The "guv'nor" would inquire concerning the progress of the Church and the members of the family, not infrequently naming them in turn.

It was the President's custom to keep in touch with the men. He wrote personal letters when they settled in a pastorate or when they thought of changing to another sphere of work.

The Rev. T. Hancocks, of Ramsgate, treasures a faded sheet of notepaper. The writing is like copperplate. Here is a paragraph of sound advice : "Never be satisfied with yourself, but go on growing, for we need men fitted to take the better positions, even more than we do the rank and file. Stick to your study even when you are in the midst of ministerial work, for you must be replenished continually or you cannot give out to others."

At one time he addressed a personal letter to each of the children of his former students. These epistles expressed tender solicitude for the child's future, and a deep desire that each should know the Saviour Who

was so precious to himself. There are men and women who can look back to a great day in the manse when they received a letter all their own, signed—C. H. Spurgeon.

A few years ago Mr. Lloyd George, at a luncheon on behalf of the new college at Norwood, referred to Spurgeon as one of the great letter writers of his time, and suggested the publication of a volume of his correspondence. Charles Spurgeon took the hint and compiled a selection. The volume shows an amazing variety of interests and a great range of correspondents.

In the early days of the college the President conceived the happy idea of a Friday night popular lecture to men, with a charge of twopence for admission. The opening lecture was a great success ; it was followed by others. Biographical subjects included the lives of George Whitefield, the two Wesleys, and George Fox ; other lectures were historical—of the Guildhall and old meeting houses. At a lecture on “The Gorilla and the land he inhabits,” with special reference to a recently published work by Paul B. du Chaillu, the chair was taken by the Right. Hon. A. H. Layard, M.P., who was accompanied by the writer of the book. The lecture was illustrated by lantern views, and on the platform there was a life-size gorilla borrowed from a museum. The lecture brought a storm of criticism ; it was followed by another on “Sermons in Candles,” illustrated by candles of various sizes and shapes.

Mr. Spurgeon defended the lectures on the ground that it was worth while getting the men together for almost any purpose that was not wicked, rather than leaving them to loaf about in public-houses and street corners.

Mr. James Spurgeon was the friend of all the students. He was vice-president of the college, chairman of the Executive, and ever accessible to those who

were in any kind of difficulty. His brother was wise enough to recognise that "Mr. James" was best able to deal with questions of administration in the college and in the church. For years he presided over the officers' meetings of the Tabernacle, and every detail of that vast organisation was safe in his care.

Dr. James Spurgeon was an incomparable second to his brother. It seemed as though in the Providence of God they were made one to supplement the other. It was exceedingly beautiful to watch their happy relationships and affectionate co-operation.

In the later years Dr. James Spurgeon felt it his duty to remain in the Baptist Union, but that did not mean any lack of affection for his brother or forgetfulness of old loyalties. In the year of his death he was to have been President. Dr. Spurgeon had the loving support of the gracious lady who became his wife and whose services to the wives of Baptist ministers happily continue.

No sketch of the college would be complete that did not at least make some brief reference to the men who in the early years shared its advantages. Pastor Frank White, described as "Professor of Buttonhole Theology," for his proficiency in getting hold of individuals, had the distinction of leading to Christ Charles Reade, the author of *Never too Late to Mend*, *The Cloister and the Hearth* and several popular plays. Mr. Reade was baptised by the Rev. C. Graham. Mr. Archibald Brown carried the flag of the college to East London, and in the Tabernacle on Bow Road gathered a great congregation. For many years Mr. Brown's congregation was second only to that of Spurgeon. Mr. William Cuff went to Shoreditch and built a new church and gathered the people zealous for good works. Mr. W. Williams became minister of Upton Chapel and attracted a considerable congregation almost under the shadow of the Tabernacle.

John Wilson, a fine example of the gospel of self-help, left his father's farm to enter college. He went to an empty chapel in Greenwich, out of which grew the Woolwich Tabernacle, with its wonderful history. Mr. Thomas Greenwood, whose generous help to London churches and the Union has entitled him to the gratitude of the denomination. Mr. Gange maintained the famous traditions of Broadmead, Bristol, and more than held the fort at Regent's Park Chapel, London. John Bradford, whose name is for ever associated with the London Baptist Association, hailed from Spurgeon's.

The college more than justified its existence, and is still one of the foremost schools of the prophets. Mr. James Clarke, the editor of *The Christian World*, through his paper, obtained £100 for the institution, and spoke highly of its work. Mr. Spurgeon desired to acknowledge the gift and presented the editor with a handsomely bound set of his sermons. The good relationships between Mr. Clarke and Spurgeon were maintained, though as the years passed their theological differences became more pronounced.

The last report of the college presents an institution full of vigour and vitality. It is definitely evangelical in its constitution, and pays more attention to academic attainments, realising that an educated minister was never more needed than to-day. Over fourteen hundred men have passed through the curriculum; a number have been called to higher service. A hundred and fifty serving as missionaries and ministers overseas, thirty-two being on the staff of the Baptist Missionary Society, of which Dr. Fullerton was for many years the beloved secretary.

Four hundred men from the college are on the accredited list of the Baptist Union ministering in the British Isles. The Presidency of the Baptist Union is

the hall-mark of the esteem and confidence of the denomination. Since 1897 the Union has called seven laymen and twenty-nine ministers to this high office. Spurgeon's college has given ten out of the twenty-nine ministers, in addition to General Superintendents, members of the Council and to the Committees of the B.M.S.

In the early days Thomas Binney, of the King's Weigh House Chapel, attended an annual meeting of the college with Mr. Colman, who was to preside. Mr. Binney was invited to speak. After paying a graceful tribute to Mr. Spurgeon, he said, "Mr. Spurgeon might multiply a certain class of men until they would be numerous; I hope they will not try to be mere imitators of Mr. Spurgeon. I heard," continued the famous preacher, "of a young man who preached to a certain congregation and satisfied them, but he made so many pauses in his preaching that the people kindly remonstrated. 'Don't you like them?' said the young man. 'Why, they are the great secret of Mr. Binney's popularity.'"

Spurgeon was continually urging students to be themselves; anything like imitation was suppressed. He was a prince of mimics and could reproduce the tones as well as the gestures of any of the London preachers; on occasion among his friends he enjoyed doing so, but his advice was, "Be yourself." It was not surprising that individuality was a characteristic of his students. He loved to hear of their adventures in preaching the Gospel. It was sheer delight to him to be told of a service in the market-place or in the hired room of a wayside inn, at which someone had heard the "good news" and had professed allegiance to Christ. He encouraged men to cultivate new ground. Probably he was concerned in the establishing of Baptist churches in and around London far more than

any society having for its object the building of places of worship. It was his practice to undertake to pay the rent of a hired room for six or twelve months. If at the end of the time the experiment justified the expenditure, he would go on ; if not, the student moved to another "pitch."

Dr. John Wilson was looking round for possibilities of extension in the growing neighbourhood of Woolwich. One of the students had been to the old chapel in Joseph Street which was closed. Spurgeon wrote : "Our student who preached there last Sunday seemed to think there was an opportunity. I am short just now, but I will give twenty pounds if you can get the amount. You might use the promise as a lever."

The college paid special attention to pioneer work, and was and is largely interested in the Pioneer Mission. The affairs of the college are now in the hands of the College Council, with the Rev. Thomas Greenwood as chairman, Mr. Frank Thompson as treasurer and the Rev. E. E. Welton, secretary. Principal McCaig, B.A., LL.D., is on the honorary staff, with the Rev. W. Hackney, M.A. The three tutors are Principal P. W. Evans, B.A., B.D., Professor Gaussen, M.A., LL.B., Professor Taviner, B.A. ; the Rev. D. Russell Smith was Warden. Principal Evans is an honoured member of the Council of the Baptist Union.

The last Annual Report refers to the academic successes of the year. One student passed the Intermediate B.D., another the Intermediate B.A. of London. C. A. Grant secured the M.A. at Edinburgh, A. G. Hill the London B.A. with Honours in Philosophy, and John Pitts, M.A., gained the Ph.D. of London.

The college authorities realise that no equipment can be too good for those who will be the leaders of the Lord's host in the days to come.

A DOMESTIC GROUP

THE love stories of preachers might prove an interesting study. Jonathan Edwards is at his best in his love letters, and John Calvin is very human in his correspondence ; their letters tell stories that ought not to be forgotten. Mr. Spurgeon's love story is like a chapter of a New England novel ; Nathaniel Hawthorne might have written it ; it is quaint and intriguing.

The daily Press of January 12, 1856, devoted much attention to the marriage of a popular preacher. One of the journals says : " On Tuesday morning, an unusual scene was witnessed in the neighbourhood of Park Street Chapel, Southwark, a large building, belonging to the Baptist body of Dissenters, at the rear of the Borough Market. Of this place of worship, the minister is the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon, a very young man, who, some months since, produced an extraordinary degree of interest at Exeter Hall, where he preached during the time his chapel was in course of enlargement.

" On Tuesday morning the popular young preacher was married. Shortly after eight o'clock, although the morning was dark, damp and cold, as many as five hundred ladies, in light and gay attire, besieged the doors of the chapel, accompanied by many gentlemen, members of the congregation and personal friends. From that hour the crowd increased so rapidly that the thoroughfare was blocked up against vehicles and pedestrians, and a body of the ' M ' Division of Police had to be sent for to prevent accidents. When the chapel doors were opened there was a terrific rush, and in less than half-an-hour the doors were closed upon

many of the eager visitors who, like the earlier and more fortunate comers, were favoured with tickets of admission.

"The bride was Miss Susannah Thompson, only daughter of Mr. Thompson, of Falcon Square, London, and the ceremony was performed by the Rev. Dr. Alexander Fletcher, of Finsbury Chapel. At the close of the ceremony, the congratulations of the congregation were tendered to the newly married pair with the heartiest good will."

Spurgeon's originality is nowhere more conspicuous than in his love-making. Miss Thompson had a wooing that would have surprised any maiden. It began with a present of an illustrated copy of the *Pilgrim's Progress*, with a message in three lines, expressing sincere desires for her progress in the blessed pilgrimage. The young couple were accidentally—or was it providentially?—included in the same party upon the occasion of the opening of the Crystal Palace on June 9, 1854. They sat side by side on raised seats at the end of the auditorium. In the midst of the buzz of conversation, waiting for the pageant, Mr. Spurgeon passed a little book to the girl at his side, pointing to a selected passage, and inquired her opinion. The volume was Martin Tupper's *Proverbial Philosophy*.

The finger pointed to a quotation on marriage which began: "Seek a good wife of thy God, for she is the best gift of His Providence." While she read the lines and the glow came to her cheeks, a voice whispered, "Do you pray for him who is to be your husband?" The girl was not sure what she replied, or whether she answered at all. The voice said, "Will you walk round the Palace with me?" A nod of the head was her answer.

How kind it was of their friends quite accidentally to leave them alone. In August the engagement of

Miss Thompson to the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon was made public. Miss Thompson became a regular attendant at New Park Street Chapel, and was baptised by the pastor. It was the old story but in quite a new setting. The happy pair wrote to each other letters which should remain private and sacred ; indeed, there is nothing special about them demanding publicity. Spurgeon was as much engrossed in his work as in his love-making, and the letters record the day-by-day activities.

At the end of 1855 Spurgeon sent his last present to Miss Thompson ; it was a copy of the first volume of his sermons in *The Pulpit Library*. Until the end, Mrs. Spurgeon was his beloved helper in all good works ; her husband delighted in paying tribute to the angel of his home. He made John Ploughman say : " Matrimony came from Paradise and leads to it. I was never half so happy before I was a married man as I am now."

The early experiments in housekeeping were upon a modest scale. Even when they went to Westwood they were careful to avoid ostentation. It would not be an exaggeration to say that for every pound they spent upon themselves they spent five-and-twenty in the work of their Master, not infrequently curtailing their own pleasures that one or other of the institutions might be kept from disaster.

At the end of the Sabbath's duties he would sit in an easy chair by the fire while " Susie " would read a page or two of *Good Master George Herbert*. Sometimes the end of the day found him very depressed, and then the ministry of " the pastor's pastor " was a benediction.

Twin sons, Thomas and Charles, brightened their home and gave life a new meaning. Spurgeon was a great lover of little children. There are old men who

recall a memory, that is an inspiration and a delight, of their association with the pastor.

Mr. Ford, for many years secretary of the Tabernacle, looks back to the early days when as a boy he used to listen to Spurgeon's words and became fired by a great desire to enter into the service of his Lord. He told his secret longings to Spurgeon and recalls how they laughed and cried together. In memory he still feels the thrill of Spurgeon clasping his hand and saying, "Praise the Lord," while his cheeks were wet with tears.

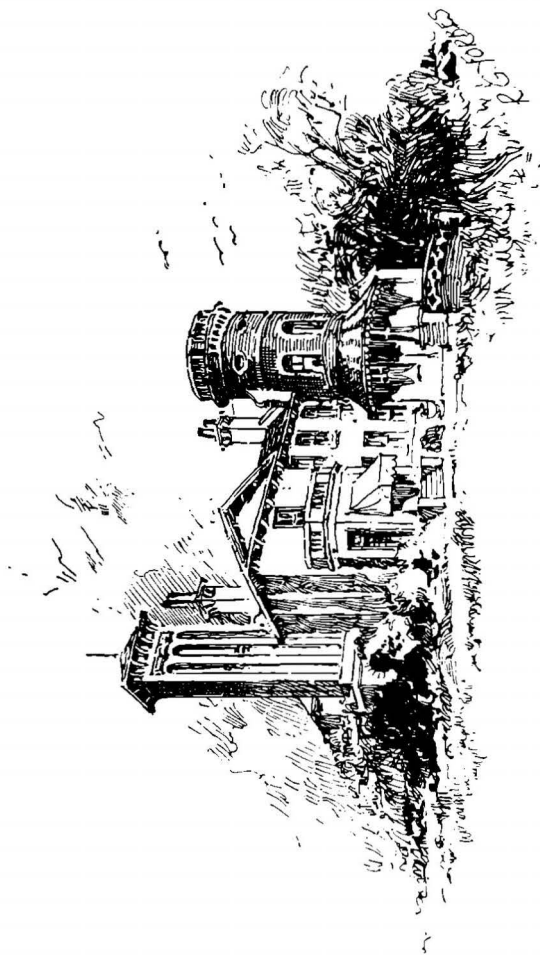
The Rev. H. H. Pullen, the Director of the Spezia Mission, Italy, recalls the visits Spurgeon paid to his home between the services on Sunday ; his pleasantries about the food and his wonder whether he would be able to conduct the evening service after all the tempting dishes.

The love story lost nothing of its romance in the passing of the years, it rather grew in tender intensity. Mrs. Spurgeon supplemented the work of her husband. She was known among ministers of all denominations as the dispenser of gifts of books, and later for the boxes of clothing sent to the families of village ministers.

Spurgeon did his best to help the pastors who had not dreamed of a Sustentation Fund and were compelled to live upon a poor pittance, about the equivalent of the income of a day labourer.

Mrs. Spurgeon has written at length upon her home life ; she has lifted the veil no other hand might touch. It is a love lyric which should be read in the autobiography in which it appears.

Spurgeon's second home in London, or as it was then described, on the outskirts of London, was Helensburgh House, Nightingale Lane, Clapham. In the early part of the second half of the last century Nightingale Lane



*The Late Mr. Spurgeon's
House at Norwood.*

was still the home of the nightingale, though the name of the lane was not taken from the bird but from the old inn which stood at the corner.

Mr. Spurgeon thought the house would be too expensive to maintain, but the opinion was not shared by his wife, and the advantages from the general surroundings and the high ground and better accommodation, and, above all, plenty of space for the children to play in, settled the matter. The establishment was really a modest affair.

Spurgeon was a great lover of the domestic side of life. He often expressed regret that he had a beautiful garden and no time to enjoy it. Those who served him were carefully considered and received many little privileges which formed links in the chain of affection binding them to him.

The home in Nightingale Lane possessed a neat little garden in front and delightful ground in the rear. It was here that Spurgeon satisfied one of his ambitions : he kept a cow. "John Ploughman was very fond of cows. He told the story of the time when his grandfather, a very poor minister, had a cow which was a great help in providing food for the children ; he had ten of them. One day the cow took the staggers and died. 'What will you do now ?' said my grandmother. 'I cannot tell,' said he, 'but I know what God will do : He will provide for us. He knows we must have milk for the children.' The next day the miracle happened. Twenty pounds came to him from a fund for the relief of poor ministers. He had made no application, but at the meeting of the Committee, when all the grants had been made, five pounds was left over, and the Chairman said : 'There is poor Spurgeon down at Essex, suppose we send it to him. Better make it ten,' he added, 'I will give another five.' Ten pounds more was added by the Committee. They

knew nothing about the death of the old cow, but God did, so there was a new cow for him."

Spurgeon was very proud of his cow, and would tell almost to a pint the average milk the cow gave.

In those days Spurgeon sometimes managed to get away with his wife for a walk in the country lanes round his home. Darby and Joan enjoyed their little outings. Mrs. Spurgeon was a lover of flowers, and Spurgeon delighted in displaying his knowledge of the wild flowers they culled upon their journeys. He was a great lover of ferns. The fernery at Nightingale Lane, and afterwards at Westwood, was a special feature which he showed to his privileged guests, and sometimes as a mark of affection he gave a little fern to be taken away. American visitors were very delighted to carry their ferns across the Atlantic and afterwards to display them with pride and tell the story of a walk with Spurgeon round his garden.

It was at Helensburgh House that John Ruskin frequently visited Mr. Spurgeon. His interest in his work was evidenced by his gift of a hundred pounds to the building of the Tabernacle, and the many letters breathing affection. Upon one occasion he was deeply moved by Mr. Spurgeon's appearance as a sick man. He kissed his friend upon both cheeks and besought him to take life less strenuously.

Mr. Spurgeon's library contained almost all Ruskin's works inscribed by the author. One day Ruskin told him a remarkable story which is worth recalling. A widower with several children was visiting an old farmhouse which he thought of buying. While he was talking with the agent the children were allowed to go on a tour of inspection, and scampered all over the place. Finally, having exhausted the wonders above ground, they discovered a basement and went helter-skelter down the stairs. Midway they were frightened,

for standing at the bottom of the stairs they saw their mother with outstretched arms and loving gesture, waving them back, forbidding their further passage. With cries of fear and joy they turned and ran to their father. "Mother has come back," they said.

The father saw that something unusual had happened, and when search was made it was discovered that at the bottom of the stairs there was a deep and open well, entirely unguarded. Had the children continued their run they must have fallen into the well and have been killed. Spurgeon agreed with Ruskin that it was an intervention of Divine Providence.

On one occasion the little garden was tidied up and specially decorated for the return of Mr. and Mrs. Spurgeon, who had been on holiday. They greatly admired the flower beds, but when they came to the little flight of steps leading to the lower ground, they observed with horror that someone had painted the stone steps a bright blue with touches of gold. It was found that the new gardener had original ideas of floral decoration. Afterwards Spurgeon greatly enjoyed the joke, especially when he saw that an old font, which had been placed in the garden and kept filled with water for the birds, had been beautifully painted to match the flowers.

In the little garden in Nightingale Lane Mr. Spurgeon began the practice which he continued for many years of receiving the college students at the commencement of the term. In the early days, when the students were few, they went regularly on Saturday morning for an informal talk with the President. Afterwards, when the school of the prophets numbered a hundred, and the meeting was at Westwood, they went on special occasions, though the President opened his home and his heart very generously to all the brethren.

It was found necessary for the Spurgeons to move, that they might be upon higher ground. Nightingale Lane had lost its rural character. Houses had sprung up and the traffic made it impossible for Spurgeon to take his walks abroad without attracting too much attention. The removal to Westwood, Beulah Hill, possessed a touch of romance. One of the neighbours in Nightingale Lane wanted a house for his son-in-law, and casually inquired whether Spurgeon would like to sell. A day or two before Mr. Spurgeon had seen a board up at Westwood announcing the premises for sale. They were put up for auction and unsold. Upon inquiry it was found that the purchase money of Helensburgh House was nearly the same as the cost of Westwood. Spurgeon always thought it "a little too grand for me," but he loved it nevertheless, and had great joy in moving into the new home.

There were foolish rumours about the mansion that was presented to him, and an American visitor, knowing nothing of modesty, after partaking of Mr. Spurgeon's hospitality, wrote an account of "the park, meadows, lakes, streams, statuary and stables rivalling those of the Queen at Windsor Castle."

Mr. Spurgeon kept an ever-open door. No doubt his hospitality was not infrequently abused, and friends from other lands told wonderful stories of what they had heard and seen. Missionaries, preachers and public men from all over the world found their way to Westwood. Spurgeon was a great host, with dignity and courtesy and abounding generosity. He delighted to entertain his visitors; he was a great talker. Mr. Holden Pike, who for years reported his public utterances, declared that in his judgment Johnson was not a greater conversationalist than Spurgeon.

He took broad views of things which often surprised his friends, and not infrequently astonished them by the

extent of his knowledge of out-of-the-way subjects. With unfeigned delight he would accompany his visitors through the gardens, indicating rare flowers and ferns which had been brought to him as love gifts. In the library he would call attention to first editions and rare books. Upon one occasion he remarked with fervour : " My Master, I am sure, does not grudge me the enjoyment of my garden ; I owe it to Him. I love it and praise Him for it." He followed John Calvin's example in playing bowls, and he knew how to pitch the wood. Even when he could not play the game he would sit by the green and offer a running commentary upon the exploits of the bowlers.

Saturday afternoon was frequently taken up by distinguished visitors who did not always remember that the pastor retired to his study at six o'clock. Upon such occasions he would make a pleasant remark about his duty on the coming day and would retire.

Those who were privileged to sit in his study caught something of the spirit of the worker. The room was ample, beautifully furnished without over-elaboration, and was, as he described it, a place for work. His two secretaries, Mr. Harrauld and Mr. J. L. Keys, sat on opposite sides of the room. Not infrequently one or two other persons would be at the long table engaged in proof-reading or in attending to correspondence. Mr. Harrauld had the routine correspondence and Mr. Keys the literary work, but it often happened that the post was so heavy that it was quite impossible, even with the aid of Mrs. Spurgeon's companion, to get through the work. Then privileged friends were called in. Spurgeon would sit at the end of the room with his back to the little private sanctum to which he often retired for prayer. His capacity for work was amazing. It may be that two to three hours is as much time as can consecutively be spent in creative work,

but Spurgeon would dictate by the hour and then go to his little room and in a few moments return to begin again.

The "Question" oak was so named because beneath its shade Mr. Spurgeon would sit with the students on the grass before him while they kept up a running fire of questions upon their work, their study and almost everything of human interest. The answers were given almost as soon as the questions were asked. There seemed no end to Mr. Spurgeon's knowledge upon Biblical subjects. Not infrequently he would suggest an alternative translation of an old text and would refer to illustrations in forgotten volumes. The answers were enlivened with touches of humour and puns upon the names of the students and the commentators under consideration. Wit and wisdom were so blended that an unforgettable impression was made upon the minds of those who were present.

Spurgeon was a great lover of animals. He knew the value of a dog. At one time Westwood boasted three pugs: Punch and Judy and little Gyp, but Punch died and his master was sincerely grieved. When he was in the South of France his letters home would ask for news about old Punch and his missus. I shall never forget my introduction to Punch and Judy. They were in the room where the "guv'nor" had been telling me of some work he wished done. When he had finished he said quite casually, "We will pray about it." At that moment one of the pugs began to walk across the carpet. "Punch and Judy, come here," he said. "Master is going to pray." Punch and Judy came close to his feet and settled down with bowed heads. I was too amused to do anything but smile broadly. When Spurgeon opened his eyes he said, "Yes, they are funny. The Lord must love humour or He never would have made their faces."

The horses that took Spurgeon to the Tabernacle were very dear to him ; he talked with them as though they were children. He declared they were Jews, for they kept the Saturday as a Sunday. With pride Mr. Spurgeon indicated the provision made for birds during the winter. He had a little sanctuary from which he drew not only pleasure but many illustrations.

A mere record of the names of the visitors to Westwood would almost provide an index to the famous people of Spurgeon's time. Among others who shared his hospitality were several of the bishops, with some of whom he was upon very friendly terms. The letters Mrs. Spurgeon received during her husband's last illness and following his home-going, indicate a genuine friendship between unlikely people. The Bishop of Rochester, afterwards Archbishop Davidson, was a great admirer of Spurgeon and a frequent reader of his sermons. During the time I was joint secretary with Dr. Davidson of the Christian Education League, I had many opportunities of hearing his whole-hearted admiration of his friend, by the side of whose grave he stood at the last.

Archbishop Benson enjoyed many a talk with the pastor of the Tabernacle. Upon one occasion he wrote in Greek the text¹ : " Fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh," and added in English, " No doubt there are other verses which you can now more than ever make your own."

The Bishop of London was very friendly. Spurgeon would often say : " There is one experience which makes all Christian people at home with each other."

Mr. Spurgeon was very interested in handwriting ; his own penmanship was almost copperplate. He held

¹ Colossians i. 24.

the view that a great deal concerning a person's character was indicated by the way in which he wrote. He obtained a very fine collection of autographs and would talk with zest upon the signatures of Lincoln and Oliver Cromwell.

Architecture had a fascination for C. H. S. Among his earliest hobbies was the collection of prints of cathedrals. It was a joy to him to turn the pages of the books of old prints and modern pictures of cathedrals of many lands and varying fates. He would discourse at large upon the curves and lines of the building and the superior excellence of Grecian over Gothic design.

The Rev. W. C. Thomas, of Eastbourne, possesses a letter which was found among rubbish in an empty house. It was dated from Westwood, April 18, 1884. It reads: "Dear Friend,—In a book of views of cathedrals I want Liverpool and other new ones, and some other Irish ones. I thought that you among your ecclesiastical blocks might have them, and might be so good as to pull me copies. It is a rather bold request, but I am bold with you by a sort of licence which you have partly given, and I have wholly taken. Who knows but the contemplation of cathedral glories may win a sturdy heretic back to the paths of Episcopacy, Blackamoors may yet be bleached and lepers lose their spots.

"Bishops multiply just now; their uses are among the mysteries which I dare not pry into. I sometimes seek recreation in collecting views and I have all the old cathedrals but not those I mention. If this should cause you too great trouble just put this note into the fire, but believe me, ever to be, Yours heartily, C. H. Spurgeon."

When the architect of the Pastors' College buildings explained his plans to Mr. Spurgeon, he was greatly

surprised to discover how much Spurgeon knew about building construction and architecture.

In the early days he had shown special facility in sketching. His father was very proud of a drawing of his bearing the date 1848. It hung in the little front room of the manse for many years. Mr. Spurgeon's sons were both at home with the pencil and the brush. Charles Spurgeon painted some good portraits, particularly of his father, while Thomas Spurgeon attained a sufficiently high standard of excellence in water-colours to hold a one-man exhibition which was fairly successful.

When the boys left home they went to boarding school and finally found their way to the Pastors' College. Charles Spurgeon held pastorates at Greenwich, Nottingham and Cheltenham. He was a preacher distinctly above the average, and a genial personality. He found his life work as Governor of the Stockwell Orphanage, where he was loved as the big brother and the wise father of a very large family.

The biography of Thomas Spurgeon was written by his friend, Dr. Fullerton ; his work is well known. It is not too much to say that both the sons possessed gifts which would have been more highly valued had they not by their very sonship been continually compared or contrasted with their father.

Mrs. Spurgeon was an invalid for the greater part of her life. She is a fine example of the triumph of sanctified will over physical suffering. Anatole France says : "Pain is the grand educator of men." Pain taught him the arts and poetry and morals ; pain inspired him with heroism and pity. Pain gives life a new value in allowing it to be offered as a sacrifice ; and pain, this august and gracious thing, has brought something of the infinite into human love.

It was so with Mrs. Spurgeon. Even in the midst of

her suffering she dictated many letters to other sufferers and helped to bear the burdens of ministers in all denominations who had fallen upon evil times and knew the hunger of the mind for a new book. The Book Fund was Mrs. Spurgeon's own creation, and was started with money saved from her housekeeping. During her lifetime the fund literally sent thousands of volumes into the studies of curates and pastors all over the land.

Writing from Menton, the beginning of 1891, to Miss Sarah Higgs, Mr. Spurgeon referred to a bit of "Samaritan work" done on the quiet by his wife: "She has been very ill since you saw her," he said, "but spending her 'cow money' on her daily eleven gallons of soup and loaves of bread has kept her from fretting." Mr. Spurgeon's favourite cow gave an extra supply of pure milk, part of which was sold by Mrs. Spurgeon to help the funds of the soup kitchen in which she was particularly interested. Her average profits with a little bit added, enabled her all through the winter to provide a daily supply of soup and bread for hungry children.

THE PRINCE OF PREACHERS

WHEN C. H. Spurgeon entered the pulpit in New Park Street a prince of preachers came to his throne. He was unlike either school of preachers of his time. There were the men who mumbled and fumbled in their speech, and others who delivered Johnsonian sentences without the Johnsonian wisdom.

A few brilliant men were preaching a beautiful humanism, tinged with theism, but their efforts were circumscribed, and all that remains of them is a few discursive devotional addresses, and some valuable fragments as contributions to literature. The Church of England popular men were mainly of the High Calvinistic school, and they were hard to find.

The Rev. James Wells was minister of the Strict Baptist Chapel in the Surrey Gardens. In early life he had been driver of a carrier's waggon ; as he said, "The Lord called me from the box of the waggon to the pulpit." He was a man of great natural gifts and indomitable energy. After his conversion he worked incessantly until he learned to speak fluently in good English, and by the kindness of the scholarly Edward Andrews, he acquired sufficient Greek and Hebrew to read the Bible in the original languages. His acquaintance with Calvinistic theology was extensive. His shrewd common sense and close acquaintance with the needs of the people, added to a keen sense of humour, made him a great power. The beautiful Tabernacle in which he ministered was built and paid for mainly by the contributions of working men, charwomen and shop-girls.

Mr. Wells was a man of the people and delighted to talk in the vernacular. He had no pleasure in "the

boy round the corner," as he described Spurgeon. Paxton Hood paints a grim picture of the famous Calvinist, "who could make a mob of bumpkins laugh at a village fair, a sort of cheap-jack in the pulpit." Mr. Hood was hopelessly mistaken. It was not coarse humour or vulgarity that brought thousands of people to listen to Mr. Wells. It was for better reasons that the streets were lined by greater crowds on the day of Mr. Wells' funeral than on the National Day of Thanksgiving.

Mr. Spurgeon introduced a new element into preaching. His lectures on preaching are among the best things on the subject. His ideal was that of the fisherman. He lowered his net to catch fish; he baited his hook, not for decorative purposes, but that he might secure the spoils.

"Sermons," he writes, "should have real teaching in them, and their doctrine should be solid, substantial and abundant. We do not enter the pulpit to talk for talk's sake." Mr. Spurgeon insisted that the preacher must proclaim Christ always and everywhere. His Person, offices and work must be "our one great all-comprehending theme. The world still needs to be told of its Saviour and of the way to reach Him." All the problems of the religious sphinx might be explained and the Gordian knot of apocalyptic difficulties might be cut and the congregation still left not knowing the way of salvation.

Spurgeon insisted from the first that nothing could compensate for the absence of teaching. "All the rhetoric in the world is but as chaff to the wheat; however beautiful the sower's basket, it is a miserable mockery if it be without seed." He insisted upon the practical note. Some men think in smoke and preach in clouds; he was concerned that the people should understand his meaning. Clearness of expression is

not a natural gift, it comes with practice, and the prince of preachers was continually clarifying his thought.

There is a story told of Douglas Jerrold that when recovering from a bad illness he was left alone for the first time while his wife paid a visit. He turned over some new books and began to read Browning's *Sordello*. He read several pages and found that he could not understand the meaning of the lines. An awful dread took possession of his mind, he thought his brain was affected by his illness. On his wife's return he thrust the book into her hand and cried, "Read this ! read this !" She looked at a page or two, shook her head and said, "I don't know what it means." "Thank God," said Jerrold, "thank God ; then I have not lost my reason."

There was nothing of the allusive and oblique in Spurgeon's style. He owed much more to hard work than is generally supposed ; frequently he urged his students that whatever genius they might possess, nothing would make up for the absence of personal study. Fluency of speech and the faculty of impromptu utterance were to be regarded as dangerous. "If you seek these gifts as pillows for an idle head, you will be much mistaken, for the possession of this noble power will involve you in a vast amount of labour in order to increase and retain it."

He was continually cultivating the homiletic habit. To his students he said : "Occasionally one has heard or read of men agreeing by way of bravado to preach upon texts given them at the time in the pulpit or in the vestry. Such vainglorious displays are disgusting and border on profanity. As well might we have exhibitions of juggling on the Sabbath as such mountebankism of oratory."

Many stories have been told about the preacher's method of work. Generally he had a number of friends

for an hour or two on Saturday afternoon. After a cup of tea there might be prayer and family worship, but before six o'clock he would withdraw. It was understood that he began to get food for his sheep. In an hour or two he would rejoin Mrs. Spurgeon for a little music or quiet conversation, having completed his preparation. On the Sunday afternoon he would prepare for the evening. Nothing is further from the fact than the idea that Spurgeon prepared his sermons in an hour or so just before delivery. He devoted that time to preparing his notes, which usually occupied the address side of an envelope or half a sheet of notepaper.

One of his famous sermons, "Songs in the Night," is given by Dr. O. S. Davis, President of Chicago Theological Seminary, in his volume on *Principles of Preaching*. This sermon has been referred to as one that was preached almost on the spur of the moment. The truth is that years before Spurgeon had marked the text for preaching and had been turning it over in his mind.

Dr. Davis analyses the sermon, showing the number of illustrations, quotations and figures of speech ; it is an amazing production. The Professor says : " The sermon could not possibly be confused with an essay or oration. The note of certainty is constantly sounded. The preacher is sure that he has something to give which will produce songs in the night. The divisions are clearly indicated and show the lines of thought to be followed."

The Professor calls attention to the Biblical character of the sermon and the appeal at the end. He might have said that the preacher regarded himself as a witness and an advocate. It was his business to bear testimony and to press for a verdict.

Mr. Spurgeon's style was the result of almost a lifetime of practice. In the early days at Waterbeach he

wrote his sermons fully. There are still several volumes in manuscript from which a selection might well be made. In later years he wrote two or three pages and then began the practice of dictating. His secretary, Mr. Harrald, and his industrious amanuensis, Mr. J. L. Keys, were continually on the lookout for illustrative matter for their chief. Mr. Keys spent hours each week in research work at the British Museum.

The habit of dictating to a secretary enabled Mr. Spurgeon to speak with precision, not only to one person but to thousands. He gave great attention to the choice of words, and was continually marking Saxon terms that he might become familiar with them. His style was definitely homely, not cheap nor vulgar, but within the mental range of an average audience. He did not preach for the élite, though many representing the intelligentsia sat at his feet, and regarded him as a great stylist.

There was nothing haphazard about his pulpit work. In a lecture on the choice of a text he declared, "I frequently sit hour after hour praying and waiting for a subject, and this is the main part of my study ; much hard labour have I spent in manipulating topics, ruminating upon points of doctrine, making skeletons out of verses and then burying every bone of them in the catacombs of oblivion, sailing on and on over leagues of broken water till I see the red lights and make sail direct to the desired haven.

"Unstudied thoughts coming from the mind without previous research, without the subjects in hand having been investigated at all, must be of a very inferior quality, even from the most superior men, and as none of us would have the effrontery to glorify ourselves as men of genius or wonders of erudition, I fear that our unpremeditated thoughts upon most subjects would not be remarkably worthy of attention.

“ Our sermons should be our mental life-blood—the outflow of our intellectual and spiritual vigour ; or, to change the figure, they should be diamonds well cut and well set, precious intrinsically and bearing the marks of labour. God forbid that we should offer to the Lord that which costs us nothing.”

An examination of Spurgeon’s sermons reveals that he paid great attention to the opening passages. He valued the first sentences as setting out what he proposed to do, indicating the road along which he would lead the thought of the congregation.

It is almost impossible to over-emphasise the value of the introduction in public speaking or in literature. Professor G. M. Trevelyan describes Bunyan’s opening of the *Pilgrim’s Progress* as probably the finest of any English work. He says : “ Of all the works of high imagination that have enthralled mankind, none opens with a passage that more instantly places the reader in the heart of all the action that is to follow ; not Homer’s, not Milton’s invocation of the muse, not one of Dante’s three great openings, not the murmured challenge of the sentinels on the midnight platform at Elsinore—not one of these better perform the author’s initial task. The attention is at once captured, the imagination aroused. In these first sentences, by the magic of words we are transported into a world of spiritual values, and impressed at the very outset with the sense of great issues at stake—nothing less than the fate of a man’s soul.”

Spurgeon’s opening usually placed his hearers in the very centre of the business in hand. No time was wasted, unnecessary words were eliminated. The greatest artists have always been more concerned with life than with art. Art is a means to an end, and Spurgeon used his marvellous gift for a very definite purpose. It was easy to listen to his words without

being conscious of the art with which they were spoken. He would not wear anything that attracted attention, and every movement was so exquisitely perfect that it gave the intended emphasis almost without being observed.

I have often wished that I could have drawn a portrait of Spurgeon as I sometimes saw him in the old days, on the Sunday morning, when the Tabernacle was packed from floor to ceiling, and the clock indicated the hour of service. It would have been wonderful for the preacher not to be punctual in coming down the little flight of stairs leading from the room where he had been alone with God to the platform where he would be before the eager gaze of five or six thousand people. For more than thirty years the great congregations came twice every Sunday and were not disappointed.

The first time I saw him has left an unforgettable memory. The building was strange to me ; the congregation was overwhelming ; such a mixed crowd, well groomed and ill clad side by side. There was a strange expectancy in their eyes and a hush almost awe-inspiring as the lonely figure hobbled down the stairs ; the figure, about medium height, seeming shorter because of his girth, dressed as an ordinary country gentleman with nothing clerical to indicate his profession. Mr. Spurgeon grasped the side of a pew as he passed down leaning upon a stick, evidently moving with difficulty. "The old enemy had him in the knees." He came to the front of the platform with hand uplifted. In a voice clear as the notes of a flute he said, "Let us pray." And then, as though a miracle had been worked in the assembly—silence ; scarcely the sound of a breath while, in tender phrases, with almost childlike simplicity, the strong, country-looking man talked to our Father.

After the prayer a tall, thin man came to the front, tuning fork in hand. He pitched the tune and led the hymn. Like the sound of many waters came the voices of the thousands of people, singing with gladness one of the songs of Zion. There was no need of an organ ; what finer instrument than the vox humana ?

The reading of the Scriptures with brief interjections seemed very strange but enlightening. Afterwards came the sermon.

The preacher had been sitting in his chair, moving as one nervous or in pain, while a number of announcements of all sorts of engagements during the week were made. He straightened himself with difficulty and stood at the top of his height. The voice announcing the text was low and pleasant ; it was evidently heard all over the vast building, and as the preacher proceeded his pain was forgotten. The countenance, heavy and uninteresting, became changed, and the dull sleepy eyes lit up until they glowed and burned. The theme had taken possession of the speaker ; he had ceased to be conscious of himself ; he had become a voice.

Mr. Spurgeon could talk to music, his voice was probably the most wonderful voice God ever made. His imagination had the quality of the poet, and with all his gifts there was the dead earnest sincerity of the flaming Evangelist. He talked to purpose. To him every occasion was a crisis. He believed that human destiny might be determined there and then, and the tremendous faith coloured all his preaching.

For nearly an hour he made from five to six thousand people forget their drab surroundings and their commonplace lives. They smiled broadly at a humorous aside and wiped their eyes at a pathetic passage.

The sermon came to an end, the last hymn was announced, and one became conscious once more of

the surroundings. They had been obliterated by the magic of the preacher's oratory. Dr. Parker described Spurgeon's voice as "the mightiest voice I ever heard ; a voice that could give orders in a tempest and find its way across a torrent as through a silent aisle."

The Victorian period was particularly rich in sweet singers and eloquent speakers. It was the era of the queens of song. Jenny Lind, Adelina Patti and the great Melba. Among the speakers there was John Bright, W. E. Gladstone, and a number of preachers, including Thomas Binney of the King's Weigh House.

One recalls an interesting incident during one of Spurgeon's lectures. He told his students that it ought to be possible for a speaker so to whisper that his words could be heard all over the large building. They looked incredulous.

"You do not think so?" he said. "Very well, gentlemen, adjourn to the Tabernacle and scatter over the building."

The students trooped across the college yard to the great Tabernacle and scattered to the back of the top gallery and to the end seats in the area. Spurgeon came to the pulpit with a smile. Holding up his hand he whispered, "Gentlemen, if you hear what I say, show your pocket handkerchiefs."

From all over the building pocket handkerchiefs were exhibited by sixty or seventy men. Then in trumpet tones he called, "Gentlemen, put them away, they are not quite clean."

The ministry at the Tabernacle was soon discovered to be far too heavy for one man's shoulders. The Rev. J. A. Spurgeon was invited to relieve his brother of part of the responsibility, and for many years the partnership was happy and unbroken. The crowds continued to throng the building at the regular services. Not content with preaching twice on Sunday and once

during the week, Spurgeon was continually going from church to church, preaching on special occasions and helping the great societies in their annual gatherings.

During 1863, 311 persons were baptised in the Tabernacle, while 116 were received by letters of commendation, making a total of 427 for the year ; after deductions the total number of members stood at 2,517, and year by year the numbers grew until the church at the Tabernacle had the largest membership of any English-speaking church in the world.

A holiday in London was regarded as incomplete unless it included visits to St. Paul's and Spurgeon's Tabernacle. Many questions were raised as to whether the wonderful popularity of the preacher would continue, but there was no sign of abatement. Persons of all ranks found their way to Spurgeon's. It was rumoured that Her Majesty, Queen Victoria, had attended a service. There was no doubt that the Prime Minister, Mr. Gladstone, did so in 1882. The Grand Old Man was accompanied by his son and they both joined the pastor in his private room. There were criticisms upon public men being so indiscreet as to patronise a dissenting place of worship. The very suggestion was amusing. Spurgeon accepted no patronage, he did not go out of his way to court the favour of the high and mighty. Mr. Ruskin discovered to his cost that Spurgeon could be quick and sharp at repartee without lacking courtesy.

In the early years of the Tabernacle ministry Mr. Spurgeon devoted special attention to pastoral work. It is amazing that he could find time to become known in the families of the people and to have anything like social intercourse with his flock. In some circles he was particularly at home. William Olney and his family were treated with an intimacy as though they were relations. There were the Greenwoods, whose

doors were ever open to give sanctuary to the tired preacher. Mr. B. I. Greenwood still possesses letters cherished almost as though they were sacred things. When he thought of getting married he wrote to Mr. Spurgeon asking if he would conduct the service. Mr. Greenwood was then engaged in the building trade. The reply was characteristic. "I'm your man for the job ; I'm good at joinery."

Upon one occasion he was shown some houses Mr. Greenwood was building. Looking at the fronts, he inquired the style of architecture. "Queen Anne," was the reply. He looked at the backs of the houses and said, "Yes, I see. Queen Anne fronts and Mary Ann backs."

Not a few of the old families associated with the Tabernacle : the Passmores, Higgs, Mills, Browns, and a host of others, have treasured memories of the young pastor's visits.

When cholera swept the district he devoted himself unreservedly to the visitation of the sick and dying. It was then upon a dismal afternoon, feeling that his strength was exhausted, he passed a shop window on the Dover Road and read the text : "There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling." ¹

Spurgeon devoted much time and thought to his public and private prayers. He rather astonished a company of ministers by advising that they should prepare their prayers, not the wording but the topics, and most of all prepare themselves to pray. Prayer is the avenue by which the conscious life of God is entered. It is not simply waiting upon the Lord or making confession or giving praise ; it is abandoning oneself to the consciousness of the Presence.

Spurgeon's prayers were oft-times as benedictions.

¹ Psalm xci. 10.

Who among the students ever forgot the final interview in the "gub'nor's" room just before leaving college, which invariably was terminated by a brief prayer dedicating the man to the life work upon which he was engaging? There must be many who like the present writer look back to that hallowed moment as a time when the heavens opened and the Spirit descended.

The Pastor of the Tabernacle lived a disciplined life. It was amazing the amount of work he got through. He would dictate to three secretaries in succession and then turn to the study of a fresh subject as though he were just beginning his work for the day. He read enormously: biography, history and the classics. Few men possessed anything like his acquaintance with the Puritan Fathers. "He had lived in their company for many a year." Shakespeare's plays and Milton's poems gave him pleasure. In fiction his range was limited: Sir Walter Scott and Charles Dickens were his favourites; he would become hilarious over the immortal "Sam Weller."

All men of genius give the impression that they are working with ease and almost without effort. The craftsmanship of the preacher is a great art, it does not come as a gift from the skies. To the uninitiated it seemed the easiest thing in the world to Spurgeon to stand up in the Tabernacle and preach. It was not an uncommon experience to hear people say as they left the building: "I have often felt what he said." He was a true doctor of souls, not a general practitioner but a specialist in the holy art of representing Christ to the people.

Bishop Quayle wrote: "Preaching is the art of making a sermon and delivering it. Why, no, that is not preaching. Preaching is the art of making a preacher and delivering that. Preaching is the outrush of soul in speech. Therefore, the elemental business

in preaching is not with the preaching, but with the preacher. It is no trouble to preach, but a vast trouble to construct a preacher. What, then, in the light of this, is the task of a preacher? Plainly this, the amassing of a great soul, so as to have something worth while to give—the sermon is the preacher up to date.”

Spurgeon gave himself without stint. Perhaps that was one of the great secrets of his success. He loved his people and gave himself to the last ounce for them.

After twenty-five years, a public testimonial was presented to the pastor. £6,233 was collected and presented at a great meeting at the Tabernacle on May 20, 1879. Mr. Carr gave an account of the work and Father Olney was called upon to make the presentation. Mr. Olney took his courage in both hands and though Mr. Spurgeon several times interjected, “That is enough, that will do,” William Olney bore his testimony. “The generosity of our pastor, his self-abnegation and his self-denial should be clearly understood. . . . When he first came at the invitation of the Church we were a few feeble folk, the sittings at Park Street had for some years gone a-begging; the minister’s salary was exceedingly small, and the difficulty we had in keeping the doors open was very great. Incidental and other expenses of one sort and another were a heavy burden upon the people. When Mr. Spurgeon came the old arrangement was continued: whatever the seat rents produced should be his. In former years the amount was supplemented by a number of collections; when Mr. Spurgeon came everything was changed. The seats were occupied and the money belonged to him. At the close of three months he said, ‘We will have no more collections for incidental expenses. I shall pay for the cleaning and lighting and what is required myself.’ And from that time until now he has done so.”

Mr. Olney concluded his speech by saying, "Mr. Spurgeon is a great example of giving. When he was pressed to receive this testimonial he declared that he would accept it on one condition : ' Not one farthing for myself. You may give it to me for myself if you like, but I will not keep it, it shall all be the Lord's.' And it was."

Later, in 1884, when Mr. Spurgeon's Jubilee was celebrated, another testimonial was presented to him. The sum contributed was £4,500, and again he insisted upon devoting the whole of it to the Lord's work. His private generosity was known throughout the land. It was his delight to send a cheery note, usually a five-pound note, and what was even more welcome was the little letter : " Dear friend, please use this for me, but be sure to use it upon yourself and your loved ones. Yours as ever, C. H. S."

Sir William Robertson Nicoll was disappointed that those who had written upon Spurgeon gave scarcely any insight to his methods of pulpit work. It would not be difficult to compare, or rather to contrast, Spurgeon with other popular preachers.

Sermons naturally fall under one of three headings so far as their structure is concerned. There are those that are written in full and read, those that are written in full and delivered either from headings or without notes ; those which without being written are preached from brief notes or extemporaneously. Spurgeon, unlike a number of great preachers, did not write much. He was accustomed to dictate and to revise the sermon after it had been reported by Mr. Holden Pike. It would be impossible to say how much time he gave to the preparation of any one sermon.

Of Ward Beecher, it was said that he described his method of preparation thus : " I am like a man who has an apple tree in his garden and knows that some

of the apples are ripe. He reaches up and feels expectantly among the many hanging on the boughs, till at last one drops readily into his hand and he crunches it with joy. So, when I am getting ready for Sunday morning I feel through my mind to find a thought that has been slowly ripening through experience. It falls naturally toward me and I bite into it with relish."

Dr. Fosdick has recently described his method : "For myself I can only say that I always have my theme for the following Sunday chosen by Tuesday morning, and I work steadfastly Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday mornings on the development of the theme, but I always write in order to clarify and define my thoughts, then I draw off an outline of what I have written and speak from the outline I have made."

Dr. Parkes Cadman, the radio preacher of America, tells his method : "In making a sermon I first of all fix my mind on a suitable theme and then try to find a text that fits it. Sometimes the process is reversed and a great verse from Scripture leaps into my mind like a tiger from a thicket. I then assemble all the literature I can muster which has bearing upon the matter, and con it over. I afterwards write out the sermon in my own hand."

Dr. MacLaren once remarked that the morning sermon had taken thirty years to mature. Spurgeon paid great attention to preparing himself. He believed that the secret of great preaching was in a great theme, born out of a personal experience. Nothing that added to the effectiveness of his pulpit work was regarded as small or trifling. He would have agreed with Dr. Fort Newton that "Preaching is first an incarnation and then an art. Of the initial impulse, or insight, and the mood which invokes it, or is invoked by it—a mood which steals softly or swiftly out of the mists of the

mind, investing an old text with a new meaning, or a new theme with an old robe of beauty—of this experience, born far back and deep down in the secret places of the soul, no one may speak ; it is too intimate and individual.”

The London pulpit in Spurgeon's time had a number of preachers of outstanding reputation. Joseph Parker was at the City Temple, Guinness Rogers at Clapham, John Clifford at Praed Street, William Brock at Bloomsbury, Henry Allon at Islington, Newman Hall at Lambeth, Canon Liddon at St. Paul's and Dean Stanley at the Abbey, with Canon Farrar towering above them all. But there, like a lonely Alpine peak, was Spurgeon, with a glory all his own.

Through all the years the great Tabernacle was usually crowded from floor to ceiling. If anything, the tendency was to increase rather than to fall off. It had been predicted that Spurgeon would go up like a rocket and down like a stick, but the prediction was unfulfilled. The additions to the membership continued to grow until the church was far and away the largest church in Christendom, and the members were not neglected. The city was divided into districts, each having its own elder whose business it was to report concerning his area at special meetings. They might have been described as Presbyters, the Pastor being the Bishop. “He repudiates the idea of isolated independency, holding by something which may be designated Baptist Presbyterianism.”

A special feature of the Sunday services was Spurgeon's comments on the Scripture reading. These might almost have been described as a lecture ; it is a calamity that they were not reported.

Visitors to the Tabernacle represented practically all classes of the community. The editor of the *Hibbert Journal*, writing to me in reference to an article, said :

"Many years ago I took Professor Otto Pfeiderer of Berlin, who was then the leading operator on the side of destructive criticism, to hear Liddon and Spurgeon on the same Sunday. He shook his head mournfully over Liddon, but was enthusiastic about Spurgeon."

Dr. Campbell wrote : "Mr. Spurgeon would seem to be superior to all the frailties of humanity. In point of labour, every day is almost a Sabbath, while his Sabbath efforts are such that might well exhaust and lay up for a day or two the strongest man."

Nearly all the great societies invited him to preach annual sermons. The Baptist Union and the London Baptist Association were continually calling for his services. He gave to the last ounce of his strength and then gave again.

SPURGEON'S SOCIAL SERVICE

IN the generally accepted meaning of the phrase, Spurgeon was not a social reformer ; that is, he did not spend his time in advocating schemes for social betterment. He took little part in parliamentary elections, though for many years he was a keen Liberal with leanings to the Radical wing. He followed Mr. Gladstone until the cleavage over Home Rule, and then went with John Bright and Joseph Chamberlain.

He was interested in many forms of social work. The mere fact that the Church at the Tabernacle supported a large number of missions carried on in slum areas and engaged largely in social service, showed his sympathies. One of his last acts was an encouraging communication to his friend, John Groom, the founder of the work which has grown to be one of the most striking forms of social service in our time.

Mr. Groom conceived the idea of having cripple girls taught how to make artificial flowers. Mr. Spurgeon was deeply interested and approved the suggestion. The enterprise has grown into a great organisation. Exhibitions of the lovely work of the girls are held in different parts of the country, and an extensive business operates all the year round.

Long ago Mr. Charles Montague began a labour of love among the poor of Spitalfields. He secured a disused cowshed, had it whitewashed and disinfected and opened as a Sunday school and Mission Hall on Sundays, and a Club House through the week. The work grew ; Mr. Montague was very keen on all that made for the advancement of young people. After forty years he was able to look upon a large and hand-

some block of buildings in which was housed the work which had its origin in the old cowshed. Spurgeon stood by him, regarding Charles Montague as one of the great assets of the Kingdom of God.

Spurgeon's interest in the children is written in the history of the institution which still continues its beneficent ministry, finding homes and education for about five hundred boys and girls. The story of the Stockwell Orphanage has often been told. In a sermon in 1884 Mr. Spurgeon said: "It is striking to see, as you and I did see, a woman of moderate wealth discarding all the comforts of life in order to save sufficient funds to start an orphanage in which the children might be cared for, not merely, as she said, for the children's sake, but for Christ's sake, that He might be glorified."

The Stockwell Orphanage is the alabaster box which a devout woman presented to her Lord. Her memory is blessed; its perfume is recognised in all parts of the earth at this moment, to the glory of the Lord she loved. Mrs. Hillyard, the widow of a Church of England clergyman, read an article in *The Sword and Trowel* for August, 1866. It called attention to the Romanising influence in schools and orphanages and urged that a great effort should be made to multiply day schools and to care for the children of the poor.

Special prayer was offered at the Tabernacle. Mr. William Olney pleaded that the way might be opened for the work to begin. A few days later Mr. Spurgeon received a letter from Mrs. Hillyard offering to entrust him with the sum of £20,000 for the purpose of founding an orphanage for fatherless children.

Principal Henderson of Bristol College told how the remarkable event came about. "Mrs. Hillyard and some friends of mine, a husband and wife, were sitting together in London. Mrs. Hillyard said to my friend,

'I have a considerable sum of money that I want to employ for beneficent purposes, but I am not competent to administer it myself. I wish you to take £20,000 and use it for the glory of God.' My friend demurred and said it should be committed to the hands of a public man whose acts were known to the people generally and whose reputation would depend upon the proper use of funds entrusted to his keeping. Mrs. Hillyard agreed and asked him to name someone he thought suitable. The result was a letter to Spurgeon asking him to undertake the work. Large sums of money were soon given and the houses were planned."

Each house is conducted as a home with a house-mother who instructs the children in the ordinary duties of a well-regulated family. The idea enabled the Committee to secure special interest in one house. Some individual subscribers contributed a house, others united for the purpose. There is nothing of the institutional type about the Orphanage, no voting or canvassing. The boys and girls are taught to retain their individuality; they are not clothed alike nor shaped in the same mould. The schools are under the educational authorities and not managed by the governors.

The first master was the Rev. V. J. Charlesworth, formerly assistant minister to the Rev. Newman Hall at Surrey Chapel. Mr. Charlesworth was particularly well fitted for the care of little people. He never quite grew up, though he was shrewd and business-like. His sunny disposition and readiness to enter into the concerns of the little people made him a great favourite.

Those who remember Mr. Charlesworth on tour with the team of bell-ringers from the Orphanage know how genial and persuasive he could be. Some of

his hymns have found a place in hymn-books for children and will perpetuate his memory.

Thomas Spurgeon was President of the Orphanage during his ministry at the Tabernacle and was followed by his brother Charles. The present Superintendent, Mr. J. McLaren, has only recently taken up the work, but he has already found his way into the love of the boys and girls.

Let us take a little walk round the Orphanage. Clapham Road has greatly changed since 1867, but the institution has continued its ministry, bringing music and sunshine into the lives of thousands of children. The entrance gate is approached by a drive. On the one side there is the Memorial Hall in which Spurgeon relics and souvenirs have been collected ; and the lovely work of Mr. Tinworth, representing Spurgeon standing in the centre, in familiar attitude with hand upraised and the index finger pointing, while on one side a group of boys and girls represents the Orphanage, and on the other a company of students represents the college. The Hall is a beautiful building and is used for special occasions of united services.

The school is well equipped, and is under the control of the Education Committee of the County Council. The reports of His Majesty's Inspectors cover a long period and are exceedingly good. Here is one taken at random. The Inspector says : " There is a pleasant tone in the school. The boys answer questions brightly and clearly. The work reaches a satisfactory level. Shorthand is now taught in the evening." In the girls' school the Inspector says : " The girls are in admirable order and there is much earnestness and brightness in the tone of the school. The oral teaching has improved, especially in the junior section. The good quality of the reading, writing, arithmetic and needlework is well maintained."

It is interesting to know what becomes of the boys and girls when they leave the Orphanage. One of them gave his life to the service of the Lord upon the Congo, another became a missionary in Japan ; another, after taking the B.A., became a missionary in India. There are missionaries in South America, Denmark and other lands, who look back to their home in the Orphanage. Several became ministers, one of them a Chairman of the London Union ; another an assistant to the late Silvester Horne.

The boys have done well in commerce. One is a Professor of Engineering, another a partner with a former Lord Mayor of London ; several are directors of big concerns ; there are solicitors, accountants, architects. Some of the girls have found their way into the mission field under the guidance of various societies, some are engaged in professional careers ; a large number have become house-mothers on their own account.

The houses of the Orphanage are much alike. Normally there are about 250 boys and 250 girls. Mrs. Hillyard was very proud of the boys, and her last thought was their concern.

There has never been a sectarian flavour about the institution. An analysis of the denominations of the children trained shows a considerable percentage of Church of England over any other denomination. The qualification has always been : the necessity of the case.

The houses were built at the cost of people who were as representative as the children that came to live in them. The Baptist churches subscribed £1,200, the college provided a house ; Messrs. Olney & Sons erected another, and so the good work went on until all the buildings were completed. Spurgeon was very happy with his children. His appearance among them was hailed with delight, and successive generations of

little people sat at his knees in open-eyed wonder while he told them marvellous stories, and then went away to the green in the centre of the houses to give a display, that he might see the progress they had made.

Everything is done to encourage the home-ness of the atmosphere. Dr. Green, in charge of the school, is very popular. His wonderful talent for music enables him to brighten the dull tasks and to cheer the hours with song. The workshops reveal the ingenuity of handicraft. The boys mend the ordinary furniture and make a variety of useful articles.

The Governor's house is a comfortable dwelling without being in any way ostentatious or forbidding. There is the office for ever associated with the memory of Mr. Ladds, himself an inmate and afterwards for many years an official. In the Board Room there are portraits of the founders and some of the governors. Mr. Chilvers, the present President, has his own modest little room for private interviews. It is impossible to walk round the Orphanage without pausing to give God thanks for the wonderful achievement.

Mrs. Hillyard's original gift of £20,000 was set aside as an endowment, to which other sums have been added, so that now there is quite a substantial income, though not nearly enough to provide all that is required, but generous hearts have ever felt the appeal of need and have met the demands.

One of Spurgeon's last public appearances was at the Metropolitan Music-hall, Edgware Road, on behalf of the Hyde Park Open Air Mission. He was very interested in the work of Mr. Charles Cook, the John Howard of his time. Mr. Cook spent a great deal of money and time in work among the inmates of the prisons, in this and other lands. He secured many reforms and always found a sympathetic supporter in Mr. Spurgeon.

Poor people who were old had a very hard time in Spurgeon's day. The workhouse was the only place open to them, and what a place it was! It was notorious for all that was bad, and the nightmare of hundreds of old folk who were wondering how long death would be in coming, and praying for the deliverance that might keep them clear of the clutches of the Poor Law.

The Christian Church has been the pioneer of social reform. There is real danger of forgetting that the care of the ignorant, the sick and the poor, now properly undertaken by the State, was part of the ministry of all the churches. In the early days at New Park Street Chapel, Dr. Rippon's people provided six almshouses, havens of rest at eventide. Mr. Spurgeon loved the idea of securing a little home for old people. He looked at the almshouses with great satisfaction and prayed that it might be his joy to add to the number.

When the church moved to the Tabernacle the Charity Commissioners agreed that the property should be sold and the proceeds used for new schools and almsrooms. A site was secured near the present Elephant and Castle railway station. Mr. Thomas Olney laid the first foundation stone on May 6, 1867. An appeal was made for £1,000 in addition to the money in hand. It was found that a sum of nearly £800 extra would be needed. Mr. Spurgeon announced the fact, and also his determination that the institution should not be opened till all was paid for. The sum was subscribed that morning.

Spurgeon was always keen on avoiding debts. "People do not pay for things after they have them with half the readiness with which they subscribe to purchase them."

The block of buildings provided seventeen alms-

rooms, two schoolrooms, and a small hall where day school was held for a number of years. There is still a Sunday school and an evening service. The old people are made very comfortable and rest awhile at eventide. Many of them tell stories fragrant with the memories of long ago. They recount with great pride their association with the Pastor of the Tabernacle.

For years Mr. Spurgeon paid for the gas, firing and other expenses from his own pocket. Very few people knew that he was the largest contributor to the funds of the institution.

Old Age Pensions were not even a dream, though there had been one or two people mad enough to suggest that it was the duty of the State to care for its veterans and not to leave them to die in squalor and neglect.

From the Elephant and Castle to Hoxton is a far cry, but the work carried on by William Orsman, the costers' "Bishop," owed much of its inspiration and support to Mr. Spurgeon. Mr. Orsman was a civil servant who devoted his life to the "down and out" in the courts and alleys of Hoxton. He provided shelter for the homeless before the Salvation Army or the Church Army began the beneficent work. Mr. Orsman was greatly encouraged by Spurgeon, and with all the enthusiasm of a life-changer, carried his enterprises to success. His special work was among the costers: people who sold things in the gutter and the street markets. He was known throughout the Metropolis as the friend of the man who was good to his donkey.

All the Tabernacle Missions were necessarily centres of social influence. Mr. Spurgeon believed in keeping to his own work of preaching the Gospel, but he was not indifferent to the week-day life of the people. He was concerned with the provision of wholesome read-

ing. In 1866 he called together a few young men to whom he unfolded a daydream. He thought they might become pedlars of good books, going from house to house, not simply selling wholesome literature that would counteract the pernicious prints, but having the opportunity of being comrades to the sick and infirm. He suggested the foundation of a new Literary Brotherhood. The dream came true ; the Colportage Society was formed. Six men were employed, though it was difficult to see where the money would come from to provide means for their support. In 1874 the work had grown ; thirty-five men were employed. Later the number increased to fifty ; the annual sales totalling over £3,000.

Many amusing incidents could be told of schemes of social betterment brought to Spurgeon's notice. He was fearful of ministers being side-tracked into work for which they had no aptitude, and which seemed to him could be better done by laymen. His policy was to enthuse others that they might go forth fulfilling the necessary tasks and fighting the battles of the oppressed.

My association with millennium-making concerns interested him. Upon several occasions I gave him accounts of the meetings of the New Fellowship, an eclectic body of which Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, the present Prime Minister, was for some time honorary secretary. The meetings were held in a large drawing-room, shabbily furnished. Those who came were in dead earnest, they had seen visions and were prepared to bring them into actuality. They believed in the millennium and were road-makers. We thought the roads would be finished in our time. Members of the Fellowship were open to accept engagements to lecture. The fees were not princely ; some men and women who afterwards became world-famed, received

2s. 6d. over and above their out-of-pocket expenses. A speaker would go to a provincial town where an enthusiast had worked up a meeting of twenty-five to fifty persons ; he would give an hour's lecture, answer questions and wait about the railway station, travelling back to London with the milk cans in the small hours of the morning.

Spurgeon had no faith in short cuts to the golden age. He thought the time of disillusion would come. He was patient, always recognising that a man must follow the leading that is given to him and not necessarily tramp the beaten track.

He sent me to Dockhead. During the time of the series of strikes culminating in the great dock strike, he gave his support quietly but definitely to those who were struggling for the very means of existence. Upon one occasion there was a strike at a tannery ; about forty men came out because of a cut in wages. The tannery belonged to Samuel Barrow & Brother. The senior partner was closely associated with the Tabernacle, and the brother, who afterwards became Sir Reuben Barrow, was an officer at West Croydon Church, of which Dr. Spurgeon was Pastor. Spurgeon was very concerned. He knew that the senior partner was greatly troubled and feared that some of the men and their families were short of food. The next day Mr. Sam. Barrow sent for me, and all unknown to the men on strike, he provided the subscriptions to a relief fund which enabled the men to continue their opposition until there was a settlement by agreement. Spurgeon greatly enjoyed the joke. Mr. Barrow beat himself and seemed delighted with the result.

Social service may be divided into two parts : talking and doing. There are those who become very eloquent about outcast London, the condition of the slum dwellers and the old people. There are the

others who render service ; they may have little gift of speech, but they get on with the work. Spurgeon believed in doing what he could to change conditions by changing individuals. His theory was that the changed life transformed the circumstances. What is now familiarly known as Social Service, from Spurgeon's point of view, was the ordinary expression of Christian character. He believed with all his heart that the best description of pure religion was that given by the Apostle James. "Pure religion and undefiled before God the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

It was as a triangle, having a God-ward side, and that for Spurgeon involved the Cross and cleansing through blood. There was the attitude toward others and the personal side.

SPURGEON THE WRITER

FROM the earliest years Mr. Spurgeon was drawn to journalism. From the time when as a child he planned his own magazine and wrote most of the contents, to the last hours, he felt the attractions of the Press.

An interesting literary souvenir came into my hands through Mr. Mills. It is a tiny sixteen-page hand-written magazine, measuring four inches by two and a quarter. It was preserved by a young lady who was engaged as governess to the elder children in the Rev. John Spurgeon's family while he resided at Colchester. Charles was still attending a day school, and often took the opportunity of looking into the nursery schoolroom while his brother and their two sisters were engaged in their lessons.

The little publication is one of the curiosities of literature. Spurgeon was under twelve years of age when he sent it forth, the first of the hundred and more works from his pen. Those who smiled at the boy's ingenuity little guessed that his printed volumes would be the "best-sellers" during many publishing seasons. The first page reads: "Home Juvenile Society. Vol. 1, April, 1846. Colchester. C. Spurgeon." The second page records "The Editor would be very grateful if someone would write a little for this magazine."

"All acknowledgments and notices may be made in this magazine."

Page 3 bears date, Sunday the 12th. "The Prayer Meeting this morning was omitted as Mr. Jennings was out, and thus an end was put to it."

"I hope it will be resumed or else I shall keep to my engagements."

Page 4 has an announcement of an exhibition. "On Monday April 13th an Exhibition was held in order to defray the expenses of the tea party.

"One member in particular seemed very much pleased."

Page 5 contains two items. "In the evening a tea meeting was held and all the members seemed very much gratified.

"Louisa was admitted as a member to which all agreed."

Sunday the 19th and Sunday the 26th are noted more seriously. The first: "Prayer Meeting very good. Carry it on and let me say that on 26th there is another. Blessings come through prayer."

Alas, Sunday the 26th, "No Prayer Meeting. What a decline. Imitate the page before.

"Certainly this morning there is an excuse, but only one in the month is dreadful."

The remaining pages are in a lighter vein, but indicate the bent of the boy's mind.

Page 9 is an attempt at humour. "A gentleman having asked a boy how old he was, replied 'Eight, sir.' 'How old is your brother?' 'Seven, sir, but when one more year has passed we shall be both of the same age.'"

Page 10 deals with the prospect of success to our Society. With pride the young author writes, "There is every prospect of success to our Society, for other societies have succeeded, then why should not ours? It is true there is a difference in number of members, amount of money, age—these are all compensated for by our unity, ready hearts and growth.

"Then do not despair. Every hope belonging to others, belongs to us."

There are two quotations in the little magazine: one on greatness. "One of the later Kings of Spain,

unsuccessful in war, had lost various considerable provinces. His flatterers gave him the title of 'Great.' 'His greatness,' remarked a Spaniard, 'resembles the extent of ditches which increases according to the quantity of ground which is taken away from him.' "

The second quotation reads : " Leonidas, the leader of the Lacedemonians, was told, when he was about to engage with the Persians, that their arrows obscured the sun by their multitude. He replied, 'Then we shall fight better in the shade.' "

There are two riddles without answers and a concluding paragraph that a new club is to be formed for raising tenpence. The little production has an interest of its own and reveals more of the real boy than many of the stories told of his childhood.

During his ministry one of Mr. Spurgeon's first efforts was a column in *The Christian Cabinet*. The little journal represented the theology of the ultra-Calvinists and was much too circumscribed to retain Spurgeon upon its staff.

With the Baptist magazine he worked as joint editor, but again there was the difficulty of double harness. He withdrew from the paper and an announcement was made that he hoped to begin a cheaper magazine. *The Sword and Trowel* was commenced in 1865 and from the first was a great success. The only chance for a newspaper or a magazine is to possess individuality. Spurgeon's publications were really Spurgeon.

The announcement of a sermon to be published each week was greeted by the wiseacres with sceptical smiles. The amazing thing was, the circulation of the sermon surpassed all expectations. The publishers had reckoned upon a sale of five hundred or six hundred copies, but from the first it was hardly less than five thousand or six thousand, and special sermons reached unparalleled figures.

When the five hundredth sermon was published a meeting of congratulation was held in the Tabernacle. The publishers gave a dinner. Dr. Campbell was very eulogistic. He declared: "All Mr. Spurgeon's movements have been new. . . . The idea of preaching and printing a weekly sermon had never entered the head of anybody, but then next to that in novelty and wonder is the assembly to celebrate the five hundredth sermon. Why, Steele with his *Tatlers*, Addison with his *Spectators* and Johnson with his *Ramblers* and *Idlers* were all little men compared with this stripling. The sale of their papers was limited to London, while Charles H. Spurgeon has supporters throughout these isles and all over the world."

During his first pastorate Mr. Spurgeon published No. 1 of *The Waterbeach Tracts* and contributed a little sketch to *The Baptist Reporter*. It was his custom to spend Monday morning revising his copy for the press. He was exceedingly careful in his proof-reading and a rather severe critic upon any of his helpers who overlooked "little commas." It was his custom in later years to dictate to one of his secretaries and afterwards to read the copy in galley proof. He must have spent hundreds of hours during the year over his corrections, sometimes recasting not only paragraphs but pages.

One of the early volumes, *The Saint and his Saviour*, was sold to the publisher, Mr. J. S. Virtue, for £50. He thought the amount almost too large for the work, but it soon proved that in comparison with what the book brought to the publisher it was a ridiculously small sum. Thirty years after, the copyright was offered to Mr. Spurgeon, but he declined to pay three figures for it, declaring that it was cheaper to write another book than buy that. It passed into the hands of Messrs. Hodder & Stoughton. Mr. Passmore found

his business largely increased by the Spurgeon publications ; finally it consisted of Spurgeon's works and gave employment to one of the largest staffs in London.

The weekly sermon, like Tennyson's brook, seemed as though it would go on for ever. Several single sermons reached a circulation of over a quarter of a million, and the total sale is nearly 150 millions. The *Treasury of David*, a work in eight volumes, sold over 50,000 ; *Lectures to Students* ranged from 45,000 to 50,000 copies, but the most popular of all Spurgeon's writings were the little volumes *John Ploughman's Talk*, of which over 300,000 copies of the first issue were sold within a comparatively short time.

The revenue from his publications would have made Mr. Spurgeon a wealthy man but for his unparalleled generosity. He had pleaded that the almshouses near the Tabernacle having been rebuilt should be properly endowed, but the money was not forthcoming. Times were hard. One morning the trustees received an intimation that a handsome donation of £5,000 had been given for the endowment. It was not difficult to trace the cheque to Mr. Spurgeon. He was a princely giver. In the early days he had a strange consciousness that he would earn a large income by writing and give it to the work of his Master.

The *Freeman*, the denominational paper, became the property of a limited liability company, and Mr. Spurgeon contributed literary extracts for Sunday reading. He set out to get the cream of religious literature from all sources, particularly from authors but little known. The quotations are mainly confined to the Puritans—Wesley and Whitefield, Thomas Hooper, Ambrose and James Durham and many less known writers ; and the English classics, including Ruskin's *Modern Painters* and *Stones of Venice*. The list indicates Spurgeon's reading. In later years he read

more biography and history but showed little taste for fiction.

Spurgeon's published output was greater than that of any man of his time ; it was an amazement to those who knew him, and judged by the most modern standards of prodigious working it still fills the mind with wonder. How could he have lived to be an old man, frequently working at the rate of eighteen hours a day ?

Perhaps the time has arrived for a further selection of Spurgeon's gems. The sermons are still treasured in thousands of homes and have yielded spiritual nourishment to not a few ministers, many of whom, like Dr. James Denney, found life through their pages.

It is needless to quote testimony to the value of Spurgeon's printed sermons ; so much has been given that it would fill a number of volumes, and the end is not yet. No preacher in any age or land left his impress upon so many lives or was used so largely as a life changer. Definite evidence has been given of single sermons by the grace of God being the means of bringing hundreds of persons to faith in Christ and allegiance to His Church. Many of the incidents connected with the sermons are striking illustrations of the wonder-working of the Holy Spirit. Here are just a few :

A poor woman employed at the publishers, stole a copy of one of the sermons in which she noticed something she thought she would like to read. She hid the sermon in her bosom and read it at home, with the result that the next morning she brought it back, returned it to the foreman, confessing with tears her repentance and her faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The man was so impressed that he, too, was led to a new allegiance, and both found their way to the Tabernacle.

An Irish girl picked up in the city of Cork an illustrated cover of one of the sermons. It was clean, and she took it home with the idea that it might be useful. After a while she read the printing on the page inside and rejoiced in the discovery of the great High Priest Who really does absolve from sin.

A London merchant prince of a sporting turn sat with his wife in the lounge of a Riviera hotel. The evening was wet and there was nothing to do, nobody would take a hand at cards. On the table there was a sermon. By way of a joke, and to kill time, he read it and passed it over to his wife. They returned to London earlier than they had intended and went to the Tabernacle. Both became earnest Church workers and intimate friends of the Pastor.

And so the story might be continued. Robert Louis Stevenson, in *Memoirs of an Islet*, included in the volume *Memories and Portraits*, says: "It was, above all, strange to see Earraid on Sunday, when the sound of the tools ceased and there fell a crystal quiet. All about the green compound men would be sauntering in their Sunday's best. . . . And it was strange to see our Sabbath services held, as they were, in one of our bothies, with Mr. Brebner reading at a table and the congregation perched about in the double tier of sleeping bunks; and to hear the singing of the psalms, 'the chapters,' the inevitable Spurgeon's sermon, and the old, eloquent lighthouse prayer."

There are still little groups of men upon the lonely ranch and the mining camp, who sit round on Sunday and listen while one reads a sermon. It is their only bit of Sunday, and is very welcome. There are men who tell of the long evenings spent at sea with nothing to read but a number or two of Spurgeon's sermons. The days of miracles never pass away. The printed page is the flaming Evangelist.

It would not be easy to explain the wonder of Spurgeon's sermons. All through the years the sermon was the centre of worship at the Tabernacle, and those who remember the services have no doubt that the vast congregations really worshipped as they listened to the unfolding of the story that transformed the world. We may agree with the judgment of Dr. Richard Glover, a very keen and sincere critic. Dr. Glover said of Spurgeon : " In head, in heart, in energy, in spirit, he presented a combination most marvellous and striking. His intellectual qualities, for instance, were of the supreme kind."

There have been other men who have possessed like qualities, though we do not think any man possessed these high qualities in such a remarkable degree. Sermons are messages ; they are almost invariably forgotten soon after they are delivered. Sermonic literature is a graveyard of many reputations. No sermons long survive the printed page. The eloquence and intellectual brilliance of Robert Hall, Newman, Chalmers and the rest can be purchased at the second-hand booksellers for a few pence per volume. They have little or no market value, but Spurgeon's sermons have survived. There is still a society, the " Spurgeon Sermon Society," entirely devoted to distributing the weekly sermon as tracts on loan ; at one time 2,000 families were supplied with copies each week in the area of the Tabernacle alone.

A sermon was published each week for more than sixty-two years. The last appeared on May 10, 1917 ; it was No. 3,563. Many of the sermons were translated into other languages, some of them attained a circulation in the region of half a million copies. Spurgeon's works are still published, and have a considerable sale. The volumes used in connection with family worship : *Morning by Morning* and *Evening by Evening*, had a

circulation of over 250,000, and in one volume nearly 80,000.

Spurgeon's controversial writings are the poorest of all his work. The truth is, Spurgeon was not a controversialist. The articles on minor controversies should be forgotten; no philosopher is always wise. The sermon on "Baptismal Regeneration" is a powerful piece of composition, but it owed its enormous circulation to the subject rather than to the method of presentation. Spurgeon from first to last was an Evangelist, one whose function it was to proclaim the truth. He knew nothing of the arts and crafts of trimming and compromising. He said the thing that was in his heart and said it with crystal clearness. He left no way of escape but burnt his bridges every time.

It was represented that in the early days he taught that children dying in infancy who were not of the number of the elect, would be lost. To this he answered in a vigorous letter to *The Baptist*. "I have never," he declared, "at any time in my life, said, believed or imagined that any infant under any circumstances would be cast into hell. I have always believed in the salvation of all infants, and I intensely detest the opinions attributed to me. I do not believe that on this earth there is a professing Christian holding the damnation of infants, or, if there be, he must be insane or utterly ignorant of Christianity."

The great controversy, to which we refer in another chapter, was fanned into a flame by many winds. Spurgeon's contribution to the writing upon the subject should be read with the knowledge now at our disposal.

Spurgeon's humour sometimes had a rugged if not a rough flavour, but it was perfectly natural, it was no more offensive or vulgar than the incomparable pages of *Punch* in which he delighted. It was as natural to

him on occasion to be humorous as for the waves of the sea to carry foam upon their crests. He did not go out of his way to tell funny stories—and some of his stories were intensely funny—they came as a matter of course. He knew the value of wholesome nonsense and enjoyed it. He was very severe upon those who attempted to tell stories that left an unwholesome flavour in the memory.

John Ploughman's Talk was regarded by some literary critics as one of the great classics of the common people. There is no doubt about the exquisite craftsmanship of the production. In the artistry there is no suggestion of art ; there is scarcely a word that is not within the limited vocabulary of the ordinary man of the mid-Victorian period, and the topics are those that are always timely.

Concerning religious grumblers, he writes : “ He who knows nothing is confident in everything. Every clock and even the sundial must be set according to their watches, and the slightest difference from their opinion proves a man to be rotten at heart. Venture to argue with them and their little pot boils over in quick style ; ask them for a reason and you might as well go to a sand-pit for sugar. They have bottled up the sea of truth and carry it in their waistcoat pockets. They have measured Heaven's line of grace and have tied a knot in the string at the exact length of electing love ; and as for the things which angels long to know, they have seen them all as boys see sights in a puppet-show at the fair.”

The little paper concludes : “ Fault-finding is dreadfully catching. One dog will set a whole kennel howling, and the wisest course is to keep out of the way of a man who has the complaint called ‘ the grumbles.’ The worst of it is that foot and mouth disease go together. Good-bye, ye sons of grizzle. John Plough-

man would sooner pick a bone in peace than fight for an ox roasted whole."

Spurgeon could be very wise in his nonsense, and always wrote with a purpose. Here is a paragraph on keeping one's eyes open. "Nobody is more like an honest man than a thorough rogue. When you see a man with a great deal of religion displayed in his shop window, you may depend upon it he keeps a very small stock of it within."

About things not worth trying, he wrote : "Don't put a cat on a coach-box or men in places for which they are not fitted. There is no making apples of plums. Little minds will still be little even if you make them beadles or churchwardens. It is a pity to turn a monkey into a minister. Many preachers are good tailors spoilt, and capital shoemakers turned out of their proper calling. When God means a creature to fly He gives it wings, and when He intends men to preach He gives them abilities."

Writing about great talkers, he says : "I had rather plough all day and be on the road with the waggon all night when it freezes your eye-lashes off than listen to those great talkers. I had sooner go without eating till I was as lean as wash-leather than eat the best turkey that ever came on the table and be dinned all the while with their awful jaw. They talk on such a mighty big scale and magnify everything so thunderingly that you can't believe them when they accidentally slip in a word or two of the truth. You are apt to think that even their cheese is chalk."

The *Salt-Cellars*, a collection of proverbs in two volumes with witty sayings and comments, reveal Spurgeon in a new light. These volumes of 300 or 400 pages each, represent an enormous amount of research and almost incredible reading. They had a very large sale, and are still published. The proverbs

are drawn from many sources, not a few were coined by Spurgeon himself, while hundreds were touched up and many were translated from the French or Latin. All his life he kept notebooks to jot down the gems discovered in ordinary reading. It was a joy to him to find an old volume of witty sayings or local proverbs. He collected calendars and "Garlands of Thought," and found amusement and recreation at the end of a long day's work in reading over his stores, arranging them, touching them up, putting them into fresh forms, carefully eliminating any proverb having a suggestion that was unwholesome. It was his aim not simply to collect but to select. It was quite impossible to give the origins, they were found in innumerable fields which could not be traced to this literary estate or that. "A line may strike where a discourse may miss." He regarded proverbs as the best form of illustration.

He would frequently enliven a drive along a monotonous road by reciting pithy sayings of the humorists, and would express great pleasure if he heard in return a saying that was new to him. He loved to add to the proverb a bit of his own, as : "One swallow does not make a summer . . . but one grasshopper makes many springs."

"A drop of gin is a drop too much . . . why not drop it ?"

To some of the proverbs he added illustrations drawn largely from the classics.

"Don't fight over a cheese mite," to which he adds, "It is a pity to contend over a great matter, but to quarrel over a mere trifle is never justifiable."

"He preaches well who lives well. . . . Even if he doesn't open his mouth his example is a sermon."

"I can't swallow the sea for the sake of the fish," to which there is this bit of exposition : "To subscribe

to a long creed for the sake of one article in it, or to put up with a heap of ill-conduct for a little benefit, or to go into an evil trade for temporary gain, will all come under this sentence."

"No cure, no pay."

"A fair principle, but it might be carried still further with advantage. Kien Long, Emperor of China, inquired of Sir G. Staunton the manner in which physicians were paid in England. When with some difficulty His Majesty was made to comprehend the manner of paying physicians in England for the time that the patients were sick, he exclaimed: 'Is any man well in England who can afford to be ill? Now I will inform you how I manage my physicians! I have four to whom the care of my health is committed; a certain weekly salary is allowed them, but the moment I am ill the salary stops till I am well again. I need not inform you that my illnesses are very short.'"

"Strike while the iron's hot. . . . But don't keep on striking till it's cold. Don't preach the people into a good state of mind and then preach them out of it."

"That which looks like a mountain may melt like a mist." . . . "Face your difficulties, they may vanish as you advance."

"The ale jug is a great waste." The comment is: "Toby Philpott fills his own pot but he often empties the teapot."

"The more haste, the worst speed." . . . "Four things only are well done in haste; flying from the plague, escaping quarrels, catching fleas and forsaking sin."

Spurgeon's *Salt-Cellars* will provide savour for many a dull moment. They are likely to last long after more serious works have been forgotten.

THE STORM

WHAT Bishop Gore described as "great shocks to established religious belief" came very quietly, almost as silently as the shadows gathering at eventide. Critical science was changing the conception of ancient history. Age-worn traditions were passing away as the fading light in a cold winter sky. Classic works associated with individual names were said to be the product of a whole epoch. The critical method was applied to the Scriptures. Some ministers went far beyond the scholars in casting doubt upon the narratives of the Old Testament. The records of the book of Genesis became the subject of fierce controversy. Doubt as to the historical value of the records spread from the Old Testament to the New. The Deity of Christ and the sacrificial nature of Christ's death were denied.¹

Bishop Butler's description of the attitude of men of his time toward religion has been aptly applied to the period under consideration. "It has come, I know not how, to be taken for granted by many persons that Christianity is not so much a subject for inquiry, but that it is now at length discovered to be fictitious."²

It was impossible for the clash of contending views to be indefinitely postponed. The pulpit was charged with silent acquiescence in the radical betrayal of the evangelical foundations of the Christian faith.

Spurgeon's attitude was clearly defined. Upon one occasion an eminent American went into the vestry at the Tabernacle and said: "Why, Mr. Spurgeon, you are preaching just what you preached twenty years ago when I was here."

¹ Bishop Gore, *Belief in God*, Chapter I.

² Butler's *Analogy*, Introduction.

"Yes, sir," was the response, "and if you come back in twenty years' time and hear me preach you will find me where I am now."

No useful purpose would be served by recalling the domestic squabbles of a denomination. Wise men try to forget "The memory of old unhappy, far-off things and battles long ago," but the controversy known as the "Down Grade" was not a squabble between Spurgeon and the Baptist Union, it was one of those thought conflicts which reappear in history when opposing ideas can no longer refuse battle.

Spurgeon in his own personality felt the challenge of the new ideas. The fact that he was a Baptist localised for the moment the area of controversy to the Baptist Union, but it was one of those inevitable conflicts which profoundly affect all the Churches.

No life of Spurgeon can omit the greatest thing in his closing years.

Froude quotes Erasmus: "A Greek proverb says 'Androclides is a great man in times of confusion.' This applies to theologians who make reputations by setting Christians quarrelling and would rather be notorious by doing harm than live quietly and not be noticed."

Spurgeon had nothing to gain by entering into controversy. He was a sick man suffering agonies of pain; indeed, he was marked for death. He had a great and unsullied reputation, with friends and admirers in all camps. Nothing less than an overwhelming conception of duty to the faith he proclaimed and the Lord he honoured could have sent him into the arena. Representations were made to him from all parts of the country. Officials of county associations and ministers appealed to him to raise his voice against the inroads of modernism.

He hated controversy and obviously was not a skil-

ful controversialist. Though he held firmly to the Baptist position he was not at any time a strong denominationalist. The fate of any union or denomination was as nothing in comparison with preserving the truth. The general falling away from the evangelical position which he saw and described, was by his own admission less in the Baptist Union than in some other quarters, but he felt that in his own denomination he ought to utter his greatest protest. The general indictment Spurgeon made definite in three charges :—That the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures was denied and thus the authority of the Bible undermined. That the vicarious nature of the death of Christ was not preached and, therefore, the way of salvation was not made known. That the doctrine of future punishment had given place to the idea of universal restoration and had weakened the motives of godly living.

In 1887 he was still in friendly relations with the Union. It was the year of Queen Victoria's Jubilee, and a fund on behalf of the British and Irish Home Mission was being raised. He wrote to the secretary : " My dear Mr. Booth,—I wish your Jubilee Fund the utmost success. I shall be ready to pay a personal subscription of fifty pounds to the London Association. I wish I could do more, but as I have just finished a chapel at Thornton Heath, I have on my own account celebrated the Jubilee and really done my part of the very work which you are aiming at."

Members of the Baptist Board and their wives were entertained at the Stockwell Orphanage on the last day of May. Spurgeon was very genial and happy. He remarked that " in no body of ministers was there more brotherly love than among the Baptist ministers of London."

During the year, however, the Down Grade con-

troverſy began to loom more largely upon the horizon. The ſecretary of the Union conſulted Spurgeon in reference to the public utterances of two or three members of the Council which filled him with apprehenſion. Theſe brethren were leaders, and what they ſaid was reported in the public Preſs, ſo that there was no queſtion of ſecrecy. Dr. Booth could not ſee that the Conſtitution of the Union provided any way by which theſe men could be called to account. He was fearful of the theology being taught in ſome of the colleges and of its influence upon ſtudents who would ſoon be in poſitions of reſponſibility in the denomination.

A ſeries of articles appeared in *The Sword and Trowel* ¹ lamenting the wiſeſpread declenſion from the faith. The Rev. R. Shindler was the author, and he was defended by Mr. Spurgeon, who in the firſt of four articles wrote : “ No lover of the goſpel can conceal from himſelf the fact that the days are evil. We are willing to make a large diſcount from our apprehenſions on the ſcore of natural timidity, the caution of age, and the weakneſs produced by pain ; but yet our ſolemn conviction is that things are much worſe in many churches than they ſeem to be, and are rapidly tending downward. Read thoſe newspapers which repreſent the Broad School of Diſſent, and ask yourſelf, How much farther could they go ? What doctrine remains to be abandoned ? What other truth to be the object of contempt ? A new religion has been initiated, which is no more Chriſtianity than chalk is cheeſe ; and this religion, being deſtitute of moral honeſty, palms itſelf off as the old faith with ſlight improvements, and on this plea uſurps pulpits which were erected for goſpel preaching.”

Unfortunately the articles in *The Sword and Trowel*

¹ Sept., 1887. Mr. Spurgeon's Four Articles on the Down-Grade.

appeared at the time described in the journalistic world as the "silly season," when editors run short of interesting copy, thus the greater publicity was given to what was described as "the heresy hunt," and a number of irresponsible writers added fuel to the fire.

Mr. Spurgeon called upon the Union for a declaration which would clearly state the beliefs of the denomination; he did not want a collection of dogmatic pronouncements by which each member should be tested and judged, but a straightforward statement which would let the world know the things for which Baptists stood.

Many letters passed between Dr. Booth and Mr. Spurgeon during the period of the controversy, 1887-1892. Some of these letters were well known to myself and others.

Dr. Booth gave names, and extracts from sermons and speeches. The correspondence passed at the death of Spurgeon into the hands of his wife, and then to his son, Charles, and it cannot now be traced. Probably it was destroyed in order to prevent accentuating the unhappy controversy to which it referred.

In October, 1887, Spurgeon felt that there was nothing left for him but to withdraw from the Union. He wrote his fateful letter to the secretary :

"Dear friend, I beg to intimate to you as the Secretary of the Baptist Union, that I must withdraw from that Society. I do this with the utmost regret, but I have no choice. The reasons are set forth in the *Sword and Trowel* for November, and I trust you will excuse my repeating them here. I beg you not to send anyone to me to ask for a reconsideration. I fear I have considered too long already. Certainly every hour of the day impresses upon me the conviction that I am moving none too soon.

"I wish also to add that no personal pique or illwill

in the least degree operated upon me. I have personally received more respect than I desire. It is on the highest ground alone that I take this step, and you know that I have delayed it because I hoped for better things. Yours always heartily, C. H. Spurgeon."

This action caused consternation, though it was not a surprise. The London papers described it as "the break-up of the Baptist denomination," and saw in it "the decomposition of Dissent"¹; those who had nothing whatever to do with the matter took a hand in the controversy and made it more difficult for all parties.

In December the Council of the Baptist Union met at the Mission House; eighty out of the hundred members being present. Dr. Angus submitted a declaration of Evangelical faith, but the Council determined that an attempt should be made to interview Mr. Spurgeon. It was openly stated that he had made no communication to the Council or brought any charge as to laxity of faith and practice such as would justify them in laying the matter before the Assembly. One of the members declared that Mr. Spurgeon's statement as to confidential communications between himself and the secretary was not true; thereupon Mr. J. A. Spurgeon in protest withdrew from the meeting and the breach was widened.

Spurgeon felt he was unfairly treated. Some of those who had given him information were at the Council meeting when it was determined to ask Mr. Spurgeon to supply it; those who should have spoken were silent. Spurgeon was very angry; he wrote to Dr. Booth: "I will give the information you have given to me." To this Dr. Booth replied: "My letters to you were not official but in confidence. As a matter of honour you cannot use them." That settled Spurgeon's attitude, he would have no more.

¹ *John Bull*, Nov. 25, 1887.

Dr. Fullerton, referring to these letters, said : " Dr. Booth, singularly enough, had consulted Spurgeon on Down-Grade matters even before Spurgeon had made any protest at all. . . ." ¹ In a cryptic sentence Dr. Fullerton adds : " I venture to say that if, say, Dr. Shakespeare had then been Secretary, the Down-Grade controversy would have taken a different direction."

Mr. Holden Pike in his *Life of Spurgeon*, made several references to Dr. Booth's communications, and Mrs. Spurgeon wrote : " There are many dear and able friends who could write the full history of the controversy, but after much thought and prayer I have been led to allow the shadow of the past to rest upon it in a measure, and to conceal under a generous silence most of the documentary and other evidence which could be produced to prove the perfect uprightness, veracity and fidelity of my dear husband throughout the whole of the solemn protest which culminated in the vote of censure by the Council of the Baptist Union."

Mrs. Spurgeon published a quotation from a letter written to her by her husband when the Union desired to send a deputation to the South of France. " The four doctors are not coming. Very likely my brother will call to tell you about the affray, he was justly wroth and describes the Council Meeting as ' horrible.' For Dr. Booth to say I never complained is amazing. God knows all about it and He will see me righted." ²

Spurgeon never was righted. The impression in many quarters still remains that he made charges which could not be substantiated, and when properly called upon to produce his evidence he resigned and

¹ *C. H. Spurgeon*, p. 315.

² *Autobiography*, Vol. VI., p. 120.

ran away. Nothing is further from the truth. Spurgeon might have produced Dr. Booth's letters; I think he should have done so.

The position was more than difficult. Mr. Spurgeon and Dr. Booth had been friends for many years. Both acted in good faith. Spurgeon had plenty of evidence; there were the utterances of well-known men which had been published in the pages of the *Christian World*, the *Independent*, the *Freeman*, the *British Weekly* and the *Baptist*. Reference to the files of these journals for 1887 and 1888 can still be made, and will provide ample proof of the truth of Spurgeon's general charge.

The Baptist ministers concerned did not all keep silence; some followed the lead of two pastors of churches in Leicester, who frankly stated their position.¹

Dr. Booth believed that agreement would be reached by conference and compromise, he was "a born amalgam"; his policy was to keep silent in order not to widen the dispute.

Spurgeon was everywhere received with enthusiasm, particularly at the meeting of the Young Men's Christian Association in Exeter Hall and the Conference at Mildmay. The Pastors' College Conference that year was one of the greatest in its history. At the annual supper a record sum of £3,700 was subscribed for the college funds. Spurgeon received hundreds of letters, many of them from prominent people in all the denominations, and it was evident that his action was very largely approved.

The controversy still went on. The Baptist Union Council framed a resolution which was regarded as the basis of reunion. Mr. Spurgeon was favourably impressed by it and hoped for the best.

¹ *The Freeman*, 1888.

At the Assembly of the Union in the City Temple, April, 1888, the Council's resolution was hailed with satisfaction. It was regarded as the end of the controversy and a clear indication respecting the Evangelical character of the Assembly, though it declared that "there is no need for additional tests of membership inasmuch as the Council and the Assembly have ample power under the Constitution to determine all questions of membership and therefore to deal with the case of any Church or person who may not hold Evangelical doctrines." The resolution was moved by the Rev. Charles Williams in a speech hostile to Spurgeon. Mr. James Spurgeon "seconded the resolution but not the speech."

Spurgeon was disappointed. In a letter from Menton he said: "Those who write in the *Freeman* and the *Christian World* show how everything I do can be misconstrued, nevertheless I know what I have done and why I did it, and the Lord will bear me through."

The Union proposed that Doctors Culross, MacLaren, Glover, Clifford and Booth should go to Menton without delay to deliberate with Spurgeon upon how the unity of the denomination in truth and love and good works might be maintained. Spurgeon declined, asking that the matter should wait until he returned.

Spurgeon's health gave cause for grave alarm. Even when he seemed so much better his friends could not shut their eyes to the fact that he had aged materially and that he moved with the slowness of weariness.

Mr. Spurgeon finally received a deputation—Dr. Culross, Dr. Clifford and Dr. Booth—at the Tabernacle on January 13, 1889; but their task was fruitless. It was much too late in the day to ask for reunion upon the basis of a resolution already interpreted in different ways.

A report of the conference was mutually agreed upon. Mr. Spurgeon could not see his way to withdraw his resignation. In answer to the question what he would advise as likely to promote permanent union, he answered : " Let the Union have a simple basis of Bible truths. These are usually described as Evangelical doctrines." He added that he knew no better summary of these than that adopted by the Evangelical Alliance and subscribed to by members of many religious communities for several years. He did not describe the Union as " a confederacy in evil " ; his words were : " It begins to look like a confederacy in evil."

The Council of the Union passed the following resolution when it received information of Mr. Spurgeon's refusal to reconsider his resignation : (1) ¹ " That the Council deeply regrets the resignation of membership in the Union by the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon, whose great gifts and usefulness are matters of joy and thankfulness to them and to the whole Church of God. But, inasmuch as the conciliatory efforts of the deputation have been unavailing, the Council has no alternative but to accept his resignation.

(2) " That the Council recognises the gravity of the charges which Mr. Spurgeon has brought against the Union previous to and since his withdrawal. It considers that the public and general manner in which they have been made reflects on the whole body, and exposes to suspicion brethren who love the truth as dearly as he does. And, as Mr. Spurgeon declines to give the names of those to whom he intended them to apply, and the evidence supporting them, those charges, in the judgment of the Council, ought not to have been made."

The Rev. James Douglas, M.A., minister of Kenyon

¹ Baptist Union Council Minutes, April, 1888.

Chapel, Brixton, who possessed Spurgeon's confidence, wrote : " While the Union cried, ' Give us names,' saying in effect, ' We are in entire ignorance of your allegations,' letters came to him from all parts of the country, bringing before him numerous cases of heretical teaching in the Baptist, Congregational and other religious bodies. . . . Everything was not done in a corner. There were those who did not hesitate to declare themselves as rejectors of the Gospel Mr. Spurgeon preached, and prominent attention had been called to these and kindred matters both in denominational print and in public assembly." ¹

Two or three prominent members of the Union declared themselves hostile to Spurgeon's views. The *Christian World*, in a leading article, November 3, 1887, said : " It is a plain and literal fact that those who share the opinions he condemns constitute a very large majority of all thinking Christian people."

Dr. Clifford in the *Pall Mall Gazette* defended the Union, " speaking broadly and without reference to certain notable exceptions." Dr. Parker, Dr. Guinness Rogers and others replied to Spurgeon.

The foregoing has been written with fullness because Spurgeon's position has hardly been known, but I am not unaware of another side. A strong case can be made for the Baptist Union. The majority of the members of the Council knew nothing of the communications between the secretary and Spurgeon. Dr. Booth no doubt believed until the last that Spurgeon would not withdraw from the Union. He depended upon private conversations and was afraid of publicity, as of gunpowder.

Spurgeon endeavoured to make it clear that he had no personal feud or pique ; he strove for what he believed to be the truth. His references in public and

¹ *The Prince of Preachers*, p. 182.

in private to his old friends, showed that the bitterness of controversy had not soured the sweet memories of other days. There was no doubt, however, that he felt the action of the Baptist Union very deeply and resented the suggestion that his statements were untrue.

Some of the Pastors' College men broke with their old leader ; one or two allowed themselves to indulge in violent attacks upon "the new Pope." These men were very dear to their President, he felt as Cæsar felt when Brutus joined in the attack.

The old College Conference was disbanded and a new organisation came into existence. The great majority of the members signed a new declaration of belief, which it was claimed expressed the teaching of the college through all the years of its history. Some of the men who objected to a credal basis yet joined it with the full consent of Spurgeon.

It is not possible to tell how the Down-Grade controversy might have gone had Spurgeon been in health or had the secretary of the Baptist Union supplied to the Council the information that he supplied to Mr. Spurgeon. The resolution, known as "the vote of censure," though no censure was intended, made old friends enemies or at least strangers for the rest of their days.

The healing hand of time may have closed the wounds, but Spurgeon's wound was never closed, though he went on with his work, crowding the days with public engagements and new literary enterprises which might have provided an occupation for half a dozen men. He never recovered from the nervous strain of those terrible days.

The following year, February, 1888, the Council adopted a declaration of principles commonly believed by the Churches of the Union. This statement was

slightly amended and finally adopted on April 21. It is of sufficient importance to be given as it stands upon the records of the Union.¹

“Whilst expressly disavowing and disallowing any power to control belief or to restrict inquiry, yet in view of the uneasiness produced in the churches by recent discussions, and to show our agreement with one another, and with our fellow Christians on the great truths of the Gospel, the Council deem it right to say that—

“(A) Baptised in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, we have avowed repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ—the very elements of a new life; as in the Supper we avow our Union with one another, while partaking of the symbol of the Body of our Lord, broken for us, and of the Blood shed for the remission of sins. The Union, therefore, is an association of Churches and ministers, professing not only to believe the facts and doctrines of the Gospel, but to have undergone the spiritual change expressed or implied in them. This change is the fundamental principle of our Church life.

“(B) The following facts and doctrines are commonly believed by the Churches of the Union :—

“1. The Divine Inspiration and Authority of the Holy Scripture as the supreme and sufficient rule of our faith and practice; and the right and duty of individual judgment in the interpretation of it.

“2. The fallen and sinful state of man.

“3. The Deity, the Incarnation, the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, and His Sacrificial and Mediatorial Work.

“4. Justification by faith—a faith that works by love and produces holiness.

¹ Council Minutes, February, 1888.

"5. The work of the Holy Spirit in the conversion of sinners, and in the sanctification of all who believe.

"6. The Resurrection ; the Judgment at the Last Day, according to the words of our Lord in Matthew xxv. 46."

To this last statement a footnote was added : " It should be stated, as a historical fact, that there have been brethren in the Union, working cordially with it, who, while reverently bowing to the authority of Holy Scripture, and rejecting the dogmas of Purgatory and Universalism, have not held the common interpretation of these words of our Lord."

On the Council of the Baptist Union were men whose Evangelical teaching Spurgeon never doubted. Who could have questioned the teaching of James Culross, Alexander MacLaren and a host who had stood by Spurgeon through all the years ? They were in opposition to him not on any question of fidelity to the faith, but upon the issue of accepting an authoritative creed ; they stood as Baptists ever stood, for the supreme authority of our Lord Jesus Christ in all matters of religion. Spurgeon himself in a memorable speech at the opening of the Tabernacle had insisted that Christ and Christ alone was the body of divinity to which allegiance should be given.

Among Baptists there has been age-long hostility to authoritative creeds. Baptists stand for liberty, the right of each individual to receive the truth from his Lord. They know that creeds have oft-times been barriers to the free development of personality and not infrequently have been used as instruments of persecution. Creeds have not secured uniformity of belief, they become divisive and tend to hypocrisy.

When the Baptist World Alliance at Stockholm made its declaration of principles, the resolution was moved by Principal Mullins of the Southern Baptist

Theological Seminary ; in seconding the motion I ventured to say that "a declaration of theological principles was first cousin to an authoritative creed, and it was very difficult to distinguish one from the other."

While at the beginning Spurgeon asked for a simple declaration of what the Baptist Union taught, some of his later utterances gave the impression that he wanted a definite theological authority and that he had gone back upon the traditional position of the Baptists.

It would not be easy to find a controversy of such magnitude so badly mishandled. General charges were made upon slender evidence. Reported statements were not verified. To unravel the threads is an almost impossible task, the tangles are personal and numerous. Looking back with close acquaintance of the leaders of both sides and some personal knowledge, it seems to me that Mr. Spurgeon may have placed too much confidence in the judgment of Mr. Shindler in the *Sword and Trowel* articles, but that he was fully justified in his own protest against the theological teaching of many of the Churches and of certain Baptist ministers in particular. He had good reasons for being indignant over the treatment he received from Dr. S. H. Booth and some others. His resignation came before the Council of the Union realised the critical condition of affairs. Having resigned, his followers were at a great disadvantage.

Spurgeon resigned also from the London Association, of which he had been the principal founder, so the battle had also to be fought there. After much strife a definition of the word "Evangelical" was adopted, so cleavage was avoided.

Ministers who owed allegiance to Spurgeon spent not a few sleepless nights in determining their loyalty. Should they follow their old chief, sharing the hope he

expressed in the concluding paragraph of the four articles on the "Down-Grade" that "the day would come when in a larger communion than any sect can offer, all those who are one in Christ may be able to blend in manifest unity," or could they, though agreeing with the protest against loose teaching, yet take their stand upon the traditional Baptist position of opposition to authoritative creeds, liberty of prophesying and the right of the local church to control its own ministry?

Spurgeon himself declared that the question had been narrowed down to the truth or untruth of his statements, but even that was a small matter in comparison with the sacred principles involved. Some of Spurgeon's students felt it their duty to tell their chief that they were remaining in the Union, and that while the protest was right, the method of their procedure should be to contend for the faith within the Union. To Mr. Spurgeon's honour be it said, though he did not share these views he was affectionate and sympathetic to those who advanced them, and did not desire that they should withdraw from the Pastors' College Conference.

Spurgeon's men, with few exceptions, are in the Union. They are Evangelical and whole-hearted in their devotion to the great truths of the New Testament. The denomination is to-day more Evangelical in spirit than at any period of its history. When Spurgeon died, leaders of the Baptist Union without exception were loud in their praise of the man. The resolution passed by the Union was among the most eloquent tributes to the memory of the greatest Baptist the English pulpit has known. In the secretary's room there is a fine portrait of Mr. Spurgeon, and at the entrance to the Church House there is the finest statue of Spurgeon we possess.

We may hope that the healing ministry of the Spirit of God has settled the controversy so far as it ever will be settled, and that in loyalty and fidelity to the truth of God, Baptists without adjectives may come together, as the great majority of them do, in one organisation, recognising each other's gifts and rights.

THE DAWN

THE results of the controversy were unspeakably trying to Spurgeon. He counted on far larger support than he received ; he was humiliated and could not get away from the idea that he had been betrayed.

In the spring of 1891 an epidemic of influenza was ravaging London. Spurgeon went about his work defying his own physical weakness. He entered into the engagements of the May meetings with ardour, preaching some of his finest sermons, but the price had to be paid. He had been driven to the conclusion that he should have another colleague in the pastorate of the Tabernacle, who could, if occasion arose, undertake the pulpit work. The Rev. William Stott, whose work at St. John's Wood was well known, had accepted the invitation and was with him in the pulpit. Spurgeon said it was so that he might feel that if he did collapse just before a service or even in a service, he would have someone there to carry on. It was not long before Mr. Stott was carrying on.

On May 17 Mr. Spurgeon could not preach. He began the service and read part of the chapter, then he turned to Mr. Stott and said, " Finish the reading." It was a dramatic moment. The vast congregation felt the thrill of something momentous. Spurgeon seemed to stagger. Two of the deacons assisted him up the stairs to his room. In a moment or two one of them returned and announced that Mr. Spurgeon had an attack of giddiness and would be unable to continue the service. Mr. Stott offered prayer and asked for the sympathy of the people.

Some confusion has arisen over the date of Spurgeon's last sermon in the Tabernacle. It was not on May 17.

Later he was permitted to speak on the morning of June 7. His text was 1 Samuel, xxx. 21-25, and the sermon was published as No. 2,208 in the regular weekly series, under the title "The Statute of David for the sharing of the spoil." That was his last utterance on the platform which for more than thirty years had been his pulpit throne. It is estimated that at least twenty million people had attended his services during that period.

His last words were spoken in the usual hush of almost awe-inspiring attention. Very quietly he said, "If you wear the livery of Christ, you will find Him so meek and lowly of heart that you will find rest unto your souls. He is the most magnanimous of captains. There never was His like among the choicest of princes. He is always to be found in the thickest part of the battle. When the wind blows cold He always takes the bleak side of the hill. The heaviest end of the cross lies on His shoulders. If He bids us carry a burden, He carries it also. If there is anything that is gracious, generous, kind and tender, yea, lavish and superabundant in love, you always find it is Him. His service is life, peace, joy. Oh, that you would enter on it at once ! God help you to enlist under the banner of Jesus Christ !"

On the following Friday Mr. Spurgeon was stricken down ; the symptoms were alarming. All day prayer meetings were held. Letters and telegrams came from all over the country. The Chief Rabbi, Mr. Gladstone, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the highest personages in the land were among the inquirers. In September he was able to be moved to Eastbourne, and returned in October, jubilant at the prospect of renewing his work, but it was not to be. It was found necessary to remove the invalid to the South of France. Menton had worked wonders for him before, and he

dreamed of the time when he would come back to his beloved place in the Tabernacle. He was very happy in the thought that his wife would be his companion. Mrs. Spurgeon had been a prisoner of pain, and for many years her husband went without her in search of health ; but this time the beloved "Susie" was so restored that she was able to arrange to be at his side.

The fateful journey began on October 26. The little company of five was made up of Mrs. Spurgeon, so restored to health that she was able to undertake the journey and to attend to her husband's needs ; Dr. J. A. and Mrs. Spurgeon, Mr. Harrauld and Mr. Allison. There was nothing eventful on the road : weariness and pain, but little fatigue, and as the end neared, hope revived. The passing of the stations recalled memories of other days and pilgrimages in search of strength. Health had then been found, why should not the experience be repeated ?

Spurgeon loved the fair land of France only less than he loved England. French history gave him many illustrations and much pleasure. Napoleon was among the great men whom he regarded as men of destiny. Carlyle's *French Revolution* was a favourite work which he had read several times and seemed never tired of quoting.

At Menton, from the unpretentious hotel which had become his home, there was a view of loveliness that made discontent a sin against Nature. By the window he would sit in eloquent stillness that made the noise of London seem mere foolishness, and controversies as senseless chatter. There he had often found the balm of healing and the enrichment of soul by which he was able to work in comfort. Even when there was no release from pain there was often the forgetfulness of the body in the sheer joy of the beauty of the scenery.

Perfect hours are few in any lifetime, but Spurgeon

had a great share of the sunshine and enjoyed it to the full. He knew the shadows in the valley, but was far more familiar with the sunshine on the hills.

His condition varied almost daily. He himself had little doubt until the last that he would return to the Tabernacle and would continue his ministry for years to come. He thought the pruning of the vine was that it might bear richer fruit. His correspondence, dictated to his secretary, indicates the change in the barometer. Early in November he wrote : " The story of my cure has been very marvellous, and this last part of it is all of a piece with the rest. My brother, whose care has made the journey less formidable, when he returns will have a cheering tale to tell of me and my dear wife whose presence with me makes every single enjoyment into seven."

Later he says : " To go up a few steps, to take a short walk, to move a parcel and all such trifles become a difficulty, so that Solomon's words are true : ' The grasshopper is a burden.' I think I could preach, but when I have seen a friend for five minutes I begin to feel that I have done as much speaking as I can well manage."

A week later there was nothing striking to report. " I feel I shall get better," he adds, " but one thing is forced upon my mind, that I am weak as water and that building up is slower work than pulling down."

About this time he wrote to his friend, Mr. Holden Pike, asking for an article on the flower girls of London, particularly in reference to the Flower Girls' Mission, of which Mr. J. A. Groom had been superintendent for nearly thirty years and in which Lord Shaftesbury had taken a keen interest.

In December he wrote to his beloved family at the Orphanage : " Dear boys and girls, I send you all my love so far as the postman can carry it at 2½d. for half



BRONZE STATUE AT THE BAPTIST CHURCH HOUSE, LONDON

an ounce. I wish you a real glorious Christmas ; I might have said ' a jolly Christmas ' if we had all been boys, but as some of us are girls I will be proper and say ' a merry Christmas.' Enjoy yourselves and be grateful to the kind friends who will find money to keep the Stockwell Orphanage supplied. Bless their loving hearts, they never let you want for anything. May they have pleasure in seeing you all grow up to be good men and women. . . . I should like you to have a fine day, such a day as we have here, but if not, you will be warm and bright indoors. Three cheers for those who give us the good things for this festival. I want you for a moment in the day to be still and to spend the time in thanking our Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ for great goodness shown to you and to me, and then to pray that I may get quite well." Later he wrote to the Church.

The first sermon published in 1892 was entitled " Gratitude for deliverance from the grave," Psalm 118, v. 17-18. The text was inscribed by Luther on his study wall, and is also on the memorial stone of Jubilee House at the back of the Tabernacle.

Hopes and fears fought for the victory. There were many who were quite sure that Spurgeon's life would be spared ; they could not conceive that God would allow His servant to pass away at a time when he seemed so desperately needed. The controversy, which had been the darkest cloud in the dark days, had quieted down. There was a truce of God, but the forces were still armed for battle. Away in the quiet the sufferer tried to forget, and did his best to assist Nature's healing ministry by cultivating a tranquil mind.

A year before Spurgeon had preached the opening sermon of the new Presbyterian Church at Menton. He was anxious to attend service there again, but it was not to be. Even then when he had stood up in the

pulpit it was recognised that the old enemy which he said was being "driven out by medicine, starved by oatmeal and nothing else for lunches and dinners," had not been conquered. During the sermon he trembled with nervousness and the bell had gone out of his voice ; it never returned.

Loving care did all that was possible during the next three months, and messages of inquiry and comfort came from all over the world. It was a great joy to Spurgeon that his wife was with him to see the glories of the land of sunshine and flowers. The rooms in the Hôtel Beau Rivage, which had been reserved for his party year by year, were made more cheerful, and after a while, as in former years, little companies gathered for morning worship. Sometimes Spurgeon himself was able to read the Scripture or to offer prayer, but the effort was too much. He endeavoured to continue his Exposition of the Gospel according to St. Matthew and some articles for the *Sword and Trowel*. He and his friends were not infrequently deceived by an apparent appearance of health while the deadly disease was eating its ways in deeper and deeper. The sunshine on the front was a great delight ; he almost lived in the open air. His favourite route was round the Boulevard Victoria and along the breakwater ; in other years it was his promenade ; he always admired the view of the old town across the harbour.

January 10 and 17 were memorable days. He decided to hold a little service for his friends. He called it "breaking the long silence." The company came to his sitting-room. He was persuaded not to attempt a new address, but to read them part of his Exposition of Matthew, which he did. Prebendary Wilson Carle in a letter to me wrote : "When he was dying at the East Bay, Menton, my wife and I went to his family prayers which he took though in bed. He prayed for

all wandering sheep, concluding, 'Thou, Lord, seest the various labels upon them and rightly regardest them by the mark of the Cross in their hearts. They are all Thy one fold.' "

It was a great joy to Spurgeon that at these little services in his private room representatives of all the denominations were welcomed. Years before it had been his custom to hold a Communion service which was open to any who desired to unite. In the early days he made his position clear. "Dear to our hearts," he said, "is that great article of the Apostles' Creed : 'I believe in the communion of saints.' I believe not in the communion of Episcopalians alone ; I do not believe in the communion of Baptists only ; I dare not sit with them exclusively ; I think I should be almost strict Communionist enough not to sit with them at all, because I should say : 'This is not the communion of saints, it is the communion of Baptists.' Whosoever loves the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth, hath a hearty welcome, and is not only permitted but invited to commune with the Church of Christ."

At the service on January 17, before offering the final prayer in the last service in which he took part on earth, he announced that they would sing one of his favourite hymns. It was the well-known hymn, "The sands of time are sinking." Did he attempt to sing the last verse :

"I've wrestled on towards heaven
'Gainst storm and wind and tide.
Now like a weary traveller
That leaneth on his guide,
Amid the shades of evening
While sinks life's lingering sand
I hail the glory dawning
From Immanuel's land." ?

Thank-offering Day at the Tabernacle was held on

Tuesday. A telegram was received from the Pastor. "Self and wife one hundred pounds hearty thank-offering toward Tabernacle general expenses. Love to all friends." That was his last gift, indeed his last message. Soon after he became unconscious and remained so until the following Sunday, and then just after eleven at night he left those who had accompanied him to the riverside and passed through the deep waters alone except for the One Who never forsakes those who put their trust in Him.

The little company could hardly realise that the spirit of "Mr. Valiant for Truth" had really departed, but on the other side the sound of the trumpets were heard. Messages of sympathy came in shoals. The most exalted persons in the land were among the first to send words of consolation. The casket containing all that was mortal bore the inscription: "In ever loving memory of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, born at Kelvedon, June 19, 1834, fell asleep in Jesus at Menton, January 31, 1892. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."

Spurgeon had chosen the place for his burial. For years he was very definite that it should be in the village churchyard of Wotton in Surrey; then he decided that it should be in the grounds of the Stockwell Orphanage. "Many would come to look at the grave and then would help the orphans in whom he took so deep an interest." That was made impossible by the South London Electric Railway. Then he determined upon Norwood Cemetery, where hundreds of his friends and church members were laid to rest.

A little while before his home-going he had whispered to his secretary, "Remember, a plain stone. C. H. S. and no more; no fuss." Undoubtedly he had in mind the plain slab over John Calvin's grave at Geneva with just the two letters, "J. C."

Spurgeon's tomb is marked by the modest memorial erected by the Church officers, but those who seek for Spurgeon's monument will not find it at Norwood, it is living in the hearts of thousands of men and women scattered over the world, who owe to him the best and the dearest in their lives. It is found in the Tabernacle Church. During his long pastorate no less than 14,691 persons were received into fellowship. At the time of his death the roll-call contained 5,311 names, and there were 22 mission stations, 27 Sunday and Ragged Schools with 312 teachers, 8,034 scholars, and in the various halls used for public services accommodation for nearly 4,000 worshippers.

It was fitting that the tired warrior should close his eyes amid the scenes he loved so well. Could he have chosen he would have died upon the field.

Though by no means a controversialist he was a valiant fighter. He never whined nor cried that he might be spared. He stood foot to foot and took the consequences. He certainly "marched breast forward, never doubting clouds would break," but there comes a time when the body is too weak for the battlefield, and the brain too tired, and then—He giveth His beloved sleep, until the day break and the shadows flee away.

There have been many warriors who have fought the good fight, have finished their course and have kept the faith; they have each received the "Well done, good and faithful servant," but the Christian Church has had only one Spurgeon. He was God's greatest gift to the modern Church. His life is a trumpet call to the timid and the fearful. Though dead, he still proclaims the message that lives and will live for evermore.

SPURGEON THE MYSTIC

IT is generally supposed that the mystic and the man of action stand in contrast, but a wiser view reveals that the dreamers are the doers. The real mystics were not those who withdrew from the dusty road of life to spend their years in uninterrupted meditation of the unseen. Spurgeon was supremely a man of affairs ; he was a sturdy Protestant. " Dream stuff " had no place in his philosophy ; but what a dreamer of dreams he was.

Mysticism has suffered much at the hands of the theologians. Even Dr. Oman says, " It could only teach men to ignore and not to inherit the earth ; and it could only efface, not rescue the distressed moral personality." ¹

The Baptist mystics of Münster left a thick cloud of prejudice over all mysticism. Too often mysticism has been identified with a wild symbolism which attempts to discover allegories of spiritual things in all earthly events. To the mystic " it may be truly said the whole universe bursts forth into a flame and blossoming as a parable, symbol and sacrament." The old mystics would have maintained that all life may be regarded as analogical, dimly hinting at the form of the hidden reality.

Christian mystics are those who believe in spiritual mysteries and claim that it is possible to enter into a fellowship with God, which lifts the soul into another region of experience. A mystery is necessarily something that cannot be fully understood, but not necessarily something that cannot be shared and enjoyed. The secret hidden from the wise and prudent may be

¹ *The Church and the Divine Order*, p. 172.

revealed unto babes. They may apprehend it, though they could never explain it. Benjamin Jowett in his introduction to Plato's *Phaedrus* says : " By mysticism we mean not the extravagance of an erring fancy, but the concentration of reason in feeling, enthusiastic love of the good, the true, the one ; the sense of the infinity of knowledge and of the marvel of the human faculties."

Christian mysticism stands for the initiation into fuller and deeper knowledge of Divine things, by which the spirit is led toward ultimate union with God. It represents such a union between Christ and the soul, that nothing can come between. Some mystics have no evangelical sympathies ; others are natural mystics, represented by Emerson, to whom religion seems to involve some form of Pantheism.

Spurgeon not infrequently described what the mystics would have called " the experience of the dark night of the soul." In the first volume of *The New Park Street Pulpit* there is an amazing sermon on " The Desire of the Soul in Spiritual Darkness." It was preached on the morning of June 24, 1855, the text being : " With my soul have I desired Thee in the night." ¹ Describing the darkness that may fall upon the believer, the preacher says :

" At certain periods clouds and darkness cover the sun, and he (the believer) beholds no clear shining of the daylight, but walks in darkness. Now there are many who have rejoiced in the presence of God for a season ; they have basked in the sunshine God has been pleased to give them in the earlier stages of their Christian career ; they have walked along the ' green pastures,' by the side of the ' still waters,' and suddenly—in a month or two—they find that glorious sky is clouded ; instead of ' green pastures,' they have to

¹ Isaiah xxvi. 9.

tread the sandy desert ; in the place of ' still waters ' they find streams brackish to their taste and bitter to their spirits, and they say, ' Surely, if I were a child of God this would not happen.' Oh ! say not so, thou who art walking in darkness. The best of God's saints have their nights ; the dearest of His children have to walk through a weary wilderness. There is not a Christian who has enjoyed perpetual happiness ; there is no believer who can always sing a song of joy. It is not every lark that can always carol. It is not every star that can always be seen. And not every Christian is always happy. Perhaps the King of Saints gave you a season of great joy at first because you were a raw recruit, and he would not put you into the roughest part of the battle when you had first enlisted. You were a tender plant, and he nursed you in the hot-house till you could stand the severe weather. You were a young child, and therefore he wrapped you in furs and clothed you in the softest mantle. But now you have become strong and the case is different. Capuan holidays do not suit Roman soldiers ; and they would not agree with Christians. We need clouds and darkness to exercise our faith ; to cut off self-dependence, and make us put more faith in Christ, and less in evidence, less in experience, less in frames and feelings."

Very early in his Christian experience Mr. Spurgeon described the utter darkness of soul which settled upon him, leading him to doubt everything and almost to believe that he was sunken in the abyss of unbelief.

Pilgrims who can ascend unto the hill of the Lord can also descend into the valley of the shadow. Spurgeon knew the heights and the depths ; heights so exalted that they were in the uninterrupted sunshine of the Divine Presence ; and depths so deep that they were unfathomable and in them was no light at all.

He understood the experience of unsparing self-abandonment to God. "It was not of works lest any man should boast." "Therefore bear in mind, beloved, no works of ours, no merit of ours, have any value in the eyes of God—for all is of grace, and all the merit is that of the Lord Jesus, flowing not from us to God but from God to us.

"By this way and by this alone have all the saints drawn near to God. How much might I not say of the Cross of Christ, and yet never could any man say enough ; for it is far beyond the mind of the high angels to understand how the Eternal God in His great love became a man and suffered the deepest shame and the bitterest sorrow for us."

So spake Master John Tauler, the friend of God, preaching in Strasbourg in 1340. The preacher might have been Spurgeon. Many of his passages contain not only the same faith but almost the same phrasing.

The mystic sense blossoms as the rose in the elect—those who pay the price—but it is not the monopoly of the chosen few, it is far more common than is generally recognised. Is it not just the spirit attuned to the infinite, the opening of the eyes to the invisible ? There are two ways of hearing and seeing : one is to comprehend, which is to see all round a thing and to embrace it ; the other is to apprehend, which is to see it in part and to take hold of it. Coventry Patmore says : "The thing may be really taken hold of which is much too big for embracing."

The faculty of direct vision may be latent in all, though for one seer who has the accomplishments and opportunities whereby his faculty can be turned to public account, there are hundreds and thousands who possess and exercise in private their extraordinary perceptive powers. "To whom has it not happened at one time or other to witness the instantaneous

shattering of some splendid edifice of reasoning and memory by the brief Socratic interrogation of some ignoramus who could see ? ”¹

The great mystics did not spend their time simply nursing the sickness of the soul. We find them undertaking missionary journeys under conditions which might well appal perfectly healthy persons. We find them organising and reforming religious orders, managing large hospitals, administering public funds, leading great movements and doing all these things with practical acumen and success. There is nothing vague and dreamy, nothing occult and creepy about them. Their peculiarity does not consist in the want of anything that goes to make up full humanity, but in something more which, while it may baffle investigation and to that extent be termed abnormal, adds to and enhances every normal faculty and channel of activity.

St. Paul says : “ I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.” He tells of a man, perhaps himself, who was caught up to the third heaven, and heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter. The great commission calling to the vocation was received in moments of vision. The voice spake to Moses at the burning bush. The Hebrew prophets dreamed strange dreams. Our Lord Himself heard the voice at His baptism, and all through the ages there have been those who have heard the voice, “ Whom shall I send and who will go for us ? ”

From the earliest days Spurgeon knew the delights of intimate communion with his Lord. In a sermon full of tender beauty, he describes Christ manifesting Himself to His people. He says : “ I know what some would say ; they would cry, ‘ Nonsense, we believe religion is a thing very good, to keep people in order,

¹ *Religio Poeta*, p. 292.

but as to these manifestations and these ecstasies, we do not believe in them.' Very well, beloved, I have proved the truth of what the text says. He does not manifest Himself unto the world. You have proved yourselves that you are of the world because you have not any manifestations.

"If I were to go much further I should be accused of fanaticism, and so it may be ; but yet I will believe and must believe that there are seasons when the Christian lives next door to heaven. If I had not gone within an inch of the pearly gates I am not here ; if I have not sometimes sniffed the incense from the censers of the glorified and heard the music of their harps, I think I am not a living man. There have been seasons of ecstatic joy, when I have climbed the highest mountains, and I have caught some sweet whisper from the throne. Have you had such manifestations ? I will not condemn you if you have not : but I believe most Christians have them, and if they are much in duty and much in suffering they will have them. It is not given to all to have that portion, but to some it is, and such men know what religion means.

"I was reading a short time ago of a Mr. Tennant. He was about to preach one evening, and thought he would take a walk. As he was walking in a wood he felt so overpoweringly the presence of Christ, and such a manifestation of Him, that he knelt down, and they could not discover him at the hour when he was to have preached. He continued there for hours, insensible as to whether he was in the body or out of the body ; and when they waked him he looked like a man who had been with Jesus, and whose face shone. He never should forget, he said, to his dying day, that season of communion, when positively, though he could not see Christ, Christ was there, holding fellowship with him, heart against heart, in the sweetest

manner. A wondrous display it must have been. You must know something of it, if not much ; otherwise you have not gone far on your spiritual course. God teach you more, and lead you deeper ! ”

Spurgeon never lost his mysticism. While in labours more abundant and in travellings more frequent, he delighted in the contemplation of the vision beautiful. Whenever he spoke of his Saviour he lingered with the longing of love to see more that he might tell more. His one passion was Christ. He revelled in spiritualising Solomon's Song. In a sermon on “ Heavenly Love-Sickness ” he describes the longing of the soul to come closer and closer still to the Lord.

“ You know how sweet it was in the past,” he exclaims. “ Beloved, what times we have had, some of us. Oh, whether in the body or out of the body we cannot tell—God knoweth. What mountings ! Talk ye of eagles' wings—they are earthly pinions, and may not be compared with the wings with which He carried us up from earth. Speak of mounting beyond clouds and stars !—they were left far, far behind. We entered into the unseen, beheld the invisible, lived in the immortal, drank in the ineffable, and were blessed with the fullness of God in Christ Jesus, being made to sit together in heavenly places in Him. Well, all this is to come again, ‘ I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice.’ ‘ A little while, and ye shall not see me : and again, a little while, and ye shall see me.’ ‘ In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment : but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer.’ Think of this. Why, we have comfort even in this sickness of love. Our heart, though sick, is still whole, while we are panting and pining after the Lord Jesus.”

The true motive of the mystic is the love which desires not the benevolence of God but God Himself,

which cannot rest until it rests in the Lord. It is not indifferent to knowledge or worldly wisdom, but broods over what it has learnt in the sanctuary, in the moments of communion. It does not turn aside from the claims of the home or the nation ; it rejoices that all love of human kind has its source in the love that passeth knowledge. It cries with one of old : " Let me love or not live." It is not sentimental pietism nor the mere gust of emotion.

Master Eckhart spoke for all the mystics when he said : " It is better to feed the hungry than to see even such visions as St. Paul saw." The true mystic, according to the deep saying of Ewald, never withdraws himself wilfully from the business of life, not even from the smallest business.

An old preacher playfully described Mr. Spurgeon in the early days as " the sauciest young dog that ever barked in a pulpit." There is no doubt that Spurgeon used great plainness of speech. In a Christmas sermon 1858, on the text, " Go home to thy friends and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee and had compassion on thee." ¹ he rebuked those who seek the monastery and cloistered cell.

" Friend," he cried, " if thou art what thou dost profess to be, a true servant of the living God, and not a hypocrite, as I guess thou art, if thou art a true believer in Christ and would show forth what He has done for thee, upset that pitcher, eat the last piece of thy bread, leave this dreary cave, wash thy face, untie thy hempen girdle, and if thou would show thy gratitude, go home to thy friends and tell them what great things the Lord hath done for thee."

Spurgeon's mysticism did not lead him away from the solid earth. He never lost the wonder and romance of communion with Christ, but he was singularly free

¹ Mark v. 19.

from that moodiness of mind which led to the abnegation of association with the world.

Mr. A. C. Benson, in an essay on religion, says : " There is a motto which I should like to see written over the door of every place of worship, both as an invitation and a warning. ' Thou shalt make me to understand wisdom secretly.' It is an invitation to those who enter to come and participate in a great and holy mystery, and it is a warning to those who believe that in the formalities of religion alone is the secret of religion to be found."

While in spirit he delighted to linger at the foot of the Cross, he did not leave any duty undone ; he was not blind to the needs of the ignorant and the poor ; he was not deaf to the cry of the fatherless children. In truth the soul becomes more sensitive as it learns to wait upon the Lord.

One of the great needs of the Church is the sensitised conscience that makes it impossible for those who have seen the vision to neglect the vocation. God calls His children that they may be Christ-like ; they are saved for service, not for themselves alone. There is a mysticism which directly ministers to vanity of spirit, and creates indifference to the needs of the world. That was not the mysticism of C. H. Spurgeon. The more sensitive his spirit became to the indwelling Christ, the more concerned it became over the conditions of the people. Upon Margaret MacDonald's Memorial in Lincoln's Inn Fields there is a sentence : " She gave herself no rest from doing good." Spurgeon knew the secret of rest in the Divine love ; it was to him the luxury of life ; it is equally true that he did with all his might whatever his hands found to do. And how much he found to do will never be known in this world.

One of Spurgeon's outstanding characteristics was his absolute confidence in God. Donald Hankey used

to say that true religion was staking your soul upon God. Spurgeon made the great adventure, and as a result he was very sure. He believed without qualification that the Lord Jesus Christ not only saved from the penalty and power of sin, but that He was the ever-present Friend, keeping the promise He made to the disciples that He would be with them always, even unto the end of the age.

The glad sense of certainty was never quite absent, even in the darkest hours of his suffering and conflict. He knew that he was not alone. It was not presumption ; it did not minister to personal vanity ; it gave strength and courage. There was solemn delight in the consciousness that he walked with the Lord in the light of His Word. Spurgeon would appeal without hesitation to the very words of Scripture, taking the promises at their face value. Whatever views may be held concerning inspiration, it will be admitted that it is no small gain to the man who faces ridicule or is received with raptures of applause, to realise that he is not only doing the will of his Lord, but that his Lord is really present with him.

The marble statue of Phillips Brooks outside Trinity Temple, Boston, where he ministered, shows Christ standing at the preacher's side, whispering a message in his ear. It is still true that God has some to whom He comes so close that closer He could not be. Is He not " closer than breathing, nearer than hands and feet " ? Are not the promises of Scripture very plain and emphatic concerning the presence of the Master to those who trust Him ? Is it not still a fact of experience that those who trust Him wholly find Him wholly true ?

Spurgeon insisted that it was within the reach of any man to know Christ for himself and to enjoy the unspeakable preciousness of the Presence.

In an age of uncertainty when we are asking where we are drifting : in matters of religion, what do we believe ?—do we believe anything or nothing ?—when no creed seems too silly for the cultured to accept, no message from the unseen world too trivial and flippant to find credence—it is good to return to the words of a great apostle of common sense, who had no hesitation in declaring : “ I know Whom I have believed and am persuaded ”—intellectually convinced—“ that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.”

It is said that religion is in a state of flux, that we are in the birth-pangs of a new religion, perhaps a new paganism. It is difficult for the average man to get out of the mood of bewilderment. Has the old faith lost its force and power ? What has happened to make it so difficult to believe ? It is not surprising that people lose their interest in the Churches when religion becomes a matter of speculation and guesswork.

The message that Spurgeon declared was born in his own experience. It comes across the years, welcome as a breath of ozone from the sea. Our problems are the old problems seen in a new light, from a fresh point of view. It may be that we are in a world from which the vastness of the universe is dimly glimpsed, that we have means of communication literally annihilating distance, and that the wonders of physical science and mechanical invention are altogether dazzling and bewildering. The one thing that spoils it all is that we have lost the assurance that Spurgeon possessed. Like William Watson, we do not know whether on the earth we are prisoners of fate or children at home in the Father's House. But the eternal realities remain, the things that are shaken are temporal, the things that abide are eternal.

The air is full of new ideas. No subject, however

sacred and age-honoured, is free from the inroads of inquiry and of attack. The modern mind hates mystery and yet is still engulfed in the mysterious. Bishop Gore says : " Even half the attendants of our churches are enfeebled in spiritual life. They entertain a suspicion that what they hear from the pulpit is not true."

A passage in *Pilgrim's Progress* represents Interpreter saying to Christian, " Hast thou considered all these things ? " And Christian answers, " Yes, and they put me in fear and hope."

Fear will quench the hope unless there is the assurance that the foundations of the hope are sure and unmovable. Spurgeon would have said, " Build on Christ and you will find your house unshaken."

The preacher contended that Christ was not simply an ideally beautiful character, the influence of which made men good. He proclaimed Christ the Son of God, the historical and spiritual reality, the abiding Presence made known to all who tread the mystic path. All that Christ did in the days of His flesh He is doing still in our midst. Spurgeon did not belittle the ideal, but he knew that men would not continue to worship and to love any character that was not more than a dream of the imagination.

The hunger for communion with Reality that characterises all true mystics, Spurgeon found satisfied by the Bread of Life, the Eternal Christ. He literally revelled in telling the message of salvation from sin and in seeing the way Christ worked through the preaching of the Gospel. There was the evidence just as surely as that which Wesley saw working in the rough colliers of Kingswood, who forsook their drunken ways and became so changed that they had difficulty in recognising themselves ; just as surely as Hugh Redwood and Harold Begbie saw it working when " God in the

Slums" was ever mending the human "Broken Earthenware." The life changers have been known by different names, but they all bear testimony to the power by which the change is wrought.

William Blake described "the bright preacher of life" who was Spurgeon's daily companion, though Spurgeon would not allow himself to speak of the Master whom he knew so well in any vague or dreamy phrases; he was as definite, as dogmatic as St. Paul.

Sometimes Spurgeon loved to browse in the Epistle to the Romans; therein was food for the soul. He lingered over the declarations concerning those for whom "there is therefore now no condemnation." He frequently quoted the great words with which the eighth chapter concludes: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Canon C. E. Raven says: "The grandeur of the Epistle to the Romans lies not in its formulæ, which like all metaphors are often inadequate, but in its passionate testimony to the reality of Jesus and to the power of His love, given and returned, to lift us out of obsession with ourselves into fellowship with Him and with one another."¹

The mystic bond unites all true disciples. They know Him and they know each other. In a passage of

¹ *Jesus and the Gospel of Love*, p. 318.

homely beauty Spurgeon says : “ Here is the power to promote the union of the people of God. There is a man there, he is almost a Puseyite. ‘ I do not like him,’ says one. Stop till I tell you something more about him, and you will. There is another man there, a Presbyterian—true blue ; he cannot bear Independency or anything but Presbytery—a covenant man. ‘ Well,’ says one, ‘ I like him a little better, but I do not suppose we shall get on very well.’ Stop ! I will tell you some more about him. There is another man down there ; he is a very strong Calvinist. ‘ Humph,’ says one, ‘ I shall not admire *him*.’ Stop, stop ! Now here are these three men ; let us hear what they say of each other. If they know nothing of each other except what I have stated, the first time they meet there will be a magnificent quarrel. There is yonder clergyman—he will have little fraternity whatever with the ultra-Evangelical ; while the Presbyterian will reject them both, for he abhors black prelacy.

“ But, my dear brethren, all three of you, we of this congregation will approve of you all, and you will approve of one another when I have stated your true character. That man yonder, whom I called almost a Puseyite, was George Herbert. How he loved the door-nails of the church ! I think he would scarce have had a spider killed that had once crept across the church aisles. He was a thorough churchman, to the very centre of the marrow of his bones, but what a Christian ! What a lover of his sweet Lord Jesus ! You know that hymn of his which I have so often quoted, and mean to quote a hundred times more : “ How sweetly doth ‘ My Master ’ sound,” and so forth. I hear a knock at the door. ‘ Who is that ? ’ ‘ Why, it is a very strong churchman.’ ‘ Do not show him in ; I am at prayer : I cannot pray with him.’ ‘ Oh, but it

is George Herbert !' ' Oh, let him in, let him in ! No man could I pray better with than Mr. Herbert. Walk in, Mr. Herbert ; we are right glad to see you ; you are our dear companion ; your hymns have made us glad.'

" But who was that second man, the Presbyterian, who would not have liked George Herbert at all ? Why, that was Samuel Rutherford. What a seraphic spirit ! What splendid metaphors he uses about his sweet Lord Jesus ! He has written all Solomon's Song over without knowing it. He felt and proved it to be divine. The Spirit in him re-dictated the song. Well now, I think we will introduce Mr. Rutherford and Mr. Herbert together, and I am persuaded when they begin to speak about their Master they will find each other next of kin ; and I feel sure that, by this time, Samuel Rutherford and George Herbert have found each other out in heaven, and are sitting side by side.

" Well, but then we mentioned another ; who was that high Calvinist ? He was the man who was called the leviathan of Antinomians. That he was a leviathan I will grant, but that he was an Antinomian is false. It was Dr. Hawker. Now I am sure George Herbert would not have liked Dr. Hawker, and I am certain that Dr. Hawker would not have liked George Herbert, and I do not suppose that Samuel Rutherford would have had anything to do with either of them. ' No, no,' he would say, ' your black prelacy I hate.' But look at Hawker, there is a sweet spirit ; he cannot take up his pen but he dips it in Christ, and begins to write about his Lord at once. ' Precious Immanuel—precious Jesus.' Those words in his morning and evening portions are repeated again and again, and again. I recollect hearing of Mr. Rowland Hill, that he said to a young man who was at tea with him one night

when he was about to go : ‘ Where are you going to ? ’ ‘ Oh ! ’ said he, ‘ I am going to hear Dr. Hawker, at St. George’s in the Borough. ’ ‘ Oh, go and hear him, ’ he said ; ‘ he is a right good man, worth hearing. But there is this difference between him and me ; my preaching is something like a pudding, with here and there a plum ; but Dr. Hawker’s is all plum. ’ And that was very near the mark, because Dr. Hawker was all Christ. He was constantly preaching of his Master ; and even if he gave an invitation to a sinner, it was generally put in this way :—‘ What sayest thou ? Wilt thou go with *this man*, and be married and espoused unto *him* ? ’ It was the preaching of a personal Christ that made his ministry so full of marrow and fatness.

“ My dear friends, let a man stand up and exalt Christ, and we are all agreed. I see before me this afternoon members of all Christian denominations ; but if Christ Jesus is not the topic that suits you, why then I think we may question your Christianity. The more Christ is preached, the more will the Church prove, and exhibit, and assert, and maintain her unity ; but the less Christ is preached, and the more of Paul, and Apollos, and Cephas, the more of strife and division, and the less of true Christian fellowship.”

Spurgeon was more catholic than the Roman Catholic Church itself ; he knew there was a unity of substance in Christian experience, though it might be expressed in a variety of systems. The Friend had many friends who were called by different names, just as the Good Shepherd had other sheep not of this fold. In theology Christians disagree, but in spiritual fellowship they are wonderfully alike. Sturdy Protestants have no difficulty in singing hymns composed by the early Catholic Fathers. The fact that the author of “ Lead, kindly light ” entered the Church of Rome,

does not interfere with the devotion with which the lines are sung.

The friends of the Friend journey by different ecclesiastical paths, but they tread the same mystic road. Spurgeon loved to think that all who named the Name of Christ and found in Him their Master, would come to the same goal : the Father's House at last.

Spiritual experience is the truest unifying power ; it enables us to see with the eyes of love. There are many dialects spoken by citizens of the same country. Inhabitants of the North have some difficulty in understanding those of the South, just as George Fox, General Booth, Spurgeon and the Archbishop of Canterbury might have been puzzled by each other's speech except when they prayed or talked about Christ ; then their language was the same.

William Law wrote words which Wesley in his latter years adopted as his own. " Perhaps what the best heathens call reason, and Solomon wisdom ; St. Paul, grace in general ; St. John, righteousness or love ; Fenelon, virtue ; may be only different expressions for one and the same blessing, the light of Christ shining in different degrees under different dispensations. Why then so many words and so little charity exercised among Christians about the particular term of a blessing experienced more or less by all righteous men ? " ¹

Those who find Christ, however far apart, are one in the deepest and the truest sense. They have something in common which is infinitely greater than all they may possess separately. " Jesus Christ seemed to be by my side continually, and, as the vision was not imaginary I saw no form ; but I had a most distinct feeling that He was always on my right hand, a witness of all I did, and never at any time, if I was but slightly

¹ *Life of Wesley*, by R. Southey, Vol. I., p. 160.

recollected, could I be ignorant of His Presence." Thus wrote Santa Teresa and bore testimony to the experience that makes all disciples one. There is a unity of the spirit very deep and real.

The services Spurgeon rendered to his age were magnificent and many-sided, yet there can be no doubt that much of his work was temporary, passing with the circumstances which called it forth. Some of it is controversial, concerning subjects which leave the modern mind puzzled but not interested. There was much more that possesses value for all time, because it dealt with the timeless things of God in man. The passing must not be allowed to obscure the abiding. His message rings true across the years. Perhaps his most important contribution will turn out to be the spiritual enrichment of the life of the time and all time, found in the eternal truth of the Divine Presence. His evidence here is the message of all the mystics who have known the Christ.

Is not this a message of hope for the present time? When religious leadership is not quite sure which way should be taken, when there are many pilgrims honestly confessing that they walk alone without inner light or guidance, having no consciousness of any unseen Friend by their side, it is no small gain to recapture the clarion tones of that matchless voice, ringing with sincerity and assurance, concerning the deepest needs of the soul.

Now that sense of security in this life and in the life to come has been rudely shaken and the old sanctities have been put on one side, with all the authorities discounted, is it not good to listen again to the great apostle of experience who had found the way and had followed it, whose shrewd practical wisdom is embodied in substantial institutions which have stood the test of half a century, bearing his testimony to the reality

of fellowship with the unseen? Here is a witness who speaks that which he knows and tells of the things concerning which he is certain. Here is more than such stuff as dreams are made of. Here is the type of the modern saint, one who embodies the Gospel in a great message and works it out in a greater benediction.

For Spurgeon, Christ's Cross and Christ's presence were the delights of life. He ever loved to point to Christ crucified. He depended not upon what he described as "the temperature of our frames and feelings," but upon the immutable things, wherein it is impossible for God to lie. He had the witness within himself, and the proof of his gospel was in the works which it enabled him to accomplish.

THE VALUE OF SPURGEON TO-DAY

WHAT is it that makes C. H. Spurgeon of value in our time? May we not ask what it is that gives permanent value to any character? The unrecorded majority have no earthly immortality. The elect few must justify their claim to a place in history.

The personality that mirrors the life of the times is always of value. Some novelists secure permanence by their pictorial treatment of their age. Other characters enter the ranks of the immortals by the impression made upon the thought of their time and the changes wrought by them in their day and generation. There may be other reasons, but these two seem essential.

The religious conflicts of the last half of the Victorian era were fought out in Spurgeon's experience. The materialism of science and philosophy challenged all the articles of belief dear to the heart and reduced the conception of faith to an attempt to believe that which one knew was not true.

The Churches were at the cross-roads, uncertain about the way. The rigid Calvinism more hide-bound than Calvin's own teaching, was discounted; its doctrine of man destroyed any real sense of moral responsibility and left the creature the victim of fate. Spurgeon taught the sovereignty of God and built his theology upon the immovable foundation of the character of our Father in Heaven. Without hesitation he set aside hyper-Calvinism and during the greater part of his ministry was attacked by the Strict School.

The authority of tradition was wavering; he treated it lightly, brushing it aside as the servant-maid

dusts a cobweb from a corner. He was right in his attitude. Tradition may be a prop, never a foundation.

Spurgeon's doctrine of man's power to choose for himself laid him open to attack from the theologians who had no place for the doctrine of free-will, and also to the new advocates of scientific philosophy. He found pulpit gladiators facing him with all the weapons they could command. When they were quiet there were the giants of the Lecture Hall in all the strength and glory of scientific discovery, expounding a new-found solution of the old problems of the universe, and launching a new attack upon religion.

The new philosophers regarded Darwin as another Moses. Professor Tyndall, speaking at the British Association in 1874, prophesied that science would one day be able to explain all the happenings of life in terms of the "ultimately purely natural inevitable march of evolution from the atoms of the primæval nebula to the proceedings of the British Association for the advancement of science."

There was no room in their penny-in-the-slot philosophy for anything but cause and effect. The blush upon the rose, the muse on Milton's lips and the tragedy in Shakespeare's brain were all alike the product of physical causes. Materialism was binding again the laws of an unreasoning fate upon humanity. The new philosophic determinism brought a sense of irresponsibility and a general cheapening of life with which we have become increasingly familiar.

Mr. C. E. M. Joad, not a biassed witness, describes the effect of the new teaching in its bearing upon the value of life. "There was a time when our planet was not suitable for mankind, it was too hot and too moist. A time will come when it will cease to be suitable, it will be too cold and too dry. When the sun goes out—

a catastrophe that is bound to be—mankind will long ago have disappeared. The last inhabitants of the earth will be as destitute, as feeble and as dull-witted as the first ; they will have forgotten all the arts and all the sciences, they will huddle wretchedly in caves in the sides of the glaciers that will roll their transparent masses over the half-obliterated ruins of the cities where men now think and love, suffer and hope. The last desperate survivors of mankind will know nothing of our genius, nothing of our civilisation. One day the last man, callous alike to hate and love, will exhale to the unfriendly sky the last human breath, and the globe will go rolling on, bearing with it through the silent fields of space, the ashes of humanity, the pictures of Michael Angelo and the remnants of the Greek marbles frozen to its icy surface.”¹

It could not be said that the implications of evolution were encouraging, though they did much to destroy the old sense of fear of the future. Fear is not the highest motive, but beyond doubt it has been a very powerful incentive. It was the policeman of the Victorian period, and Darwin killed the policeman.

Spurgeon appealed to the moral conscience of man. His preaching developed in the direction of universality. His good news was not for a type or a class, but for all he proclaimed a Saviour able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by Him. He realised that the supreme need of the pulpit was that the preacher should be an advocate and a witness, he bore his testimony to the wondrous love of God in Jesus Christ.

May it not have been that in publishing this Gospel he rekindled hope in the hearts of thousands of people who were ready to give up in despair? Illogical as it may seem, Spurgeon's Calvinism was of such a character

¹ *Guide to Modern Thought*, p. 41.

that while he proclaimed the majesty of God he did not hesitate to ascribe freedom of will to man and to insist that any man might find in Jesus Christ deliverance from the power of sin. There was hope for the worst as well as for the best.

In a famous sermon he depicted Paul committing himself to Jesus as a captain commits his vessel to a pilot. "This is a new river to me," he said, "I have never traversed it. There are shoals and narrow channels. Pilot, thou knowest the way up to the city, take the helm and steer my vessel safely." So amidst the shoals and quicksands of this mortal life we know not our way, but we leave ourselves in our great Pilot's hands, the Pilot of the Lake of Galilee.

Spurgeon, in an age of doubt, taught men that the sky might be radiant with hope and the outlook more beautiful than the loveliest landscape. His firm faith in God gave him the strength of self-reliance. He knew that man by his natural powers could never rise above the level of his own nature, but man in union with Christ could ascend to the throne of the heavens.

One of the terrible legacies left by the Victorian pulpit was the suspicion of insincerity; not that preachers deliberately told untruths, but that they did not tell quite all that they believed or knew. The decline of the authority and influence of the pulpit could be traced to the growth of the suspicion that the preacher was a professional special pleader rather than a witness to the truth and nothing but the truth. It became somewhat common for men to profess a general belief in creeds which they repudiated in particular.

Stopford Brooke made a great contribution to the mid-Victorian pulpit by refusing, even at the solicitation of his dear friends, to retain his position in the Established Church when he had ceased to believe its creeds. He may have been entirely wrong in his judg-

ment, that is not our concern, but he was entirely right in his action in refusing to proclaim as truth that which he believed to be error.

Spurgeon's thorough-going sincerity commanded the respect of many who did not accept his views. There was never any doubt concerning his fidelity to the highest standard of honour and veracity. It is a curious mentality that can present part of a case as though it were the whole. The half truth may be told without any falsehood being in it, yet because it is only half it may leave an impression entirely false. Spurgeon was very indignant with the preachers who failed to declare "the whole counsel of God." In the dark days of the Down-Grade controversy one of his chief contentions was that preachers were withholding their own views and that to be consistent they should leave the pulpit and find a platform where they would have freedom.

By the fundamental character of his thinking he rendered good service. He sought to get at the core of true religion. He was not content to lead the people to the outer courts of the temple, he would guide them **into** the Holy of Holies that they might realise that they were all priests of God. It is impossible to read his later sermons without seeing something of the anxiety of the preacher to unveil the mysteries and to get behind the metaphors and allegories to the foundation truths. The thought forms of Spurgeon's day are not ours, they are mainly cast aside as obsolete, but much of the thought remains.

Spurgeon had no cheap and easy method of curing the ills of life or of solving its manifold problems. He was not content to be superficial. While others scraped the surface, he sought to penetrate to the depths.

Spurgeon's ministry closed when thoughtful men were beginning to realise that the pulpit was losing its

power. It may be that the age of great men was passing and that preachers, in common with politicians and writers, were not attaining the standard of their predecessors ; though we may not agree with the dictum of Mr. A. G. Gardiner that " we may say of England much more truly than Cassius said of Rome, that we have lost the breed of noble blood. We are travelling across the plains, there is no peak on the sky-line of our vision, there is no personality that stirs our emotions or excites our expectation. We have much cleverness, much energy, much talent, but we have no great men." ¹

Spurgeon was described as " the last of the Puritans." Some writers of the day repeated the phrase with satisfaction. They may have been sorry that Spurgeon had passed over, but they had no regrets at the passing of Puritanism. Their judgment may have been of less value than Mr. Gardiner's. Puritanism in the narrow sense, was simply a designation of seventeenth century dissent from the Church of England. Ironically it was the creed of the kill-joys, but it was something more than a point of view. Spurgeon was the embodiment of Puritanism as it is represented in theology, but also of that Puritanism which, as a way of life, stood for fidelity to the ideals of clean healthy-mindedness in all departments of conduct.

Spurgeon may be described as the first of a new Puritanism. He certainly was not the last of his type. Puritanism indicates the eternal struggle that finds expression in the life of all who have seen the ideal. It is not simply a question of opposition to this or that, or of prohibitions ; it is a spirit rather than a formula.

Spurgeon's Puritanism did not create artificial sins or add to the number of the commandments. There was a healthy-mindedness about it, finding expression

¹ *Prophets, Priests and Kings*, p. 163.

in joyous laughter. It was eminently a religion for men. One of the characteristics of the Tabernacle congregations was the large proportion of young fellows obviously enjoying their religion.

The religion that was "brief, bright and brotherly," knowing not the stern side of Truth, was not Spurgeon's faith. He insisted that violated justice and outraged love could not be laughed out of court; that life was a serious business and after all there was something of which wrongdoers might reasonably be afraid. That note in his preaching was an insistence upon reality.

He did not spare the enemies of the faith. He said strong stinging things, but who, knowing the man, could have imagined that he would say soft things? He is to be judged not so much by what he said as by what he might have said. He had command of a whole armoury of oratorical weapons.

Spurgeon did not oppose the inrush of modern thought with "the sullen resistance of innovation." To use Burke's famous phrase, "nor was his attitude the unalterable persistence in the wisdom of prejudice." The new Liberalism, in his judgment, was tampering with the moral sense of the people and sapping the spiritual life of the Church.

Spurgeon helps men to see themselves in right relations. There is always danger in the mood of detachment; in thought it is possible to withdraw from ourselves, to sit in judgment upon our emotions and deeds. It is the old trick of one part of the personality measuring up another. Papini describes what is now a commonplace in psychology.

"There is in every man a multitude of ancestors who come to life from time to time in the action of their descendant; then there is man as he is every day, changing with the different phases of age; then man as he would wish to be, and man as he believes he is,

and the same man as he appears to others, not to speak of the everlasting strife between the corporal ego with bestial desires and the spiritual ego with an angel's nostalgia." ¹

The way to harmonise personality, according to Spurgeon's method, is by the act of the will, to get into right relations. He sounded a clarion call to the confused and the overwrought that life was intended to be music, not discord. Man should be at peace with himself, no power, either human or Satanic, could destroy the tranquillity of the harmonised soul in union with Jesus Christ.

He taught that freedom was found in submission to the highest authority, that liberty was never licence ; anarchy meant chaos. All the reserves of the grace of God might be called to the aid of the one who sought to follow the vision. He was more than a conqueror who made the great surrender. " Christ has conquered for us," he said ; " we share His victory. When He began with us we were but a prey to divers lusts and evil powers ; Satan ruled us, the world rode roughshod over us ; we were evil."

How wonderfully he appealed to the moral sense ; how dramatically he represented the conflict of the opposing wills in the one personality ! His was a message of hope to the individual, never more needed than in our time. With a wealth of metaphor and illustration he set forth the conquest of Christ over the individual, so that the harmonised desires became the expression of the Divine decree.

In rich allegorical language Spenser in *The Færie Queen* sets forth the tragedy of conflict between Holiness and Truth. He pictures Holiness as the hero clad in armour, ready to go out upon adventure. At his side there is Truth, a gentle lady, beautiful to the eyes that

¹ *Labourers in the Vineyard*, p. 153.

love her. She is the fair Una. They ride together to the depths of the forest until they come to the little chapel hidden away among the trees, where they are received by an old priest who gives them counsel. It was there that Holiness looked upon Truth with uncertainty and wondered. He came to believe that she was faithless and rode away, leaving the fair Una alone in the sanctuary. That was the beginning of a long story. Truth was forsaken, her beauty was feared. Holiness found his way into the home of Spiritual Pride, and there lost his Purity. Afterwards he sought for Truth along many paths, but did not find her till the end of the story.

Spenser's representation of the old tragedy between Purity and Truth has been played out in many a chapter of Church History. It was not uncommon in the mid-Victorian period. Spurgeon insisted that truth and holiness were "two sides of one penny." He would accept no other explanation. Whatever happened he would not lower the ideal or agree to the fatal separation. There may be morality without religion, but there cannot be the Christian religion without morality.

A shrewd writer says: "In a new and positive morality in which men can believe, lies the hope for the world. Yet such a morality cannot come without a revival of religion. Religion and religion alone gives the driving force which impels men to change things, and, until a religious attitude to the world again becomes part of man's common heritage, all the apparent changes in morality of which different ages and countries are the witnesses will fail to disguise the fundamental fact that there is no morality to change."

Each period in the history of the world is a period of transition, but some periods show the movement of accelerated force. Changes are so rapid that they

become bewildering. It is not an easy task to think back into Spurgeon's surroundings, though it is only a span of fifty or sixty years to the days of his glory.

The modern terminology was not his ; the old meanings of religious phrases were lipworn and becoming obliterated before he ceased to use them. Old authorities have little authority left now, and the sanctions of fifty years ago have passed away. The modern man has been swept into a new world, so strange that it is romantic.

Spurgeon stood unflinching as a rock against the incoming tide. He served the new generation by keeping his feet upon solid foundations. The old sage of Chelsea may not have been wrong in declaring that the preaching man had lost his point, but Spurgeon kept close to the centre in spite of a theology that was somewhat the worse for wear. He kept in touch with reality, hating all that was artificial, supercilious or obscure, approaching the world and all its problems in the plain language of the people, not shrinking from the humiliation of being compelled to confess that to many of the new problems he knew no reply.

Life is always greater than logic. Spurgeon might have been praised for that "minute and skilful honesty" ascribed in delightful irony to Defoe. He played no tricks with his great public though it might have been so easy, with such matchless dramatic power, to have gained the consent of the mind by an appeal to the heart ; but that was not his method. When he appealed to the emotions he did so frankly and without apology. He made a frontal attack, but on the whole there was very little emotionalism in his preaching. He spoke to the whole man and there was always a solid foundation of clear thought.

The effervescence of the popular evangelist did not commend itself to Spurgeon. He paid his congrega-

tion the compliment of appealing to their intelligence. In the pulpit, as in private life, he displayed a shrewd mother wit, sweetened by tender sympathy and enlivened by irresistible humour, but he ever kept in close touch with honesty that begets confidence. He would have nothing of teaching with reservations ; he told the truth as he knew it, not infrequently it was unpleasant truth, but those who listened knew that he was sincere and without doubt meant what he said, as he said what he meant. Spurgeon was not blind to human weakness. He knew the infirmities of the flesh and the passions of manhood, but he knew something more, and that enabled him to stand firm, recognising that man was not a victim but a victor. One of his favourite quotations was : "Work out your own salvation in fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you to will and to do His own good pleasure."

The congregation at the Tabernacle knew that life was hard. While there were men and women of position and wealth, the great majority of the worshippers were engaged in a daily struggle. They were familiar with the sordid side of existence, living under conditions happily less common in our time. Not infrequently they found it difficult to pay for the daily bread for the family. The more fortunate belonged to the middle class : the skilled artisan, the clerk and the little shopkeeper type. For most of them life was drab and grey, almost their only pleasure being the Tabernacle service ; there they secured freedom for a little breathing space when they could look with unhurried eyes upon the King in His beauty.

It was no small achievement that through nearly all the years Spurgeon kept his vision unclouded and his optimism undaunted. Even at the end of the journey, when he described himself as "under the weather,"

he returned continually to the message of hope. It was a period in which the new teaching of the scientists was filtering through the public mind and reaching the readers of magazines and cheap journals. The note of pessimism gained in volume, and Spurgeon, a martyr to pain and depressed by controversy, would have been less than human if he had not felt the chill of the popular scepticism.

No preacher can succeed who emphasises negations. Spurgeon found his courage in his unshaken belief in the sovereignty of God and the Divine decree that in Christ the golden age would dawn. He was the knight errant of the Kingdom of God and led men while they were in the wilderness to believe in the Promised Land.

The significance of Spurgeon is in the supremacy of character. No Church is so rich in noble lives that it can afford to forget its inheritance in the saints. Spurgeon is a glorious illustration of his own teaching concerning individual worth. He was the dynamic of his own preaching. He did not simply talk religion, though he did that as perhaps no other English preacher ever did ; he lived the faith he proclaimed. The denial of self and the grace of charity in thought and deed did not come easily to Spurgeon. He was of kingly nature, born to rule and to lead. It was almost impossible for him to be in any company without dominating the whole ; it seemed to be his right.

The histrionic gifts he possessed in such full measure made it easy, almost natural, for him to play a part, but with crystal clearness his sincerity remained through all the years. He knew that there could be no real religion without sincerity of purpose. Sincerity was often his theme when talking to students ; it was his habit.

Rumour said that Spurgeon would die a very wealthy

man, but rumour was disappointed. It became a tradition at the Tabernacle that the pastor never made an appeal for money without giving a subscription to the fund, and not infrequently he was the largest subscriber. The attitude towards money is an acid test of religion. Mr. H. G. Wells says, "Man is an imperfect animal and never quite trustworthy in the dark." Spurgeon remains one of those of whom we have no doubt in the dark or in the light. His judgment may have been mistaken, but his honesty was never questioned.

The progress of religion is told in the biographies of the saints and reformers. Each forward movement has been the work of a human personality who dared to disturb the conservatism into which all Churches nestle down as the years pass. The Heaven-sent evangelist is always a man of character. Religion dies out as sincerity becomes questioned. The Church in the lands where it was first planted became as an extinct volcano, as faith in the integrity of its representatives weakened and disappeared.

The evangelist sets out upon a crusade so hopeless that he is doomed unless he can maintain his faith and sincerity. The connection between sincerity and belief is so vital that it is impossible to separate them. Who is sufficient to stand as the prophet of the eternal unless he has seen the vision and heard the voice?

Spurgeon's world was weakened by the pursuit of pleasure and drugged by despair. There were increasing signs of the passing of the creeds and the standards that seemed so firmly planted in the religious life. It was not surprising that sometimes he felt that he stood alone, as the old oak in the space cleared of the trees. In such moods it would have been impossible to have realised the inspiration of the faith, had there not been personal sincerity. Spurgeon had not chosen his

vocation, though he loved it with all the passion of a bridegroom's affection ; he realised that he was called of God to be what he was, and therefore he could be no other. "How can a man live with himself," he said, "if he has destroyed his own self-respect?"

Carlyle did much to popularise the gospel of work for work's sake. Samuel Smiles must have made a modest fortune out of *Self Help*: the ideal was irreproachable, but the achievement very difficult. "Straight is the gate and narrow is the way" and few enter the path.

A heavy handicap rested upon C. H. Spurgeon. He was essentially a countryman, it was hardly likely that he could even understand the mind of a townsman. All his tastes were with Nature, the far-stretching lands and the open heavens. In a city would he not be like a bird in a cage? London filled him with something like fear, and only the urge of destiny turned his feet toward the metropolis. What could a lad less than twenty years old do in a pulpit which was laden with great traditions in the capital city of the world?

A successful farmer he might have been, but a preacher who would move multitudes, could he ever be that? He was a son of the soil ; the fragrance of the haystack was a great delight. The difficulties in his own nature were not inconsiderable. His genius was undisciplined and hardly known to himself. In occasional moments he must have realised that he was not as other men, that he had a life apart which could not be shared even with those who shared his home. Naturally he was impulsive and explosive, quick to see and not slow to speak, with an independence of spirit that would accept no patronage. He found the Churches surprised and almost shocked, the ministers mildly amused and critical, the Press sarcastic, holding

him up to ridicule, and the public fearful of pulpit mountebanks.

Spurgeon faced his difficulties with supreme confidence in God and his mission. By sheer hard work he gained the ear of the people, winning the confidence of the Churches and the ministers. It was not by genius alone that he came to the pulpit throne. He toiled all along the road, and when others took their ease he worked. Nothing was too small or too exacting that would legitimately add to his efficiency. He literally toiled at his tasks and had the reward which he ascribed to the grace of God. But those who knew the man were not slow to recognise the labour of the servant as well as the blessing of the Master. It was not by any miracle he came to a position of power in the religious life of the country.

If Spurgeon thought it essential to practise such little things as emphasis, sibilants, aspirates and final "g's," lesser men should not regard the work as unnecessary or beneath their attention. All through his life he was learning how to preach. He gave himself no rest from the practise of his Art. He sought clearness of expression as a man seeks for precious gems. Only those who have seriously made the attempt realise the difficulties of expressing thought in language that exactly conveys the meaning of the speaker.

Spurgeon was a great master of the art of using words. His English was never a dead language. He did not move his congregation as Sordello affected Salinguerra, to "immeasurable yawning." The arresting phrase, the stab sentences, the comforting, almost caressing words, came not by chance or miracle to his lips, but as the result of continual study and clear thinking. His style was so perfect that he seemed to have no style at all but to speak with the naturalness

and variety of Nature's sounds, whether in the song of the skylark, the moan of the sea or the peal of the thunder.

Spurgeon would not excuse himself from labour, neither would he excuse others. He could be very angry with students who tried to shuffle out of their studies. "My advice to my boys has been," said John Ploughman, "get out of the sluggard's way or you may catch his disease and never get rid of it. I am always afraid of their learning the ways of the idle and am very watchful to nip anything of the sort in the bud."

Spurgeon enabled preachers to realise the value of the direct method. A favourite attitude of his, when preaching, was to stand upright with head thrown back, the left hand grasping the rail of the platform and the right arm extended with the index finger pointing as though he said, "Thou art the man" or "And such were some of you." He delighted in straight simplicity. Preaching that went all round the subject to avoid the real issue, never attracted him.

Simplicity of thought and speech were not the chief characteristics of his time. Many preachers possessed the fatal facility of making simple truths complex. As Spurgeon said, "They love to go on the round-about." Eloquent elaboration obscured vital issues until truth was veiled and the moral sense of the congregation undisturbed, while the consciousness of sharing in an intellectual performance was gratified.

The English Authorised Version of the Bible was his standard and court of appeal. Though thoroughly conservative in his outlook, he did not hesitate to use any help that came from modern scholarship. His mind was not hospitable to theological speculation, and the vacillating attitude annoyed him. In all his pulpit work he avoided modern criticism except to

hold up its exponents to ridicule. Planting himself unreservedly upon the Bible as he understood it, he went straight for its spiritual and ethical values. The teaching of Karl Barth and the Oxford Group Movement, indicate that there is still a response to Spurgeon's method.

It is sometimes asked what would happen if Spurgeon could return to London. What impression would he make in this strange new world of ours? He would hardly recognise it. The gap which divides the men of the last generation from us, makes it difficult to imagine what they would do in our conditions. If it be true that the preacher has fallen upon evil days, it is beyond question that he lives in other days, and each age has its own perils. The world, the flesh and the devil appear in other forms, but they do not disappear.

Would not Spurgeon become bewildered in this new time? London was strange to him eighty years ago; it was full of noise, rush and madness. What would he say to-day? Men do not stop to gaze with unhurried vision upon the calmness of the river; the poet no longer stands on Westminster Bridge in the solemn silence and awe of the moonlight. The rush of the traffic, the hooting of buses, cars and lorries, an almost endless procession, leave no place for meditation.

He would face competitors unknown in his day. How would he approach the "picture" mentality of the crowd? Would he, like Ward Beecher, resolve to preach in pictures? He frequently did that; but these new pictures, which move and talk, would he use them? There is a "movie" mentality that makes the old-fashioned service terribly dull. The "firstly, secondly and thirdly" construction of pulpit speech has lost its force for the multitude.

Spurgeon did not have to compete with the wonders of the radio. There was no National programme to

put on star preachers who could be switched off if they became dull. He knew nothing of the attractions of the little car that make it so easy to run out into the country during the summer evenings. The Sunday newspaper had not become the vogue. If we do not live in a new world, we certainly live in another world to that which Spurgeon knew.

Each new generation produces a new company of worshippers, not quite the same type as their predecessors. The modern congregation no longer looks to the pulpit with unquestioning eyes ; there are as many interrogations as there are listeners. There is a subtle feverish mood, born of an age of machinery. The old leisure of mind and luxury of meditation have disappeared. The people may have lost the power to sit and concentrate their thoughts for an hour or so upon an abstruse topic ; they have little inclination to follow theological reasoning or any other reasoning. There is the lust for change and variety born in our blood.

It is useless to argue with the inevitable. Change comes with each generation. At the door of the past the present knocks. The newcomers grow impatient with age that hesitates or refuses to give entry, and may in anger break down the door.

Much is said about the failure of the Churches. Critics have less deference for ecclesiastical authority and pay no attention to their spiritual advisers. What could Spurgeon do under our changed conditions ? I wonder. Certainly he would not settle down to the conventional methods and an acceptance of defeatism ; he would explore fresh avenues of approach to the outside man. Would he draw the crowds to the Tabernacle ? Would he make the indifferent different ? He would not minimise the difficulties. " The Church should be used to dying," he said. " Does she not die

to live? ” That is the hope of the future ; when the last trace of light dies out of the clouds, over the hills comes “ the sound of the drums of the dawn.”

Christian history is a good tonic for the depressed. Is it not true that whenever the evangelist for the age has uttered his voice the hosts of waiting souls have recognised the call and have rallied to the Cross? Any day the voice may be heard and the miracle happen. Revivals of religion are not made, people are not educated into Christianity, they are born again, and the life-changer is sent of God in response to human need.

Great evangelists have not been numerous. In England there have been at least four : Wycliffe, Wesley, Bunyan and Spurgeon. There may not be another. If so, there is the challenge to all who name the Name that was so dear to Spurgeon.

The qualities of our race which he embodied were never more urgently needed than now. The steady persistence and cheery optimism with which he faced difficulties are an example we are too poor to neglect. The qualities he emphasised are as much in need as ever. In times of depression there is real danger of accepting the spirit of defeat. May we not turn to Spurgeon as our guide, that perchance we may secure his tenacity of purpose and serenity of spirit?

INDEX

ANGUS, Dr. (Tutor at Stepney College), 80, 83, 85, 86, 247

Banks, Rev. C. W., 117

Baptist, The, 237, 249

Baptist Annual Register, 97

Baptist Messenger, The, 130

Baptist Reporter, The, 232

Baptist Union, 90, 183, 184, 185, 217, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257

Spurgeon's withdrawal from, 246, 251

Baptist World Alliance, 255

Beecher, Ward, 54, 214, 303

Benson, A. C., 276

Benson, Archbishop, 197

Binney, Thomas, 185, 209

Booth, Dr., Secretary of the Baptist Union, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 252, 256

British Banner, The, 114, 160

British Weekly, 249

CADMAN, Dr. Parkes, 215

Calvin, 132, 133-135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 141, 142, 143, 147, 148, 162, 163, 287

Calvinism, 132, 134, 136-137, 138, 140, 141-143, 147, 148, 149, 150, 287

Cambridge, 58, 59, 60, 70, 72, 73, 76, 77, 84, 93, 105, 124

Campbell, Dr., 114, 160, 217

Carlile, Prebendary Wilson, 264

Charlesworth, Rev. V. J., 220

Christian Cabinet, The, 231

Christian News, 158

Christian World, The, 184, 249, 250, 252

Clark, James, 184

Clifford, Dr., 250, 252

Colchester, 32, 38, 51, 56, 57, 58, 70

Colportage Society, 226

Cook, Charles, 223

Criticism of Spurgeon, 115-118, 121, 122, 123-124, 126, 139, 156

Crystal Palace, service held in, 125

Cubitt, Mr., 65

Culross, Dr., 250

DALE, Dr., 41, 112

D'Aubigné, Dr. Merle, 162

Davidson, Archbishop, 197

Davis, Dr. O. S., 204

Declaration of Principles issued by the Baptist Union, 253-255

Denck, Johannes, 74

Distinctive Doctrines of Calvinism, The, 140

Dods, Dr. Marcus, 23

Douglas, Mr., 56

Douglas, Rev. James, 251

Down-Grade Controversy, 243, 244-253, 256, 257, 259, 291

EAGLEN, Rev. Robert, 38

Earthen Vessel, The, 117

Education Act of 1870, 63

Educational facilities, inadequacy of, 60, 63, 64, 66-67

Evening by Evening, 236

Evening schools, 67, 68

Everett, J. D., 86

Exeter Hall Sermons, 121

Exeter Hall, services held in, 113, 119, 120, 121, 148
Panic in, 114-115

FERGUSON, Mr., 65, 66

Ford, Mr., 190

Fosdick, Dr., 215

Freeman, The, 90, 123, 161, 173, 233, 249, 250

Fullerton, Dr., 21, 22, 23, 184, 199

GENEVA, 133, 134, 135, 139, 140, 162, 163

George, Lloyd, 182

George, Rev. Jonathan, 170

INDEX

- Gill, Dr., 95, 96, 132
 Glover, Dr. Richard, 236, 250
 Gore, Bishop, 242
 Gould, George, 88
 Grant, James, 122, 129
 Greenwood, B. I., 211
 Groom, John, 218, 262
- HALL, Rev. Robert, 70, 96
 Harrauld, Mr., 65, 195, 205, 261
 "Helensburgh House," 190, 192, 194
 Henderson, Professor, 219
 Hepp, Professor V., 141
Hibbert Journal, 216
 Higgs, William, 25, 163
 Hillyard, Mrs., 219, 220, 222, 223
- Independent*, 249
 Indian Mutiny, Day of Humiliation for, 125
Institutes of the Christian Religion,
The, 135, 136, 138
 Isleham, 52, 84, 86
- JACKS, Professor, 66
 James, John Angell, 86
 James, Professor William, 49
 "John Ploughman," 33, 57, 189, 191, 302
John Ploughman's Talk, 233, 238
 Johnson, Mr., 65
 Joynson, W., 152, 153
- KELVEDON (birthplace of Spurgeon), 32, 33
 Keys, J. L., 195, 205
 King, Mary, 52
 Knowles, Sheridan, 110
- Lambeth Gazette*, 122
 Law, William, 284
Lectures to my Students, 77, 233
 Leeding, Mr., 57, 58, 82
 Lewis, Henry, 57
Life of Spurgeon, by Holden Pike, 248
 London Baptist Association, 91, 123, 217, 256
- London, conditions in, 94, 119-121
- MACLAREN, Dr., 215, 250
 Masfield, John, 45
 McLaren, J., 221
 Medhurst, T. W., 170
 Metropolitan Tabernacle, 21, 25, 32, 64, 66, 68, 76, 128, 132, 154, 157, 158, 159, 161, 163, 164-166, 167, 172, 173, 174, 180, 183, 190, 192, 209, 210, 213, 216, 224, 225, 234, 250, 259, 263, 265, 267, 297, 299
 Building, 152-158, 161
 Completion, 163
 Criticised, 156-158
 Opening services, 164-166
 Proposed, 152
 Site chosen, 153
 Montague, Charles, 218, 219
Montgomery Mail, 161
 Morley, Lord, 15
Morning Advertiser, 122, 129
Morning by Morning, 236
 Mullins, Principal, 255
 Mursell, Mr., 178, 179
- NEWMARKET, 42, 51, 52, 56, 58
 New Park Street Chapel, 88, 90, 93, 95, 97-99, 102, 105, 106, 111, 113, 114, 118, 123, 127, 129, 152, 159, 187, 188, 189, 201, 213, 224
New Park Street Pulpit, 19, 269
 Newspaper tributes to Spurgeon, 14
 Nicoll, Dr. Robertson, 14, 19, 26, 132, 214
 Nonconformists, exclusion of, from Degrees, 59, 60
- OLNEY, Thomas, 88, 101, 127, 224
 Olney, William (friend of Spurgeon), 101, 113, 167, 172, 210, 213, 214, 219
 Orsman, William, 225

Pall Mall Gazette, 252
 Passmore, Joseph, publisher of
 Spurgeon's works, 102, 232
 Pastors' College, 21, 64, 69, 169-
 175, 177, 178, 180, 182, 183,
 184, 185, 186, 198, 199
 Pastors' College Conference, 249,
 253, 257
 Pattison, Mark, 134
 Pierson, Dr. A. T., 13
 Pike, Holden, 248, 262
Pilgrim's Progress, 188, 206, 279
 Pinkess, Mr., 65, 66
Principles of Preaching, 204
 Pullen, Rev. H. H., 190
Pulpit Library, The, 189
Punch in the Pulpit, 115

"QUESTION" oak, 196

RAVEN, C. E., 280
 Rippon, Dr., 88, 95, 97, 155, 224
 Robinson, Rev. Robert, 70
 Rogers, Rev. George, 170
 Ruskin, John, 129, 169, 192, 193,
 210, 233
 Rutherford, Mark, 15, 19, 35

Saint and his Saviour, The, 52, 232
Salt-Cellars, 239, 241
Saturday Review, 158
 Selway, Mr., 64
 Sheen, Rev. Danzy, 38
 Shindler, Rev. R., 245
 Speer, Dr. Robert E., 75
 Spurgeon, Miss Ann (Aunt to
 Charles Haddon), 55
 Spurgeon, Charles (Charles Had-
 don's son), 189, 199, 221, 246
 Spurgeon, Charles Haddon—
 Ancestry, 31, 74
 Appeal to the moral conscience
 of man, 289, 294
 Attacked by the Cambridge
 Sunday School Union, 87
 Attitude to the critics, 242
 Baptism, 52
 Belief in his message, 24

Spurgeon, Charles Haddon—*contd.*
 Belief in the Bible, 146, 277,
 302, 303
 Birth, 31
 Boyhood, 33
 Building of the Metropolitan
 Tabernacle, 152-158
 Burial in Norwood Cemetery,
 266
 Capacity for work, 195, 205,
 234, 302
 Calvin, love for, 135, 136
 Calvinism, acceptance of, 132,
 140, 147
 Catholicity, 30, 283, 289
 Christian experience, 270, 271
 College, work for the, 169-175,
 177
 Coming of age, 121
 Comments on Scripture read-
 ing, 216
 Confidence in God, 167, 168,
 276, 277, 290, 301
 Controversialist, weakness as a,
 237, 244
 Controversies, 139, 243
 Conversion, 38-40, 41, 43, 44,
 45, 46-48, 51
 Conviction of sin, 34-37
 Creative genius, 30
 Criticism of his preaching, 117,
 118, 121-122, 126, 288
 Death, 266
 Doctrine, opposition to his, 117,
 118, 127, 139, 288
 Domestic life, 189, 191
 Downrightness, 15
 Early influences, 27, 33, 34, 37-
 38, 54-58
 Educationalist, 60, 64, 66,
 67
 Education and training, 54-56,
 57, 58, 59
 Eloquence, 19, 110, 301
 Endurance of pain, 130-131
 Evening School at the Taber-
 nacle, 64-66, 69
 First church, 78
 First sermon, 71

INDEX

Spurgeon, Charles Haddon—*contd.*
 First Sermon in the Metropolitan Tabernacle, 132, 164
 First service held in Exeter Hall, 113-115
 Fundamental character of his thinking, 291
 Funeral 11-12
 Generosity, 213, 214, 225, 233, 266, 299
 Hatred of controversy, 243
 Hatred of sectarianism, 30
 Health-seeking in the South of France, 260, 261
 Help for poor pastors, 190
 Hospitality, 194, 197
 Humility, 25, 89
 Humour, 237-238, 297
 Ill-health, 250, 259, 260, 262, 263, 264
 Influence, 13, 14
 Interest in architecture, 198
 Interest in handwriting, 197
 Interest in his students, 175, 176, 179, 181
 Interest in life, 18
 Invitation to London, 87, 88-89, 105, 107
 "John Bullism," 14-18
 Joy, 42, 46, 47
 Last illness, 261-262, 263, 264, 266
 Last of the Puritans, 14, 24, 292
 Last sermon, 259, 260
 Lay Preachers' Association, founding of the, 76
 Lectures to men, 182
 Legacy to posterity, 21-22
 Letters, 40, 42, 80, 89, 102, 105-106, 107, 118, 160-161, 173, 181, 182, 186, 198, 214, 237, 244, 246, 248, 250, 262, 263
 Literary work, 229-241, 245, 264
 London, life in, 91 ff.
 Love of animals, 196, 197
 Love of children, 219, 222
 Love of fun, 178

Spurgeon, Charles Haddon—*contd.*
 Love of his home, 32, 54, 191
 Love of Nature, 73, 124, 300
 Love of oratory, 102
 Love of reading, 27
 Love-story, 187-189, 190
 Magazine, his first, 229
 Marriage, 187
 Medal of Remembrance, receiving the, 135
 Ministry at Stambourne, 33
 Mother, influence of his, 24, 32
 Mysticism, 268, 272, 274, 275, 276, 279
 Open-air preaching, 72, 77-78, 124, 126, 128
 Optimism, 297, 298
 Oratory, 110, 208
 Ordination, refusal of, 111-112
 Parentage, 54
 Pastoral work, 210, 211
 Physician of souls, 176, 212
 Plain speaking, 275
 Prayer, time devoted to, 211
 Preaching, 48-49, 70-89, 97-101, 109-110, 112-113, 125, 126-127, 129, 162, 164, 177, 201-209, 213, 214, 215, 242, 272-273, 297, 298, 302
 Proverbs, Use of, 240, 241
 Psychic gifts, 12
 Reading, 212
 Reasons for his greatness, 24-28, 128
 Receiving of college students in his home, 193
 Refusal to go to College, 80-83, 86
 Schooldays, 54, 56, 57-58
 Secret of his greatness, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 127
 Sensitiveness, 130
 Sermons, far-reaching influences of, 13, 22, 234, 235, 236
 Sermons, publication of, 37, 231, 232, 234, 236
 Services rendered to his age, 285-286

INDEX

- Spurgeon, Charles Haddon—*contd.*
 Sight-seeing in London, 102-105
 Simplicity of language, 19-20, 302
 Sincerity, 16, 20, 291, 297, 298
 Slavery, attitude towards, 159-161
 Social work, 218, 219, 223-228
 Spiritual experiences and difficulties, 269-271, 272-274, 278, 279, 284
 Standard of values, 17
 Style, 19-20, 203-205, 206
 Success in London, 106, 109, 113, 119-130, 155
 Supremacy in the pulpit, 18
 Supremacy of character, 298
 Teaching at Cambridge, 59-60
 Teaching at Newmarket, 51-52
 Tenderness towards suffering, 130
 Testimonial after twenty-five years' work, 213, 214
 Testimonial after fifty years' work, 214
 Theology, 132 ff., 287, 288
 Unconventionality, 109, 111, 112, 113, 127, 188
 Use of illustrations and incidents, 18
 Visit to Baden-Baden, 161-162
 Visit to Geneva, 162
 Visit to Paris, 158
 Voice, 208, 209
 Withdrawal from the Baptist Union, 246, 251
 Withdrawal from the London Baptist Association, 256
 Youth, 78-89
- Spurgeon, James (brother of Charles Haddon), 25, 57, 85, 182, 183, 209, 247, 250, 261
- Spurgeon, Job, 31
- Spurgeon, John (father of Charles Haddon), 27, 32, 38, 40, 80, 102, 229
- Spurgeon, Mrs. (mother of Charles Haddon), 24, 27, 32, 42, 52, 177
- Spurgeon, Mrs. (wife of Charles Haddon), 189, 190, 192, 193, 197, 199, 200, 248, 261
- Spurgeon, Thomas (Charles Haddon's son), 189, 199, 221
- "Spurgeon Sermon Society," 236
- Spurgeon's College. *See* Pastors' College.
- Stambourne, 32, 33, 54, 126
- Stepney College, 80
- Stevenson, R. L., 235
- Stockwell Orphanage, 21, 199, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 244, 262, 263, 266
- Stott, Rev. William, 259
- Sunday at Home*, 128
- Surrey Gardens Music Hall, services held in, 71, 113-114, 115-117, 119, 152
- Swindell, Mr., 51, 52
- Sword and Trowel, The*, 231, 245, 246, 256, 264
- TABERNACLE. *See* Metropolitan Tabernacle.
- Thank-offering Day, 265
- Thomas, Rev. W. C., 198
- Thompson, Susannah, wife of Spurgeon, 188, 189
- Times, The*, 14
- Tollesbury, 32, 38
- Treasury of David*, 233
- Troeltsch, Ernest, 150
- UNIVERSITIES, need for reforms in the, 61-63
- VINCE, Charles, 112
- Vintner, James, leader of the Local Preachers' Association, 70, 75
- Visitors to "Westwood," 197
- WALKER, David, 58
- Walker, Hay, 169
- Watchman and Reflector*, 160

INDEX

Waterbeach (Spurgeon's first church), 78-80, 83, 84, 86, 87, 93, 97, 105, 106, 204	"Westwood," 178, 189, 192, 193, 194, 196, 197, 198
<i>Waterbeach Tracts, The</i> , 232	Whittemore, Rev. Jonathan, 130
Wells, Rev. James, 139, 201, 202	Working Men's College, opening of the, 63-64