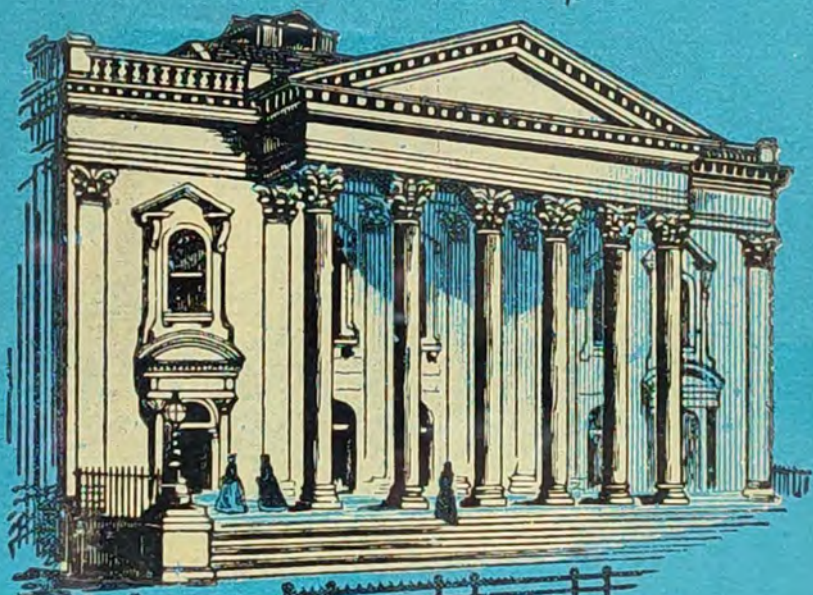


C. H. SPURGEON

His Life And
Ministry



BY
Jesse Page



C. H. Springer

C. H. SPURGEON.

This Life and Ministry.

BY

JESSE PAGE, F.R.G.S.,

AUTHOR OF "SAMUEL CROWTHER, THE SLAVE-BOY WHO BECAME
BISHOP OF THE NIGER," "DAVID BRAINERD,"
"HENRY MARTYN," ETC.

"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept
the faith."

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STOCKWELL ORPHANAGE.

P R E F A C E.

THE bereavement which we suffer in the loss of Mr. Spurgeon makes us feel like having to begin life again. While he lived we were satisfied that, whether we heard his voice or not, he was here among us as a mighty witness for God, uncorrupted by the canker of place or popularity, unfettered by the cramp of conventionalism, unshaken in faith by the sweeping drift of modern thought, an evidence of Christianity which the world could not gainsay, which brought honour to God and confidence to his brethren. The depth of our loyalty to truth was the measure of our sense of his value to us. Rarely did the electric wire carry a lightning message to so many hearts as when it flashed the news that Mr. Spurgeon was dead. The loss was not only national, it made the

world poorer, causing the hearts of thousands of his sermon-readers in lands far away to throb with grief. It is not the Christian Church alone, it is the world for whose salvation the Christian Church exists, which also weeps over his grave.

Mr. Spurgeon was such a many-sided man that it is not surprising that a dozen reasons are readily given to account for his remarkable popularity. When he upset the respectable decorum of London church- and chapel-goers, and crammed the Surrey Music Hall with eager crowds, it was said that his attraction lay in his racy stories, his youthful eccentricities, and the unsparing way with which he smote the Philistines hip and thigh. Then men began to discover the qualities of his unsurpassed voice, and that he was one of the orators of the age. Finally public opinion settled down to acknowledge that he was the embodiment of straightforward sincerity, could hit hard but could also gently heal, and that he succeeded because he believed in Christianity, preached it in faith, and stuck to it. Men felt that he was a manly man, and that somehow he was more, he was a man of God.

His brother went into a Jew's shop in Shoreditch one day to make some purchases, when the man begged to know whether his customer was related to the great preacher. Learning that this was the case, the Jew shut the door, looking nervously all round the shop that no one should hear. "Will you tell me, sir," he said, "what is the secret of his great success?" The reply was an apt impromptu: "I think," said his brother, "that it lies in the fact that he loves Jesus of Nazareth and Jesus of Nazareth loves him."

And so think we. It was the Christ-power, the Christ-presence, and the Christ-love which made this Essex boy the bishop of evangelical Christendom. Of course this assertion does not deny his remarkable originality of character and unquestionable intellectual powers.

As a prince of preachers, there was a simplicity and ease about him which can be attributed to no other man. Using common words, picking up suggestive illustrations from the plain highway of human life, he "only spoke right on," and held thousands in breathless interest. He was just as much at home with a cultured audience as with a crowd of Smithfield cattle-drovers. There was the same marvellous knack of saying the fit thing in a way quite out of the ordinary track. He was always original, and never lowered his theme to win applause. It was the last thing anybody would expect from Spurgeon. He was an Englishman every inch. The strong combativeness, the genial *bonhomie*, the warm sympathy of his nature, these all made the people feel that he was one of them—only a great deal better. In this respect he had a reputation in common with John Bright, who perhaps was his only equal in the use of pure Saxon idiom, the people's tongue.

He was strong, but it pleased God to grant him the ministry of suffering, and to discover to him the sweet and hidden secret of affliction. To the great world outside, the exquisite tenderness of his nature was almost unknown, yet a more loving and more childlike heart never beat in human breast. "To see Mr. Spurgeon at his best," said one of his friends the other day, "you should watch him amongst his orphans, each clasping an outstretched finger and drinking in his gentle, playful words." This golden vein in the granite is diviner far than intellectual power, for God is love, and we are most like Him when we most love like Him.

People said he stood still, while the world of mind marched on. Perhaps in a certain sense he did; in so doing he may have chosen the wiser part. "Progress," cried Carlyle, "progress! but *whither?*" One thing is certain: his steadfastness did not contract his circle of influence, neither did it tend to weaken his arm of mighty labour, nor dim his eagle eye of faith. If any think the old

gospel of salvation is an effete thing for progressive daws to peck at, let the timid believer take courage in this magnificent example of the nineteenth century, that it was in this man's work and own experience the power of God.

In penning these pages the writer has felt the great and good subject of them to be not far away, and the labour which this work has necessarily involved is forgotten in the thought that some young people may see in it footprints on the sands of one worthy of their admiration and whose words and acts alike may inspire them to live more wholly to the glory of God.

Indebtedness is acknowledged to the admirable volume by Mr. G. Holden Pike ; and special thanks are due to the invaluable help of the Rev. E. Hunt Cooke, to Mr. Samuel Bull, and other helpful friends.

May God grant that the Christ, all-sufficient and unchangeable, of Mr. Spurgeon's life may be as bright a reality to every reader of this book.

JESSE PAGE.





MR. SPURGEON'S STUDY.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
CHAPTER I.	
A CHILDHOOD OF PROMISE	11
CHAPTER II.	
AT THE WICKET GATE AND THROUGH	27
CHAPTER III.	
A CALL FROM WATERBEACH	42
CHAPTER IV.	
HISTORICAL RETROSPECT	50
CHAPTER V.	
NEW PARK STREET AND THE SURREY MUSIC HALL .	60

CHAPTER VI.		PAGE
AN OPEN AIR SERVICE AND THE TABERNACLE REARED		73
CHAPTER VII.		
A SHEAF OF STORIES		84
CHAPTER VIII.		
GOOD WORKS AS WELL AS WORDS.		98
CHAPTER IX.		
HIS STUDENTS AND HIS BOOKS		116
CHAPTER X.		
LATER DAYS. /		137
CHAPTER XI.		
MENTONE, AND HOME AT LAST		146





MR. SPURGEON'S BIRTHPLACE, KELVEDON, ESSEX.

C. H. SPURGEON.

His Life and Ministry.

CHAPTER I.

A CHILDHOOD OF PROMISE.

"I do not know how it is, but I feel a solemn presentiment that this child will preach the gospel to thousands, and God will bless them to many souls."

RICHARD KNILL.

THE year of grace 1834 will be remembered as a notable and tumultuous one in the annals of the English people. Two years only had passed since the enfranchisement of the masses by the first Reform Bill, and the popular fever and unsettlement of that fierce political struggle had by no means abated. Famous men who have left their mark on the time were still living: the Duke of Wellington fighting what he conceived to be another Waterloo in the House of Lords; O'Connell in the Commons pouring forth the passionate invective of

patriotic fire ; Sir Robert Peel taking office for the first time, and beginning that career of honour which ended in the calamity of Constitution Hill. From the sphere literate, Samuel Taylor Coleridge passed away as the roses were blooming in his Highgate garden. The ranks of the explorers lost a brave man in the death of Richard Lander at Fernando Po ; and the pulpit of the age missed one of its most brilliant and popular orators when Edward Irving, that strange, sincere, and wonderful soul left behind the mists of earth for the open day of Heaven.

Possibly the least noticed event of that year was the advent of a youngster in the village of Kelvedon, in Essex. The fact finds no record in the register of notable births ; beyond the narrow horizon of that little group of cottages and meadows, no interest was stirred by this new addition to the sum of human existence. And yet that infant was destined to fight a more glorious warfare than Wellington ever knew, and to impress the world with a spiritual power and eloquence which left the influence of Irving far behind. The public men whose actions distinguish the year of his birth, will find due prominence in the history of the time, but the name of Charles Haddon Spurgeon is engraved in the memory of the English people as with a golden pen, and his work will be the unforgotten treasure of generations to come.

He was a child of promise and of prophecy. It is said that on the day of his birth the "Express" coach to London rattled by, and his mother, looking with conscious pride at the little baby in her arms, declared that he would one day make a greater noise and fame in this world than that fast-flying vehicle. It is easy to say that such a speech at such a time would be likely

to be made by any mother of her child ; but in this case it was certainly true that grand possibilities and a noble destiny were wrapped up in the heart of her little son.

These, then, are the tiny beginnings of that stream of life which is to be followed in these pages, along the sunny ripples of its youthful days, by the deepening force of its gathered years amid craggy defiles of opposition and struggle, through broad lands of peace and fruitfulness which have been fertilised by its waters, up to the point where it is lost for ever in the glorious sea without a shore. Surely such a life is a river of God.

He came of a good old stock. Not, perhaps, in the heraldic sense of ancestry, however ; those who have any desire to discover how in the past he is linked on to some aristocratic house will probably be disappointed in their quest. But his escutcheon bears the record of faithful service and suffering for Christ's sake, and he would probably count it a high honour that one of his forefathers, Job Spurgeon to wit, got himself a prisoner of the Lord in Chelmsford Jail for conscience' sake. His grandfather was a venerable specimen of the good old-fashioned nonconformist minister. He was a unique character in his way. Scrupulous in his dressing—wearing still the frilled front, smalls and silk hose of the Georgian period, of noble mien, the favourite of all the children, a village pastor for fifty years and a sound convincing preacher, this progenitor of Spurgeon deserves more than a brief notice. He, also, was an Essex man, having been born in the village of Halstead in September 1776. He joined the Independent Church, and growing up, became a business man until the age of twenty-six,

when he entered Hoxton Academy as a student for the ministry. Before this step was taken, however, he was converted to God under circumstances which happily his grandson has preserved in the pages of the *Sword and Trowel*. The old man lived long enough to see Charles Haddon Spurgeon in the ministry, and this was one of the many reminiscences which he recounted to the young preacher in his old age. We quote Mr. Spurgeon's words:—

“My grandfather remarked that there was formerly a wood in what I think he called Honeywood Park, which was a very memorable place to him. In that wood he had groaned and wept before the Lord while under the burden of sin, and under a tree, an oak, then only a sapling, he had received the grace of faith and entered upon the enjoyment of peace with God. It was a lovely spot, but henceforth it was to him no other than the house of God and the very gate of Heaven. Often he resorted thither and praised the name of the Lord.

“Some time after this happy event, having to go from Coggeshall to Halstead, his route was over this hallowed spot. On the night previous he dreamed very vividly that the Devil appeared to him and threatened to tear him in pieces if he dared to go along that footpath and pray under the oak as he had been wont to do. The Evil One reminded him that there was another way through the farmyard, and that if he took the farmyard path all would go well with him. When my grandfather awoke, the impression on his mind was overpowering, and he reasoned thus with himself:—Whether it be a dream or really a temptation from Satan I cannot tell, but anyhow I will not yield to it, but will show the Devil that I will

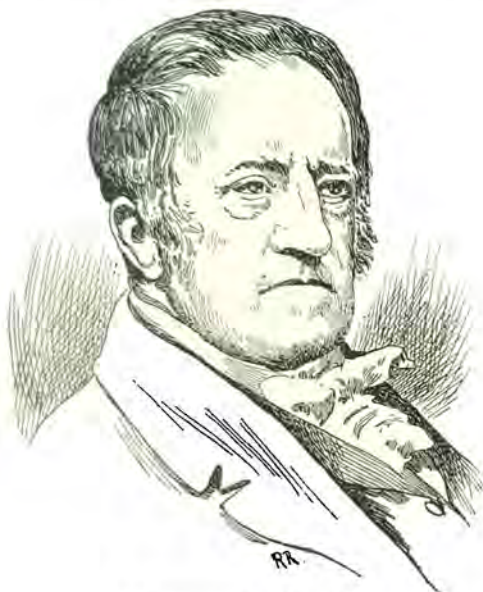
not do his bidding in anything, but will defy him to his face. This was the good man's spirit all over.

"Like Luther he had a vivid impression of the reality and personality of the great enemy, and was accustomed to make short work with his suggestions. One day, when in the pulpit, it came into his head that the place where the sand was kept for sanding the brick floor of his manse ought to be boarded in. His next thought was, 'What business has the Devil to make me think about the sand closet on a Sunday, and in the pulpit too? It shall not be boarded in at all. I will let him see that he shall not have his way with me.'

"But to return to the story. My grandfather, then a young man, went on cheerily enough till he came to the stile where the two paths diverged; then a horrible fear came upon him, and he felt his heart beat fast. Suppose he really should meet the arch-fiend, and should find him too strong for him, what then? Better take the farmyard path. No, that would be yielding to Satan, and he would not do that for a thousand worlds. He plucked up courage, and tremblingly pressed on. The stile was leapt, the narrow track through the wood was trodden with resolution mingled with forebodings. The oak was in sight, the sweat was on his face, the pace was quickened, a dash was made, and the tree was grasped—but there was no Satan there.

"Taking breath a moment, the young man uttered aloud the exclamation, 'Ah, cowardly devil, you threatened to tear me to pieces, and now you dare not show your face.' Then followed a fervent prayer and song of praise; and the young man was about to go on his way, when his eye was caught by something

shining on the ground. It was a ring, a very large ring; he told me nearly as large as a curtain ring, and it was solid gold; how it came there it would be hard to guess. Inquiries were made, but no claimant ever appeared, and my grandfather had it made into



MR. SPURGEON'S GRANDFATHER.

my grandmother's wedding ring, in memory of the spot so dear to him.

"Year by year he continued to visit the oak-tree on the day of his conversion, to pour out his soul before the Lord. The sapling had spread abroad its branches and the man had become the parent of a numerous family, but the song of gratitude was not forgotten,

nor the prayer that he and his offspring might for ever be the Lord's; the angels of God, we doubt not, watched those consecrated seasons with delightful interest.

"To add to the solemnity of this secluded wood, his father while passing by the spot was touched by the hand of God and fell dead. He could then feel even more deeply, How awful is this place! This made the annual visitations to the tree more deeply impressive, and, we believe, beneficial. They would have been continued till my grandfather's last year, were it not that the hand of modern improvement ruthlessly swept away tree and wood and every relic of the past.

"His last prayer upon the dear spot was most ludicrously interrupted. As the wood was almost all felled, he judged by the pathway as nearly as possible where the long-remembered oak had stood. The place was covered with growing wheat, but he kneeled down in it and began to bless the name of the Lord, when suddenly he heard a rough voice from over the hedge crying out, 'Maister, there be a creazy man a-saying his prayers down in the wheat over thayre.' This startled the suppliant, and made him beat a hasty retreat. Jacob must wrestle somewhere else. The man of God looked at the spot and went his way, but in spirit he still raised an altar in that Bethel, and praised the God of his salvation."

Venerable John Spurgeon watched with keen and gratified interest the rising career of his grandson Charles. Unspoiled by that jealousy with which age sometimes regards the achievements of youth in its own particular sphere, the pastor of Stambourne was delighted when the boy preacher showed evidence of making the name of Spurgeon distinguished above

the sober honour of his ancestors in the Essex villages. He lived long enough to hear all London talk about his grandson, and to read about the vast Tabernacle at Newington, which, however, nothing could persuade him to visit in his old age.

"My grandson can preach better than I can, but he cannot preach a better Gospel." This was his gracious comment one day.

The old man was spared to the age of eighty-seven, and was borne to his last resting-place in the village of Stambourne, where for over fifty-three years he had faithfully ministered. Men of such spiritual mettle cannot fail to die well, and he closed his career triumphantly and yet with the grace of humility, telling those who watched by his bed that in that final and supreme hour all was perfect peace, the Gospel was his only hope, he was on the Eternal Rock—immutable as the throne of God.

At his earliest and most impressionable age, Charles Haddon Spurgeon went to live with his grandfather at Stambourne, and most of those precious recollections of that time, which he has piously preserved, are interwoven with the fireside converse of that household. Perhaps no public man has had more tales told about every portion of his life than Mr. Spurgeon, and the greatest care is therefore necessary to place upon permanent record only those which are undoubtedly authentic. There need be little hesitation in affirming that he was, as a child, singularly precocious, and at a very early age exhibited a gravity far beyond his years. Trained at the old minister's knee, he was always full of questions, asking, as is easy for a man as it is for a child, explanations about things to which there is no sufficient answer by mortal

man. The Book of books became his study as soon as he could spell out its words, and he would not hesitate to inquire into its meaning in season and out of season. On one occasion, during the family prayer, he was as usual called upon to read a portion of the Bible, and it happened to be in the Book of Revelation, in which the words "bottomless pit" occurred. At this the boy stopped short.

"Grandpa, what can this mean?"

"Pooh, pooh, child! Go on."

But this did not by any means deter his curiosity, for morning after morning he persistently read the same chapter and repeated the same question.

"Well, dear, what is it that puzzles you?" at last rejoined his grandfather.

And then he put his difficulty, referring to the fruit baskets of frail construction often becoming bottomless by reason of the weight of their contents; but a pit without a bottom suggested to his childish mind the difficulty as to where the wicked people would go who fell out of the other end. How the aged divine settled the question for him history speaketh not, but the incident sufficiently indicate the drift of his opening mind.

Linked with the above may be mentioned another fact, which shows certainly a predilection for the ministerial office at a very early period of his life. It was also while staying with his grandfather, and being then only six years old, that he seems to have noticed one member of the church who was in the habit of visiting very frequently the village alehouse. He had heard the expressed regrets of the old pastor over this misconduct, and once indignantly exclaimed, "I'll kill old Rhodes, that I will!"

"Hush, hush! my dear, you mustn't talk so; it's very wrong, you know, and you'll get taken up by the police if you do anything wrong."

"Oh, but I shall not do anything bad; but I'll kill him though, that I will."

This fearful threat from lips so juvenile caused the family some anxiety, which was intensified by his rushing in one day with the exclamation,—

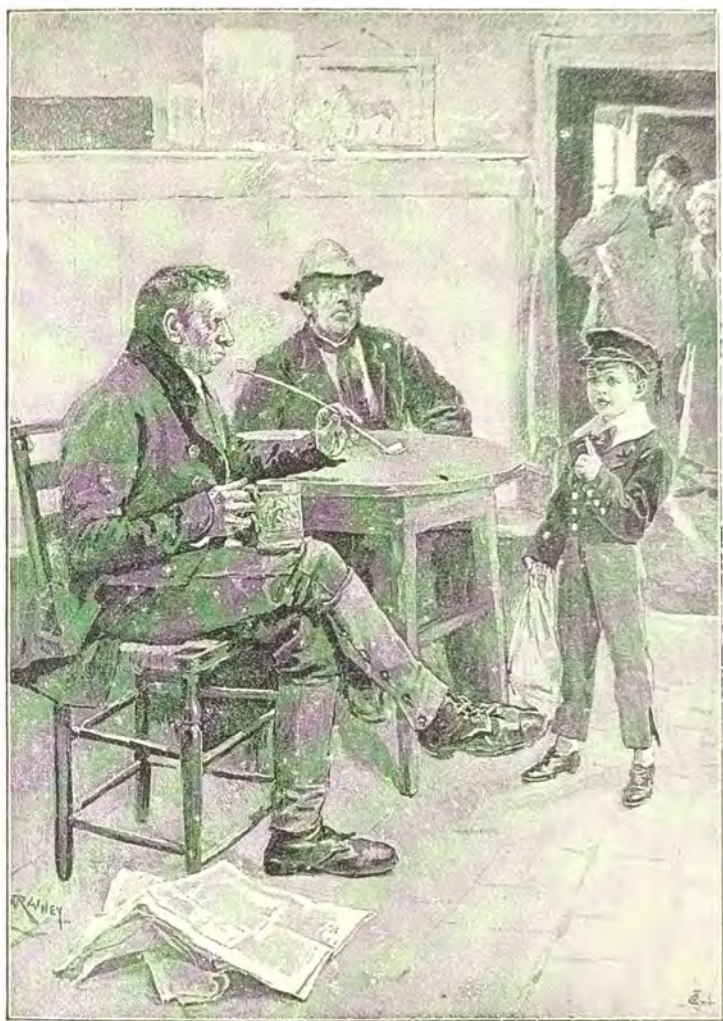
"I've killed old Rhodes; he'll never grieve my dear grandpa any more."

"My dear child!" said the old man, alarmed now. "What have you done? where have you been?"

"I haven't been doing any harm, grandpa; I've been about the Lord's work, that's all."

What had really occurred was afterwards related by the repentant Rhodes himself, when he called to apologise for his shortcomings as a church member.

"I'm very sorry indeed, my dear pastor, to have caused you such grief and trouble. It was very wrong, I know, for I always tried you and wouldn't have done it if I'd only thought. I was a-sitting in the public just having my pipe and mug of beer, when that child comes in—to think an old man like me should be took to task and reprov'd by a bit of a child like that! Well, he points at me with his finger just so and says, 'What doest thou here, Elijah! sitting with the ungodly, and you a member of a church, and breaking your pastor's heart. I'm ashamed of you! I wouldn't break my pastor's heart, I am sure.' And then he walks away. Well, I did feel angry, but I knew it was all true and I was guilty; so I put down my pipe and did not touch my beer, and hurried away to a lonely spot and cast myself down before the Lord, confessing my sin and begging



KILLING OLD RHODES.

for forgiveness. And I do know and believe that the Lord in mercy pardoned me, and now I've come to ask you to forgive me ; and I'll never grieve you any more, my dear pastor."

The sequel proved that the child's timely reproof had indeed turned the current of a backslider's way, and been the means of his becoming a most consistent and useful worker in the church to which he belonged. To some this story may sound apocryphal, to others strained and unnatural, but it is true nevertheless, and is, moreover, eminently characteristic of the man whose finger even in youth was destined to move the heart of many sinners and to point a countless multitude to "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."

Little more remains to be told of those days of his childhood. He owed much to the watchful and loving care of a maiden aunt, whose memory he always held dear. He seems to have been a reading boy in an age when books were few, and his favourite works outside the Bible were the "Pilgrim's Progress" and "Robinson Crusoe," the two books which have been the first literary treasures of almost every boy of the past generation.

It has been said that Spurgeon's early life was prophetic of his future usefulness ; and a story is left on record which is remarkable, not only for the prophecy itself and the object of it, but for the fact that the speaker was himself an illustrious servant of the Most High God. The incident, as related to his people at the Tabernacle by Mr. Spurgeon himself in the following deeply interesting manner, will fitly close this chapter of his childhood.

"When I was a young child staying with my grand-

father, there came to preach in the village Mr. Knill, who had been a missionary at St. Petersburg, and a mighty preacher of the gospel. He came to preach for the London Missionary Society, and arrived on the Saturday at the manse. He was a great soul-winner, and he soon spied out the boy. He said to me, 'Where do you sleep? for I want to call you up in the morning.' I showed him my little room. At six o'clock he called me up, and we went into the arbour. There, in the sweetest way, he told me of the love of Jesus, and of the blessedness of trusting in Him and loving Him in our childhood. With many a story he preached Christ to me, and told me how good God had been to him, and then he prayed that I might know the Lord and serve Him. He knelt down in the arbour, and prayed for me with his arms about my neck. He did not seem content unless I kept with him in the interval between the services, and he heard my childish talk with patient love. On Monday morning he did as on the Sabbath, and again on Tuesday. Three times he taught me and prayed with me, and before he had to leave, my grandfather had come back from the place where he had gone to preach, and all the family were gathered to morning prayer. Then, in the presence of them all, Mr. Knill took me on his knee, and said, 'This child will one day preach the gospel, and he will preach it to great multitudes. I am persuaded that he will preach in the chapel of Rowland Hill, where (I think he said) I am now the minister.' He spoke very solemnly, and called upon all present to witness what he said. Then he gave me sixpence as a reward if I would learn the hymn

'God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform.'

I was made to promise that when I preached in Rowland Hill's Chapel that hymn should be sung. Think of that as a promise from a child! Would it ever be other than an idle dream? Years flew by. After I had begun for some little time to preach in London, Dr. Alexander Fletcher had to give the annual sermon to children in Surrey Chapel, but as he was taken ill, I was asked in a hurry to preach to the children. 'Yes,' I said, 'I will, if the children will sing "God moves in a mysterious way." I made a promise long ago that that hymn should be sung.' And so it was: I preached in Rowland Hill's Chapel, and the hymn was sung. My emotions on that occasion I cannot describe. Still that was not the chapel which Mr. Knill intended. All unsought by me, the minister at Wotton-under-Edge, which was Mr. Hill's summer residence, invited me to preach there. I went on the condition that the congregation should sing, 'God moves in a mysterious way'—which was also done. After that I went to preach for Mr. Richard Knill himself, who was then at Chester. What a meeting we had! Mark this! he was preaching in the theatre! His preaching in a theatre took away from me all fear about preaching in secular buildings, and set me free for the campaigns in Exeter Hall and the Surrey Music Hall. How much this had to do with other theatre services you know.

"God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform."

Sufficient has been said to show that in his case the well-worn adage is true, that "the child is father of the man." He was a strong lad, but showed a disinclination to spend his time in the romps and

occupations of boyhood. While others were racing in the fields, he would be found sitting under a tree with a book, and whenever he was missing, say at the dinner-hour, his whereabouts could soon be traced to the study of his father deep in some volume, which for the nonce was food convenient enough for him.

One characteristic of his boyhood has been scarcely noticed at all by his previous biographers, and that is, his ability in drawing. He was, even in those early days, by no means deficient in artistic taste and power, and his father still possesses a large picture which was the production of his faithful pencil.

There is one delicious bit of retrospect which has never been mentioned before, and with which this chapter may appropriately close. His venerable father relates how one afternoon Charles was missing, and on going to the stable a striking scene presented itself. There in the railed rack, high up above the manger, stood the future pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, grasping with his little hand the rail before him, and delivering what we may fairly consider his first sermon. Below, in the manger, sat his brother James; and the rest of the congregation, consisting of his two little sisters, occupied seats on the trusses of straw upon the stable floor.

Thus the bud is tinged with the bloom of the future flower, and the called of God mingle in their childish prattle the message which shall move the world.





THE CAM.

CHAPTER II.

AT THE WICKET GATE AND THROUGH.

"Assurance is the Cream of Faith.—The milk comes first, and when it is settled the cream follows."

THE SALT-CELLARS.

AS the boy grew the characteristics which had marked his childhood became still more evident. He was clearly possessed of will power, which at times expressed itself in passionate outbursts ; the ruling spirit manifested itself, and there was need enough for "grace abounding" to check and direct him. But he had one thing, the value of which can hardly be over-estimated in a boy, and that was a loyal love of truth. His grandfather, who had such special opportunity of observing his conduct in those early years, has put on record the testimony that "I could not remember that we ever had occasion to correct him for any false tale." When he began his schooldays, this was part of his character on entering the first testing time of life, and his love of veracity was

alike honourable to himself and those who had had the training of his mind. It was at Colchester that he began his studies, and his proficiency seems to have caught the special attention of Mr. Leeding, the principal usher, who took him under his own care when, after a time, he opened a school at Cambridge on his own account. Although in the City of Colleges, he never entered the University, but it must not be imagined that the absence of a degree is any proof of his lack in the matter of education. In after years, when all the world was talking about him and wondering who and what this young Spurgeon was, his educational attainments were not sufficiently credited by the public. As a matter of fact he was well grounded in Greek and Latin, and had a tolerable knowledge of the French language. Had it not been so we are sure that he would not have supported the honourable position of usher in Mr. Leeding's school with such credit. In later years, when Mr. Leeding had come to him in London, he spoke with much pride of his pupil who had become so famous. Spurgeon, he said, when a boy of fourteen could read the Greek Testament, and his mathematical ability was exceptionally good. On one occasion he gave the boy a mathematical book to study, which however proved to have no attractions for his pupil at the time. Putting it back on the shelf, Mr. Leeding remarked, "Ah, you will be glad to do it next term!" and next term the boy mastered it with ease. Of such a man it may be said that his education was never finished, for every year of his full and useful life he was gathering fresh stores of knowledge and utilising them in the great purpose of his work.

The most important turning point of his life was

drawing near, and although piously brought up and trained in the knowledge of Scripture, the time came when he must of himself pass the corner of spiritual decision. He had always been a religious boy, and before his conversion, when only fourteen years of age, he had imbibed strong theological predilections which he was not slow to express. He wrote a letter to his uncle in which he is very anxious to clear himself



CAMBRIDGE.

from the scandal of being "a toptree Antinomian." He hastens to assure his uncle that he holds very different views, and, speaking of the covenant of works and grace combined, quotes Berridge, and calls it "to yoke a snail with a serpent." With a vigour of expression far beyond what one might expect from a boy, he gives in this letter a testimony of his spiritual standing and experience which is most characteristic. Young as he was, he was painfully conscious of his shortcomings in the sight of God, and bewails his

corruptions in a manner which reminds one of the letters of Henry Martyn and David Brainerd. He has been speaking generally of our need of God's grace, and then thus opens his mind to his uncle upon his own condition of heart :—

“ I rejoice in an assured knowledge by faith of my interest in Christ, and of the certainty of my eternal salvation. Yet what strivings, what conflicts, what dangers, what enemies stand in my way ! The foes in my heart are so strong, that they would have killed me and sent me to hell long ere this, had the Lord left me ; but, blessed be His name ! His electing, redeeming and saving love has got fast hold of me ; and who is able to pluck me out of my Father's hand ? On my bended knees I have often to cry for succour ; and—bless His name !—He has hitherto heard my cry. Oh, if I did not know that all the Lord's people had soul-contention, I should give up all for lost. I rejoice that the promises left on record are meant for me, as well as for every saint of His, and as such I desire to grasp them. Let the whole earth, and even God's professing people, cast out my name as evil ; my Lord and Master He will not. I glory in the distinguishing grace of God, and will not, by the grace of God, step one inch from my principles, or think of adhering to the present fashionable sort of religion.

“ Oh, could I become like holy men of past ages—fearless of men—holding sweet communion with God—weaned more from the world, and enabled to fix my thoughts on spiritual things entirely ! But when I would serve God, I find my old deceitful heart full of the very essence of hell, rising up into my mouth, polluting all I say and all I do. What should I do,

if, like you, I were called to be engaged about things of time and sense? I fear I should be neither diligent in business, nor fervent in spirit. 'But' (say you) 'he keeps talking all about himself.' True, he does; he cannot help it. Self is too much his master. I am proud of my own ignorance; and, like a toad, bloated with my own venomous pride, proud of what I have not got, and boasting when I should be bemoaning. I trust you have greater freedom from your own corruptions than I have; and in secret, social, and family prayer enjoy more blessed, sanctified liberty at the footstool of mercy.

"Rejoice! for heaven awaits us, and all the Lord's family! The mansion is ready; the crown is made; the harp is strung; there are no willows there. May we be enabled to go on, like lions, valiant for the truth and cause of King Jesus, and, by the help of the Spirit, vow eternal warfare with every sin, and rest not until the sword of the Spirit has destroyed all the enemies in our hearts.

"May we be enabled to trust the Lord, for He will help us; we must conquer; we cannot be lost. Lost! Impossible! For who is able to snatch us out of our Father's hand?"

Although so evidently impressed, as this letter shows, with the importance of spiritual considerations, the great change of heart and purpose which should render him a decided Christian had not yet taken place. He saw his own sinfulness, and was not slow to bewail it; but the burden was still on the pilgrim's back, and he had not yet been made free. Indeed it seems as though it was during this time, when he was acting as usher in the school at Newmarket that he passed into that dense thicket of Scripture doubt which is the

trouble of so many earnest young souls. He had been for a time to a college at Maidstone, and had returned to Newmarket to work under a Baptist principal, although the school was associated with the Independent Church. Nothing is recorded to show in what way the temptation to unbelief came; whether any book had reached his hand and eclipsed his faith, or whether it was the result of some conversations he had with an unbeliever. Possibly the world might not have known of such a time of spiritual struggle had it not been in later life that Mr. Spurgeon felt moved to refer to it at a meeting at Exeter Hall. Many had thought that one whose assurance of faith seemed so doubly sure could have scant sympathy with those who were fighting their way to the light. A common error this, to suppose that the enjoyment of a sunny confidence in God and an unswerving faith in His revelation of His will implies that there has been no antecedent travail of soul when as yet it sat in darkness and the shadow of death. Every heart knows not only its own sorrow but its own struggle; and the stranger intermeddleth not with that joy of sunrise which follows the gloom of feeling there is no God.

Spurgeon, on the occasion referred to, had been depicting the position and prospects of a freethinking young man, and broke out into this utterance of a personal retrospect: "I, too, have been like him. There was an evil time when I dropped the anchor of my faith; I cut the cable of my belief; I no longer moored myself hard by the coast of Revelation; I allowed my vessel to drift before the wind, and thus started on the voyage of infidelity. I said to reason, Be thou my captain; I said to my own brain, Be thou my rudder;

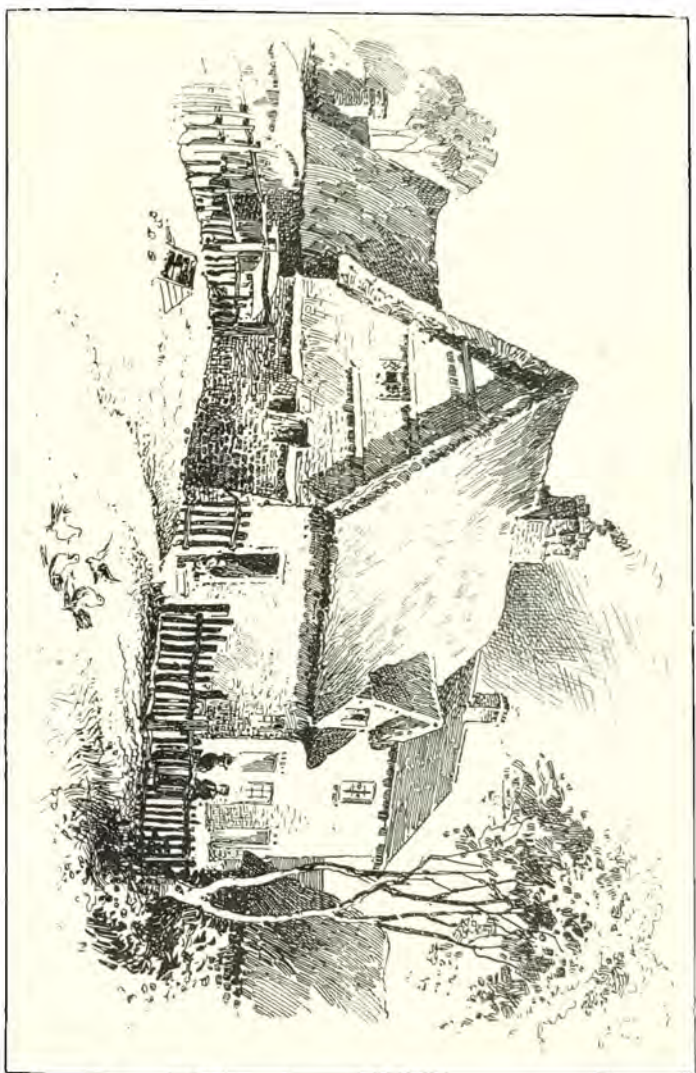
and I started on my mad voyage. Thank God it is all over now, but I will tell you its brief history ; it was one hurried sailing over the tempestuous ocean of free thought."

It is not given to every one to be able to fix the precise date of their conversion ; they can rejoice in having passed from darkness to light, but when or how the mighty deliverance came it is not theirs to record. With Charles Haddon Spurgeon, however, it was different, and the incident which was the means of his conversion marks Sunday, the 13th of January, 1850, as the golden letter day of his life. Happily he has told the story in one of his sermons, and it cannot be better told. He was in Colchester at the time, and what he relates took place in the Primitive Methodist Chapel of that town. The minister to whom he alludes was afterwards identified as Mr. Eaglen, who was in the circuit in that year. Here then is the account of his conversion :—

"I will tell you how I myself was brought to the knowledge of this truth. It may happen the telling of that will bring some one else to Christ. It pleased God in my childhood to convince me of sin. I lived a miserable creature, finding no hope, no comfort, thinking that surely God would never save me. At last the worst came to the worst—I was miserable ; I could do scarcely anything. My heart was broken in pieces. Six months did I pray—prayed agonisingly with all my heart, and never had an answer. I resolved that, in the town where I lived, I would visit every place of worship in order to find out the way of salvation. I felt I was willing to do anything and be anything if God would only forgive me. I set off, 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 them once fully preach the gospel. I mean by that—they preached truths, great truths, many good truths that were fitting to many of their congregation—spiritually-minded people; but what I wanted to know was—How can I get my sins forgiven? And they never once told me that. I wanted to hear how a poor sinner, under a sense of sin, might find peace with God; and when I went I heard a sermon on ‘Be not deceived. God is not mocked,’ which cut me up worse, but did not say how I might escape. I went again another day, and the text was something about the glories of the righteous; nothing for poor me. I was something like a dog under the table, not allowed to eat of the children’s food. I went time after time, and I can honestly say I don’t know that I ever went without prayer to God, and I am sure there was not a more attentive hearer in all the place than myself, for I panted and longed to understand how I might be saved.

“At last, one snowy day,—it snowed so much, I could not go to the place I had determined to go to, and I was obliged to stop on the road; it was a blessed stop to me,—I found rather an obscure street and turned down a court, and there was a little chapel. I wanted to go somewhere, but I did not know this place. It was the Primitive Methodists’ chapel. I had heard of these people from many, and how they sang so loudly that they made people’s heads ache; but that did not matter. I wanted to know how I might be saved, and if they made my head ache ever so much I did not care. So, sitting down, the service



COTTAGE IN WHICH SPURGEON FIRST PREACHED.

went on, but no minister came. At last a very thin-looking man came into the pulpit and opened his Bible and read these words: 'Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.' Just setting his eyes upon me, as if he knew me all by heart, he said, 'Young man, you are in trouble.' Well, I was, sure enough. Says he, 'You will never get out of it unless you look to Christ.' And then lifting up his hands he cried out, as only I think a Primitive Methodist could do, 'Look! look! look!' 'It is only a look,' said he. I saw at once the way of salvation. Oh, how I did leap for joy at that moment. I know not what else he said: I did not take much notice of it,—I was so possessed with that one thought. Like as when the brazen serpent was lifted up, they only looked and were healed. I had been waiting to do fifty things, but when I heard this word, 'Look,' what a charming word it seemed to me. Oh, I looked until I could almost have looked my eyes away, and in heaven I will look on still in my joy unutterable.

"I now think I am bound never to preach a sermon without preaching to sinners. I do think that a minister who can preach a sermon without addressing sinners does not know how to preach."

When Charles came home after this spiritual revelation he carried the secret in his heart, and in the evening went with his mother to the Baptist Chapel at Colchester. At the end of the day his father conducted the family worship, and then told the boys that it was time to go to bed.

"Father," said Charles, "I don't want to go to bed yet; I want to speak with you."

Late into the night the godly father and his boy

sat up, the latter unburdening his heart of the event of the morning, saying :—

“ In the text, ‘ Look, look, look ! ’ I found salvation this morning ; and in the text, ‘ Accepted in the beloved, ’ preached at the Baptist Church in the evening, I found peace and pardon.”

Thus he recorded what God did for him that day ; and soon after he began his first essay in doing something for God, in that work which was henceforth to be the labour of his life. He tells us, that “ when it rained I dressed myself in waterproof leggings and a mackintosh coat, and a hat with a waterproof covering, and I carried a dark lantern to show me the way across the fields. I had many adventures . . . but what I had gathered by my studies during the day I handed out to a company of villagers in the evening, and was greatly profited by the exercise.” The incident of his first preaching attempt is well known—how with a companion he went from Cambridge one day to hold a little cottage meeting, and how they disputed by the way in an amiable fashion who should *not* take the first place in preaching to the people who would be assembled. The elder one was strong in his protestations that he could not do such a thing, and it was therefore left to the younger, who was the future minister of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, to make the attempt. How he succeeded, what text he took, what his village listeners thought of him, is now lost to view. Some “ oldest inhabitant ” has said that memory preserves the subject of his discourse, and that he gave out the words “ Fear not, thou worm Jacob,” the selection of which must surely have been prompted by the deep sense of his own weakness and misgivings.

The ruddy-faced youth, with his round unclerical jacket, and turn-down collar, standing behind the chair in that cottage, breaking through his first modest diffidence in public speaking, and presently, as he warmed to his theme, stretching forth his hands as he reasoned with these simple folk "of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come," afterwards walking home with his friend under the stars to Cambridge, with its spires, and towers, and ringing bells, —surely this is a scene full of deepest interest, the point of wonderful beginnings in a life of glorious fame.

He was now sixteen years of age, and having been baptised while living at Newmarket, had now cast in his lot with the Baptist denomination. This is his own pleasant retrospect of that event. "My parents wished me to follow my own convictions," was Mr. Spurgeon's own confession, and he was accordingly baptised by the ex-Jamaica missionary, Mr. Cantlow, at Isleham Ferry, "a beautiful stream dividing Cambridgeshire from Suffolk, and dear to local anglers," on May 3rd, 1850. "It was my mother's birthday," he added, "and I myself was within a few weeks of being sixteen years of age. I was up early to have a couple of hours for quiet prayer and dedication to God. Then I had some eight miles to walk to reach the spot where I was to be immersed into the Triune Name according to the sacred command. What a walk it was! What thoughts and prayers thronged my soul during that morning's journey!"

Many people began to discern gifts of utterance in the boy preacher; and it was always noised abroad when he was going to speak at any of the thirteen villages which surrounded Cambridge and formerly his

parish. His youth then, as when he came into the midst of the metropolitan critics whose beards *had* grown, was the subject of constant remark. At one of his village services an old woman called out, " Bless your dear heart, how old are you ? "



THE SCENE OF SPURGEON'S
FIRST PASTORATE.

The youthful exhorter rebuked her curiosity by telling her that she must wait until the end of the service, when such a question would be more orderly. So she asked him again as he passed out.

" I am under sixty, replied he."

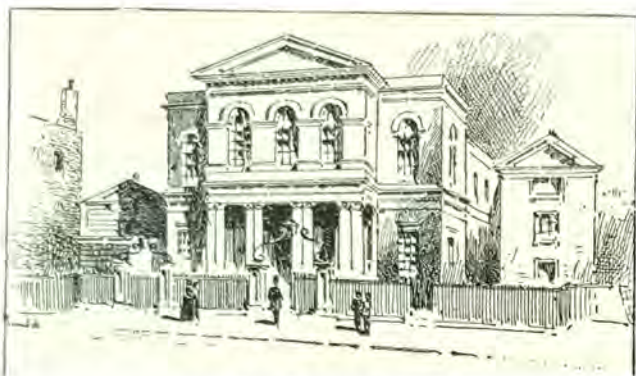
The old lady caught the twinkle in his eye, and

went away shaking her head and saying to herself, "Yes, and under sixteen."

At the little church at Waterbeach his popularity became so great that the poor people earnestly entreated him to become their settled pastor. Thus it came to pass that while the little cottage at Teversham was to be remembered as the scene of his first preaching effort, the church at Waterbeach became his maiden pastorate. To the picturesque little conventicle many flocked from the thatched dwellings of the neighbourhood, and at the end of a year's work the number of those in fellowship had increased. Writing to his mother at this time, he speaks with gratitude of the progress of his church, and how happy he was in the midst of a loving people. His stipend was very limited, but his wants were few; and he thus expresses his feelings on the point:—

"I have all that heart can wish for; yea, God giveth more than my desire. My congregation is as great and loving as ever. During all the time I have been at Waterbeach I have had a different house for my home every day. Fifty-two families have thus taken me in; and I have still six other invitations not yet accepted. Talk about the people not caring for me because they give me so little! I dare tell anybody under heaven 'tis false! They do all they can. Our anniversary passed off grandly: six were baptised; crowds on crowds stood by the river; the chapel afterwards was crammed both to the tea and the sermon."

A great anniversary, with six baptisms, seemed to have filled the heart of the youthful pastor to the brim with thankfulness. But there, many miles away, the great city unconsciously waited the coming of one whose trumpet would wake its millions in Christ's name.



NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL.

CHAPTER III.

A CALL FROM WATERBEACH.

"He whom God steers sails safely.—But keep your own hand off the tiller, saying, 'Not as I will, but as Thou wilt.'"

THE SALT-CELLARS.

THE circumstance has been noted that while Charles Haddon Spurgeon began his ministry so near Cambridge, he had never inscribed his name amongst the *alumni* of the University; and it is equally singular that the most eminent divine of our time and the founder of the Pastors' College should never have been himself in training at any of the excellent institutions of the Baptist denomination.

And yet it would appear that the fact of his not having a college course was determined by a trifling incident, the oversight of a servant girl, but what may be also considered a providence. It is a question

whether such a man could have been much improved by the years spent within college walls; whether, indeed, it may not have been a distinct advantage to him and his work that the bent of his mind was allowed to have free action, unfettered by external control and direction. The story is told by Spurgeon himself in the pages of the *Sword and Trowel*, and we cannot do better than repeat it here in his own words:—

“Soon after I had begun, in 1852, to preach the Word in Waterbeach, I was strongly advised, by my father and others, to enter Stepney, now Regent’s Park College, to prepare more fully for the ministry. Knowing that learning is never an incumbrance, and is often a great means of usefulness, I felt inclined to avail myself of the opportunity of attaining it, although I believed I might be useful without a college training. I consented to the opinion of friends that I should be more useful with it. Dr. Angus, the tutor of the college, visited Cambridge, where I then resided, and it was arranged that we should meet at the house of Mr. Macmillan, the publisher. Thinking and praying over the matter, I entered the house at exactly the time appointed, and was shown into a room where I waited patiently for a couple of hours, feeling too much impressed with my own insignificance and the greatness of the tutor from London to venture to ring the bell and inquire the cause of the unreasonably long delay.

“At last, patience having had her perfect work, the bell was set in motion, and on the arrival of the servant, the waiting young man of eighteen was informed that the doctor had tarried in another room, and could stay no longer, so had gone off by train

to London. The stupid girl had given no information to the family that any one had called, and been shown into the drawing-room, consequently the meeting never came about, although designed by both parties. I was not a little disappointed at the moment ; but have a thousand times since then thanked the Lord very heartily for the strange providence which forced my steps into another and far better path.

“ Still holding to the idea of entering the Collegiate Institution, I thought of writing and making an immediate application ; but this was not to be. That afternoon, having to preach at a village station, I walked slowly in a meditating frame of mind over Midsummer Common to the little wooden bridge which leads to Chesterton, and in the midst of the common I was startled by what seemed to me to be a loud voice, but which may have been a singular illusion : whichever it was, the impression it made on my mind was most vivid ; I seemed very distinctly to hear the words, ‘ Seekest thou great things for thyself ? seek them not ! ’ This led me to look at my position from a different point of view, and to challenge my motives and intentions. I remembered my poor but loving people to whom I ministered, and the souls which had been given into my humble charge ; and although at that time I anticipated obscurity and poverty as the result of the resolve, yet I did there and then renounce the offer of collegiate instruction, determining to abide for a season at least with my people, and to remain preaching the word so long as I had strength to do it. Had it not been for those words I had not been where I am now. Although the ephod is no longer worn by a ministering priest, the Lord guides His people by His

wisdom, and orders all their paths in love; and in times of perplexity, by ways mysterious and remarkable, He says to them, 'This is the way; walk ye in it.'

The popularity of Spurgeon soon began to extend beyond these Cambridge villages; and the first step to his wider sphere of work was taken when he delivered a speech at a meeting of the Cambridge Union of Sunday Schools. Amongst his hearers was a visitor from London, who, much struck with the force and originality of the youthful minister, spoke of it to one of the deacons of New Park Street Chapel, then without a pastor.

Spurgeon has himself told us through the pages of his magazine the history of that event which, next to his conversion, was the most important of his life. It was after a walk from Cambridge one Sunday morning that he found on the table of the little vestry at Waterbeach a letter addressed to himself, bearing the unusual postmark of London. With much curiosity he opened it, and found the invitation to preach in the pulpit where had stood a succession of ancient and honoured divines.

"Dr. Rippon seemed to be over us as an immeasurably great man, the glory of whose name covered New Park Street Chapel and its pulpit with awe unspeakable. We quietly passed the letter across the table to the deacon who gave out the hymns, observing that there was some mistake, and that the letter must have been intended for a Mr. Spurgeon who preached somewhere down in Norfolk. He shook his head, and observed that he was afraid there was no mistake, as he always knew that his minister would be run away with by some large church or

other, but that he was a little surprised that the Londoners should have heard of him quite so soon. '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.' He shook his head very gravely, but the time was come for us to look out the hymns, and therefore the letter was put away, and, as far as we can remember, was for the day quite forgotten, even as a dead man out of mind."

He wrote a favourable answer, however, and in due time came to the metropolis, apparently his first introduction to the mighty maze and world of humanity which was one day to feel and acknowledge his power. Now that he is gone and the voice which thrilled the city with its music is hushed for ever, nothing can be of greater interest than his own recollections of that eventful first day in our midst. Once more, therefore, we quote from his impressions, as recorded by himself in the *Sword and Trowel* under the title, "Twenty-five years ago."

"We lodged for the night at a boarding-house in Queen's Square, Bloomsbury, to which the worthy deacon directed us. As we wore a huge black satin stock and used a blue handkerchief with black spots, the young gentlemen of that boarding-house marvelled greatly at the youth from the country who had come up to preach in London, and who was evidently in the condition known as verdant green. They were mainly of the Evangelical Church persuasion, and seemed greatly tickled that the country lad should be a preacher. They did not propose to go and hear the youth, but they seemed to tacitly agree to *encourage* him after their own fashion ; and we were encouraged

accordingly. What tales were narrated of the great divines of the metropolis and their congregations! One, we remember, had a thousand city men to hear him; another had his church filled with *thoughtful* people, such as could hardly be matched all over England; while a third had an immense audience, almost entirely composed of the *young men* of London, who were spellbound by his eloquence. 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 our hearing, and when we were shown to bed in a cupboard over the front door we were not in an advantageous condition for pleasant dreams. Park Street hospitality never sent the young minister to that far-away hired room again; but assuredly the Saturday evening in a London boarding-house was about the most depressing agency which could have been brought to bear upon our spirits. On the narrow bed we 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 our rusticity with such amusement; pitiless the spare room, which scarce afforded space to kneel; pitiless even the gas-lamps, which seemed to wink at us as they flickered amid the December darkness. We had no friend in all that city full of human beings, but we felt among strangers and foreigners, hoped to be helped through the scrape into which we had been brought, and to escape safely to the serene abodes of Cambridge and Waterbeach, which then seemed to be Eden itself.

"Twenty-five years ago it was a clear, cold morning,

and we wended our way along Holborn Hill towards Blackfriars, and certain tortuous lanes and alleys at the foot of Southwark Bridge. Wondering, praying, fearing, hoping, believing—we felt all alone, and yet not alone. Expectant of Divine help, and inwardly borne down by our sense of the need of it, we traversed a dreary wilderness of brick to find the spot where our message must needs be delivered. One word rose to our lips many times, we scarcely know why: ‘He must needs go through Samaria.’ The necessity of our Lord’s journeying in a certain direction is no doubt reflected in His servants, and as our present journey was not of our seeking, and had been by no means pleasing, so far as it had gone—the one thought of a ‘needs be’ for it seemed to overtop every other. At sight of Park Street Chapel we felt for a moment amazed at our own temerity, for it seemed to our eyes to be a large ornate and imposing structure, suggesting an audience wealthy and critical, so far removed from the humble folk to whom our 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 suggestions raised by the exterior of the building, and we felt that by God’s help we were not yet out of our depth, and were not likely to be with so small an audience. The Lord helped us very graciously. We had a happy Sabbath in the pulpit, and spent the intervals with warm-hearted friends; and when at night we trudged back to the Queen Square lodging we were not alone, and we no longer looked on Londoners as flimsy-hearted barbarians. Our tone was altered, we wanted no pity of any one, we did not care a penny for the young gentlemen lodgers and their miraculous minis-

ters, nor for the grind of the cabs, nor for anything else under the sun. The lion had been looked at all round, and his majesty did not appear to be a tenth as majestic as when we had only heard his roar miles away."

It is not on record whether the fussy young gentlemen who gazed at him from on high lived long enough to discover who their Waterbeach visitor really was. But possibly some of these may be still surviving, and count it one of their privileges to have known Mr. Spurgeon in those Queen Square lodgings. One thing is clear from the closing words which we have quoted ; the terror of the great city troubled him no more, and he ever afterwards felt at home in the midst of the modern Babylon.





OLD LONDON BRIDGE.

CHAPTER IV.

HISTORICAL RETROSPECT.

"Suffering is better than Sinning.—There is more evil in a drop of sin than in an ocean of affliction. Better burn for Christ than turn from Christ."

THE SALT-CELLARS.

IT will not be out of place here to record briefly something of the history of that church with which Spurgeon was so soon to identify himself. Its foundation takes us back to those times when it cost a good deal to maintain liberty of conscience and hold the truth against the powers that be. The molestation of the Baptists dates from the reign of Henry II. ; but it is sufficient for the present purpose to go back to the age of the Commonwealth, when the Parliament, having gained its own liberty, set about curtailing the liberties of others. "By the Parliamentary Ordinance of April 1645," says Dr. Stoughton, "forbidding any person to preach, who

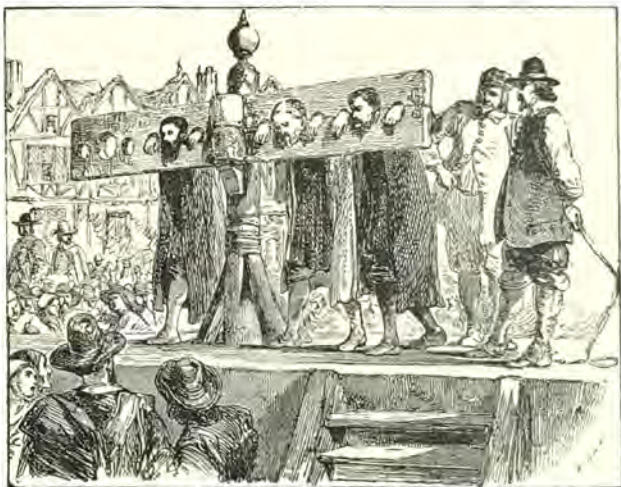
was not an ordained minister in the Presbyterian or some other reformed Church, all Baptist ministers became exposed to molestation, they being accounted a sect and not a church. A few months after the date of this law, the Baptists being pledged to a public controversy in London with Edmund Calamy, the Lord Mayor interfered to prevent the deputation—a circumstance which seems to show that on the one hand the Baptists were becoming a formidable body in London, and on the other hand, that their fellow-citizens were highly exasperated against them." Spurgeon, commenting on this titbit of historical persecution, adds, "Or say rather, that the Lord Mayor's views not being those of the Baptists, he feared the sturdy arguments which would be brought to bear upon his friends, and concluded that the wisest course he could take was to prevent the truth being heard. No Lord Mayor, or even king, has any right to forbid free public speech, and when in past ages an official has done so, it is no evidence that his fellow-citizens are of the same mind. Jack in office is often peculiarly anxious that the consciences of others should not be injured by hearing views different from his own."

Amidst such stormy circumstances, the little Baptist church of Southwark elected its first pastor, William Rider, in the year 1652. This good man had a faithful ministry of fifteen years, and it was then a common sight to see numbers of persons who had adopted the Baptist view being immersed in the Thames close by,—a sweeter river, let us hope, than now for the purpose.

His successor was Benjamin Keach, who seems to have had the honourable distinction of suffering more for the faith than any of the others in the succession

of the pastorate. While a young preacher at the little Buckinghamshire village of Winslow, he was harried by his enemies, often in jail, and shamefully ill-used by the brutal soldiery who were supposed to vindicate the law against sectaries. In 1664 he was solemnly tried for publishing a little book, "The Child's Instructor," which was offensive because it contained some doctrines not in accordance with the Prayer Book. After the farce of a trial he was condemned, fined, and pilloried in Aylesbury town. When Keach came to London he preached to large assemblies in the meeting-house in Goat's Yard Passage, Fair Street, Horse-lie-down, and quite as zealously laboured with his busypen by writing works of poetry and prose. His "Key to open Scripture Metaphors," and "Exposition of the Parables," are among his best known literary productions. He was pastor thirty-six years. Before he died he called to his bedside Benjamin Stinton, who had been his co-worker for some years. To him he committed the care of the church and the many works of usefulness in connection therewith. The principal act of Mr. Stinton's pastorate was the establishment of the Baptist Fund for needy ministers. After fourteen years God called him, and the election of his successor divided the church and left John Gill to begin, under no promising aspect, a ministry which was to continue for more than half a century. He was in every respect a notable man, and by his writings on the Bible has made for himself an honoured and permanent place among the old divines. As one of the best Hebrew scholars of his day, he received from the University of Aberdeen the diploma of Doctor in Divinity, and his exposition of the whole New Testament, in three large volumes, secured his reputation as a commenta-

tor. So much was he respected that, at the request of many who did not belong to the Baptist denomination, he commenced a week-day lecture in Eastcheap, and for twenty-six years faithfully fulfilled this duty. In the pulpit he was powerful and weighty in style. To the unruly he could be stern, to the weak and repentant he was always gentle. Like his distinguished suc-



IN THE PILLORY.

cessor, who is the subject of these pages, many stories are told of his eccentricities, two of which may find a place here.

An old man, whose rudeness had often manifested itself to the preacher, used to wait at the pulpit stairs to make some scoffing remark as the worthy Doctor passed down.

"Is this preaching?" was the cynical sneer again and again repeated; and at last Dr. Gill could stand

it no longer. "Is this the great Dr. Gill?" demanded the plague. The Doctor drew himself up, and, pointing to the pulpit, sternly replied,—

"Go up and do better—go up and do better."

The other instance is that of a talkative woman, who took him to task for the length of his clerical bands. Wearied at length by her impertinency, he one day handed her the scissors and asked her to cut them to her satisfaction. This done it was his turn.

"Now, my good sister, you must do me a good turn also."

"Yes, that I will, doctor ; what can it be?"

"Well, you have something about you which is a deal too long and causes me no end of trouble, and I should like to see it shorter."

"Indeed, dear sir, I will not hesitate, what is it? Here are the scissors, use them as you please."

"Come then, good sister," said the grim old doctor, 'put out your tongue!'

In both these cases, we doubt not, the rebuke was well delivered and acted as a perfect remedy. It was the recollection of this eminent man which made Spurgeon quake at the prospect of occupying his pulpit in New Park Street, which pulpit is still preserved in the Pastors' College for the use of students.

Of Dr. Gill's closing hours Spurgeon thus speaks : "The last words he was heard to speak were 'O my Father, my Father!' He died at Camberwell, October 14th, 1771, and was buried at Bunhill Fields. His eyesight had been preserved to him so that he could read small print by candlelight even to the last, and he never used glasses. His was a mind and frame of singular vigour, and he died before failing sight, either mental or physical, rendered him unfit for service, in

this as highly favoured as he had been in most other respects. He was one of the most learned men that the Baptist denomination has ever produced."

Of Dr. John Rippon's long pastorate of sixty-three years much that is full of interest might also be said. He was the most fashionable dissenting preacher of his day, and the old chapel in Carter Lane was filled with a wealthy congregation, the minister himself driving a coach and pair. He was an active man, with a mixture of humour and intolerance, and had evidently the desire to keep himself out of hot water if possible.

One day, one of his friends asked him why he did not attend the meetings of the Baptist body and take a more prominent part in their deliberations. "Why," said he, "I see the Dover coach go by my house every morning, and I notice that the leaders get most lashed."

His pen was never idle, and he displayed his ability in this direction most by his admirable book of hymns, which were such a good selection that it met with appreciation from a large number of dissenters not associated with his particular church and denomination.

Spurgeon says of him that he "outlived his usefulness," and his long pastorate of sixty-three years proves that "it is not an unqualified blessing to live to be eighty-five."

The building of the new chapel in New Park Street, a most out-of-the-way and undesirable situation, brings us to the year 1833, and the three brief pastorates which preceded that of Mr. Spurgeon. Dr. Joseph Angus took the pulpit in 1840, and after four years of conspicuous success was elected Secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society, and is still living.

The Bible student is indebted to him for those "Handbooks of the Bible," and "English Literature," which could not now be spared, and as Principal of the Baptist College in Regent's Park he is enriching others by his scholarship and high qualities of heart. Spurgeon's immediate predecessor was James Smith, who had the oversight of the church; he was a man of rare feeling, whose ministry under much physical weakness was greatly blessed to the church. He resigned through illness, and died in 1861.

One Sunday, a little time before his decease, when Mr. Spurgeon was preaching at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, he referred to his predecessor in these graceful and tender words, "I saw this week the former pastor of this church, Mr. James Smith, of Cheltenham. About a year ago he was struck with paralysis, and one half of his body is dead. But yet I have seldom seen a more cheerful man in the full heyday of strength. I had been told that he was the subject of very fearful conflicts at times; so after I had shaken hands with him, I said, 'Friend Smith, I hear you have many doubts and fears!' 'Who told you that?' said he, 'for I have none.' 'Never have any? why, I understood you had many conflicts.' 'Yes,' he said, 'I have many *conflicts*, but I have no *doubts*; I have many wars within, but I have no fears. Who could have told you that? I hope I have not led any one to think that. It is a hard battle, but the victory is sure.' Then he said in his own way, 'I am just like a packet that is all ready to go by train, packed, corded, labelled, paid for, and on the platform, waiting for the express to come by and take me to glory. I wish I could hear the whistle now.'"

A brief three years under the care of Mr. William

Walters brings us back to the point from which this chapter has diverged, the invitation of the deacons and church at New Park Street to Mr. Spurgeon.

The invitation was that of a large majority, but the fact of the few, to whom possibly his extreme



THE BOY PREACHER OF NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL.

youth was the only offence, was not unobserved by the young minister. In his reply he prefers to come for three months, and then if the church disagrees they both reserve the option of his retirement, or he will go on as a supply for three months longer, until they all are well satisfied. "Perhaps this is not

businesslike. I do not know," says he, "but this is the course I should prefer, if it would be agreeable to the church. Enthusiasm and popularity are often the cracking of thorns and soon expire. I do not wish to be a hindrance if I cannot be a help."

At the end of three months he had made himself master of the position, and the church, without a dissident, invited him to cast in his lot permanently among them. This he accepted with absolute confidence, and his reply expresses his unfailing trust in the guidance of Providence. He reminds them of the trepidation of mind which their first invitation to him to preach gave him, and how wonderfully God seems to have called him from that obscure village, himself but a mere youth, to undertake such responsible duties. But he places himself entirely at the disposal of his covenant-keeping God, whose hand unfailingly directs and controls his future.

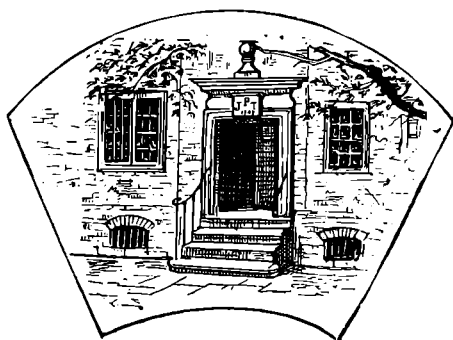
No one in reading this letter can doubt the sincere humility of the writer, or fail to appreciate that solemn sense of responsibility which almost oppressed him.

As an evidence of this we will add the following extract from the letter, as a fitting conclusion to this chapter :—

"I feel it to be a high honour to be the pastor of a people who can mention glorious names as my predecessors, and I entreat of you to remember me in prayer, that I may realise the solemn responsibility of my trust. Remember my youth and inexperience; pray that these may not hinder my usefulness. I trust also that the remembrance of these may lead you to forgive the mistakes I may make, or unguarded words I may utter.

"Blessed be the name of the Most High: if He

has called me to this office, He will support me in it, otherwise how should a child, a youth, have the presumption thus to attempt a work which filled the heart and hands of Jesus? Your kindness to me has been very great, and my heart is knit unto you. I fear not your steadfastness, I fear my own. The gospel, I believe, enables me to venture great things, and by faith I venture this. I ask your co-operation in every good work ; in visiting the sick, in bringing in inquirers, and in mutual edification."





ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

CHAPTER V.

NEW PARK STREET AND THE SURREY MUSIC HALL.

"Dare to do right, and walk in the light.—Beware of that 'bold bashfulness,' as Fuller called it, which dares to offend God, while it fears to offend man."

THE SALT-CELLARS.

HIS settlement at New Park Street made the old deserted chapel stir once more with life. The news spread through London that the boy preacher was worth hearing, and stories of his oddities of speech were passed freely from mouth to mouth. In due time he became the most talked-of man in London. The demand for hearing his sermons led him to make the experiment of printing one of them, which he delivered at New Park Street Chapel in the autumn of 1854; and this, upon the text "Is it not wheat-harvest to-day?" became the first of that series

which without a break have been published every week since then. First issued as the "Penny Pulpit," then as the "New Park Street Pulpit," and finally as the "Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit," this series is unique in the history of published sermons, which are not generally highly esteemed by ordinary readers, and must be referred to in a later page, when his copious literary works have our attention.

Before many months had expired, the chapel in New Park Street, once, alas! all too large for its occupants, became inconveniently crowded; and its minister began to feel that something must be done for the large crowds sent away from the packed doorways, and also to realise the inconvenience to both speaker and hearers of the intense heat, especially at the evening service. He looked round from the pulpit to see where an enlargement of the building could be made. One evening, after one of his sermons, he exclaimed, "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, and by faith this wall at the back shall come down too!"

For this irreverent prophecy an ancient church officer rebuked him, and hoped such words would not be repeated. "What do you mean?" exclaimed the minister warmly; "you will hear no more about it *when it is done*, and therefore the sooner you set about doing it the better." This wall of course in due time came down, and the extra space in the rear was rapidly filled by the rush of worshippers. The heat seems to have continued to distress him, and he complained several times of a certain window, well barred and kept shut in the galleries, without effect. One Sunday morning the deacons were shocked to find the glass of the offending window broken, and

drew his attention to it; but the pastor could only recommend that a reward of £5 should be offered, to be presented to the culprit as a testimonial. He admitted afterwards that he had a knowledge of the stick that did the damage. Still the crowds came, and Exeter Hall was taken from February until May of the year 1855. Such a step, like so many others of Mr. Spurgeon's, justified itself, for Sunday after Sunday the vast building was crowded to overflowing, and the waiting multitude became quite a feature of Sunday in the Strand. Although springing so suddenly into fame, the notice which he received was not always complimentary, and the papers vied with each other in ridiculing the talk of the town. Comic sketches in burlesque of Spurgeon appeared; one of himself in one pulpit, and Bellew the "society" clergyman in another, with the suggestive inscription "Brimstone and Treacle"; another represented the Baptist minister with a fly-catcher round his head, and certain ladies and gentlemen of all sorts and conditions with wings flying round and attracted by him. Many of these were characterised by bad taste, and an illiberal estimation of the preacher's sincerity and earnestness.

It must not be imagined that the work of Spurgeon was all in the pulpit, and that in these early times, with the claims of a rapidly rising popularity, he was regardless of pastoral duty. In his grand work "The Treasury of David," when commenting upon the beauties of the ninety-first Psalm, he makes one of those personal allusions which so admirably illustrate the point enforced by the text. Any attempt to tell the story in words other than his own would be to spoil it, so we will transfer the same to our pages:—

"In the year 1854, when I had scarcely been in London twelve months, the neighbourhood in which I laboured was visited by Asiatic cholera, and my congregation suffered from its inroads. Family after family summoned me to the bedsides of the smitten, and almost every day I was called to visit the grave. I gave myself up with youthful ardour to the visitation of the sick, and was sent for from all corners of



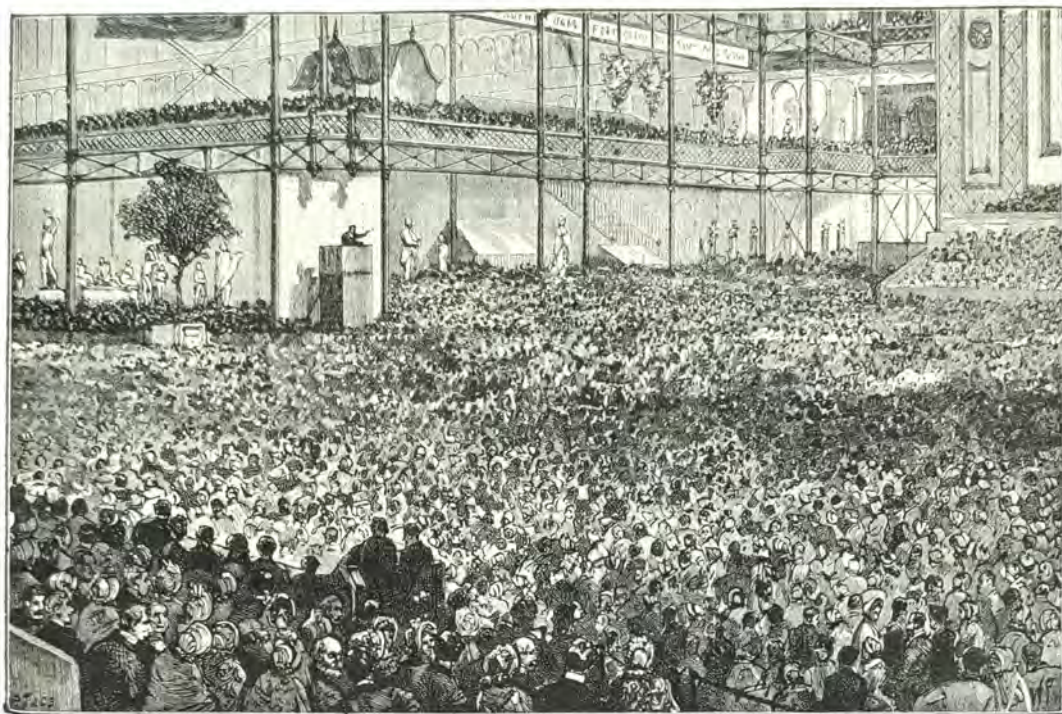
THE TEXT IN THE WINDOW.

the district by persons of all ranks and religions. I became weary in body and sick at heart. My friends seemed falling one by one, and I felt or fancied that I was sickening like those around me. A little more work and weeping would have laid me low among the rest. I felt that my burden was heavier than I could bear, and I was ready to sink under it. As God would have it, I was returning mournfully home from a funeral, when my curiosity led me to read a paper

which was wafered up in a shoemaker's window in the Dora Road. It did not look like a trade announcement, nor was it; for it bore in a good bold handwriting these words:—'*Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation, there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.*' The effect upon my heart was immediate. Faith appropriated the passage as her own. I felt secure, refreshed, girt with immortality. I went on with my visitation of the dying in a calm and peaceful spirit; I felt no fear of evil, and I suffered no harm. The Providence which moved the tradesman to place those verses in his window I gratefully acknowledge, and in the remembrance of its marvellous power I adore the Lord my God."

A great calamity befell the English people in the year 1857, when our Sepoy soldiers revolted and deluged India with British blood. The thrill with which the news shocked England, the passionate grief of those who had lost relations and friends, the recital of horrors of cruelty which every mail brought home, and the passionate anxiety evinced for those in peril, will never be forgotten by our countrymen and women. On the day of National Fast and Humiliation, Mr. Spurgeon was at the Crystal Palace, and preached to an immense assemblage. One who was present thus describes his appearance and the scene:—

"He is of medium height, at present quite stout, has a round and beardless face, not a high forehead, dark hair, parted in the centre of the head. His appearance in the pulpit may be said to be interesting rather than commanding. He betrays his youth, and still wears a boyish countenance. His figure is awkward



MR. SPURGEON PREACHING AT THE CRYSTAL PALACE

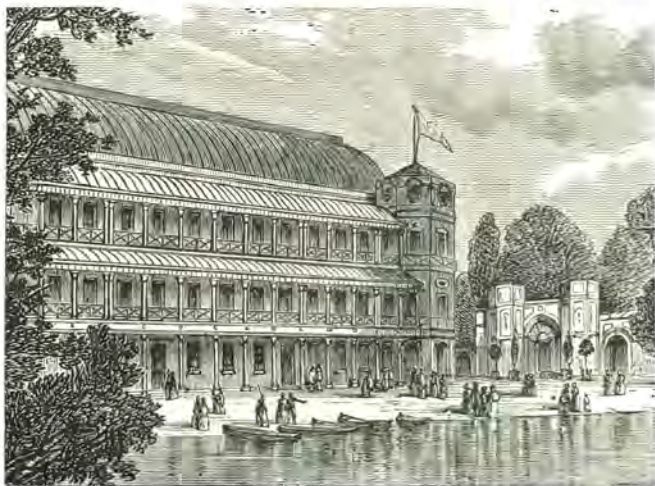
—his manners are plain—his face (except when illumined by a smile) is admitted to be heavy. His voice seems to be the only personal instrument he possesses by which he is enabled to acquire such a marvellous power over the minds and hearts of his hearers. His voice is powerful, rich, melodious, and under perfect control. Twelve thousand have distinctly heard every sentence he uttered in the open air, and this powerful instrument carried his burning words to an audience of twenty thousand gathered in the Crystal Palace. The address abounded in telling points; he did not only enjoin his fellow-countrymen to bewail their sins before God, but pointed out, unmistakably, what those offences were. Lifting up his voice against the tyranny of mammon he cried:— ‘But, my friends, I am inclined to think that our class sins are the most grievous. Behold this day the sins of the rich. How are the poor oppressed! How are the needy downtrodden! In this age there is many a great man who looks upon his fellows as only stepping-stones to wealth. He builds a factory as he would make a cauldron. He is about to make a brew for his own wealth. Pitch him in! He is only a poor clerk who can live on a hundred a year. *Put him in!* There is a poor timekeeper; he has a large family; it does not matter, a man can be had for less; *in with him!* Here are the tens, the hundreds, and the thousands that must do the work. Put them in; heap the fire; boil the cauldron; stir them up; never mind their cries. The hire of the labourers kept back may go up to heaven; it doesn’t matter. The millions of gold are safe. The law of demand and supply is with us. Who shall interfere?’”

One other incident must be noted in relation to his

pastorate at New Park Street Chapel, and that was his happy marriage. This took place on January 8th, 1856, and his wife, destined to be such a faithful and beloved helpmeet to him, was the daughter of Mr. Robert Thompson, of Falcon Square. Dr. Fletcher performed the simple but impressive rite, and the appropriate hymn of "Salvation, O the joyful sound," was sung. It is said such was the crush of people to witness this event that quite two thousand were left outside in the street.

When the enlargement of New Park Street Chapel was found utterly inadequate to meet the crowds which came to hear him, Spurgeon took the Royal Surrey Music Hall, the largest building that could be procured in the South of London; and on October 19th, 1856, he began his first service to an audience of at least seven thousand persons. Just, however, as he began his prayer, some wicked person, it is supposed, raised an alarm of fire, and as a result the people rushed panic-stricken to the doors. For a time Spurgeon continued, and not without success, to pacify the people, but preaching was impossible, so the sermon came as quickly as possible to an end. In the meanwhile, however, the crush on the staircase had been fearful, and seven persons were trampled to death, besides many others who were taken up seriously injured. This sad event caused a profound impression upon the metropolis and the country, and Spurgeon himself was for the time quite shattered in nerves and strength by the shock. For more than a week he seemed to have utterly lost his balance, and this suffering was accentuated by the cruel and disgraceful comments of the public papers. "This man," wrote one of these precious scribes, "in his opinion is

a righteous Christian, but in ours nothing more than a ranting charlatan. We are neither strait-laced nor sabbatarian in our sentiments, but we would keep apart, widely apart, the theatre and the Church. Above all would we place in the hand of every right thinking man a whip to scourge from society the authors of such vile blasphemies as on Sunday night,



ROYAL SURREY MUSIC HALL.

above the cries of the dead and the dying, and louder than the wails of misery from the maimed and suffering, resounded from the mouth of Mr. Spurgeon in the Music Hall of the Surrey Gardens." Such slanderous words as these cut the young minister to the heart, and the short, sharp experience through which he passed after this calamity was the bitterest trial of his life.

To prevent the possibility of a recurrence of such a

calamity, Spurgeon gave up preaching in the evening at the Music Hall, and held morning services only, which, however, were just as fully attended. This unconventional place of worship was attended by many of the aristocracy ; but on this point the minister simply remarks : " We have before us a list of the nobility who attended the Music Hall, but as we never felt any great elation at their attendance, or cared to have their presence blazoned abroad, we will not insert their names. It was a far greater joy to us that hundreds came who were led to seek the Lord and to find eternal life in Him."

It may, however, be of interest to record that amongst the eminent names which in the pastor's account are not disclosed, were, the Lord Chief Justice Campbell, the Lord Mayor and Sheriffs of London, Earl Russell, Lord Alfred Paget, Lord Panmure, Earl Grey, Earl of Shaftesbury, Marquis of Westminster, the Duchess of Sutherland, Lord Carlisle, Earl of Elgin, Baron Bramwell, Lady Rothschild, and Miss Florence Nightingale ; it has been stated that members of the Royal Family were also occasionally present.

That appreciation instead of abuse was beginning to set in is evidenced by a letter signed *Habitans in Sicco*, which appeared in the *Times* newspaper, and was known to be from an eminent pen. Here is an extract therefrom :—

" ' I want to hear Spurgeon ; let us go.' Now, I am supposed to be a high churchman, so I answered, ' What : go and hear a Calvinist—a Baptist!—a man who ought to be ashamed of himself for being so near the Church and yet not within its pale ? ' ' Never mind ; come and hear him.' Well, we went yester-

day morning to the Music Hall, in the Surrey Gardens. . . . Fancy a congregation consisting of 10,000 souls, streaming into the Hall, mounting the galleries, humming, buzzing, and swarming—a mighty hive of bees—eager to secure at first the best places, and, at last, any place at all. After waiting more than half an hour—for if you wish to have a seat you must be there at least that space of time in advance—Mr. Spurgeon ascended his tribune. To the hum, and rush, and trampling of men, succeeded a low, concentrated thrill and murmur of devotion, which seemed to run at once, like an electric current, through the breast of every one present; and by this magnetic chain the preacher held us fast bound for about two hours. It is not my purpose to give a summary of his discourse. It is enough to say of his voice, that its power and volume are sufficient to reach every one in that vast assembly; of his language, that it is neither high-flown nor homely; of his style, that it is at times familiar, at times declamatory, but always happy, and often eloquent; of his doctrine, that neither the Calvinist nor the Baptist appears in the forefront of the battle which is waged by Mr. Spurgeon with relentless animosity, and with gospel weapons, against irreligion, cant, hypocrisy, pride, and those secret bosom sins which so easily beset a man in daily life; and to sum up all in a word, it is enough to say of the man himself, that he impresses you with a perfect conviction of his sincerity.

“But I have not written so much about my children’s want of spiritual food when they listened to the mumbling of the Archbishop of —, and my own banquet at the Surrey Gardens, without a desire to draw a practical conclusion from these two stories,

and to point them by a moral. Here is a man not more Calvinistic than many an incumbent of the Established Church, who 'humbles and mumbles,' as old Latimer says, over his liturgy and text—here is a man who says the complete immersion, or something of the kind, of adults is necessary to baptism. These are his faults of doctrine; but if I were the examining chaplain of the Archbishop of —, I would say, 'May it please your grace, here is a man able to preach eloquently, able to fill the largest church in England with his voice, and what is more to the purpose, with people. And may it please your grace, here are two churches in the metropolis, St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey. What does your grace think of inviting Mr. Spurgeon, this heretical Calvinist and Baptist, who is able to draw 10,000 souls after him, just to try his voice, some Sunday morning, in the nave of either of those churches? At any rate I will answer for one thing, that if he preaches in Westminster Abbey we shall not have a repetition of the disgraceful practice, now common in the church, of having the sermon before the anthem, in order that those who would quit the church when the arid sermon begins, may be forced to stay it out for the music which follows it.'"





MR. SPURGEON PREACHING IN HACKNEY FIELDS.

CHAPTER VI.

AN OPEN-AIR SERVICE AND THE TABERNACLE REARED.

"Lord, touch my ear that I may hear.—And if it has been wounded by sin or stopped up by error, Lord, heal it, and open it to hear Thy word."

THE SALT-CELLARS.

ONE more incident must be noted before passing from that period during which the life and work of Mr. Spurgeon were associated with New Park Street Chapel. This was a meeting in the open air, which, on a week evening, he held at Hackney. The place where this immense assemblage was gathered together has long been obliterated by the growth of London, but it was then an open field in King Edward's Road, Hackney, and at least ten thousand people stood in the evening light to listen, as the eloquent evangelist warned them to flee from the wrath to come. This was on Tuesday, the 4th of September, 1855. The awakening nature of the discourse will be seen by the text, which was, "And I

say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

There are some who well remember that striking scene: the faces of the vast crowd turned as of one man with deep interest towards the youthful speaker, moving them now to smiles, now to sobs of contrition, as he spoke of the raptures of heaven and the terrors of hell. Fortunately, this sermon was printed with a footnote, which speaks of the honesty of him who uttered it. As a characteristic evidence of Spurgeon's style in those early years, we give an extract therefrom. He is speaking of the blessedness of the saved in glory.

"And mark the *good company they sit with*. They are to sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. Some people think that in heaven we shall know nobody. But our text declares here that we shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. Then I am sure that we shall be aware that they are Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I have heard of a good woman who asked her husband when she was dying, 'My dear, do you think you will know me when you and I get to heaven?' 'Shall I know you?' he said; 'why, I have always known you while I have been here, and do you think I shall be a greater fool when I get to heaven?' I think it was a very good answer. If we have known each other here we shall know one another there. I have dear departed friends up there, and it is always a sweet thought to me that when I shall put my foot—as I hope I may—upon the threshold of heaven, there will come my sisters and brothers

to clasp me by the hand, and say, 'Yes, thou loved one, and thou art here.' Dear relatives that have been separated, we shall meet you again in heaven. One of you has lost a mother—she has gone above, and if you follow the track of Jesus, you shall meet her there. Methinks I see yet another coming to meet you at the door of paradise, and though the ties of natural affection may be in a measure forgotten—I may be allowed to use a figure—how blessed would she be as she turned to God and said, 'Here am I, and the children that Thou hast given me.' We shall recognise our friends—husband, you will know your wife again. Mother, you will know those dear babes of yours—you marked their features when they lay panting and gasping for breath. You know how ye hung over their graves when the cold sod was sprinkled over them, and it was said, 'Earth to earth, dust to dust, and ashes to ashes.'

"But ye shall hear their loud voices again, ye shall hear those sweet sounds once more, ye shall yet know that those whom ye loved have been loved by God. Would not that be a dreary heaven for us to inhabit, where we should be alike unknowing and unknown? I should not care to go to such a heaven as that. I believe that heaven is a fellowship of the saints, and that we shall know one another there. I have often thought I should love to see Isaiah, and as soon as I get to heaven, methinks I would ask for him, because he spoke more of Jesus Christ than all the rest. I am sure I should want to find out good George Whitefield—he who so continually preached to the people, and wore himself out with a more than seraphic zeal.

"Oh, yes! we shall have choice company in heaven

when we get there. There will be no distinction of learned and unlearned, clergy and laity, but we shall walk freely one among another, we shall feel that we are brethren, we shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. I have heard of a lady who was visited by a minister on her death-bed, and she said to him, 'I want to ask you one question now that I am about to die.' 'Well,' said the minister, 'what is it?' 'Oh,' said she, in a very affected way, 'I want to know if there are two places in heaven, because I could not bear that Betsy in the kitchen should be in heaven along with me; she is so unrefined.' The minister turned round and said, 'Oh, don't trouble yourself about that, madam. There is no fear of that, for until you get rid of your accursed pride you will never enter heaven at all!'

"We must all get rid of our pride. We must come down and stand on an equality in the sight of God, and see in every man a brother, before we can hope to be found in glory. Aye, we bless God, we thank Him, that there will be no separate table for one and for another. The Jew and the Gentile will sit down together. The great and the small shall feed in the same pasture, and we shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of Heaven."

Towards the close of this remarkable sermon he pictured to the awestruck listeners the horror of the lost, and those pains which are for ever and for ever. Then stretching forth his hands in earnest entreaty, he besought them to "flee from the wrath to come. Now shut the black book," he cried. "Who wants to say any more about it? I have warned you solemnly. I have told you of the wrath to come! Ah! and the evening darkens with some of you. I

can see grey-headed men here. Are your grey hairs a crown of glory or a fool's cap to you? Are you on the very verge of heaven, or are you tottering on the brink of your grave and sinking down into perdition?

"Let me warn you, grey-headed men, your enemy is coming. Oh, poor tottering grey-head, wilt thou take the last step into the pit? Let a young child step before thee and beg thee to consider! There is thy staff—it has nothing of earth to rest upon, and now, ere thou diest, bethink thyself this night, let seventy years of sin start up, let the ghosts of thy forgotten transgressions march before thine eyes. What wilt thou do with seventy wasted years to answer for, with seventy years of criminality to bring before God? God give thee grace this night to put thy trust in Jesus.

"And you middle-aged men are not safe; the evening lowers with you too, you may soon die. A few mornings ago I was roused early from my bed with the request that I would hasten to see a dying man. I hurried off with all speed to see the poor creature, but when I reached the house he was dead—a corpse. As I stood in the room I thought, 'Ah! that man little thought he would die so soon.' There were his wife and children and friends—they little thought he would die, for he was hale, strong and hearty but a few days before. None of you have a lease of your lives. If you have, where is it? Go and see if you have it anywhere in your chest at home. No, ye may die to-morrow."

The time now had arrived when the inadequacy of New Park Street Chapel and the crowds which beset the services at the Surrey Music Hall made

a new building absolutely necessary; and it was in October, 1856, that the first great meeting was held to recommend the erection of the Metropolitan Tabernacle. After this Spurgeon himself went forth through the country preaching and advocating the scheme. Some thought it ambitious to propose a chapel of such immense size, and there was a great difficulty in obtaining a suitable site. The piece of ground at the rear of the Elephant and Castle, which was eventually decided upon, was leasehold under the Fishmongers' Company, and of course anything but a freehold could not be considered. By what Spurgeon always accounted the providential intervention of an influential friend, the desired tenure was at last secured, and the building began to rise. Early, however, in the work, Spurgeon and one of his deacons found their way into the wilderness of masonry and timber one evening after the workmen had retired, and there knelt down to pray for God's blessing on the work and the workmen, and to grant them immunity from accident. This petition was answered. When the foundation stone was laid by Sir Morton Peto, a large and representative gathering was held, and at the evening meeting Judge Payne, a notable man in those days, concluded his speech by telling the people that their pastor's initials, C. H. S., meant a Clear Headed Speaker, with a Cheerful Hearted Style, a Captain of the Hosts of Surrey, a Cold Hating Spirit, having Chapel Heating Skill, a Catholic Humbug Smasher, a Care Hushing Soother, a Child Helping Strengthenener, a Christ Honouring Soldier, and a Christ Honoured Servant. Never surely was there such a discovery of virtues in a man's initials.

The opening services, in March 1860, were crowned

with abundant success ; £31,000 of freewill offerings were given, and afterwards Spurgeon and many of the members of the church signed a solemn testimony of thankfulness to God. " We asked in faith, but our Lord has exceeded our desires, for not only was the whole sum given us, but far sooner than we had looked for it. Truly the Lord is good and worthy



EXTERIOR VIEW OF THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE.

to be praised. We are ashamed of ourselves that we ever doubted Him, and we pray that as a church and as individuals we may be enabled to trust in the Lord at all times with confidence, so that in quietness we may possess our souls."

It is scarcely necessary to give any particulars of a building, which after thirty-two years has become familiar to people not only in England but to almost all visitors to our shores ; sufficient to say that it

holds nearly 6000, without any crowding, and is one of the noblest places of worship in the metropolis.

The Church, when it migrated from New Park Street, had 1178 members; in five years it increased to 2900, and its present membership is over 5000.

In 1864, Spurgeon preached his famous sermon on Baptismal Regeneration. With his usual outspokenness he denounced the priestly claims of those who, in the Church of England, taught this spiritual change in the rite of infant baptism, and never was a more powerful indictment brought against the language of the Prayer Book. A storm of retort broke all over the country: the Evangelical clergy, who were most hard hit, protesting against such an interpretation of the words which they were compelled in the service to use; and those of the High Church school, on the other hand, defending the teaching as the proper doctrine of the Church. Of the sermon which had raised such a tumult, 200,000 copies were quickly sold. In it he said, "The velvet has got into our ministers' mouths of late, but we must unrobe ourselves of soft raiment, and truth must be spoken, and nothing but truth; for of all lies which have dragged millions down to hell, I look upon this as being one of the most atrocious—that in a Protestant Church there should be those who swear that baptism saves the soul. Call a man a Baptist, or a Presbyterian, or a Dissenter, or a Churchman, that is nothing to me; if he says that baptism saves the soul, out upon him, out upon him; he states what God never taught, what the Bible never laid down, and what ought never to be maintained by men who profess that the Bible and the whole Bible is the religion of Protestants." The storm is now over, but, doubtless, its effect is

still perpetuated in a more awakened conscience as to the dangerous intrusion of unscriptural dogmas into the religious faith of the English people.

Spurgeon, speaking to his vast auditory Sunday by Sunday, and by his printed sermons making his message felt in every town and village of the land, was most assuredly the people's preacher, and when any event of importance occurred, the common question of the day was, "What will Spurgeon say about it next Sunday?" When the Cotton Famine was gripping Lancashire in the vice of speechless despair, it was the voice of Spurgeon which pleaded with the people for succour; when the Hartley Colliery disaster shocked the nation by its sudden horror, his pulpit failed not to tell its lesson to the hearts of men. Lifting up his voice at the end of that wondrous discourse on "If a man die shall he live again?" he thrilled the thousands in the Tabernacle with this eloquent climax on death:

"And then, lastly, as this is true of the sinner so it is true of the saint. He shall live again. If in this life only we had hope, we were of all men the most miserable. If we knew we must die and not live for ever, our brightest joys would be quenched, and in proportion to the joy we lost would be the sorrow which followed. We shall live again. Godly wife, thy Christian husband, though he perished by the fatal 'damp,' shall live again, and thou shalt sit with him before the eternal throne. He finished his life with prayer amid his comrades, he shall begin anew with praise amid the cherubim. Widow, bereaved of thy many children, thou hast lost them all; not lost, we hope, but gone before. Oh, there shall be joy when every link that was snapped shall be refitted,

when again the circle shall be completed and all losses restored.

“ ‘Far, far removed from fear and pain,
Dear brother, we shall meet again.’

“That sweet hymn of the children is a blest one after all—

“ ‘We shall meet to part no more.’

“Death, thou canst not rob us ; thou canst not tear away a limb from Jesus’ body ! Thou canst not take away a single stone from the spiritual temple. Thou dost but transplant the flower, O Death ! thou dost not kill it ! Thou dost but uproot it from the land of frost to flourish in the summer’s clime ; thou dost but take it from the place where it can only bud to the place where it shall be full blown. Blessed be God for Death, sweet friend of regenerate man ! Blessed be God for the grave, safe wardrobe for these poor dusty garments till we put them on afresh glowing with angelic glory. Thrice blessed be God for resurrection, for immortality, and for the joy that shall be revealed in us.

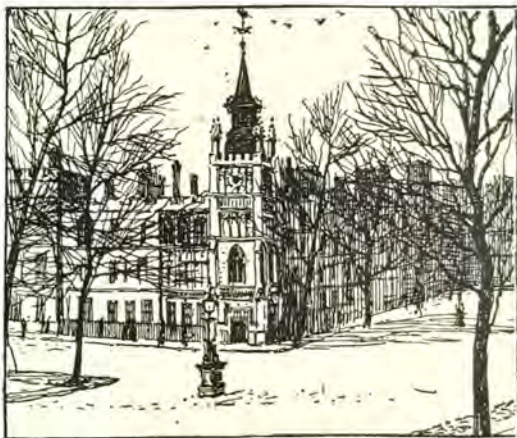
“Brethren, my soul anticipates that day ; let yours do the same. One gentle sigh and we fall asleep,—perhaps we die as easily as those did in the colliery ; we sleep into heaven and wake up into Christ’s likeness. When we have slept our last on earth and open our eyes in heaven, oh, what a surprise ! No aching arm, no darkness of the mine, no choke damp, no labour, no sweat, no sin, no stain there ! Brethren, is not that verse near the fact which says—

“ ‘We’ll sing with rapture and *surprise*
His loving kindness in the skies.’

Shall we not be surprised to find ourselves in heaven ?

What a new place for the poor sinner ! From the coal mine to celestial spheres. From black and dusty toil to bright and heavenly bliss. Above ground once for all, aye, and above the skies too. Oh ! long-expected day, begin ! When shall it come ? Hasten it, Lord.

" 'Come death and some celestial hand,
To bear our souls away !' "





INTERIOR VIEW OF THE METROPOLITAN
TABERNACLE.

CHAPTER VII.

A SHEAF OF STORIES.

"*Stories grow as they flow.*—De Quincey says: 'All anecdotes are false,' and this comes of their shape being altered as they pass from mouth to mouth. They not only grow as they flow, but change as they range."

THE SALT-CELLARS.

"**H**AVE you seen the latest *canard* about yourself in this morning's paper?" was asked of Spurgeon one day by a student. "Yes," he replied, "I have, but I shall not deny it. Perhaps some poor wretch earned a supper last night by inventing it, and if he gets a breakfast by inventing another this morning I shall bear it."

In truth there never was a man about whom more tales have been told than the Pastor of the Tabernacle. Many were true, because he was one of the most

original humorists of his age, and his striking characteristic was that he never seemed to speak like other men, or do anything in a commonplace way. Wherever his earnest messages to sinners sped, there followed a flight of crisp, laughter-moving anecdotes, which gave to his words a living personality. Long before he dropped the "Rev." as a prefix, the English people had ceased to apply the formality in his case; it was Spurgeon's sermon the masses read, and it was tales of what Spurgeon had said and done under the oddest circumstances that passed as the current coin of gossip in the street and round the table.

Of these stories a goodly crop were pure invention, and, as we have seen, the good-natured popular favourite could treat these attentions with a smile. No life of Spurgeon could be complete, or in any way representative, which did not include some of the authentic anecdotes which reveal the man in his varied aspect of ready wit, swift satire, and tender love.

In his Pastors' College he was of course at home, and did not think it beneath his dignity to crack a joke; as, for instance, when he took his place among them one morning, and laid upon the table his well-known easy headgear: "Brethren," said he, "they call us the *wide-awake* college. Well, anything is better than being *nappy*; let us be careful that wherever we go we are *felt*."

When necessary he could be severe, but even then it only provoked the love of the admonished; as, for instance, when, after rebuking a brother for something, the only answer he got was, "Well, that may be so, but I will tell you what, sir, *I would die for you any day*." "Oh," said the pastor, "bless your heart, I am

sorry I was so sharp ; but still you did deserve it, did you not ? ” And the culprit admitted it with a smile.

Rather different, but quite as efficacious, was his treatment of three ill-behaved young men, who, at one of the services at the Tabernacle, posted themselves conspicuously in the gallery, and persisted in wearing their hats. The officers of the place having failed to enforce their proper behaviour, Spurgeon soon had his eye upon them, and speaking about the respect which Christians should show for the feelings of others, remarked in his sermon, “ My friends, the other day I went into a Jewish synagogue, and I naturally uncovered my head, but on looking round I perceived that all the rest wore their hats ; and so, not wishing to offend against what I supposed to be their reverent practice, though contrary to my own, I conformed to Jewish use and put on my hat. *I will now ask those three young Jews* up in the gallery to show the same deference to our Christian practice in the House of God as I was prepared to show them when I visited their synagogue, and *take off their hats.* ”

He had a marvellous way of putting things, and by a slight satiric touch could force home a truth which perhaps the conscience would have otherwise resisted. Thus, in one of his sermons referring to the languid interest felt in the cause of Christ, he says :—“ There are many whose attention to the mission field is confined to the day of the mission sermon ; and very much confined then : the smallest threepenny piece that can be discovered is appropriated to the collection. They *love* the mission ; yes, they do ; but it is after the old fashion—‘ *She never told her love.* ’ ”

He was ever ready to put in a quiet aside when occasion offered, in his good-humoured way. Somebody

tells how a clergyman had been with his wife to hear Mr. Spurgeon preach, and they sat together in the side gallery near the pulpit. The sermon over, and a collection being made, the lady suggested that the opportunity was favourable for getting away and avoiding the crowd. She rose to leave, and, in trying to pass some other people on the seat, knocked down some hymn-books. The clergyman rather nervously pulled his wife's dress to try and restrain her from carrying out her intention ; whereupon Mr. Spurgeon, who had been quietly looking on at the scene, said in a confidential whisper, not intended to be heard by the congregation, " You had better go, sir, or you will hear more of it."

Many seem to think that in this blunt Englishman there was a lack of humility, but can anything be more beautiful than this story of him? " Shortly after Mr. Spurgeon came to London he and some other ministers were invited to the house of the Rev. John Aldis, a well-known Baptist minister at Hackney or Ballspond. At the close of the evening's enjoyment a patriarchal minister was asked to lead in prayer. He did so, and in his supplications broke out in this wise, ' O Lord, thou knowest that thy young servant Spurgeon has a great deal to learn and very much more to unlearn. O Lord, lead him aright.' Mr. Aldis was afraid that when the brethren arose from their knees there would be a scene. But instead of that Mr. Spurgeon went over to the aged minister, and, clasping his hand, said, ' My dear brother, may God in His mercy answer your prayer in my behalf.' "

Many stories are related of people who took to themselves the pulpit message, believing that the

preacher had deliberately sought them out in his utterances.

"I did as you said," remarked a good woman to him once.

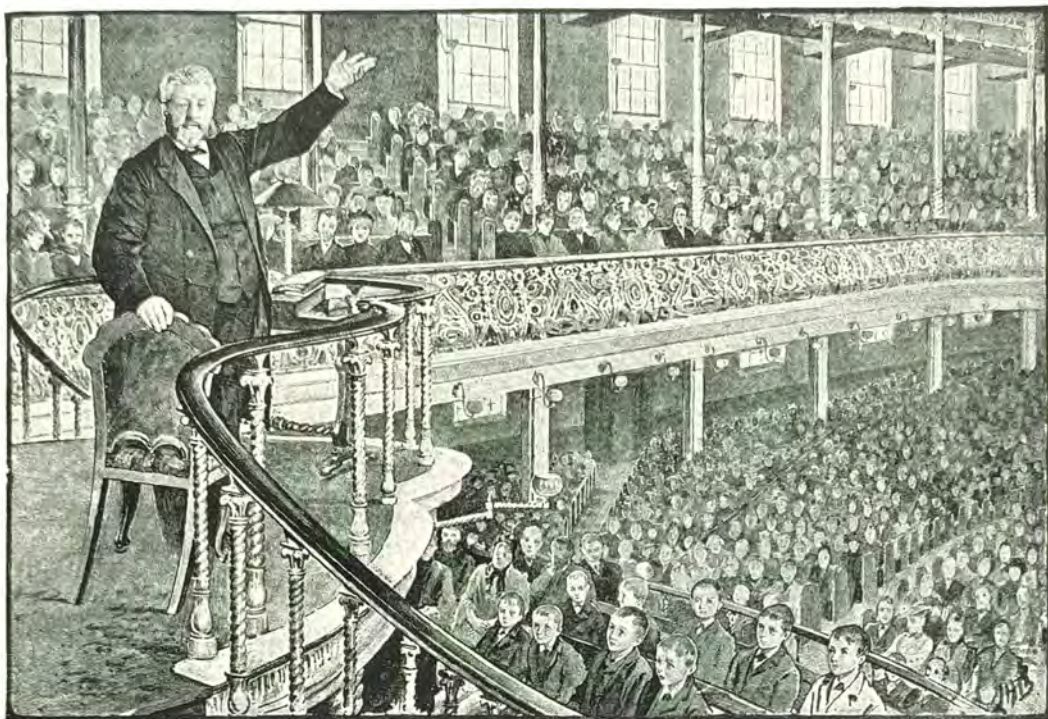
"What was that? I don't remember ever speaking to you before."

"Oh, yes; it was one night at the Tabernacle. You were speaking of the duty of parents to speak to their children about their souls, and you said, 'You, mother sitting there, ought to go home and wake up little Mary to tell her of the love of Jesus'; and I did it, thank God."

On another occasion he received a letter from a poor shoemaker, who said that he was the man about whom he had spoken in the pulpit as having kept his shop open on Sunday, and had only sold one pair of old boots for eighteenpence; and having been so exposed by the preacher he had resolved to give up such wicked trading in future.

It is clear that Spurgeon practised the teaching which he was never tired of giving to his students as to being *direct* in their appeals.

It was not the practice of men of the world who wanted to gain any object to beat about the bush, and neither should it be the practice of men who wished to convert sinners. To illustrate what he meant by going direct to the point, he told how he had once met a labouring man on a hot day resting for a moment with a loaded barrow and wiping the perspiration from his forehead. "It's a hot day, my man," said Mr. Spurgeon sympathetically, "and it looks odd to see so large a truck for so small a load." "Yes, it is, sir, a very odd thing," said the man, looking straight at Mr. Spurgeon, "but do you



MR. SPURGEON PREACHING IN THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE.

know I've met with an odder thing than that this blessed day. I've been about working and sweating all this 'ere blessed day, and till now I haven't met with a gentleman that looked as if he'd give me a pint of beer till I saw you." "That man," said Mr. Spurgeon, "went straight to the point." But not to the public-house in consequence we may rest assured.

A story must be recorded about his memorable sermon at the Crystal Palace. In order to test the acoustic properties of the vast transept which was to constitute his auditorium, Spurgeon went quietly one day and tried his voice in the, as he thought, absolutely empty building. Lifting up his voice the text rang out like a clarion:—"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

Having spoken these words, he left the building, apparently satisfied with its acoustic properties. A few days later a poor labouring man attended an "experience" meeting in the district, and with much confidence told how he had been converted. He said he was so bad that he thought he could not be saved. But he had spent a dinner-hour in the Crystal Palace, praying behind one of the statues, and as he prayed he distinctly heard a voice from heaven say, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." From that moment he was converted. Little did he know of Mr. Spurgeon, or Mr. Spurgeon of him.

Mr. Spurgeon could always find an illustration from the most everyday events which drove in the arrow of conviction. Much of his great power lay here; there was no escape from the clear, simple application of some of his pulpit stories. Take, for instance, this:—

He was explaining how it was that he was always preaching with so much energy the truths of the Gospel to those who were perhaps as fully conversant with them as himself. "The fact is," he said in effect, "I am like the man who knocked at the wrong door late at night. After he had been knocking for some time a head appeared at a window and a voice was heard saying, 'What do you want?' 'I want Mr. Smith.' 'Then why do you come here disturbing me when Mr. Smith lives next door?' 'That's just it,' was the reply, 'Mr. Smith has no knocker, and so I have to knock loudly with yours to make him hear.'"

And yet withal Spurgeon *could* feel nervous, and there were times when a comparatively trifling event would make him uncomfortable. Reverting once more to his gathering at the Crystal Palace, the following is too good to omit :—

"Mr. Spurgeon had never known the fear of man, but when he discovered that his then young wife was agitated, as she well might be at the sight of that enormous congregation, he felt that concern for her might perhaps unnerve him. He beckoned one of his deacons to come to him. This deacon, after a whispered conversation with the pastor, went to Mrs. Spurgeon, who sat immediately under the extemporised pulpit, and said, 'Mr. Spurgeon would be glad if you would sit somewhere else where he cannot see you. If you remain there, it may make him nervous.' The other incident occurred at the close of the service, and impressed itself upon the memory because it settled a point on which every mind had been intent—whether the preacher could possibly be heard at the extreme end of such a crowd. He had asked that

the Doxology should be sung. After the last notes had died away Mr. Spurgeon, without any apparent effort, said, 'No, no, my friends, that won't do. There are great numbers of you who did not sing at all just then. I will have it again, and I will ask you all to sing. Mr. Organist, let us have that again.' The organist was seen in the far distance, with his hand to his ear as Mr. Spurgeon was speaking. At these last words he promptly turned to his instrument, and forthwith again the Doxology resounded through the Palace, this time with a much greater volume of sound, and with an effect that was truly magnificent."

Quite early in his ministry he exhibited his characteristic alertness of mind in choosing and applying a difficult text. Before going on his village preaching rounds one day, he was greatly fixed for a text; but while looking through the window he saw a lot of wretched sparrows persecuting a poor little canary, which in its escape had fallen upon evil times. There then came unto him the word of Jeremiah, "Mine heritage is unto me as a speckled bird, the birds round about are against me." Spurgeon tells us that he "walked off with the greatest possible composure, and preached upon the peculiar people and the persecution of their enemies."

Later in life, this facility in preaching at short notice was frequently referred to, and one of his friends relates the following anecdote of him in this respect:—" 'Give me a text, Williams, and I will preach you a sermon,' said he on one occasion when we were sitting alone in a lovely glen in Scotland. 'One star differeth from another star in glory,' said I. At once he began by describing the glory of certain special stars of separate constellations, giving in each case the name,

and their position in the heavens, until I listened and wondered, and wished I could only write it down. But the finish up! Never have I heard him do anything more sublime, even when preaching to gathered thousands."

Spurgeon was a great lover of nature, and often showed how observant he was of little details which would escape the eye of others. Another of his friends gives this incident of a walk through Richmond Forest. "'Do you know,' he said, 'how to tell a horse-chestnut tree in winter, when the leaves are fallen?' 'I should judge by the bark, and the disposition of the branches,' I said. 'Yes, but you may know it by the horse-shoes. Haven't you noticed that it is marked all over with horse-shoes?' 'No.' He reached and broke off a small branch, and showed me how, at every point where a leaf stem had grown, it had left an impression not unlike a horse-shoe with its nails. 'Look at that oak,' he said; 'he is a world in himself. His very outline is a globe. He sturdily holds out his lower arms at right angles from his trunk. What strength that requires! And his higher branches radiate from the centre. Put one leg of a pair of compasses into the trunk at the level of the lowest branches, and with the other you will describe the outline of the tree. It is perfect!'"

The Rev. Mark Guy Pearse says:—"Some years ago I sat with him on the platform at the Tabernacle, and in an interval of the service I whispered to him, 'When I was a young fellow in London I used to sit right over there and hear you preach, and you will never know how much good you did me.'

"I cannot forget the light that came into his face as he turned to me and said, 'You did?'"

“‘Yes,’ I said, ‘I am so glad of having this chance of telling you. You used to wind me up like an eight-day clock. I was bound to go for a week after hearing you.’

“He put out his hand and took mine in it, and the tears brimmed to his eyes as he said, ‘God bless you—I never knew that.’”

The following is quoted as an account of the visit of Mr. Gladstone to the Tabernacle on January 8th, 1882:—Mr. Gladstone’s visit to the Metropolitan Tabernacle on January 8th, 1882, was an interesting event. The Premier, as he then was, was accompanied by his eldest son, Mr. W. H. Gladstone, who has since passed away. They spent a little time with Mr. Spurgeon in the vestry before the service. The visitors, who followed the pastor and his deacons to the platform, occupied the pew known as “Mrs. Spurgeon’s,” immediately behind the pulpit-platform. The text from which Mr. Spurgeon preached that evening was Mark v. 30. The discourse is described as “a simple but profoundly impressive” one, “lit up in one portion at least by a characteristic touch of humour.” After the service the Premier and his son returned to the vestry, where the deacons and elders in rotation shook hands with Mr. Gladstone, who offered a kindly word to each, and expressed to Mr. Spurgeon his gratification that the pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle was supported by such a large body of workers.

The *Christian World*, reporting an address which Mr. Spurgeon gave to his students about seven years ago, gives the following capital story:—

“He had promised to tell them a few stories of things he could recollect; and a face he saw before

him reminded him of a visit he once paid to Tring. He was regarded as being too *high* for one chapel there, too *low* for another, but in a third he was permitted to preach. The pastor of this chapel was in receipt of only fifteen shillings a week, and Mr. Spurgeon had some misgivings about drinking the poor man's tea. During the meal he noticed that his host wore a very shiny alpaca coat. At the close of the sermon, Mr. Spurgeon said, 'Now I have preached my text to you, "Freely ye have received, freely give." The minister of this place looks as if he wants a new suit of clothes. I will give half a sovereign, my friend down below will do the same, and plates will be held at the doors for your contributions.' The effort was successful. After the service the poor pastor, addressing Mr. Spurgeon, observed that ever since he became a minister of Jesus Christ, his Master had always sent him his livery, and he was beginning to wonder where the next would come from."

About his home life many tender and sweet stories might be told. Here he shone with a radiance which even his publicity never knew. All his great heart went out freely, and those who were **privileged** to cross that threshold have memories which they will cherish for ever. One such speaks thus of a scene which is pathetic in its great gentleness:—

"It was after a committee meeting held in his house. Business over, we had risen from tea and walked through the beautiful grounds, and were once again in the house. He opened the Bible, read and expounded as only he could, opening up the very heart of the Scriptures. Dear Mrs. Spurgeon, slowly recovering from a long and wearisome sickness, was lying on the couch, sharing our joyful communion

Reading finished, the dear one said, 'We are part of the family of God: shall we draw near and talk to Him?' As we turned to kneel, he moved towards the couch, and with one arm around the loved form, he poured out his very soul in a passion of importunate prayer. Never can we forget that hour. It was as if heaven's gates had been more widely opened, and some lustrous beam, alight with our Father's smile, had strayed into the room. Chastened, awed, ennobled, we rose and walked quietly home."





SCHOOL AND ALMSHOUSES.

CHAPTER VIII.

GOOD WORKS AS WELL AS WORDS.

"Be good, get good, and do good.—Do all the good you can, to all the people you can, in all the ways you can, as often as you can, and as long as you can."

THE SALT-CELLARS.

"THE God that answereth by orphanages, let him be God," was the characteristic remark which Spurgeon made when some agnostic professor was pitting the intellectual deity of his own invention against the Ancient of Days. The man whose voice spoke the thunder of God's wrath against sin had a winsome note for the children; no man has had a tenderer heart towards the little ones than he. From time to time he remembered the claims of the orphan and fatherless, when urging, in the *Sword and Trowel*, his church and people to take up Christian

work and put into practical shape the faith which they professed. But it was in September, 1866, that an incident occurred which was the starting-point of the orphanage work. A lady, Mrs. Hillyard, the widow of a clergyman, wrote to Spurgeon asking him to found a shelter for orphan children, and giving her advice practical shape by adding that she had invested £20,000 to be at his disposal for the purpose. Such a munificent act at first almost dismayed him ; he felt hardly equal to such a task, and therefore urged the generous donor to give the money to Mr. Müller for the established and excellent Orphanage at Bristol. Such a suggestion was, however, not acceptable, and therefore he called his deacons together ; and the following year found the land purchased and the buildings already in progress.

A number of persons came forward to give their assistance. The plan being that of separate houses, these rose in turn, each bearing some sign of those who had borne the expense. Thus, one was called the Silver Wedding House, built by a lady who received the £500 from her husband as a silver wedding present ; the Merchant's House, in memory of an anonymous donor of £600, given to Mr. Spurgeon in a sealed envelope ; Unity House, erected by Messrs. Olney in memory of their mother ; the Workmen's House, put up free of expense, the material being also given by Mr. Higgs, the builder ; and the College House, built by the students of the Pastors' College.

During the building of the Orphanage, the pages of the *Sword and Trowel* recorded their progress ; and although the response was hearty to his appeals, there were times, evidently, when Spurgeon's faith was tried, and the responsibility he had taken was not free from

anxiety. He makes a note, under date July, 1867, to this effect :—

“ We have been waiting upon the Lord in faith and prayer concerning our Orphanage ; but He is pleased at present to try us. As we have no object in view but the glory of God by the instruction of fatherless boys in the ways of the Lord, having a special view to their souls’ salvation, we had hoped that many of the Lord’s people would at once have seen the usefulness and practical character of the enterprise, and have sent us substantial aid immediately. The Lord’s way, however, is the best, and we rejoice in it, let it be what it may : if the work is to be one of time and long effort, so let it be, if thereby God’s name is magnified.

“ We have engaged a sister to receive the first four orphans into her own hired house until the Orphanage is ready. One beloved friend, the original donor, has given her plate to be sold for this object, and in so doing has set an example to all believers who have surplus silver, which ought to be put to better use than by lying wrapped up in a box.”

One of the pleasing incidents in the work was the sympathy and practical help it evoked in his ministerial brethren, when, in the name of the Baptist Churches, they presented their contribution towards the Orphanage of £1765, with a kindly letter, in which they said :—

“ We have a twofold object in this presentation. First, as a small token of the high esteem in which we hold you ; secondly, to aid you in your noble effort to found a home for orphan boys. We have watched your past career with praise and prayer ; praise to our covenant-keeping God who has so richly

endowed you with gifts for His service, inspired you with zeal in His cause, and blest you with Pentecostal success ; prayer, that He would keep you blameless to the end, give you increasing love to and ever-growing success in His kingdom, and, finally, the crown of eternal life. We honour you for your work's sake, nor less for your generous love to all your brethren in the ministry, and to the churches over which they preside. To the blessed God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be all the glory.

"We feel a deep interest in the Orphanage scheme which you have been privileged to commence, and pray that you may have all needful grace to carry it on. We desire that the two houses to be built with the money now cheerfully given may prove an abundant blessing to many sons of good and devoted ministers of Jesus gone to their rest ; in them may their children find a precious home, be trained, blest, sanctified, and made blessings—a joy to you and an honour to our Lord."

Of course, the part which the *Sword and Trowel* had taken was duly acknowledged, and in a conspicuous position there is a carved device with the text, "The Lord will provide." The completion of the undertaking was a day of rejoicing, and the new premises began with fifty necessitous children.

One of the incidents of this work must be noted here,—that the large wooden building which was erected as a temporary hall was caught by a storm after the meeting had been held, and collapsed, when it was absolutely empty, or the consequences might have been a repetition of the dreadful scene of the Surrey Music Hall.

Meanwhile gifts continued to pour in, some in

money, others equally welcome in kind. One lady set the pupils of her school to a labour of love, and sent some thousands of shirts for the boys. Spurgeon notes some of these interesting items in his diary during those early days of the work:—

“Mr. Chown, of Bradford, kindly sent £125, the result of a collection, and, with other sums, we had more than £700 in hand. The time had, however, come for new suits for the orphans and certain expenses incident to the season, and to our surprise the report of the secretary was ‘*all bills paid, but only £3 left.*’ Prayer went to work at once, and results followed. Will the reader, however, picture himself with more than two hundred and twenty boys to feed and £3 in hand! He may say, ‘The Lord will provide,’ but would he feel the force of this truth if he were in our straits? We have lived on, but it has been very much from hand to mouth,—and it is very sweet to see how the Lord provides. A friend in Sweden sent us help, and another from Belgium. A young man sends 6s. 6d., being threepence per week of his first half-year’s wages, adding, ‘May it please the Lord to put it into the hearts of many to support you in your great undertaking.’ A brother, with a large family, offers some potatoes and turnips, and remarks that since he has given to the Orphanage he has been much the gainer by improved crops. A donor, who is accustomed to store weekly for the Lord, speaks of the plan as greatly beneficial. One who sends a considerable donation, says, ‘I never write a cheque for you without feeling very sorry that I cannot make it ten times as much.’”

Before giving particulars of the present position of this admirable institution, attention must be drawn to

some of the special characteristics of the work. One is, that the old-fashioned and very unsatisfactory system of election by votes is discarded. The trustees sift carefully the merits of every case, and the most deserving is always selected; the wretched touting for votes, in which not the most needy, but the one who has the most and best friends succeeds, is thus entirely avoided. Another feature is the separate home system, each house being a distinct family to itself, in which the children can feel a freedom and happiness which are impossible when they are massed like a flock of sheep and moved only in the multitude. One more, and certainly not the least instance of Spurgeon's sound sense, is that the boys and girls here are not clad in a monotonous uniform, but are dressed with just the variety of other boys outside. This preserves their individuality and inculcates self-respect—two qualities very important in the training of the young. It is entirely unsectarian. All the churches are represented among its children, and of course a number are the children of parents who profess no religious belief whatever. Surely all are "children of the same dear God," as Whittier puts it, and being in need come without exception within the category of those of whom it is said that a cup of cold water given to such "little ones" shall not lose its reward.

This Orphanage now covers nearly four acres of ground, and under the separate system every house is a real home and has its "mother," to whom the little group of children look up with affection. They all meet together in one common hall for meals, still however keeping to the family order, and in each home family worship is conducted and the texts on

Spurgeon's Almanack for the day committed to memory. In addition to the education they receive, the children are brought up not to be ashamed of work, and both boys and girls alike have their accustomed duties. Mr. Charlesworth, under whose care this institution has been so admirably conducted, says that, "While baptism is not insisted upon, in a place which is quite unsectarian, still, in many cases, the ordinance is asked for. A goodly number of the girls have been baptised upon a profession of faith—sufficient evidence, witnessing to the reality of their conversion, having been given in their daily conduct. While we do not urge the children to come forward for Christian baptism with undue haste, we feel we dare not refuse our consent when they themselves request to be allowed to make a public profession of their faith. In each instance baptism has only been administered when the relatives of the candidates have expressed their hearty concurrence. It is no business of ours to make proselytes, but we dare not refuse to a believer, even of tender years, an ordinance which is enjoined by the Lord Jesus Christ."

Up to the date of the last report we find that 1513 fatherless children have been received, and their parentage represents almost every class of our social order. The largest proportion come from mechanics, tradesmen, and unskilled labourers, the warehousemen and clerks, however, contributing a considerable number. The religious profession of the parents, as an evidence of the impartial basis of the admission, is shown to be, making up the 1513 children, Church of England, 585; Baptist, 387; Congregational, 160; Wesleyans, 140; Presbyterian, 28; Brethren, 9; Roman Catholic, 3; Moravian, 2; Bible Christian, 2;

Society of Friends, 2 ; Salvation Army, 1 ; and where religion is not specified 194.

When the children go away into situations, they do not forget those who sheltered their helpless childhood, and the letters which they send express their gratitude. One old boy who met Mr. Charlesworth after a lapse of years told him that, "Memories of school days dawned, when I, including all the boys, listened attentively to your voice, which always had something important to tell us. I have lived to prove those boyhood days at Stockwell Orphanage were my best. I do sincerely thank God for the privilege of looking back, recollecting that my schooldays were spent there."

To the widows, whose fatherless ones it has safely tended, the work is dear beyond expression ; one such speaks from her heart when she writes to Mr. Charlesworth about her little girl who has been some time at the Orphanage :—"To me it has always been a source of great thankfulness to know that she has always been carefully trained and guarded in a Christian home, directly under your supervision. It was indeed a door opened by God, and has lifted a great burden from my heart. Words fail me to express the thanks I feel ; I can only say "Thank you ; a thousand times thank you," and may God richly bless you and yours for the many kindnesses shown to the fatherless children under your care, and particularly to my delicate girl, who is so shortly to leave the roof which has proved so blessed a shelter for the last eight years."

Mr. Spurgeon, speaking recently to a visitor about the efficacy of prayer, said that he could no more doubt it than disbelieve the law of gravitation. "The

one is as much a fact as the other," said he, "constantly verified every day of my life. Elijah by the brook Cherith, as he received his daily rations from the ravens, could hardly be a more likely subject for scepticism than I. Look at my Orphanage. To keep it going entails an annual expenditure of about £10,000. Only £1,400 is provided for by endowment. The remaining £8,000 comes to me regularly in answer to prayer. I do not know where I shall get it from day to day. I ask God for it, and He sends it. Mr. Müller, of Bristol, does the same on a far larger scale, and his experience is the same as mine. The constant inflow of funds—of all the funds necessary to carry on these works—is not stimulated by advertisements, by begging letters, by canvassing, or any of the usual modes of raising the wind. We ask God for the cash, and He sends it. That is a good, solid, material fact, not to be explained away."

At two periods of our life we have perforce to claim the sympathy and assistance of others,—in the weakness and dependence of childhood, and in the weariness and failing force of old age. Spurgeon had provided for the little ones by the establishment of the Orphanage; now the old must have his care. The idea of the Almshouses arose out of the New Park Street Chapel being found no longer useful in its original design. For sometime the Church, worshipping at the Tabernacle, kept it on as a sister Baptist chapel; and although the preacher was not unsuccessful in his spiritual work, it soon became too evident that the people naturally gravitated in the direction of the Tabernacle, to find a place under Spurgeon's ministry.

It was therefore decided to sell the property at New Park Street, and build with the proceeds a



From a photo. by]

MRS. SPURGEON. *[Messrs. Negretti & Zambra.*

block of houses for the old and homeless near the Tabernacle. An appeal was made for subscriptions, and when the premises were quite ready, it was found that there was a deficiency of £720. The Pastor had determined to take possession free of debt, and so a number of donations were received, including one from himself, which at once removed the difficulty.

The next labour of love to be noticed in connection with Spurgeon's work at the Tabernacle is really due, both in its inception and development, to the gracious forethought of Mrs. Spurgeon. This is known as the Book Fund, the benefits of which have gladdened many a poor preacher's heart and home. The value of books to ministers has been aptly expressed by Spurgeon himself, when, seeing some swans in his garden disconsolately waiting for the water to come into the lake again, he remarked, "These swans without water are like ministers without books. How they long for the brooks and volumes of water!" How this beneficent effort to supply the needy pastors with this essential literary element began and grew is told in that charming little book by Mrs. Spurgeon, entitled, *Ten Years of My Life in the Service of the Book Fund*, from which we venture to extract the following very interesting bit of retrospect as to its beginnings:—

"It was in the December of the year 1875 that my dear husband completed and published the first volume of his *Lectures to My Students*. Reading one of the proof copies, I became so enamoured of the book that when the dear author asked, 'Well, how do you like it?' I answered with a full heart, 'I wish I could place it in the hands of every minister in England.' 'Then why not do so? *How much*

will you give ? ' said my practical spouse. . . . Then comes the wonderful part, I found the money ready and waiting ! Upstairs in a little drawer there were some carefully hoarded crown pieces, which, owing to some foolish fancy, I had been gathering for years whenever chance threw one in my way ; these I now counted out, and found they made a sum *exactly* sufficient to pay for one hundred copies of the work. If a twinge of regret at parting from my cherished but unwieldy favourites passed over me it was gone in an instant ; and then they were given, freely and thankfully, to the Lord, and in that moment, though I knew it not, the Book Fund was inaugurated ! "

It need scarcely be said that directly it became known that these priceless literary gifts would be bestowed upon struggling ministers, quite irrespective of denomination, applications, like the sound of abundance of rain, came pouring in. The letters which every post brought revealed a picture of ministerial penury most pitiful to contemplate. The unknown and as yet unuttered "bitter cry" of those who preached and starved in the respectability of what is called the ministerial profession became manifest, and it touched the tender hearts of the Pastor and his wife. In pleading for these, Mrs. Spurgeon urges the case in words which could hardly be resisted : "The room is small and very poorly furnished," she writes in the *Ten Years*, "a tiny fire burns in the grate, for it is mid-winter ; but beyond this there is an absence of all the suitable surroundings of a minister's study, and you can count the *books* on your fingers. The pastor sits there with bowed head and weary body after a day of heavy work, and—shall I tell it?—of very scanty sustenance. A deep sense of respon-

sibility is upon him, and he feels the weight of souls upon his heart ; but in addition to this, special cares just now press upon him heavily ; troubles of church building matters, questions as to ways and means, fightings without and fears within, which vex and grieve him sorely. . . . Weary and faint, *he is very, very poor*, and, almost overwhelmed by the difficulties of the way, he turns to the fire with his open Bible on his knee and sighs. Oh ! such a sigh. Will the angels hear it, I wonder, and come and minister to him, as they used to do to their sorrowful Lord ? Perhaps so, but his Heavenly Father hath also prepared an earthly solace, and the answer to his cry is even now at the door. The bell rings, and a large parcel is left 'For the Pastor,' and is taken at once to his room. In a moment he knows that relief has come ; he knows the superscription and divines the contents ; in his joy he almost caresses the package ; then, with trembling fingers, he cuts the string and spreads the treasures out before the Lord—yes, literally 'before the Lord' ; for now you see him kneeling by the side of the open parcel, thanking and blessing God for such opportune mercy, such streams in the desert, such blossoming of roses in the wilderness."

This is no ideal picture ; again and again is both its need and its thankfulness confirmed by actual fact. The books, especially *The Treasury of David*, have been a blessing and a real help to many weary-hearted men, working amid a dense population with its many claims, or in remote villages where the isolation is keenly felt.

But to one so sympathetic as Mrs. Spurgeon, it soon became evident that something else other than books must be sent to these witnesses in want. There-

fore a stream of good things—of warm clothing, and in some cases timely and absolutely necessary monetary help—began to flow, through the generosity of many kind friends, far and wide throughout the land. How these were received can be seen by the letters which Mrs. Spurgeon has printed, not only in the little volume of *Ten Years*, but in the further Report of the year 1889.

Brief extracts of some of these are given here, as a permanent record of this Christlike work, and in order to extend if possible a knowledge of its requirements among the English people.

Mrs. Spurgeon tells us how through the kindness of a friend she is able to send bonnets to poor pastors' wives:—

“Many a little bit of brightness has this uncommon offering thrown across a dark and dreary pathway. ‘I am especially pleased with the bonnet,’ writes a very weary, over-tasked pastor’s wife. ‘Don’t think me vain,’ she naïvely adds, ‘but *such a one* has not fallen to my lot for years, and I *do* like it so much.’ Can any one doubt that a very sweet mission of love was fulfilled by that dainty headgear?”

A hard-working country minister can hardly express his gratitude to his kind donor:—

“DEAR MRS. SPURGEON,—I speak the honest truth of my heart, when I say that I was ‘lost in wonder, love, and praise’ when your parcel came. Your generosity has gone far beyond my expectations. It was more than I ever anticipated, to become possessed of *The Treasury of David* complete so soon! My weight of joy and thankfulness is positively a burden, but you must accept in spirit what words cannot possibly convey. I am deeply thankful also for the other volumes, especially for the *Sermon Notes*.

My eyes have been upon them for a long time, but I little thought my desire would thus be so quickly gratified. Their service to me will be invaluable. That God will spare your loving sympathetic life for many years to come, and give you increased blessing in this important work for Him, is the fervent prayer of your deeply thankful friend, ——”

Not only in this country, but amongst the missionaries in distant lands, are there many grateful recipients of the benefits of the Book Fund. One who is working in India finds more applications than he can supply for the loan of books sent out from England. He writes:—

“I do so thank you for those Sermons month by month ; there is only one thing concerning them which makes me sorry, and that is, that I cannot keep them to refer to when I am in trouble, and need the comfort they always give. But the people ask me so earnestly for them that I cannot refuse, and so my ‘feast of fat things’ is contributed to hungry and weakly souls. My copy of *Lectures to my Students* shared the same fate. The young Hindoo students of the Presidency College got possession of it, and so appreciated it that they used to read the lectures to one another in their rooms ; but, alas for me ! they liked it so much that they never returned it, and so I lost one of the choicest books in my library, and I sorely miss its wise teachings. When the vacation was over, I made inquiries after my book, but was told that the student who took it away had settled as a master in a Hindoo school, and was reading it to some of his boys. Well, my loss is their gain ; but there is no other book which can take the place of that one as my help and counsellor.”

There is a wonderful pathos in the following extract from one of the Lord's tried disciples, whose cup of experience is sweetened not a little by help from the Fund :—

“DEAR MRS. SPURGEON,—For your present and previous help, we feel that we owe you a life-long debt of gratitude. You are the greatest benefactor we have in the world, and your name will ever be fragrant in our memory. I cannot tell what we should have done without your timely and generous aid. Many of the garments we are still wearing we owe to you. Many of the best books on my shelves are your gifts, and we have been relieved, again and again, from your treasury. Truly you have been God's ministering angel, helping and cheering us in our times of special need. We devoutly bless God for you, and for the grand work you are doing for God's needy ones. I do hope we shall never again be in such distress as at present; but though we know not what awaits us, of this we are confident, that ‘The Lord reigneth.’”

Mrs. Spurgeon's comment upon this letter is as follows :—“The shadow of a great grief lay on the heart of the pastor who wrote the above words. Sickness had been busy in his home, and death had claimed one of his dear ones. A baby's coffin was brought in—empty—but it carried away the sweet wee blossom which had well-nigh cost the mother's life. Ah me! God's wheat needs long and careful winnowing! But with what glorious results does the fan in His hand thoroughly purge the floor! Poverty, and suffering, and bereavement do but make the soul triumph in its King, and look eagerly forward for the promise of His coming! ‘Breadcorn

is bruised.' Yes, but only to be made ready for presentation in the House of the Lord. 'This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, which is wonderful in council and excellent in working.'"

Although this does not exhaust the list of good works which Spurgeon and his noble wife have inaugurated as Christianity in action, it is one of the grand evidences of the reality of the teaching at the Tabernacle that the place is the ever active centre of every conceivable means of usefulness. The bodies as well as the souls of men are tenderly considered ; not only to the poor is the Gospel preached, but the broken-hearted have the healing of Christian love, and to the captives, lying bound in the cramping fetters of poverty, old age and human woe, liberty is proclaimed.





PASTOR'S COLLEGE.

CHAPTER IX.

HIS STUDENTS AND HIS BOOKS.

"The minister's life is the life of his ministry.—People will not mind his words unless there is a holy life at the back of them. We must burn in our acts and shine in our sermons."

THE SALT-CELLARS.

THE natural fruit of such preaching as that of the Metropolitan Tabernacle was that, fired by the example of Spurgeon, many young men whose heart, the Lord had touched expressed themselves as ready to preach the Word themselves. The Pastor had inaugurated a new era as regards ministerial action ; his very style, its simplicity and directness, was so unlike the rolling periods and studied rhetoric of the day, that many yearned to go and do likewise, and to appeal to the hearts of the people as he had taught them and had shown them the way. It was therefore the very necessity of the case which led to the

founding of the Pastors' College. As Spurgeon says himself, "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 want 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. The Holy Spirit evidently had set His seal upon the work of one of them (Mr. T. W. Medhurst, of Landport) by conversions wrought under his open-air addresses ; it seemed therefore to be a plain matter of duty to instruct this youthful Apollos still further, that he might be fitted for wider usefulness. No college at that time appeared to me to be suitable for the class of men that the providence and grace of God grew round me. They were mostly poor, and most of the colleges involved necessarily a considerable outlay to the student, for even where 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 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. It seemed to me that the preachers of the grand old truths of the Gospel, ministers suitable for the masses,

were more likely to be found in an institution where preaching and divinity would be the main objects, and not degrees and other insignia of human learning. I felt that, without interfering with the laudable objects of other colleges, I could do good in my own way. These and other considerations led me to take a few tried young men and to put them under some able minister that he might train them in the Scriptures, and in other knowledge helpful to the understanding and proclamation of the truth."

The experiment was entirely successful, and the scheme rapidly developed. It speaks for the openness of Spurgeon's mind, that in choosing the Rev. George Rogers to be the tutor of the new college, he found the fit man, whom he believed indeed was sent of God, not in a Baptist but in the minister of a Congregational Church at Camberwell. Such a choice was justified by the progress of the years, and the Pastor speaks of his association with Mr. Rogers as "one of uninterrupted comfort and delight." The Pastor and his College Principal loved each other, and both won the affection of every student in the college. The young men were, in the first instance, received into the house of Mr. Rogers, and the system of boarding them out in the neighbourhood of the Tabernacle has been wisely maintained.

As, however, the work grew, and numbers of earnest and suitable young fellows presented themselves, the question of meeting this new and increasing expense became a real anxiety to the Pastor. From his own purse he supplied the cause most liberally, and kind friends responded to his appeal for support of this school of the prophets. But in consequence of the position he took upon the Slave question, the anti-

abolitionist party in America took grave offence, and his vindication of the rights of the oppressed cost him a heavy loss of income by the cessation of his sermon sales in that country.

It was a serious crisis, in which the new burden weighed much upon his mind, and he felt this the more because the condition of his health precluded him from going through the country preaching on behalf of the college. But his faith failed not, and he makes a thankful record that "after a season of straitness, never amounting to absolute want, the Lord has always interposed, and sent me large sums (on one occasion £1000) from unknown donors." In due time the college was built, and under the care of its venerable principal, it became yearly a greater power in the land. The training was admirable and thorough, and men sent from its doors to proclaim the unsearchable riches of the Gospel did not begin to preach when they begun their ministry. During the short college course of two or three years, they had plenty of opportunity to practise the gift that was in them, and by experience in evangelistic work became ready and effective speakers. Under the wise and thorough instruction of Mr. Rogers and his staff of tutors, they were furnished and equipped for the exigencies of a ministerial career.

But every student past and present will admit that the great value of the College lies in the impress which any man gets of the Pastor's powerful individuality. He became, without question of imitation, Spurgeonic. To these students Spurgeon is a master, an ideal which they loyally believe to be the very best for a young preacher to follow. They pray that they may catch his spirit, they desire that they may all

become Elishas upon whom the prophet's mantle shall fall. Whatever they are, they feel under God they owe to him, and they treasure in their memories every word and gesture of those wonderful speeches which he gave them from time to time. And he, on his part, was always proud of his students. "I devoutly bless God," he says, "that He has sent to the college some of the holiest, soundest, and most self-denying preachers I know, and I pray that He may continue to do so; but it would be more than a miracle if all should excel. While thus speaking of trials connected with the men themselves, it is due to our gracious God to bear testimony that these have been comparatively light, and are not worthy to be compared with the great joy which we experience in seeing no less than two hundred and seven brethren still serving the Lord according to their measure of gift, and all, it is believed, earnestly contending for the faith once delivered unto the saints; nor is the joy less in remembering that eleven have sweetly fallen asleep after having fought a good fight. At this hour some of our most flourishing Baptist churches are presided over by pastors trained in our college, and as years shall add ripeness of experience and stability of character, others will be found to stand in the front rank of God's host."

In the last report of the College, Mr. Spurgeon records the fact that eight hundred and forty-five men have been assisted by it to preach the Word. He speaks of those who, from the doors of the College, have gone to foreign lands, and who are successful pastors in Guernsey, the Falkland Islands, Tasmania, the Cape Colonies, and the United States. He shows that the students are of no mean attainments, and

their college course is a definite and thorough education.

"Although we have taken within our doors men of considerable early advantages," he writes, "we hope we shall never be induced to shut out the order of men for whom our classes were first formed. When there is rich mental soil, whatever early neglect there may have been, the ground yields plentifully as soon as it is tilled ; and in produce, the virgin soil frequently rivals that which has been cropped all along. Verily, 'there are last that shall be first': men far behindhand in education feel their lack, and, by a desperate resolve, cause the republic of knowledge to suffer violence, and to be captured for the kingdom of heaven. We have no occasion to be ashamed of our students, nor of the marked advance which they have made in preparation for their life-work. *We* take men who would have been preachers whether or no. We never knowingly receive a brother who could, would, or should have been repressed. In many cases, if the men could have been kept out of a pulpit, we did our best to keep them out : the brave enthusiasts forced their way, and were not to be restrained by us. We never persuade or induce any one to come ; but, on the contrary, put many to severe trials to test their ardour ; and then we yield to their importunity."

Of course there has been opposition in the work, and some prejudice to overcome among the churches. To this he refers when he says : " If we send forth men who hold the old faith, the gentlemen of the modern school will not admire them, will seek to block the pulpits against them, and will declare them to be 'uneducated men.' This last is not true, and those who make it would know better if they were better

educated themselves. As to closing the churches to us, we are under no fear; for the success in that direction will be small indeed. Of late, a violent attempt has been made to prejudice Christian people by the statement that we have sent forth so many men that we have increased the number of 'the unemployed' in the ministry. We are not of those who consider the ministry of Christ's gospel to be a Trade Union, and therefore we are not moved by this cry. We have been accustomed to pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth labourers into His harvest, and we have tried to prove the sincerity of our prayer. Among the novelties of the present age is the crime of helping too many men to get instruction in the things of God, too many men to be soul-winners. We wonder what next!"

Having its headquarters in the college buildings, the Colportage Association, which was founded in 1866, is another excellent institution which Spurgeon has established in connection with the Tabernacle. The work of these vendors of the truth is manifold, and is far more than going to and fro among the villages of England, selling Bibles to the cottage folk. This they do, and it is a noble work in itself; while even our country districts are being invaded by the tide of degenerating literature, it is admirable that the Bible and other books worthy to go with it should find their way to the table of the farm labourer and his children. The Colporteur, however, talks to the people on the doorstep about the kingdom of heaven, kneels by the bedside of the sick, holds open-air meetings, gives Bible readings, and generally does real missionary work. Such men are a strong and needful auxiliary to the work of any



ONE OF MR. SPURGEON'S COLPORTEURS.

minister, especially in the country districts, where so much ignorance still prevails, and people are really only just beginning to arouse from a patient and servile sleep.

No record of Spurgeon's life and work would be complete without a reference to his labours in the field of literature. He not only had the eloquent tongue, he could also in a masterly fashion wield the pen. It is astonishing how, with his many duties, the care of the largest Christian Church in the world, and such numerous outside calls, he could find time to write so many excellent books. In truth he was a man of unwearied application, who never knew idleness, and, feeling the pressure of life's brief space for doing, did his duty with all his might, redeeming the time. Now that his voice is hushed, his written words seem to leap into a new and precious value; he yet speaketh in the volumes with which he has enriched the shelves of almost every Bible lover in the land.

His sermons, in their thirty-seven volumes, are indeed his great work, to which he could have pointed as Charles Lamb did to his books in the South Sea House, only with a better meaning. They are in every town and village of the country, and have carried his name far into other lands where his face has never been seen nor his tongue heard. Therefore his fame will more generally rest upon these wonderful discourses. Unlike most sermons they bear reading, and are so full of originality that, notwithstanding the thousands which have been given to the world, there is no sign of repetition or failure of fresh, vigorous interest. They are a well of Saxon undefiled, and like the Bible and *Pilgrim's Progress* will sustain

the priceless heritage of our grandmother tongue. One of the ablest literary men of the present day said that some years ago he was compelled to forego books and all contact with the world for a space, and during those months, shut up in a little village, he read some volumes of Spurgeon's sermons again and again with ever-wondering delight. It is not at all surprising that in remote places, and at times when no sermon could be preached, to read one of Spurgeon's sermons seems to be the most natural thing. During the shooting season, it was the custom of the late Earl Cairns to read every Sunday one of these sermons to his visitors and servants in Scotland.

Next in order of merit and importance must be mentioned that grand work, *The Treasury of David*. Into these volumes Spurgeon seems to have put his very heart, experience, and inmost soul. It is as unlike any other commentary as the man was unlike any other man, the Shepherd of Israel had indeed led him where the loving flock doth feed. The pages abound with rich and original illustrations, drawn in many cases from wide reading of the very best classics, ancient and modern ; and also from the view of his own golden experience of life in its suggestions. For pathos and point some of the stories cannot be surpassed in English literature ; and the comments which the author makes upon the Psalmist's words, how he seems to play the music of the golden harp, and interpret the sweet mysteries of praise, penitence, and prayer—these are beautiful beyond expression. The following is from Mr. Spurgeon's comment upon the 126th Psalm :—

“ *They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.* Hence present distress must not be viewed as if it would

last for ever ; it is not the end, by any means, but only a means to the end. Sorrow is our sowing, rejoicing shall be our reaping. If there were no sowing in tears there would be no reaping in joy. If we were never captives we could never lead captivity captive. Our mouth had never been filled with holy laughter if it had not been first filled with the bitterness of grief. We must sow ; we may have to sow in the wet weather of sorrow ; but we shall reap, and reap in the bright summer season of joy. Let us keep to the work of this present sowing time, and find strength in the promise which is here so positively given us. Here is one of the Lord's shalls and wills ; it is freely given both to workers, waiters and weepers, and they may rest assured that it will not fail : 'in due seaeon they *shall* reap.'

"This sentence may well pass current in the Church as an inspired proverb. It is not every sowing which is thus insured against all danger, and guaranteed a harvest ; but the promise specially belongs to sowing *in tears*. When a man's heart is so stirred that he weeps over the sins of others, he is elect to usefulness. Winners of souls are first weepers for souls. As there is no birth without travail, so there is no spiritual harvest without painful tillage. When our own hearts are broken with grief at man's transgression we shall break other men's hearts ; tears of earnestness beget tears of repentance : 'deep calleth unto deep.'

"*He.*' The general assurance is applied to each one in particular. That which is spoken in the previous verse in the plural—'they,' is here repeated in the singular—'he.' '*He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come*

again with rejoicing bringing his sheaves with him.' He leaves his couch to go forth into the frosty air and tread the heavy soil; and as he goes he weeps because of past failures, or because the ground is so sterile or the weather so unseasonable, or his corn so scarce and his enemies so plentiful and so eager to rob him of his reward. He drops a seed and a tear, a seed and a tear, and so goes on his way. In his basket he has seed that is precious to him, for he has little of it, and it is his hope for the next year. Each grain leaves his hand with anxious prayer that it may not be lost: he thinks little of himself, but much of his seed, and he eagerly asks, 'Will it prosper? shall I receive a reward for my labour?' Yes, good husbandman, *doubtless* you will gather sheaves from your sowing. Because the Lord has written *doubtless*, take heed that you do not doubt. No reason for doubt can remain after the Lord has spoken. You will return to this field—not to sow but to reap; not to weep but to rejoice; and after a while you will go home again with nimbler step than to-day though with a heavier load, for you shall have sheaves to bear with you. Your handful shall be so greatly multiplied that many sheaves shall spring from it; and you shall have the pleasure of reaping them and bringing them home to the place from which you went out weeping.

"This is a figurative description of that which was literally described in the first three verses. It is the turning of the worker's captivity, when, instead of seed buried beneath black earth, he sees the waving crops inviting him to a golden harvest.

"It is somewhat singular to find this promise of fruitfulness in close contact with return from captivity;

and yet it is so in our own experiences, for when our own soul is revived the souls of others are blessed by our labours. If any of us, having been once lonesome and lingering captives, have now returned home, and have become longing and labouring sowers, may the Lord, who has already delivered us, soon transform us into glad-hearted reapers, and to Him shall be praise for ever and ever. Amen."

One of Spurgeon's ancient productions was the *Saint and his Saviour*, which was for some time out of print but has now appeared again ; it will be found a striking example of his early directness of teaching. At the end of each chapter there is a direct appeal to "the unconverted reader in concern for his soul," the last one being as follows :—

"Friend, you are now commencing the life of grace, for thou art just awakened to know the evil of sin. You are now feeling the guilt of your life, and are lamenting the follies of your youth. You fear there is no hope of pardon, no prospect of forgiveness, and you tremble lest death should lead your guilty soul unforgiven before its Maker. Hear, then, the Word of God. Thy pains for sins are God's work in thy soul. He woundeth thee that thou mayest seek Him. He would not have showed thee thy sin if He did not intend to pardon. Thou art now a sinner, and Jesus came to save sinners, therefore He came to save thee ; yea, He is saving thee now. These strivings of soul are the work of His mercy ; there is love in every blow, and grace in every stripe. Believe, O troubled one, that He is able to save thee unto the uttermost, and thou shalt not believe in vain. Now, in the silence of thine agony, look unto Him, who by His stripes healeth

thee. Jesus Christ has suffered the penalty of thy sins, and has endured the wrath of God on thy behalf. See yonder crucified Man on Calvary, and mark that those drops of blood are falling *for thee*, those nailed hands are pierced *for thee*, and that open side contains a heart full of love *to thee*.

“None but Jesus, none but Jesus,
Can do helpless sinners good.’

“It is simple reliance on Him which saves. The negro said, ‘Massa, I fall flat on de promise’; so if you fall flat on the promise of Jesus you shall not find Him fail you; He will bind up your heart, and make an end to the days of your mourning. We shall meet in heaven one day to sing hallelujah to the condescending Lord; till then may the God of all grace be our helper. Amen.”

Perhaps his best known work is *John Ploughman’s Talk*, which shows the author in his unequalled capacity for talking to plain people in a plain, pungent, witty manner. It is a rich feast of proverbial philosophy, and thousands of men who would have yawned over another book and could hardly get through the weekly paper at their firesides, have read and laughed, and read again, these bright, regularly Spurgeonic pages.

Of his *Lectures to My Students*, it may fairly be said that almost every student has read them. We can well understand the avidity with which the few privileged ones in the Pastors’ College heard these words, seeing that a host, which cannot be numbered, of young men with their eye and heart upon a future pulpit have read them again and again. Pithy, powerful, and wise, these counsels for preachers might



From photo. by]

MR. SPURGEON AMONG HIS BOOKS. *[Messrs. Elliot & Fry.*

be profitably studied by ministers of older growth. This is the way in which he cautions future preachers in these *Lectures*:—

"To opinions and remarks about yourself turn also as a general rule the blind eye and the deaf ear. Public men must expect public criticism, and as the public cannot be regarded as infallible, public men may expect to be criticised in a way which is neither fair nor pleasant. To all honest and just remarks we are bound to give due measure of heed, but to the bitter verdict of prejudice, the frivolous fault-finding of men of fashion, the stupid utterances of the ignorant, and the fierce denunciations of opponents, we may very safely turn a deaf ear. We cannot expect those to approve of us whom we condemn by our testimony against their favourite sins; their commendation would show that we had missed our mark. We naturally look to be approved by our own people, the members of our churches, and the adherents of our congregations, and when they make observations which show that they are not very great admirers, we may be tempted to discouragement, if not to anger: herein lies a snare. When I was about to leave my village charge for London, one of the old men prayed that I might be 'delivered from the bleating of the sheep.' For the life of me I could not imagine what he meant, but the riddle is plain now, and I have learned to offer the prayer myself. Too much consideration of what is said by our people, whether it be in praise or depreciation, is not good for us. If we dwell on high with 'that great Shepherd of the sheep' we shall care little for all the confused bleatings around us; but if we become 'carnal, and walk as men,' we shall have little rest if we listen to this,

that, and the other which every poor sheep may bleat about us. Perhaps it is quite true that you were uncommonly dull last Sabbath morning, but there was no need that Mrs. Clack should come and tell you that Deacon Jones thought so. It is more than probable that having been out in the country all the previous week, your preaching was very like milk and water, but there can be no necessity for your going round among the people to discover whether they noticed it or not. Is it not enough that your conscience is uneasy upon the point? Endeavour to improve for the future, but do not want to hear all that every Jack, Tom, and Mary may have to say about it. On the other hand, you were on the high horse in your last sermon, and finished with quite a flourish of trumpets, and you feel considerable anxiety to know what impression you produced. Repress your curiosity; it will do you no good to inquire. If the people should happen to agree with your verdict, it will only feed your pitiful vanity, and if they think otherwise your fishing for their praise will injure you in their esteem. In any case it is all about yourself, and this is a poor theme to be anxious about; play the man, and do not demean yourself by seeking compliments like little children when dressed in new clothes, who say, 'See my pretty frock.' Have you not by this time discovered that flattery is as injurious as it is pleasant? It softens the mind and makes you more sensitive to slander. In proportion as praise pleases you censure will pain you. Besides, it is a crime to be taken off from your great object of glorifying the Lord Jesus by petty considerations as to your little self, and, if there were no other reason, this ought to weigh much with you. Pride is a deadly sin, and will

grow without your borrowing the parish water-cart to quicken it. Forget expressions which feed your vanity, and if you find yourself relishing the unwholesome morsels confess the sin with deep humiliation. Payson showed that he was strong in the Lord when he wrote to his mother, 'You must not, certainly, my dear mother, say one word which even looks like an intimation that you think me advancing in grace. I cannot bear it. All the people here, whether friends or enemies, conspire to ruin me. Satan and my own heart, of course, will lend a hand ; and if you join too, I fear all the cold water which Christ can throw upon my pride will not prevent its breaking out into a destructive flame. As certainly as anybody flatters and caresses me my heavenly Father has to whip me ; and unspeakable mercy it is that He condescends to do it. I can, it is true, easily muster a hundred reasons why I should not be proud, but pride will not mind reason, nor anything else but a good drubbing. Even at this moment I feel it tingling in my fingers' ends, and seeking to guide my pen.' Knowing something myself of those secret whippings which our good Father administers to his servants when He sees them unduly exalted, I heartily add my own solemn warnings against your pampering the flesh by listening to the praises of the kindest friends you have. They are injudicious, and you must beware of them."

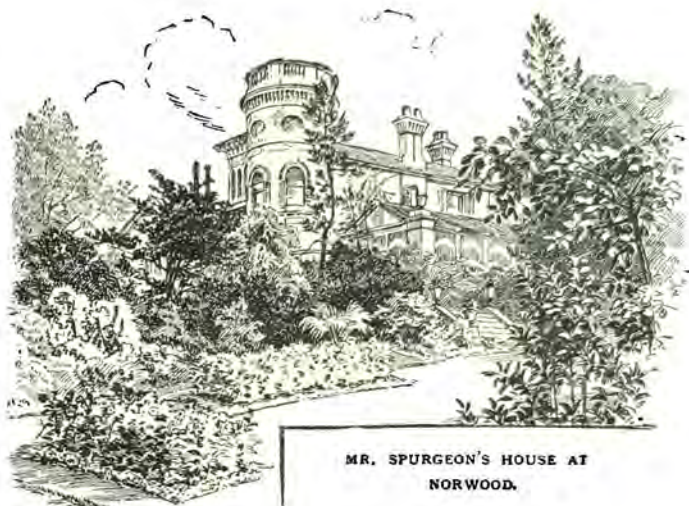
A little book for the pocket is the *Spare Half Hour*, from which we extract the following :—

"When a man begins to think, 'Well, there is something praiseworthy in my flesh after all,' depend upon it, there is nothing in him of any real worth. I remember a friend of mine who one morning met in

the market a deacon, for whom up to that hour he had entertained the highest respect. This deacon said to my friend, 'Friend So-and-so, I want you to do me a good turn.' 'Well,' he replied, 'I am sure I will do it if it is at all reasonable.' Then said the other, 'I want you to lend me a hundred pounds.' My friend had it on his tongue to say, 'Yes, I will write you a cheque at once,' when the deacon said, 'You can trust me, you know,—I am perfectly safe; I am not like a young man, who may be led into doing wrong: I have been in the ways of the Lord for so many years, and have had so much experience, that I am past temptation.' 'Past temptation!' muttered my friend; 'past temptation! I would not lend you the value of a sixpence.' 'Why not?' said the man with surprise. 'Because you say that you are past temptation, and I distrust a man who is so confident in himself.' I was gratified at the shrewd common-sense of my friend, and glad that he saved himself from losing one hundred pounds, for the boaster went to pieces, and was in prison within a month of that time. Whenever we allow our hearts to dream that we are beyond the region of indwelling sin, we are encircled by its coils."

Then what shall be said of *Morning by Morning*, and its companion volume of *Evening by Evening*, the vehicle of family worship in thousands of homes; of that crisp and helpful little book, *Feathers for Arrows*; of the *Interpreter*, of *Gleanings among the Sheaves*, of *Flashes of Thought*, and many more?

Such books are companions for a quiet hour, are stepping stones to reach high scriptural truths, are helps to piety, and a stimulus to zeal.



CHAPTER X.

LATER DAYS.

"Trials are the ballast of life.—The burdened vessel may sail slowly, but she sails safely. Without the ballast of time men are apt to blow over."

THE SALT-CELLARS.

IN the midst of the busy organisations for the spiritual and temporal well-being of mankind, of which the Metropolitan Tabernacle was the centre, Mr. Spurgeon continued until comparatively a few years back to direct and labour with vigour little abated. From the time, however, when his brother, Rev. J. A. Spurgeon, became his co-pastor he felt a grateful sense of relief, and was never weary of expressing how deeply he was indebted to the loving unselfishness of his fellow-worker. Had it not been for the unique service which his brother rendered him, in its measure

and depth unrevealed to the outer world, the Pastor of the Tabernacle would have long ago succumbed. As it was he told a friend in one of his letters that he was being crushed with overwork, and the malady which began to make inroads upon his health, although an inherited complaint, was being aggravated and developed by excessive mental strain. Few people knew what it cost him in these later years to stand up in his old place to preach to his people. His sturdy spirit showed no sign of suffering, but it became evident that his absence from England during the wintry months of fog was absolutely necessary. 'Every year he bade his flock farewell, and from Mentone he would write such letters as bespoke the grateful love of his heart. Then after those weeks of sunny refreshment he would return to meet his people and with a fresh accession of vigour to preach the Word. Not only did he preach at the Tabernacle, but he was continually travelling to different parts of the country to fulfil his many engagements; there was no rest for or indeed in the man. He spent a holiday in Scotland in the summer of 1876, but although starting out with the intention of securing absolute quiet, the applications he received to preach were legion. "I have returned to England," he wrote to a friend afterwards. "I had eleven clear week days in Scotland, and was asked to preach more than fifty times. *That* when I came to rest—and in a Christian country too! A merciful man, etc."

Two years afterwards he again visited the north, and very nearly lost his life while being driven down a steep country road. The horses took fright, and death seemed imminent, when, in the providence of God, the danger was arrested and this precious life spared. He could not refrain from preaching several

times during his stay ; once, standing above the porch of a house where he was staying, he addressed a large crowd of fisher people, who had gathered from great distances to hear him. The scene was a striking one, and the preacher felt it when he cried, "Oh that my blessed Master would look around this throng this night and find out those who are bowed down in spirit and almost in despair ! He or she who thought himself or herself most likely to be passed by and so obscure and undeserving of Christ's regard, was most likely to obtain the blessing." This and the other services which he conducted in Scotland gave him a fast hold upon the strong religious character of that nation, which, like Wales, is the cradle of mighty preachers.

His fame was of course immense in America, where his books and sermons were read everywhere. One of the things to be remembered by the American on returning from a European tour was having heard Spurgeon, and every scrap of detail as regards the great preacher's style and stories was received with avidity. It is not surprising that, like John Bright, he had many pressing invitations to cross the Atlantic ; but to these he could never consent. One firm of lecturing agents made him a most tempting pecuniary offer if he would go. But the thousands of gold dollars which were promised were no inducement to Spurgeon. "If I could come," was his reply, "I am not a lecturer, nor would I receive any money for preaching."

Although he did not profess to be a lecturer, his well-known "Lecture on Candles" was exceedingly popular ; the array of various "dips" upon the table being made an object lesson replete with sound sense

and timely humour. Those who heard him at Exeter Hall deliver his lecture "De Propaganda Fide," in connection with the course of lectures of the Young Men's Christian Association, will not soon forget the power and earnestness of that platform sermon, to which the vast audience of young men listened breathlessly throughout.

It was about this time that Mr. Spurgeon preached a notable sermon in the Independent Chapel, at the corner of Cross Street, Islington, where his father had become the pastor. The white-headed old man shared the pulpit with his son, who in his jocular way referred to their absolute union of heart and opinion, except upon one point. "My dear father, here, and I," said Mr. Spurgeon, "agree admirably; the only difference we have is that there is a little water between us."

No man can charge Mr. Spurgeon with being lacking in brotherly love; his heart went out towards all who loved Christ and preached the truth. An instance of this was in his words to the Wesleyan Conference, then being held at City Road Chapel, in August, 1880. He had been very ill, and had no intention of speaking to the Methodist brethren when he went that way. His own account of this incident, which appeared in the *Sword and Trowel*, is so characteristic that it cannot be better told than in his words:—

"When the Wesleyan Conference was in full session I called at the City Road Chapel vestry upon a business errand, for I wished to see the manager of the refreshment department. The commissariat for the proposed visit of the Baptist Union was under discussion, and it seemed a practical thing to see how

others attended to that matter. I hoped to steal in and out, and go home in quiet ; but scores of hearty brethren pounced upon me, and in a few minutes Dr. Punshon was conducting me into the Assembly. The whole host of divines received me in a manner which melted me to tears, and bowed down my soul with a weight of love. The President spoke in chosen terms of affection, and invited me to address the Conference. I was utterly unprepared, but I cried for help to the Lord, and I trust that the word was not quite so broken and confused as it might have been. Then Dr. Osborn and Dr. Punshon spoke right warmly, and I left with a deep sense of gratitude for the generous reception. These brethren know that I differ from them in many points, but they love me none the less for speaking out plainly what I hold to be true. The remark was made that neither of us would be willing to ignore those differences, nor anxious for others to do so ; but then we agree in many vital truths which are broad enough for mutual love to dwell upon and walk at large in. The whole scene was a spontaneous outburst of brotherly love in Christ Jesus—love which has a solid foundation. Both Baptists and Wesleyans *believe* something, and this is rather a rarity in these doubting times. We alike dread both the superstition and the rationalism of the age, and it is well that we should heartily unite in the defence of the essential doctrines of salvation through faith in the blood of Jesus, and regeneration by the Holy Spirit. I thank all the brethren, and again wish them the baptism of the Holy Ghost."

The occasion of his twenty-fifth year as pastor of the Tabernacle was a great and happy event. His

loving people came with their gifts, amounting to over six thousand pounds, which he immediately gave again to the Orphanage, Book Fund, Colporteurs, and other good works in their midst. In vain the donors begged him to take something for himself; it was from no lack of affection that he would not, for the words of gratitude which welled from his heart that night were very real. "Well, this love," said he, "is to me an amazement. I am the most astonished person among you. I do not comprehend it. It seems a romance to me. What I have done I shall do still, namely, love you with all my heart, and love my Lord as His grace enables me. I mean to go on preaching Jesus and His Gospel, and you may be sure that I shall not preach anything else, for it is with me Christ or nothing. I am sold up and my stock-in-trade is gone if Jesus Christ is gone. He is the source of my ministry, my all in all."

On the lamented death of President Garfield in 1882, Mr. Spurgeon received from his widow a kind and grateful note, having reference to the occasion when she and the President sat together in the Tabernacle listening to his preaching. She sent Mr. Spurgeon an extract from her husband's journal at the time, saying:—"A sentence from it may interest you. After describing very fully the impressions of the great audience, of the preacher and of the sermon, he closes thus—'God bless Spurgeon! He is helping to work out the problem of religious and civil freedom for England in a way that he knows not of.'"

Two other scenes of Mr. Spurgeon's preaching ought not to be omitted. One, the immense gatherings in the Agricultural Hall, Islington, during the cleaning and renovation of the Tabernacle. The

sight of that vast auditory cannot be forgotten by those present. Over twenty-two thousand persons were present on one occasion: the great area was packed with human faces, the galleries were full, and some, to get a sight of the preacher, found a coign of vantage on the girders; yet the marvellous voice of the speaker penetrated every part of the building; and a sentence in his prayer, "O Christ! at whose girdle swing the keys of hell and of death, touch every heart to day," was remarkable for its distinctness and force.

The other is that of his visit to the Quakers' meeting at Devonshire House, when he solemnly exhorted his audience of quiet, soberly-dressed brethren to be steadfast in the faith.

In the earlier years of his ministry Mr. Spurgeon, as we have seen, entered the field as a controversialist upon the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration. The warmth of his attack, and the vigour with which he denounced what he felt to be false teaching, brought him much into prominence, and made him some enemies. In his later years he turned his attention to divergences nearer home, and boldly entered into an issue with his own ministerial brethren. This was the beginning of the Down Grade controversy, which cannot be fully discussed within the limit of these pages, but is a marked feature of the conclusion of his ministry. All through his life one of his strongest characteristics had been an unswerving loyalty to Evangelical truth; to him the Bible was, without any equivocation, the Word of God, and the doctrines therein contained were to his conviction absolute and unalterable. Therefore a note of alarm rang through the Baptist denomination and far beyond

it when the following definite charge was made in the pages of the *Sword and Trowel* in the month of August, 1889 :—" That in many churches and chapels the atonement is scouted, the inspiration of Scripture is derided, the Holy Spirit degraded into an influence, the punishment of sin is turned into fiction, and the resurrection into a myth." Then he foresaw, as a consequence of this, "That at the back of doctrinal falsehood there has come a natural decline of spiritual life, evinced by a taste for questionable amusements and a weariness of doctrinal meetings."

This naturally called forth many protests. Mr. Spurgeon was challenged to prove his assertion, and much heart-searching and pain were felt in the ranks of his brethren. The position of the greatest preacher of the age gave immeasurable weight and power to such a criticism. He had openly flouted the progress of modern thought, and cared not a fig for changes of theological posture which the advanced spirit of the age was presumed to make necessary. The tolerated uncertainties of certain pulpits to him spelt heresy, and, much as the step cost him, he would have his brethren either repent and do their first works, or claim him no longer in their fellowship. He withdrew from the Baptist Union, and prepared a confession of faith, which was signed by himself and others, as a protest against the prevalence of false doctrine. He challenged the students of his college to testify their allegiance to the old truths or depart ; he would never be President where Down Grade teaching was held. Feeling that life was necessarily drawing near evening with him, Mr. Spurgeon fought with all his old force what he felt to be his last battle for the Lord. Only such a man as Mr. Spurgeon

could, humanly speaking, have afforded thus to stand in the stream and take the consequences. Certain it is that while some were pained and others misunderstood, his brave avowal checked a dangerous drift in the churches; and all admitted, whether they agreed with his position or not, that he was actuated by the noblest motives and deserved a continuance of their respect and love.

A few years before this controversy Mr. Spurgeon had definitely taken sides in a battle, the issues of which are only second to the cause of religion. He had boldly put on the blue ribbon, and taken his place as a total abstainer. The letter which he wrote to the Tabernacle Total Abstinence Society has been preserved. He could not go to the meeting on account of illness, but wrote as follows:—"I sincerely believe that, next to the preaching of the Gospel, the most necessary thing to be done in England is to induce the people to become total abstainers. Go in for winning the real drunkards, and bringing the poor enslaved creatures to the feet of Jesus, who can give them liberty." He signed himself, "Yours teetotally, C. H. SPURGEON."

If there is one thing more than another in which Mr. Spurgeon was a bulwark and a witness of the faith, it was in his unswerving belief in the efficacy of prayer. His wonderful success might be attributed to the distinct answer of a prayer-hearing God to the cry of His servant and the flock committed to his care. To his visitors, who from various parts of the world came to see the Tabernacle work, he had always one remark to make in explaining the spiritual activity of his people. "Here is the secret of our success," he would say, as he conducted the week-

night prayer-meeting ; "these fervent prayers and strong cryings to God hold us up." He was never weary in pointing out answers to these prayers. Speaking to someone once upon this point, he mentioned a remarkable instance :—

"Some two years ago a poor woman, accompanied by two of her neighbours, came to my vestry in deep distress. Her husband had fled the country ; in her sorrow she went to the house of God, and something I said in the sermon made her think I was personally familiar with her case. Of course I had known nothing about her. It was a general illustration that fitted a particular case. She told me her story, and a very sad one it was. I said, 'There is nothing that we can do but to kneel down and cry to the Lord for the immediate conversion of your husband.' We knelt down, and I prayed that the Lord would touch the heart of the deserter, convert his soul, and bring him back to his home. When we rose from our knees I said to the poor woman, 'Do not fret about the matter. I feel sure your husband will come home ; and that he will yet become connected with our church.' She went away, and I forgot all about it. Some months after, she reappeared with her neighbours and a man whom she introduced to me as her husband. He had indeed come back, and he had returned a converted man. On making inquiry and comparing notes, we found that the very day on which we had prayed for his conversion he, being at that time on board a ship far away on the sea, stumbled most unexpectedly upon a stray copy of one of my sermons. He read it. The truth went to his heart. He repented and sought the Lord, and as soon as possible he returned to his wife and to his

daily calling. He was admitted a member, and last Monday his wife, who up to that time had not been a member, was also received among us. That woman does not doubt the power of prayer. All the infidels in the world could not shake her conviction that there is a God that answereth prayer. I should be the most irrational creature in the world if, with a life every day of which is full of experiences so remarkable, I entertained the slightest doubt on the subject."



MENTONE.



THE GRAVE AT NORWOOD CEMETERY.

CHAPTER XI.

MENTONE, AND HOME AT LAST.

"Faint, yet pursuing; weak, yet subduing; spent, yet renewing; Christ ever viewing.—This is much as our life hath been; may God be glorified both by its weakness and its strength, its change and constancy."

THE SALT-CELLARS.

M R. SPURGEON once said to a friend, "I have inherited most of my father's excellences and the gout with them."

"What is gout like?" was the inquiry. "If you put your hand into a vice," replied Mr. Spurgeon, "and let a man press as hard as he can, that is rheumatism; and if he can be got to press a little harder, that is gout."

This malady, about which he could even speak jocularly in his crisp way, is supposed to have had its ancestral starting-point in the sufferings of one of the early Spurgeons in prison for conscience' sake.

A more painful physical enemy could hardly be imagined, and during the last few years it was steadily and surely making fatal inroads upon the robust constitution of the Pastor of the Tabernacle. Constant visits to Mentone only parried the stroke for a time, and at last, in the autumn of 1891, the final attack came which in the end carried the fortress. The sympathy which the news on the placards of the newspapers, "Serious illness of Mr. Spurgeon," evoked, is now, and will ever remain, a matter of history. All over his native land, and far beyond its borders, men and women were waiting on the tiptoe of excitement to hear fresh tidings. As he grew worse the excitement intensified: crowds filled the Tabernacle daily, imploring God to spare his life. The personal notes in the *Sword and Trowel* became of engrossing interest; one of them said:—"At intervals, a few bright rays of hope have shot through the dense darkness which has surrounded the sick chamber; but these have been followed by periods of most painful suspense, in which the precious life has seemed to reach the very verge of the unseen world. All that medical skill, patient watching, and careful nursing could do, appeared, for a while, to be of no avail. It ought to be stated, however, to the honour of God, that even when almost the last hope of recovery had to be given up, those who were most deeply concerned in the issue of the terrible trial had one source of consolation left. Among the letters that poured in daily, from all quarters, there were many from godly men and women who wrote, not merely to say that they were praying for Mr. Spurgeon's recovery, but that it had been impressed upon them most powerfully, that this

sickness was 'not unto death,' and that the Lord would raise up His servant even from the very gates of the grave." Members of the royal family, the nobility, and the representatives of every branch of the universal Church made inquiries after the patient ; and, what was far better, the voice of prayer went up from public assemblies and the houses of Christian people everywhere. To think of the possibility of his dying seemed to anticipate a loss which the heart of the nation shrank from. In his lucid intervals between the delirium of the disease, he was made acquainted with the fact of the Christian world being on its knees for his recovery, and said fervently, "God bless them all."

Then, at last, when all seemed lost, the doctors having given up hope, and everything that love and skill could do having been done, and the shadow of a great fear hung over the land, a wonderful change took place, and a slight reflux ripple of returning life and hope was seen with astonishment and gratitude. Strength slowly returned, and on August 8th a letter in his own words brought this message to his church and people :—"The Lord's name be praised for first giving and then hearing the loving prayers of His people! Through these prayers my life is prolonged. I feel greatly humbled, and very grateful at being the object of so great a love and so wonderful an outburst of prayer. I have not strength to say more. Let the name of the Lord be glorified!"

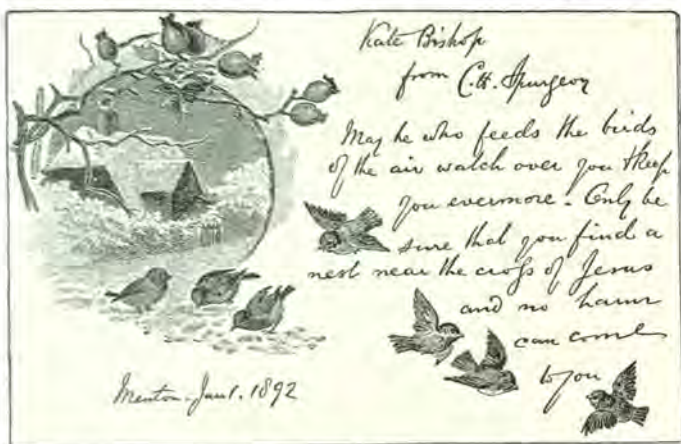
The first note written to the readers of his magazine speaks his gratitude. In it he says : "I am unable to send a personal letter of thanks to the thousands of friends, of all ranks and religions, who wrote sympathetic letters to Mrs. Spurgeon and myself during

the dark days of my illness; but I beg, in the best manner possible to me, to return my hearty thanks to them all. To my dear, sorrowing wife the kind words from all quarters were, by God's blessing, an unutterable consolation. I was too ill to know much about the matter; but now I am recovering, the reading of these generous expressions fills my eyes with tears, my mind with astonishment, and my heart with gratitude. Surely there is unity deep down in the Church of God, and on fit occasions it shows itself: that I should furnish such an occasion overwhelms me. Some of those affectionate expressions, from persons who are ecclesiastically divided from me, are as fervent as if we agreed on every point, and are vastly more true and precious than if that were the case. Brethren and sisters in Christ, the Lord recompense upon each of you a hundred-fold your tender consideration of one who had no claim upon you but his great affliction!"

It is not too much to say that a new thrill of relief and thankfulness was felt in hundreds of thousands of homes when it was found that God had answered the people's prayer. Mr. Spurgeon went as soon as possible to an English seaside resort for a brief space, and then repaired to Mentone, where among the flowers and orange groves of his favourite retreat he felt at home. From this distant spot he wrote brief letters to his people, which found a place in all the newspapers of the land. He still suffered much, but was full of hope. "I shall recover," he says, "for this is the tenor of the prayers which our God has so far answered." But he warns them that "The symptoms are the same as when I was at home. I am tossed up and down upon the waves of my disease and what is

thought progress to-day is gone to-morrow. I have seasons of utter prostration. Always weak, it seems at times that I have no strength whatever, and must altogether collapse."

In all his communications home, he urged them to remember the Orphanage and other works of usefulness, and to these the thankofferings of many were liberally devoted. Absent in the body, his spirit was



FACSIMILE OF MR. SPURGEON'S CARD TO THE HEAD GIRL.

still with them, and the children especially had a warm corner in his remembrances. As Christmas drew near, he sent loving letters to the orphans:—

"I send you all my love, as far as the post can carry love at twopence-halfpenny for a half-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 feel grateful to the kind

friends who 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!"

In their turn, the little people sent him messages and pretty cards; and to some of these, in the midst of all this affliction and weakness, he managed to write most tender little missives. To the head girl his



FACSIMILE OF MR. SPURGEON'S CARD TO THE HEAD BOY,

message is:—"May He, who feeds the birds of the air, watch over you, and keep you evermore! Only be sure that you find a nest near the cross of Jesus, and no harm can come to you." And to a youngster who was the eldest boy, and had sent him a card, he says: "May the Lord Jesus make you His good soldier, and keep you faithful and valiant! Enlist by faith, put on your armour by diligence, keep it bright by holy service, and watch in all things unto prayer." Such letters might by the unsympathetic

be considered but trifles, but they exhibit in a beautiful manner the tenderness of this strong man's heart.

January 1892 brought with it a burden of sorrow to the English people. The dread scourge influenza caught and slew the young Prince Albert Victor in the early summer of his manhood, and as the bells were tolling for him, the venerable Cardinal Manning passed away. Meanwhile, the patient at Mentone suddenly suffered a relapse, and a telegram urged the need of continued appeal to God. The awestruck nation had, however, another blow yet to bear, for, on the last day of the month, he for whom millions had lifted up their hearts in prayer found his release. The eloquent lip was to move no more, the busy brain stood still, the brave, tender heart was hushed to throb no more. "Spurgeon is dead!" rang like a knell over the land. The people who had smiled through their tears and begun to think of such a joyful reception as the Tabernacle had never known, who had begun to build a lift so that he might be spared the toil of the staircase, were now in mute grief to receive that olive casket with its precious burden and palm branches at the doors. It was borne first to the College, and afterwards carried to the Tabernacle and placed in front of the baptisery, and below the rostrum, draped with black. Sprays of beautiful palm-leaves bespoke of victory, wreaths of fragrant flowers told of the sweet and everlasting summer of that land to which he had sped. The text he last quoted, and which was now above his prostrate form: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith," suitably summed up his career. Amongst the wreaths was one with a

sword and trowel fashioned in violets, and the verse attached :—

“O master builder, thou on Zion’s wall,
Thy busy *Trowel* knew no cankering rust,
Thy *Sword* was keen and double-edged withal,
To smite the invading foemen to the dust.”

His widow’s memorial was simple and beautiful—
“With Christ, which is far better. I will follow thee,
my husband.”

For a whole day all this was on view, and through the aisles of the Tabernacle a stream of over sixty thousand people slowly passed, to gaze for a moment where all that was mortal of the great preacher lay, and then with unrestrained tears to move away. At the first of the three memorial services which followed, a tender epistle came from Mrs. Spurgeon, who was not able to leave Mentone, and for whom the deepest sympathy was expressed on all hands. In it she said :—“For me it is absolutely necessary that I should keep looking up. ‘He is not here; He is risen,’ is as true of my beloved as of my beloved Lord. To-day (Sunday) he has been a week in Heaven. Oh, the bliss and rapture of seeing his Saviour’s face! Oh, the welcome home which awaited him as he left this sad earth! Not for a moment do I wish him back, though he was dearer to me than tongue can tell. I shall pray very much for you all during this week of grief. I feel myself like a shipwrecked mariner who has with difficulty reached the shore, and now looks with streaming eyes and faint heart on those who are still struggling through the dreadful waves of sorrow.”

Mr. Spurgeon had, at Mentone, expressed a wish to be buried in the grounds of the Orphanage, but the

underground railway had made this unadvisable, so the funeral took place at Norwood Cemetery, in a spot which he had indicated to a friend some time before. He had been helping this friend to choose a site for a family vault, and when Mr. Spurgeon suggested one his friend modestly objected, as the position seemed too prominent. "No," Mr. Spurgeon said, "it will just do for you." The spot was agreed upon, and then Mr. Spurgeon, turning to the superintendent of the cemetery, said, "Now have you a decent corner where you could put Spurgeon some day?" A corner was pointed out, and Mr. Spurgeon said, "That will do."

Such a funeral has hardly passed the streets before, grand in its simplicity, beautiful in the sincerity of its grief. The utterances of those who spoke and prayed were choked with emotion ; as the casket was lifted from its place the grand old German chorale was sung by the choir :—

"Thou art gone to the grave,
But we will not deplore thee,
Tho' sorrow and darkness
Encompass the tomb ;
Thy Saviour has passed
Thro' its portals before thee,
And the lamp of His love
Is thy guide thro' the gloom."

But perhaps the pathos of the scene reached its climax when the girls and boys of the Orphanage, whom he loved so well, lifted their childish treble and wafted, as the procession left the doors, that touching song—

"The Homeland ! the Homeland !
The land of the freeborn ;
There's no night in the Homeland,
But aye the fadeless morn,

"I'm sighing for the Homeland,
My heart is aching here ;
There's no pain in the Homeland
To which I'm drawing near."

The forty carriages slowly wended their way through miles of reverent spectators, and a vast crowd was at the cemetery waiting for the arrival of the funeral. The grave, which was made fair with moss and flowers, was close to those of Dr. Moffat and Dr. Morley Punshon ; and the hearse which carried Spurgeon to his tomb was the same which bore the body of Mrs. Booth, the sainted "mother of the Salvation Army." A brief but impressive service was held, and the Bishop of Rochester pronounced the benediction.

Thus they laid him to rest who has left a space in the world which many men combined could hardly fill. While he was at Mentone, a short time before he died, he sat in his chair to give to some friends a few words upon the new year, upon which he was not destined to travel far. This was his last message, uttered while his hand was already on the latch of the door of life, and looking backward he tells us how safe is the saint in the keeping of his God. The prospect which by the eye of faith he sees shall be the bright ending of this record of his life ; not in clouds of gloom did his sun set, but amid the glories of that light which streams from the mansions which He hath prepared for them that love Him. Here, then, let us stay to hearken to the preacher's last words ere he entered through the gate into the City.

"I see a *pathway made* from this first of January 1892, to the first of January, 1893. I see a highway cast up by the foreknowledge and predestination of

God. Nothing of the future is left to chance ; nay, not the falling of a sparrow nor the losing of a hair is left to haphazard ; but all the events of life are arranged and appointed. Not only is every turn in the road marked in the divine map, but every stone on the road, and every drop of morning dew or evening mist that falls upon the grass which grows at the roadside. We are not to cross a trackless desert ; the Lord has ordained our path in His infallible wisdom and infinite love. 'The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord ; and he delighteth in His way.'

"I sec, next, *a Guide provided*, as our companion along the way. To Him we gladly say, 'Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel.' He is waiting to go with us through every portion of the road. 'The Lord, He it is that doth go before thee ; He will be with thee, He will not fail thee.' We are not left to pass through life as though it were a lone wilderness, a place of dragons and owls ; for Jesus says, 'I will not leave you comfortless : I will come to you.'

"God all-sufficient will not fail those who trust Him. When we come to the place for shouldering the burden, we shall reach the place for receiving the strength. If it pleases the Lord to multiply our troubles from one to ten, He will increase our strength in the same proportion. To each believer the Lord still says, 'As thy days, so shall thy strength be.' You do not yet feel that you have grace to die with : what of that ? You are not yet dying. While you have yet to deal with the business and duty of life, look to God for the grace which these require ; and when life is ebbing out, and your only thought is about landing on the eternal shore, then look to God your Saviour for dying grace in dying moments.

We may expect an inrush of Divine strength when human strength is failing, and a daily impartation of energy as daily need requires. Our lamps shall be trimmed as long as they shall need to burn. Let not our present weakness tempt us to limit the Holy One of Israel. There is a hospice on every pass over the Alps of life, and a bridge across every river of trial which crosses our way to the Celestial City. Holy angels are as numerous to guard us as fallen ones to tempt us. We shall never have a need for which our gracious Father has furnished no supply.

"I see, most plainly, *a power overruling* all things which occur in the way we tread. I see an alembic in which all things are transformed. 'All things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His purpose.' I see a wonder-working hand which turns for us the swords of disease into the ploughshares of correction, and the spears of trial into the pruning-hooks of discipline. By this Divine skill, bitters are made sweet, and poisons turned to medicines. 'Nothing shall by any means harm you,' is a promise too strong for feeble faith ; but full assurance finds it true. Since God is for us, who can be against us? What a joy to see Jehovah Himself as our banner, and God Himself with us as our Captain! Forward then into the New Year, 'for there shall no evil befall you.'

"One thing more, and this is brightness itself : this year we trust we shall see *God glorified* by us and in us. If we realise our chief end, we reach our highest enjoyment. It is the delight of the renewed heart to think that God can get glory out of such poor creatures as we are. 'God is light.' We can-

not add to His brightness ; but we may act as reflectors, which, though they have no light of their own, yet, when the sun shines upon them, reflect His beams, and send them where, without such reflection, they might not have come. When the Lord shines upon us, we will cast that light upon dark places, and make those who sit in the shadow of death to rejoice in Jesus our Lord. We hope that God has been in some measure glorified in some of us during the past year, but we trust He will be glorified by us far more in the year which now begins. We will be content to glorify God either actively or passively. We would have it so happen that, when our life's history is written, whoever reads it will not think of us as 'self-made men,' but as the handiwork of God, in whom His grace is magnified. Not in us may men see the clay, but the Potter's hand. They said of one, 'He is a fine preacher' ; but of another they said, 'We never notice how he preaches, *but we feel that God is great.*' We wish our whole life to be a sacrifice ; an altar of incense continually smoking with sweet perfume unto the Most High. Oh to be borne through the year on the wings of praise to God ! to mount from year to year, and raise at each ascent a loftier and yet lowlier song unto the God of our life ! The vista of a praiseful life will never close, but continue throughout eternity. From psalm to psalm, from hallelujah to hallelujah, we will ascend the hill of the Lord ; until we come into the Holiest of all, where, with veiled faces, we will bow before the Divine Majesty in the bliss of endless adoration. Throughout this year may the Lord be with you ! Amen."